

# Itinerant Curriculum Theory meets Teacher Education: Educational foundations, knowledge production, and the teaching and learning context

A Teoria Curricular Itinerante encontra a  
Formação de Professores: Fundamentos  
Educacionais, Produção de Conhecimento e o  
Contexto de Ensino e Aprendizagem

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## Abstract

In this essay the author, once again (see Price, 2017, for the first such effort), employs itinerant curriculum theory (ICT) as a curricular lens to examine teacher education. Bringing forth a scholarly process to deconstruct the knowledge production of education in general, the focus here is on educational foundation knowledge. By reviewing the politics of education in this particular moment, I attempt to make meaning of the state of knowledge in the abstract, and claim that epistemicide of educational foundations knowledge in teacher education has occurred. I also note that there is a desire to reconceptualize this course of events. The observations made in this essay are manifold and include, for example, that although alternative types of knowledge might still be uncovered (resuscitated) or created anew they are most assuredly excluded from contemporary educational reform, noticeably absent in the discourse, ideology, and policy in teacher education circles in the USA today. However, there is a movement afoot to valorize 'context' as a critical feature of effective teacher preparation programs, and these phenomena might prove to be beneficial for those who wish to go beyond technical and instrumental rationality, to new, vigorous forms of reflective, intentional, and socially just practices in teacher preparation. But first we would need to consider the problem. Where did the foundations go? And why does emancipatory knowledge take a back seat in this, the audit culture of teacher education?

## Resumo

Neste ensaio, o autor, mais uma vez (ver Price, 2017, para o primeiro desses esforços), emprega a Teoria do Currículo Itinerante (ICT) como uma lente curricular para examinar a formação de professores. Trazendo um processo acadêmico para desconstruir a produção de conhecimento na educação em geral, o foco aqui é no conhecimento dos fundamentos da educação. Revendo as políticas de educação neste momento particular, eu tento criar um sentido sobre o estado do conhecimento no abstrato, e reivindico que o epistemicídio de conhecimentos fundantes da formação de professores ocorreu. Também observo que há um desejo de reconceitualizar esse curso desses eventos. As observações feitas neste ensaio são múltiplas e incluem, por exemplo, que embora tipos alternativos de conhecimento possam ainda ser descobertos (ressuscitados) ou criados de novo, eles são os mais seguramente excluídos da reforma educacional contemporânea, notavelmente ausente nos discursos, na ideologia e nas políticas dos círculos de formação de professores nos EUA hoje. No entanto, existe um movimento em andamento para valorizar o "contexto" como uma característica crítica dos programas efetivos de preparação de professores, e esses fenômenos podem ser benéficos para aqueles que desejam ir além da racionalidade técnica e instrumental, em direção a formas novas e vigorosas práticas reflexivas, intencionais e socialmente justas na formação de professores. Mas primeiro precisaríamos considerar o problema. Para onde foram os fundamentos? E por que o conhecimento emancipatório fica em segundo plano nesta cultura de auditoria da formação de professores?

## **A Teoria Itinerante do Currículo encontra a formação de professores: fundamentos da educação, produção de conhecimentos e o contexto ensino-aprendizagem**

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### **Itinerant Curriculum Theory: Attempting to explain the unexplainable**

To answer such questions, we turn to ICT. Epistemicide is a prominent theme that ICT attempts to address (Paraskeva, 2011, 2016a, 2016b, 2018), although ICT is neither an approach or a ‘salve’ to fix this wound. Essentially, epistemicide is the powerful and all-encompassing term concerning how knowledge from ‘the South’, for example, has been erased. Hegemonic forms emanating from within the bowels of the Eurocentric, Western canon are the culprit. Paraskeva argues that Science as imagined, expressed, and implemented in the global North, precludes other ways of knowing. Knowledge(s) emergent from the geographical but more broadly metaphorical South . . . is tossed away. Oliveira (2007; 2014;

