CURRICULUM MAKING IN EUROPE

PRAISE FOR *CURRICULUM MAKING IN EUROPE*

'Europe is a rich site for comparative analysis of curriculum making, and this book provides a new perspective and a wealth of studies on different actors and influences. It is a prime resource for students of curriculum.'

Lyn Yates, Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor Emerita of Curriculum, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Australia

'This is one of the most interesting and important books on curriculum for a very long time. The study of the curriculum has been in the shadows for several decades but this book puts it under the spotlight again - deservedly so. The contexts and history of the case studies produced are diverse, yet each case study enables comparison by being framed using a common conceptual heuristic based on sites of activity, reflecting global, national, local, school and classroom ideologies, policies and practices. The dynamic processes between the layers of systems are thus revealed. The powerful central argument is for more, and better, sense-making from actors within and across all sites. This book provides a rationale, an incentive, and evidence (negative and positive) for doing things better. It should be read by actors at all levels in education systems.'

Mary James, University of Cambridge, UK

'With its implications for policy and practice that go beyond traditional rigid educational policy texts, this book is essential reading for higher education students pursuing educational doctorates. The chapters offer a powerful corrective that empowers teacher and schools alike with making curriculum relevant to the experiences of students, and point our attention to translational and transactive processes that are otherwise ignored not only in educational policy literature, but in educator discourse. This book does a great service in (re)inscribing curriculum as a truly dynamic process in accessible language. As a curricularist who engages with education policy, I believe this work provides valuable theoretical and research material detail. For those who are interested in thinking the curriculum anew, I suggest that *Curriculum Making in Europe* be placed at the top of the reading list.'

Todd Alan Price, National Louis University, USA

CURRICULUM MAKING IN EUROPE

Policy and Practice Within and Across Diverse Contexts

EDITED BY

MARK PRIESTLEY
University of Stirling, UK

DANIEL ALVUNGER
Linnæus University, Sweden

STAVROULA PHILIPPOU
University of Cyprus, Cyprus

TIINA SOINI
Tampere University, Finland

emerald **PUBLISHING**

Reprints and permissions service
Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

ISOQAR
REGISTERED

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1 (INTERNATIONAL TRENDS)

No tables or figures

CHAPTER 2 (CYPRUS)

No tables or figures

CHAPTER 3 (PORTUGAL)

CHAPTER 4 (CZECHIA)

CONCLUSION

This page intentionally left blank

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Mark Priestley is a Professor of Education at the University of Stirling, and the Director of the Stirling Network for Curriculum Studies. His research interests lie in the school curriculum – theory, policy and practice. He is a Co-author of *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach* (published by Bloomsbury) and Lead Editor of the *Curriculum Journal*.

Daniel Alvunger is an Associate Professor in Education at the Department of Education and Teachers' Practice at Linnæus University, Sweden. His research is focussed on education policy and curriculum making as social practice, teachers' professional agency, the organization of teacher education, and leadership and school development.

Stavroula Philippou is an Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Cyprus, Cyprus. She is currently Lead Editor of *The Curriculum Journal*. Her research draws upon the theoretical, historical and sociological study of curriculum and teaching, focusing on genealogies of curriculum studies, teacher professionalism and curriculum change.

Tiina Soini, PhD, is a Research Director Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University and an Adjunct Professor in Philosophical Faculty, University of Eastern Finland. Her research interests include educational reforms, teachers' professional agency and well-being, and pupils' learning agency.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ariana Cosme has a PhD in Sciences of Education and is an Assistant Teacher at the Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education. Currently, she is also a Member of the Monitoring Committee of Curricular Reform. Her research interests are teaching work and the performance of teachers, pedagogical intervention, and student assessment.

Majella Dempsey is an Associate Professor and lectures on curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment in Maynooth University, where she leads the professional doctorate in curriculum studies. She has led research projects on the role of technology in formative assessment, the assessment of key competences and task development and evaluation in science and mathematics.

Audrey Doyle lectures on initial teacher education across a range of modules on curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment at Dublin City University. She tutors on the micro-teaching and School Placement programme. She was principal of a post-primary school and a teacher for over 30 years.

Dominik Dvořák, PhD, is a Senior Researcher at the Faculty of Education, Charles University, Prague. His research interests include curriculum and knowledge, education systems, and comparative education. He is an Executive Editor of the journal *Orbis Scholae* and has extensive experience as a textbook editor and author.

