The Hangzhou Model of Internationalization

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Abstract
The Hangzhou Model of Internationalization 1) promotes the internationalization of curriculum studies through cross-cultural cooperative research, 2) communicates cultural wisdom, producing new knowledge, 3) aspires to create new cross-cultural methods to address both recurring and emerging curriculum problems in this international era, and 4) promotes the understanding of curriculum practice and contribute to more worthwhile curriculum in schools. We express our conviction that through cross-cultural cooperative research, we can contribute to the reconstruction of curriculum practice.

Keywords: China, internationalization, cross-cultural research, worthwhile school curriculum.

Introduction
At this first meeting of the European Association for Curriculum Studies we wish to describe one effort to engage in the internationalization of curriculum studies currently being developed now in Hangzhou, China, under the leadership of Professor Zhang Hua. Professors Zhang Wenjun and William F. Pinar are working closely with Professor Zhang Hua to develop and actualize this model, which at this point of formulation has four elements: 1. To promote the internationalization of curriculum studies through cross-cultural cooperative research, thereby contributing to the reconstruction of curriculum knowledge and values. 2. To communicate cultural wisdom. Especially in China, curriculum research and development are informed by cultural perspectives and wisdom traditions. Cross-cultural research can produce new knowledge and wisdom and contribute to the worldwide field. 3. To create new methods to address both recurring and emerging curriculum problems in this international era. Through cross-cultural cooperative problem solving and the sharing of wisdom traditions, we can discover new meanings of existing methods and create new methods of curriculum research. 4. To promote the understanding of curriculum practice and contribute to more worthwhile curriculum in schools. Through cross-cultural cooperative research, we can contribute to the reconstruction of curriculum practice. Through mutual understanding and cooperation between researchers and practitioners, we can reconceptualize the curriculum.
In the next sections we sketch the four elements of the Hangzhou Model. These remain in early stages of formulation, and we invite our European colleagues – and others who may be in attendance - to make recommendations. We conclude with a brief summary statement and an invitation to colleagues worldwide to join us in Hangzhou in ongoing conversation and cross-cultural collaborative curriculum research and develop.

1. Internationalization

In contrast to the standardization globalization threatens, the internationalization of curriculum studies forefronts difference through dialogue among colleagues across national borders as we report to each other developments in our respective academic fields and in the schools, as we engage in efforts to understand in our own terms how intellectual histories and present circumstances inform these developments. Clarification – not comparison – is, then, the first stage of internationalization, as we cannot assume we understand even common concepts – such as curriculum implementation – unless we appreciate the term’s contextualization within colleagues’ distinctive national histories and cultures as well as its connotations in present debates, reforms, and research. Efforts at clarification are context-specific: it is particular colleagues working in specific countries who labor to understand their colleagues' research within its own setting, within that setting’s history and present circumstances. For example, when Portuguese colleagues seek to understand curriculum research and development in, say, India – what we could call the Portugal-India cross – there will reciprocal self-disclosure, as the Portuguese colleagues’ questions cannot be comprehended unless their contextualization, on their own terms, is accomplished, however summarily. Only after clarification has been accomplished can comparison – perhaps emphasizing differences – can be undertaken.

To provide another illustration we turn to an exchange between Zhang Wenjun and Alicia de Alba of the National Autonomous University of Mexico that occurred during the curriculum studies in China project that is now in press. After studying Zhang’s essay on the concept of postmodernism, focused on its importation and recontextualization in China, Alicia de Alba asked Zhang Wenjun: “Why, do you think, that from postmodernism perspectives is it possible to criticize and analyse the core problems of Chinese culture as well as the core problems of Western culture?” Zhang Wenjun replied by referencing the contemporary scholar Hao Deyong, who had used “cocoon” as a “metaphor of cultural development and self-restraint.” Various cultures, Hao had argued, incorporate ideas and practices, then spin them together, rendering their cultural threads thicker, more strong. “During this process,” Zhang continued, “cultures constantly seek more power and control, finally achieving hegemony, at which point they become conservative, closed, exclusive, even arbitrary.” The “cocoon” metaphor could serve as a “parable” of Foucault’s concept “discourse.” Like the “episteme,” various moments, tendencies, even cultures coalesce into distinctive phenomena; Hao provided a genealogy of medieval, modern western, and Confucian cultures, construing them as distinctive discursive formations.

In this brief exchange we see how a question from a colleague in Mexico to her colleague in China sought clarification of a concept well known to her but, as
Alicia de Alba appreciated, enjoyed a different history and usage elsewhere. Referencing postmodernism's capacity to provide opportunities for critique that Zhang had cited in her essay, Alicia de Alba's question of clarification prompted Zhang Wenjun to recall Hao’s metaphor of “thread” to depict a concept’s recontextualization. Referencing a common and key theorist known worldwide – Michel Foucault – Zhang offered a bridge between two distinct sites and traditions of curriculum theory. In this Mexico-China “cross,” we note that intellectual histories inform present circumstances across two national borders.