2017) goes further exploring the idea of a blindness constructed in the relation of hierarchies among knowledges. This “epistemological blindness” (Oliveira, 2007, 2017) deeply aggravates the distances between these knowledges producing some knowledges (southern, gendered, ethnical and others) as invisible, therefore, inexistents. Subaltern knowledge(s) is set aside and/or relegated to the other side of an imagined abyssal line. To Santos, (2016), “Cognitive justice” is a rallying cry. ICT is a means out of this problem: “this itinerant theoretical path, claims a multifaceted curriculum compromise, and “runs away” from any unfortunate “canonology” (Paraskeva, 2011). For Oliveira (2007) the overcoming of the epistemological blindness is not just an epistemological displacement but a political choice, which reinforces the idea of a profound injustice with the South, also, in the aspect of the policies of knowledge, of memory and curricula (Oliveira, 2017). There is no possibility of social justice without cognitive justice and it also depends on the overcoming of an everyday life form of producing blindness, death and inexistences (Oliveira, 2007, 2014). The epistemicides result of lethal practices of epistemological blindness conducted by the occidental cosmogony with the ways of feeling, listening, telling, seeing the world, as Oliveira points out (2007).

As I noted, paraphrasing this call, teacher education and education in general must reclaim that which is rendered invisible. Enlightenment Philosophy, Classical Liberalism, Capitalism as *the* economic world system, and Reason as truth, these are the characteristics of the unfortunate “canonology” of which Paraskeva speaks. Yet in this bizarre political moment, one might wonder, where are these characteristics today amidst such chaos and cacophony? While this powerful expose resonates with explanatory power, there are two contributing phenomena that complicate the well intentioned, all-encompassing notion, and powerful meta-narrative.

The first phenomenon is that there are practical limits to which the portrait(ure) of a steadily encroaching, all-consuming, Western canon, marching over all of humanity, works. One problem is that it is simply the case that the current political situation in many countries in the world today resembles an epistemological wrecking ball, not necessarily the Western canon, but more so a return to Byzantine, Barbarianism, aiming not at propagating a uniform ideology or world view, but in an opportunistic way drawing from several once defunct ideas to mimic an explanatory system . . . and to destroy the attributes of Western rationality.

What appears to reign is devolution and tribalism, and in many quarters thuggery, thievery and autocracy. Indeed, the re-emergence of ‘strongman politics’, which crisscrosses the globe, is connotative more so than any other coherent, purposeful type of politics might

afford, that the *raison d'être* for the political knowledge that we have to work with, is power itself. There seems to be a lack of imagination, if not the will to imagine anything different except power and wealth to determine the fortunes of the people. Globalization might once have offered a vision, perhaps even of a spreading of knowledge, and hence wealth, yet in this particular political moment, demagogues court chaos and discord, and seek to promote crises for their own autocratic benefit and to meet their insincere ends. Thus they often retreat from the league of nations. To dismantle order and emasculate the institutions of the people, institutions which might have been compromised perhaps, but institutions that nonetheless worked under the premise of democratic governance, rule of law, and dignity of the individual . . . these are the forms of what the strongman abhor.

A more subtler consideration of the limitations of the Western canon as overarching, hegemonic explanatory system, is that 'it' exists aside a general reduction of knowledge into bits and bytes as a function of technology and digitization. A particularly interesting kind of epistemological blindness (Oliveira, 2007). Knowledge itself is undergoing metamorphosis because the form follows function, and in higher education today, that function is to produce evidence, data, and systems for speedy and powerful analysis. Again, form follows function, and the aim of education administrators, for example, is to try to convince otherwise skeptical, sometimes openly hostile, political decision makers, and increasingly the cynical public itself, that public education works, that teacher preparation through colleges of education still matters, and that higher education is itself still a viable enterprise. It is the case that the aforementioned parties could hardly care less about the premises upon which Western canonology stands or falls, rather, they are keenly concerned with 'the value proposition' of knowledge in general. Given the opportunity to weigh in, the general public must consider: will this education and the knowledge it imparts lead to my getting a job?