Walter Humes has been a Professor of Education at the Universities of Aberdeen, Strathclyde and West of Scotland. He is now an Honorary Professor at the University of Stirling. His publications include work on curriculum studies, policy analysis, history of education, teacher education and educational leadership.

Stavroula Kontovourki is an Assistant Professor in Literacy and Language Arts Education at the University of Cyprus, Cyprus. Her research is theoretically grounded in sociocultural perspectives on literacy and post-structural theories of identity, and focuses

on literacy pedagogy, literate identities across social contexts, multimodality, literacy teachers' professional identities, and literacy curricula, policy, and change.

Wilmad Kuiper is an Emeritus Professor of curriculum evaluation at Utrecht University. He is the former head of the Curriculum Research Department at SLO. His research interests are curriculum evaluation in relation with curriculum (re)design and implementation, balancing curriculum regulation and freedom, and the alignment between curriculum (renewal) and assessment.

David Leat is a Professor of Curriculum Innovation at Newcastle University, UK, and a Visiting Professor at the University of South East Norway. His main interest is in project-based learning and community curriculum making partnerships. His latest book is *Enquiry and Project Based Learning: Students, School and Society* (Routledge).

Bob Lingard is a Professorial Fellow in the Institute for Learning Sciences & Teacher Education at Australian Catholic University and an Emeritus Professor at The University of Queensland. His most recent books include, *Globalisation and Education* (Routledge, 2021), *Digital Disruption in Teaching and Testing* (Routledge, 2021) and *Globalizing Educational Accountabilities* (Routledge, 2016).

Anne Looney is a Professor and an Executive Dean of Dublin City University's Institute of Education. From 2001 to 2016, she was the CEO of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. In 2014/2015, she was a Professorial Research Fellow at the Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, based at Australian Catholic University in Brisbane.

Ana Mouraz holds a PhD in Sciences of Education and is an Assistant Professor at Universidade Aberta (Portugal). Currently, she is coordinating a research project funded by the Portuguese Science Foundation, entitled 'Digital migrations and curricular innovation: giving new meaning to experience and rekindle the teaching profession after 50'. Her research interests are teacher education, curriculum studies and evaluation.

Nienke Nieveen is an Associate Professor and the Director of the teacher education programs at the University of Twente, The Netherlands. Her orientations are in teacher professional learning in relation to curriculum (re)design in schools, educational design research and curriculum design approaches and tools.

Gemma Parker, PhD, is a qualified primary school teacher who has taught in South London primary schools and in Higher Education settings, lecturing in primary mathematics. She now works as an independent primary mathematics advisor. Her doctoral research focussed on teachers' curriculum autonomy, and this continues to be an interest.

Janne Pietarinen, PhD, is a Professor of Educational Sciences, School of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education, University of Eastern Finland and an Adjunct Professor at the Tampere University. His research interests are in educational transitions, pupil and teacher learning, and well-being in the context of sustainable school development.

Kirsi Pyhältö, PhD, is a Professor of Higher Education, in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Centre for University Teaching and Learning, at the University of Helsinki, and a Professor of educational sciences in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, at the University of Oulu. Her research interests include school development, teachers' professional agency and well-being.

Eleni Theodorou is an Associate Professor in Social Foundations of Education at the Department of Education Sciences at European University Cyprus, Cyprus. Her research interests include, inter alia, sociological and anthropological constructions of childhood, multicultural education politics and policy, and sociological understandings of teacher professional identities, investigated through qualitative research methodologies.

Ninni Wahlström is a Professor of Education at Linnaeus University, Sweden. Her current research focusses on transnational and national policy discourses and their implications for national curriculum, deliberations at a municipal level and classroom teaching from a perspective of critical curriculum theory.

CURRICULUM MAKING:
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

Mark Priestley, Stavroula Philippou, Daniel Alvunger and Tiina Soini

INTRODUCTION

One of main and recurring research themes in the field of curriculum studies has been how different social actors, as individuals and as groups or bodies, understand or envision curriculum in different ways for different historical, political, sociocultural and/or biographical reasons. Such research contradicts widespread perceptions of curriculum as (merely) an official text designed by government official authorities to be faithfully implemented and passively 'received' in schools; it illustrates how curriculum work involves highly dynamic processes of interpretation, mediation, negotiation and translation, across multiple layers or sites of education systems. For example, official curriculum texts – that is, government prescription – are already products of interpretation when committees or bodies developing them try to operationalize them into forms usable in schools for subsequent enactment into practice (e.g. Westbury, 2000). Other examples include how school leaders and teachers engage into further cycles of interpretation as they re-interpret such official curriculum in and for their local contexts in schools, seeking to make further sense of the national specifications and the official guidance produced; and in classrooms, as teachers and students negotiate and produce curriculum events via daily pedagogic transactions (Doyle, 1992a).