We propose that colleagues in each country organize a series of national conferences, inviting colleagues from other countries to serve on international panels posing questions of clarification to those colleagues labouring to understand their own intellectual histories and present circumstances. In the dialogical encounters that follow, colleagues in the host country can achieve distance from the emergency of the present by replying to questions that require them to understand their own circumstances from other points of view, where concepts they are using might well exhibit different histories and meanings. Members of international panels can contextualize their questions in their own fields, then make recommendations concerning “next steps” for the host country’s field, as well as returning home with first-hand reports of what is occurring elsewhere. Publications can record these exchanges – these “crosses” – between specific colleagues working in different nations at different historical moments. Such a multivariate complexity of dialogue across multiple borders constitutes the internationalization of curriculum studies. Such a series of events has now begun in Hangzhou.

2. Cultural Wisdom

By itself, Zhang Hua cautions, internationalization risks “cultural invasion.” Historical reconstruction – and specifically of that wisdom displaced by scientism – accompanies contemporary curriculum reform in China. China’s great “wisdom traditions” – Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism – comprise the ancient cultures now being invoked in contemporary curriculum research and development. Confucianism centers on “cultivating individual moral character,” Zhou Huixia summarizes, emphasizing “respect,” whereas Buddhism focuses on one’s heart, stressing “cleanness.” Confucianism centered on “cultivating individual moral character,” emphasizing “respect,” whereas Buddhism centered on cultivating one’s heart, stressing “cleanness.” Later Confucianism embraced “cleanness” and “finding one’s true self,” which require “cultivating one’s heart.” Thus one Confucian doctrine states that “the study of mind and disposition manages one’s internality, while serving the sovereignty and the country accomplishes one’s externality.” The humanities become crucial subjects for cultivating morality, and the teacher is a “person” of “noble character” and “integrity.” In fact, “moral behavior outweighs knowledge.” Buddhist educational practice, Zhou continues, emphasizes practice, including “meditation.” As “mental and spiritual activity,” meditation encourages the heart to focus, enabling understanding of the phenomenal world. Following nature in Taoism means respecting the individual’s distinctiveness. Teaching “wordlessly” is a Taoist tradition that acknowledges students’ subjectivities. Zhou references the Yangming School of Mind; it absorbed Buddhist thought, especially Zen
Buddhism. Yangming’s admonition to “inquire inside” was inspired by Zen’s concern with self-comprehension. “Such thoughts,” Zhou observed, “remain the cultural roots of contemporary education in China.” “In my opinion,” Zhou Huizia concludes, referencing present circumstances, “Confucianism indicates a sign of resurrection.”

Internationalization, Zhang Hua emphasizes, requires “respect for cultural uniqueness, complexity, and differences” as we “increase the sharing of interests, and promote interaction and cooperation among all countries and cultures.” Such cooperation, Zhang Hua concludes, is the meaning of “cultural democratization.” He cautioned: “If the principle of democracy were overlooked and destroyed, ‘internationalization’ would deteriorate into cultural invasion or international autocracy.” Zhang Hua argues that the “integrity” of “internationalization” and “democratization” is “the fundamental meaning of cosmopolitanism … the basic philosophy guiding our international relationships.” He emphasizes that “the meaning of our cause—internationalization of curriculum studies—is not limited to the curriculum field. It is an organic part of the project ‘for the better world’.”

3. New Methods

Understanding this cosmopolitan cause of curriculum studies provides opportunities to recover and share the cultural history and wisdom that informs our respective fields, enabling us to create new methods to solve both recurring and emerging curriculum problems, unique to our specific settings and sometimes shared by all of us. Both “national” and “international” are “relational concepts,” Zhang Hu16 has pointed out, so that “we should understand them based on relational” not “atomized” or “entity thinking.” Within China, he suggests, “international and cross-cultural communications are necessary and inescapable.” Zhang references the incorporation of Buddhism into Chinese life – dating it to the Han Dynasty – followed by the importation of Zen from Japan. “If one culture is too local, limited, and narrow-minded to pass the examination of international interaction,” he has observed, “it will disappear at last.” Zhang suggested that the “international” is the basic condition of “national.” Indeed, the “uniqueness of any nation, country, culture, and so on is the prerequisite for ‘internationalization’.”