Increasingly shrill, reactionary attacks on education and 'truth' in general denotes a qualitatively different challenge than before, because now the basis for arguing the merits of education as a whole is entirely without a common foundation to start from. In other words, advocates for and opponents against the use of Science (modern period), for example, over Religion (Byzantine period) in making public policy decisions, can't even agree on what constitutes 'facts', or discern, it seems, what are shared truths, because there are few common frames. Arguably religious beliefs in this current political moment are given priority in some quarters over empirical data.

Take the following example.

## Who will prosper under PROSPER?

In early 2018, Chairwoman Virginia Foxx of the Education and the Workforce Committee released the laughingly mistitled Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act for a vote. Speaking to C-Span, she gave this reflection: Foxx: I believe it is the first reform of post-secondary education . . . it's true reform. Yes, we've talked with the leadership and we've begun to do our due diligence to prepare the bill to come to the floor. . . we know we are going to be working on job opportunity reform through welfare reform and the two will often go together. The members of the committee are anxious because they've worked very hard. This is a committee project, everyone was interviewed by staff, while my name is first, it is truly a committee project. (C-SPAN, 2018)

On a number of assertions, Foxx's insights are dubious. This "committee project" was pushed through in an entirely partisan fashion, backed exclusively by Republicans. Instead of helping teachers, It would effectively do the opposite, and harm them. How so?

PROSPER would eliminate the few federal government sponsored supports that provide for teacher education: The TEACH program, and the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP). The TEACH program, part of Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA), is a \$43 million incentive package distributed in increments of roughly \$4000 to applicants who commit to teach in the nation's most under resourced schools and school districts. How TEACH works is that prospective students/teacher candidates (often themselves hailing from under resourced communities) are expected to complete their teacher preparation program on time, and fulfill a prior commitment to teach in under resourced schools for four years. Removing this program suggests that these students aren't worth the investment.

The TQP plays an equally supportive role for teacher education, but in a different fashion; TQP sponsors research by teacher education faculty to improve college accessibility, opportunity, and the social connections and relations between community, schools, and the university at large. The goal of these TQP grants—which included most notably one that supported curriculum development called FIPSE (Federal Improvement of Post-Secondary Education)—is to garner useful information using evidence-based research, and to inform decision making in the interest of strengthening teacher education. In other words, TQP aims to improve teachers. Therefore, the dismantlers must erase it.

## What role for the federal government?

To be certain, the involvement of the federal government in such programs raised some eyebrows concerning the proper role of the federal government in relation to education. Since 1787 and the casting of the United States Constitution, public education has broadly been conceived as a 'state' concern, and universities and colleges to be autonomous although needing to receive accreditation through professional organizations. Teacher educators whom received the grants appreciated the federally sponsored supports which provided them the means to conduct research in K-12 inner city public schools (and in some instances, rural schools, where the need for highly qualified effective teachers is also pronounced). Furthermore, several students from colleges of education teacher preparation programs would not have been able to 'prosper' without these TEACH grants. Yet the idea of the federal government being this intimately involved with higher education rubbed some the wrong way.

Both of these programs, TEACH and TQP, "prospered" under the Obama administration. Nonetheless, Secretary Duncan and the Department of Education (ED) came under criticism for federal over reach. Secretary Duncan's initiative Race to the Top (RTT) awarded states for adopting Common Core State Standards (or similar types of accountability system), and analysts across the political divide voiced concern over these programs as seemingly impositions to local control. Other initiatives from the ED during this time was the raising of 'caps' (in other words getting rid of limitations on the number of) on Charter Schools. Still another initiative was to demand that states institute teacher pay-for-performance accountability systems, using "value-added measures" (Price, 2014). Many teachers and teacher educators were not always on board with the education reform initiatives.

It was no great surprise, therefore, when Congress finally decided to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which is essentially the nomenclature upon which the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) had rested, that the Secretary of Education and ED would have their wings clipped. And so, they did.