1

This kind of transactional process emerges amidst a number of conditions, including the room for manoeuvre and conceptual resources afforded by policy, and the beliefs, values and professional knowledge of the participating teachers and other stakeholders involved. In summary, teachers and school leaders are more than simply passive conduits implementing – or to use today's fashionable policy parlance, delivering – somebody else's curriculum product; instead, they are *making* the curriculum within their own contexts alongside a number of other social actors, including their students.

Moreover, such research has provided ample evidence challenging a long-debated concept in the field of curriculum studies, that of 'teacher-proof curricula', highlighting how they are underpinned by an unattainable ideal of fidelity in implementation and by a constricting theorization of what teachers (and students), as social actors, are and do in schools. As has been noted by various researchers (e.g. Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992; Cuban, 1998; Stenhouse, 1975), teachers will always find ways to work around even the most prescriptive policy and, moreover, highly experienced teachers can be the most effective at doing this (Bowe et al., 1992). The notion of 'teacher-proof curricula' emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in mainly Anglo-Saxon contexts, to denote efforts of reform that constricted teacher influence by drawing firm connections between curriculum objectives, content and assessment (Eryaman & Riedler, 2010). Fifty years on, as we write this chapter, the concept seems to remain a dominant rationality of curriculum policy and reform, a context which invites us to challenge such certainties by reflecting on the ways in which curriculum is made within different settings, and more specifically in the multifarious and complex educational contexts included in this book.

Against this background, and to frame the central task that underpins this book, we draw on the following insight, that curriculum:

> *[…] is a complex system involving teachers, students, curricular content, social settings, and all manner of impinging matters ranging from the local to the international. It is a system that needs to be understood systemically. The question*

is not which of the various factors explain high achievement, the current crime-solving model at work in the literature, but, rather, how it all works together. (Connelly, 2013, ix)

The book is an attempt to explore this sort of complexity by drawing upon examples of curriculum making across different national systems in Europe that illustrate both similarities and – in some cases – quite stark differences. We have been inspired by work, which has sought to understand curriculum through analysis of curriculum across different levels, layers or domains (e.g. Deng, 2012; Doyle, 1992a; Goodlad, 1979; Thijs & van den Akker, 2009). In this chapter, we seek to elaborate how such thinking can be revisited to account for what we have started to explore elsewhere, that curriculum making occurs

across multiple sites, in interaction and intersection with one another, in often unpredictable and context-specific ways, producing unique social practices, in constant and complex interplay, wherein power flows in non-linear ways, thus blurring boundaries between these multiple sites. (Priestley & Philippou, 2018, p. 154)

More particularly, and rehearsing critique of earlier 'levels' thinking (e.g. Doyle, 1992a; Goodlad, 1979), we argue that the metaphor of 'levels' assumes and encourages thinking about curriculum matters along linear (and often hierarchical) administrative lines or jurisdictions. Instead, we aspire to push analytical work to account for curriculum making of different texture emerging within and between different layers or sites of social activity, defined by the nature of such activity, rather than by the administrative system level, within which it is normatively expected to occur. A key point is that the use of such a framing is not normative; instead, we seek to provide a heuristic framing that can be applied to different contexts, allowing the flexibility to explore and analyse the differences that exist between these contexts.

In this introductory chapter, we first explore the concept of curriculum making. We then develop the multi-layered framing in more detail, explaining how it will be applied, before introducing the chapters that will form the rest of this volume.