Zhang emphasizes the “uniqueness” of each concept (national, international), of each phenomenon (internationalization), asserting: “No uniqueness, no relationship.” Nationality references the multiplies histories and cultures of any single country but internationalization belongs to no one country but references the relationships among various nations, a “third space” that is implied in notions of “interculturality” and “internationality.” For Zhang, this non-coincidence between the “national” and the “international” implies a “critical consciousness.” From that critical consciousness - expressed in dialogical encounters across borders - can come new methods of international, and national, understanding, thereby contributing to the emergence of a worldwide field of curriculum studies as it supports the intellectual advancement of nationally distinctive fields and the public schools they study and support.

4. Curriculum Practice
Contemporary curriculum reform in China, Ma Yungpeng reports, “embraces new methods such as encouraging students to ask questions, to pay attention to problems in real life, and to guide students to inquire and explore.” Now “there are more student activities and communication in class. Students have more opportunities to ask questions.” These new methods in teaching follow from the reform’s determination to recast curriculum as the cultivation of students’ personalities. Now the curriculum is to emphasize character education, to exhibit a humanistic quality as it includes a course of comprehensive practical activities, enabling students to learn interdisciplinarity. The core of Chinese educational reform, Zhong explains, is curriculum reform. And the core of curriculum reform is the reform of classroom teaching. And the core of classroom-teaching reform depends upon the professional development of teachers.

In coming years colleagues in universities and in public schools across China as well as colleagues from abroad will be invited to Hangzhou to participate in conferences dedicated to understand and improve these new methods encouraged by the reform. Last March an international conference focused on autobiography and teacher development (see note 6) – was held. Understanding curriculum as complicated conversation invites teachers to engage colleagues in dialogue over their experiences of teaching. International colleagues – both university professors and classroom teachers – can narrate their own experience and address the experience of their Chinese colleagues as they labor to enact curriculum reform. This ongoing conversation represents a “new internationalism” – a form of intellectual exchange and professional solidarity across borders – among those dedicated to understanding, and from understanding, improving the curriculum.

5. Conclusion

Zhang Hua names four prerequisites for the future development of curriculum studies in China. First is “interactive pluralism,” that “we should be open to every trend of thought in society, and at the same time, create conditions to carry on ‘complicated conversations’ among them.” Second is the ongoing significance of studying intellectual history and China’s wisdom traditions, important not only for the future of Chinese curriculum field, but also for giving the field “its true meaning.” Third, Chinese curriculum scholars, schoolteachers, and curriculum policy-makers “should be open to curriculum theories from other countries or regions.” Internationalization and nationalization are reciprocally related, and so texts from aboard must be welcomed but “we should study them based on our own culture and ‘sinologize’ them as much as possible. This double interconnected movement – internationalization and nationalization – acknowledges that curriculum scholars are at the same time working locally and focused globally, that the importation of ideas from abroad must be both be understood on their own terms (as they function in the places of their genesis) but also recontextualized according to the present circumstances and intellectual histories of the place where they now have achieved a “second life.” This double movement – exchanges among colleagues at home and from elsewhere – complicates the conversation as it affirms our international solidarity with the common cause of curriculum studies dedicated to understanding, and from understanding, improving the school curriculum. That is the Hangzhou Model of
Internationalization.

Notes

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4. In the present context “cross” des not reference the famous Christian symbol but represents the horizontal and vertical directions of dialogical encounter: historical within each colleagues’ field, and present-minded, as colleagues labor to understand the present circumstances of each other’s field.
5. Pinar in press.
7. All quoted passages in these two paragraphs are from Pinar in press.
9. In March 2013 an international conference on Autobiography and Teacher Development was held at Hangzhou Normal University, with keynote speakers from Brazil, Canada, Luxembourg, and the United States as well as from across China. A collection of essays will follow (Zhang and Pinar, in preparation). Another international conference is planned for May 2014. From mid-May through June 30 Pinar was in residence at Hangzhou Normal University, teaching graduate students and conferred with colleagues there, Zhejiang University, and the Tianjin Academy of Educational Sciences. He will return to Hangzhou in May 2014.
10. Quoted in Pinar in press. Recall that “cultural invasion” can occur within nations across classes and politicized formations: see Freire 1970, 150ff.
12. See Zhang in press.
13. All quoted passages from Pinar in press.
14. For me the canonical curriculum question – what knowledge is of most worth? – is also a moral question. The teacher threads the moral through academic knowledge, and vice versa. Unless it is threaded through academic knowledge and dialogical encounter, morality can become split-off, a grid conformity to which conceals difference and dynamism.
15. All quoted passages in this paragraph are from Pinar in press.
16. All quoted passages in these two paragraphs are from Pinar in press.
17. Here Zhang referenced Aoki (see Pinar and Irwin 2005).
18. Quoted in Pinar in press.
20. In a forthcoming book to be published by Routledge, Janet L. Miller characterizes these events as creating “communities without consensus,” as the preservation of intellectual independence, cultural and national distinctiveness, and professional ethics in our complicated conversation is paramount.
21. See Zhang Hua in press.

References


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