During the 2015 Congressional session, the Senate Education Committee led the way, curbing the federal government's role, and passing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This act effectively put to rest the ED's oversight role concerning the monitoring of school(s) progress in making "adequate yearly progress" (AYP). What this essentially meant was that the local schools would no longer be subjected to reporting their progress in the form of an AYP report card to the feds. ESSA was arrived at in a bi-partisan manner, signaling not only for many



schools and school districts that they could expect less federal government intrusion, and for several it meant the much sought after relief had arrived, but for politics in general, this conferencing bodes well, a way forward to be able to cross the aisle and work toward seemingly collaborative agreements in the interests of the nation as a whole.

## Secretary Dismantle

This bipartisan spirit obviously didn't last long. With the election of Donald Trump, a slew of what seemed to be hastily thrown together appointees were assembled, including a religious evangelical and prominent 'school choice' and privatization lobbyist and fundraiser, Betsy DeVos, was forwarded for consideration as the next Secretary of Education. Having no experience in the public schools, she was grilled before a joint hearing in which Senator from the Democratic Party wondered aloud what she thought her credentials were to have arrived at such a station. One Senator asked her to distinguish between achievement and student growth and was dumbfounded when it became clear that she had no clue as to the significance. Partisanship had returned to the education committee process and procedure.

In fact, DeVos blatant disregard for the agency she was effectively appointed to run, seemed bizarre to many in Congress. She pushed a crusade for reducing the education budget by \$9 billion, Congress rejected this charge and ultimately awarded some \$2 billion more. She lobbies to subsidize private schools with taxpayer money, never popular with taxpayers when brought to referendum. But dismantle she tries, with little success at this point to show for it.

Enter the PROSPER Act. With this partisan offensive, the 'dismantlers' have apparently come out in Congress; like their dismantler in chief in the White House and Secretary of Education DeVos, aspire to do away with public education, analogous to what they aspire to do to other government organizations and their generated and sustained acts, Titles, and programs. Programs for education, health, labor, social security, or the environment, what were once considered to be the common good, are targeted, merely because they are public. Hence, they are on the chopping block, or the auction block, depending on how much venture capitalists will pay for their dismantled parts.

## The Foxx guarding the hen house



Chairwoman Foxx pushes the vacuous ideology of austerity and subsequent reliance on the magic and allure of the free market, with a cruel twist; she posits that these pale imitations at education reform are well intentioned job creators:

*Foxx: We have 6.2 million jobs in this country unfilled right now. I often ask groups of people and individuals why did you get a degree, why did you go to school? Everybody invariably answers to get a job. (C-SPAN, 2018)*

This specious argument caught few by surprise as it hides the real intention of the dismantlers; to open the hen house to corporate edupreneur class, and their for-profit making schemes. One reporter not fooled by the opportunism embedded within the PROSPER Act was one David A. Tomar who noted that

*. . . after two decades of rapid growth—decades paired not uncoincidentally with out-of-control tuition, swelling student loans, growing default rates, and rampant postgraduate underemployment—recent years have been tough on for-profit colleges . . . [PROSPER] rolls back nearly every measure taken by the Obama administration to reign in bad actors in the for-profit sector, measures that have reduced fraud, corruption, and exploitation in higher education.*

It is not hard to remember one such example, the Trump University. Former students sued the university, citing the cost of tuition up to \$35,000 for negligible benefit, and reportedly unqualified instructors. Former university managers, as reported in an article by the New York Time, characterized the sales pitch of the university as fraudulent (NYT, 2016). Shortly after winning the election, President Trump opted despite claims to the contrary to cave in and settle the dispute paying \$25 million.

That the federal government needs to tighten its belt, means, as far as teachers are concerned, working harder for less and less. Foxx' tenure denotes a new round of attacks on programs which offer "incentives" to aspiring teachers, those who might otherwise be encouraged to choose to teach children. By eliminating supports for teachers like TEACH and TQP, and attempting to do away with programs like the public service loan forgiveness for those who would otherwise aim to serve in the public sector, Foxx and DeVos, and Trump and company have turned their backs on the adults who actually teach and aspire to help children learn. But more cynically, they plot to give away the common good, public schools and higher education to the highest bidder. PROSPER would if it becomes law

*Democrats have argued that this bill would take away a lot of the safe guards and guard rails for federal money flowing to colleges and universities, particularly for-profit colleges.*

*The bill would wipe out much of the Obama era regulations . . . on for profit colleges. (C-SPAN, 2018).*

PROSPER opens the proverbial hen house door of education to those who are ready to raid the house. No one is safe.