CURRICULUM MAKING: CURRICULUM
AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

The development of more nuanced understandings of curriculum making has arguably become more important than ever in recent years as research has shed light on complexities unaccounted for by modernist understandings of schooling and curricula. However, 'curriculum making' is a term with a long and complicated history, ascribed diverse meanings that have been changing over the years, in many ways reflecting and contributing to theoretical shifts in the field. Two examples are given here, as a way to illustrate the very different uses of the term, before we present our own conceptualization of it. 'Curriculum making' appeared with what has been denoted as the emergence of curriculum studies as an academic field in North America, namely in the publication of two articles by Franklin Bobbitt, wherein he envisioned a 'scientific method' for curriculum making. This would shift the focus of curriculum from subject-matter, academic subjects, syllabi and textbooks to human activity, by particularizing 'with definiteness and in detail the objectives, and to do this in the light of actual human needs', rather than by using 'the fortunately moribund conception of mere blind subject-teaching' (Bobbitt, 1921, pp. 607–608). While attempting to shift curriculum discussions from academic content knowledge to current social and economic needs as exemplified in human/child activity through the idiom of 'science', this tradition ultimately resulted in highly technical, managerial and prescriptive curriculum work, produced by 'experts' outside schools and classrooms and encouraging administrative hierarchies, at the bottom of which teachers and students were to be found. Compare such theorization with the image of teachers as 'curriculum makers' proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (1992), which re-theorized classroom teachers as making curriculum in negotiation with others' mandates and desires (Craig, 2010), but mainly by drawing on their own 'personal practical knowledge' and in interaction with the knowledges brought into the classroom through their students, the latter acknowledged as emerging beyond the school as familial and community curriculum makings (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011).

The mobilization of education in general, as well as school curricula in particular, for social and economic 'engineering' purposes at a national level, has remained a constant in school curriculum history; however, the ways in which these have been influenced by significant discourses produced and disseminated by major institutional actors on the world stage – the OECD, the European Union, UNESCO, *inter alia* – have significantly changed the nature of curriculum policy. There are changed expectations about how policy is mobilized to frame practice in schools, with a shift from input regulation to output regulation (see: Leat, Livingston, & Priestley, 2013; Nieveen & Kuiper, 2012). This is not merely a superficial shift in emphasis, but a major transformation of the technical form of the curriculum, with profound effects. As Luke (2012) reminds us, while debates about curriculum tend to be about content and goals, the technical form, that is 'core categories and levels of specification used by state systems' (p. 4), is a significant influence on curriculum making. Thus, national curricula 30 years ago tended to resemble the rationality of, for example, England's 1988 National Curriculum, through detailed regulation of inputs (e.g. specification of content). Later variants of national curriculum, increasingly commonplace around the world and termed the 'new curriculum' (Priestley & Biesta, 2013), have tended to place less emphasis on the specification of content, instead focusing on the importance of the development of skills, and the autonomy of schools and teachers in making the curriculum locally.

Subsequent research suggests that the putative autonomy afforded by the new curricula is perhaps more rhetorical than substantive, as governments have tended to replace the former regulation of input with pervasive regimes of output regulation, particularly via the measurement of schools' performance in respect of attainment data, self-regulatory performance indicators and external inspections and audits (e.g. see Wilkins, 2011). Indeed, the outcomes steering associated with the new curricula has been claimed to have eroded teacher autonomy more comprehensively than did the former input regulation (Biesta, 2010), leading to cultures of performativity (e.g. Keddie, Mills, & Pendergast, 2011) – what Luke, Woods, and Weir (2012) describe as

> *a host of 'collateral' effects that include narrowing of the*
> *curriculum, teaching to the test, teacher deskilling and*
> *attrition, documented test score fraud and manipulation*
> *at the state and school level – with no visible sustainable*
> *effects at improving equity outcomes. (p. 20)*

Furthermore, it can be argued that ostensibly more permissive curricula actually have much in common with their prescriptive predecessors. Both are premised on an assumption that curriculum practice in schools can be determined, or at least led, by national policy.