## **Teacher education institutions: Last bastion for curriculum theorists?**

Because curriculum theorists care about higher education, and because they more often than not work in colleges of education, they are intimately aware of the costs and benefits of teacher education as a milieu or habitus for deeper study of such things as policy matters. Teacher education is replete with the stated goal(s) of imparting on their teacher candidates (an interesting euphemism, which implies one does not become a teacher until the teacher education institution and ultimately the state confirms it is so) 'knowledge, skills, and dispositions' and as such provides a rich array of resources/offerings for greater consideration. In other words, teacher education institutions are rich repositories of social, cultural, and political norms, values, and mores.

In the previous work, Price, (2017), I argued that these rich repositories are nonetheless fraught with problems, having become less than scholarly places of study and theoretical reflection, and more like professional institutes, cranking out workers to fill slots in the school system. Knowledge in professional teacher education organizations consisted largely in ways to optimize efficiency, and drawing the reference from Tom Popkewitz, I agree that:

*Most research tends to view teaching as a problem of human engineering and teacher education as the most efficient way to provide new recruits with specific behaviors and attitudes of the people who practice teaching (Paraskeva, 2011, p. 58).*

I characterized this phenomenon as "*The New Taylorism*" and suggested a tyranny of method exists which has the result rendering all other forms of knowledge irrelevant at best, and subversive (and hence to be eradicated) at worst. The argument in fact hearkens back to a time when universities were deemed elite institutions with general power over the form and operational system of greater society. This time may seem quite antiquated by today's standards, but here is an explanation of the role, and the university as having privileged status: the university, the unique source of research, has as part of its responsibility to give back to the professions the new scientific knowledge which it will be their business to apply and test.

But that day appears to be past, with universities appearing as pale versions of their former selves, under audit, and scrambling to not only make budget projections, but to convince a doubting public they are still relevant.

## Where did emancipatory knowledge go?

Having worked in this particular role, as a higher education faculty member, director of doctoral studies, and as an educational policy and curricular scholar, my contention is that *emancipatory knowledge* (Oliveira, 2007), is rarely if ever explicitly embedded within curriculum formation as it relates to the teaching of teachers. Furthermore, it is nearly exclusively deemed non-essential, not only by educational policy makers whom are frequently (and rightfully) blamed for its non-existence, but also—and this point is critical—by the teacher educators/faculty their selves, whom seemed to have caved to the pressures of compliance, meeting the demands of educational reform. Because teacher educators must labor under an audit culture (evidence-based decision making is required to ‘prove’ teacher education effectiveness), the social meliorists amongst them are more times than not pushed into the background. Social Meliorists, those to whom harbor an ambition to change education, society, even the world, are consistently thwarted in their otherwise laudable efforts to do so, by their colleagues and their institutions which practice *Technical Rationality*. The stakes are high, to use a ‘gaming’ metaphor; Social Meliorists in the academy struggle mightily to save public education in general and promote as indispensable the teacher education field in particular. Essentially, they <the Social Meliorists> are reduced, like all educators, to filling in spreadsheets, submitting reports—where it is questionable they even get read—and of course counting numbers. That they are doing this auditing for others to whom ‘data’ and ‘evidence’ is demanded, is quite apparent, and on its face a clear indication that the educational class is quite subservient to those who make the decisions in this house of “casino capitalism” (Giroux, 2015).

Indeed it is a tragic situation, and to those laboring in this profession of knowledge creation, quite obvious; it hardly bears worth stating, but nonetheless needs to be exclaimed at every turn that public education, teachers, teacher educators/faculty, colleges of education and higher education more broadly, have been under withering, sustained attack in two ways, for several years.

On the one hand, public education advocates and curriculum theorists (often the same interest group) have been at the brunt of this attack. The dismantling by reactionary forces of teacher unions has staggered teachers across the country; faculty in higher education are attacked by state legislatures, losing tenure and job protections. But both groups have been attacked in more subtle ways by the constant monitoring and surveillance afforded having to measure their own performance and show “value” – added by their own students test scores. Critical scholars have spoken up and spoken out on numerous occasions, waging battles with other allies in opposition to the overarching forces of neoliberalism and reactionary anti-intellectualism. But more times than not, public education advocates and curriculum theorists are relegated to the margins of educational policy debates, even by their colleges of education and by their faculty colleagues. Indeed, higher education professionals are hindered in their efforts to create emancipatory knowledge and engage in policy matters.

Why is this so, and what exactly are *policy matters*? What role might public education advocates and curriculum theorists alike play in advancing progressive/radical political ideas/ideals in the common interest of public education and teacher preparation?

## Technical (ir)rationality

Before we can answer these questions, we must first reconcile what are the political foundations of our current, bizarre era, where what I first described as the audit culture (Price, 2014, 2014, 2016, 2018), has evolved into a second culture, that of as the *age of technical (ir)rationality*. It is in this second age, observing political acts in this second phenomena, that I use the 'ir' as a qualifier to indicate that both *technical rationality* (Schön, 1983) and *irrationality* co-exist; hence, *technical (ir)rationality*.

Technical rationality or refers to the phenomena wherein reductionism reigns supreme. As an historical phenomenon, technical rationality finds its expression in Positivism, as follows:

*. . . a philosophy emerged which sought both to give an account of the triumphs of science and technology and to purge mankind of the residues of religion, mysticism and metaphysics . . . (Schön, 1983, p. 32).*

The modern equivalent of Positivism is social efficiency, or scientific management (Kliebard, 1986). In the case of education, complex processes are neutered, made apparently simple, and teaching and learning is subject to a decomposition (Grossman, 2009), a breaking down of narrowly defined ‘practice’ into constituent parts. These parts are, in turn, absurdly to

curricular theorists, exaggerated in their importance, made to appear to be more than the whole. Technical rationality pays fealty to this narrow science because it starts from the assumption that the end goals in mind are already evident, and hence the path taken is determined:

*. . . practical knowledge was to be construed as knowledge of the relationship of means to ends. Given agreement about ends, the question, "How ought I to act?" could be reduced to a merely instrumental question about the means best suited to achieve one's ends (Schön, 1983, p. 33).*

And yet it is the paradox that in this byzantine period technical rationality is actually complimented by an irrationality wherein pseudo-science, by a bizarre regression (reactionary, anti-government groups leading the way), lends credence to myth, crass commercialism, and nativism. These false idols all guide decision making, terrible decision making, using pseudo-science as a cover.

It is well established by critical curricular theorists (Taubman, 2009) that over-examined are practices related to test preparation and raising PK-12 student test scores is the mantra for success. This 'teaching by the numbers' continues, although interestingly and disturbingly 'data' and 'evidence' are linked to value-added measures (Price, 2014) which are political, rather than scientific. Indeed, so-called value-added measures are well discredited with respect to validity and reliability (Amrein, 2013). But to complicate matters (these are indeed most contradictory times), while over-test preparation continues, it does so mostly for those with the least resources, and is coupled with an overarching rejection of conventional scientific norms of trial and error, validity and reliability, and peer review. This takes some explaining, which is forthcoming.

Under-examined are how certain practices actually work to support *collaborative teaching, sustainable practices, and progressive learning conditions*, for students to be able to become healthy, happy, and engaged citizens, coexisting with their parents and community(s) in a pluralistic democracy. Some of the practices that I've been able to research in my own tenure as a professor include: *Universal Design for Learning* (Council for Exceptional Children, 2005); *Co-teaching* (Friend, 2008); and *Civic Education* (IllinoisCivics.org, 2015). These emancipatory teaching, learning and curriculum formation practices promote a vision of an inclusive, collaborative, and democratic society.