Both approaches have tended to be dominated by thinking about curriculum making – amongst policy makers and widely by teachers and leaders in schools – as implementation *from policy to practice*. Such a view positions teachers as being limited as professionals, and curriculum consequently as a regulatory mechanism (Doyle, 1992b). In both cases, curriculum making has been dominated by simplistic metaphors, which underplay and misrepresent its complexity as social practice (see: Priestley & Philippou, 2018). Such narrow conceptualizations of implementation are unhelpful, and they constrain the development of more sophisticated understandings about how curriculum is made in diverse settings and about how curriculum making occurs as a non-linear recontextualization process (Bernstein, 1996). As evident in previous research, and as noted above, even under the most prescriptive 'teacher proof' curricula, spaces exist for teachers to mediate the curriculum. Such mediation often occurs in constructive educational ways, and sometimes in strategic ways which deliberately undermine the aims of curriculum policy (e.g. Osborn et al., 1997). Curriculum research has long suggested that teachers do not implement policy; they enact, translate, mediate it (e.g. Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011), through a process of iterative refraction (Supovitz, 2008), filtered via existing professional knowledge, dispositions and beliefs. For example in the United States, Goodlad (1979, p. 21) noted that activity at the instructional level often emerges from 'interpretation of what is desired by unseen, remote decision makers' and Doyle (1992a, p. 69) characterized curriculum making as 'a deliberative process of interpretation, judgment and responsibility'.

Similarly, Stenhouse's (1975, p. 25) concurrent work in the UK context pointed to the importance of the teacher's curriculum development work to 'translate ideas into classroom practicalities help the teacher to strengthen his [*sic.*] practice by systematically and thoughtfully testing ideas'. This, and similar writing, argues powerfully for the role of the teacher as a curriculum maker, often drawing on previous theorizations of education that construct teachers as important actors (e.g. Dewey, Tyler and Schwab: see Craig, 2010). These arguments resonate as well with older critiques of curriculum implementation that warn against the 'fidelity perspective' and position curriculum as an *enactment* or *social practice* instead. In the latter view, curriculum is a process of interaction of teachers, pupils, materials and the official context in class, entailing the construction of personal meaning by the participants in the process (see: Doyle, 1992a, 1992b; Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Arguments accounting for such complexity have been advanced by various writers, for example in theorizing curriculum change as transformative rather than incremental (Macdonald, 2003), as a transaction (Doyle, 1992a), or as dynamic knowledge work achieved through negotiation (Tronsmo & Nerland, 2018).

The use of metaphors to capture the essence of curriculum making has been prominent in much writing. We have previously used the metaphor of the spider's web to convey the complexity of curriculum making (Priestley & Philippou, 2018), building on a tradition of using metaphorical language in curriculum theory to re-imagine curriculum (e.g. cf. Kliebard, 1975). Curriculum making is itself a powerful metaphor, capturing the essence of much curriculum work as dynamic, ongoing and purposeful. The use of this metaphor raises for us a number of questions. Curriculum making by whom? For whom? For what purposes? Where and when? And what is being made? Many definitions of curriculum are less than adequate in helping us to address such questions, focusing on curriculum as content or as a product. A more constructive definition is to view school curriculum as 'the multi-layered social practices, including infrastructure, pedagogy and assessment, through which education is structured, enacted and evaluated' (Priestley, 2019, p. 8). There are three dimensions worthy of comment here. The first is the notion of curriculum as social practice; it is something

that is done, or more aptly, made by practitioners and other actors working with each other. The second point concerns the multiple layers or sites of education systems, across which curriculum is made in its various forms, for example schools and district offices, policymaking arenas, and national agencies. The third point relates to the sort of practices which comprise curriculum: incorporating the selection of knowledge/content, but also including pedagogical approaches, organization of teaching (e.g. timetabling), and the production of resources and infrastructure for supporting curriculum making in schools. We will return to these issues later in the chapter, in particular expanding on the way we conceive of the layers through which curriculum making occurs.

LEVELS, LAYERS OR SITES?

The chapters in this volume all utilize a particular typology for curriculum making, which construes the curriculum, as a collection of social practices, as something that is made – which happens – across multiple layers of social activity. As indicated previously, this is a heuristic rather than normative framing of different layers, comprising what have been termed supra, macro, meso, micro and nano levels. We adopt this terminology, while acknowledging that this typology is far from straightforward; the chapters have different theoretical orientations, as might be expected in an edited collection comprising contributions from different authors and unsurprisingly also offer slightly different interpretations of the concepts encapsulated in the 'levels'. In the following sections of our introductory chapter, we explore different conceptions of the typology, offering a critique of some of the existing thinking, and seeking to elaborate it through the development of an approach that more aptly captures the complexities of curriculum making in complex modern education systems. Part of this discussion involves consideration of the terminology – and associated metaphors – used in describing curriculum making.

Our theorization of curriculum making builds upon earlier thinking about levels or domains of curriculum making: some approaches have utilized the same terminology (e.g. Thijs & van