The all-consuming test-preparation practices crafted largely by professional educators who function largely as auditors working for statist, bureaucratic regulatory agencies, increasingly in collaboration with educational maintenance organizations. Public education

advocates and curriculum theorists regardless shun the manner in which the nation's schools are reducing knowledge, and socially engineering futures for students, revolving around pointing students toward fixed stations in corporatist, capitalist society. Current forms of test-preparation practices share none of these values—collaboration, democracy, equity—nor mention democratic society as a desirable outcome. Nor is democratic process a predominant, formative curricular goal. Rather, the current group of education reformers merely aim to force PK-12 students and the public schools they attend to compete for the highest test score(s), because to have to compete for diminishing resources and opportunities is casino capitalism's primary goal.

### There's more to education than practice: It's all about the context

*Context* is the buzz word in teacher education discourse, if we consider as relevant its usage in white papers and reports across the professional teacher organizations. Noticeable over time is the evolution or imposition, depending on one's station in the university decision making, of the political jargon. Academic language, and trendy terms indicate official mores, norms, and values regarding what counts as teaching and learning. The particular usage of *context* itself is reflective I believe of audit culture fatigue and of an effort to reclaim the profession from chronic bureaucracy. I explain the audit culture as being reflective of, respectively, the Obama administration and the Bush administration's zeal in pushing 'evidence-based' accountability agendas for various stated and unstated rationales. Teacher educators are staggering under the weight of producing evidence, and context seems to suggest that something more is meaningful than data.

As follows from the germinal white paper of the profession, *A pivot toward clinical practice*, context is clearly the reigning and eminent demarcation point for all policy matters related to education reform. . .

- 1) *Because local **context** matters when considering how to best operationalize clinical practice, we avoid making sweeping national recommendations (p. 4).*
- 2) *. . . we measure "quality" in a myopic manner. Annual Professional Performance Reviews, for example, developed in response to federal legislation and competitive grants, operate in sharp contrast to the standards of quality defined by the profession itself . . . in this **context** teachers have been expected to be knowledgeable, decisive, reflective, and able to promote critical thinking and problem-solving in every child (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2014), while explicitly contributing to our nation's economy by reducing dropout*



*rates and developing a skilled workforce (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996) (p. 7).*

3) *Educator: Any professional worker in a school, university, or other educational **context**.*

4) *Teacher: Any professionally prepared educator who uses pedagogy to facilitate student learning in a school or other educational **context**.*

*. . . and so on.*

Clearly, context is the umbrella term, the educational foundation condition of import upon which the previously mentioned mores, norms, and values regarding teaching and learning and curriculum development are anchored. In the first instance, the report states that the “local context matters” thus affirming that local school districts are radically different in terms of social, cultural, and economic resources and capital . . . and as such should be more increasingly involved in the aims, means, and end of teaching, learning, and curriculum formation. In the second instance, the teacher education profession is acknowledging the existence of a gap between local contexts and the federal context; indeed the report notes that often curriculum has been developed in response to federal legislation and competitive grants.

This is a clear indication of the movement away from national education goals and toward locally defined prerogatives. Missing is an explanation of the conditions to which this otherwise oblique text refers to: for example, local context itself is very different in terms of governance: most school districts are managed by *locally elected* [my italics] school boards, but in several large urban inner city school districts where poverty runs rampant, the school board is managed by the mayor, with *mayoral appointed/unelected* [my italics] board members. In a nod to Bill Doll (I speculate), the AACTE report on clinical practice seems to acknowledge the limitations of linearity of developmentalism, opting to affirm that not all teacher candidate experiences are on the same point of the same line at the same time:

*Clinical partnerships progress through developmental stages that facilitate school-university relationships. These stages may appear to be linear, but in reality, they are recursive [italics in the original] and boundary spanning [italics again from the original] as partnerships evolve (AACTE, 2018).*

## Reclaiming the educational foundations

### *Foundations*

*As candidates take courses exploring theoretical perspectives as well as the philosophical, historical, and social factors related to major subdisciplines—such as educational policies, aims, goals, curricula, and instructional practices—they also observe their application while participating in microteaching experiences in clinical settings (CPC, 2018).*



Continuing from the script *A pivot toward clinical practice*, is the call for a more clear role for the educational foundations, integrated of course, as the white paper confirms, into practice. But enough about practice for a moment. Of greater import is that students/teacher candidates in teacher education programs crave theoretical knowledge to inform their practice. Courses and curriculum which provide a meaningful learning context regarding their chosen career path are exceedingly helpful to them in informing their own opinions, nurturing their own budding, critical consciousness, aiding them to be able to raise and even articulate theoretical questions. The courses and curriculum that help them make meaning include *history of education*, *philosophy of education*, and *contemporary issues in education*. These are the very courses that are deemed to be less important to administrators, the “administrative progressives.” Different from “pedagogical progressives” and “social justice progressives”, administrative progressive thwart social justice ends in critical ways (see Kliebard, 1986; Murphy, 1990).

Pedagogical progressives have long aspired to progressivity in the development and nurture of the child. Laudable enough, but as questioned by George Counts, pedagogical progressives have often left unchallenged the need to inculcate values of social justice, to levy questions concerning society, culture, and political systems at large, instead focusing with ‘laser’ like precision on child-centeredness in pedagogical technique. Counts once castigated these otherwise social liberals in his most scathing speech:

*[P]ersons who... assume an agnostic attitude towards all important questions... who have vague aspirations for world peace and human brotherhood... have no deep and abiding loyalties, who possess no convictions for which they would sacrifice over-much... who are rather insensitive to the accepted forms of social injustice... These people have shown themselves entirely incapable of dealing with any of the great crises of our time — war, prosperity, or depression. At the bottom they are romantic sentimentalists. (Counts, 1932, p. 257)*

It is a remarkable phenomenon to observe that—in lieu of fighting back against the draconian attacks on public education as a democratic institution, the undermining of teachers’ work, a class of culture workers, and the eviscerating of tenure at higher education institutions—faculty have instead opted to remain largely silent, pursuing their own careers as what I deem is representative of ‘edupreneurs’.

The focus of teacher education has moved steadily and tragically from the “reflective practitioner” (Schön, 1983, 1988) to one of choosing tips, tricks, and techniques to “teach like a champion” (Lemov, 2013). I argue that what teacher education teaches is largely pre-determined by an empty “common sense” (Kumashiro, 2009) and a technical rationality that

enshrines method as supreme, under the guise of the “new managerialism” . . . and interestingly enough, the purveyors of new managerialism are the faculty their selves, as Michael Apple (2013) alludes:

*perhaps the archetypical attempt by capital to control people’s work, [did] not come directly from dominant groups in an unmediated fashion. It’s been much more complicated than this and requires a more subtle appraisal of class dynamics both outside and inside education (Apple, 2013, p. 140).*

There are more sophisticated characterizations of these methods: “representations, decomposition, and approximations of practice” (Grossman et. al., 2009). Yet sophisticated or not the general problem is not method, but rather that, in technically rational terms, in contemporary education reform today, method trumps theory. It is well established by William E. Doll (Doll, 1993; Trueit, 2012) in his respective scholarly works, that method and curriculum more broadly in the Western canon is largely derivative of the Ramist map under Calvinism. Hence, Doll concludes, the Puritanical, paradigmatic approach to teaching and learning in the US of A.

This approach works in objectifying and commodifying teaching and learning to the point where assessment and measurement and rubrics determine what is considered legitimate to teach, learn, and study. My own rendering of this process is to call it the “tyranny of method” where practice is supposed to drive theory, instead of the other way around. Others have explained this phenomena by recognizing “technical rationality” as part and parcel of a “social construction of rationality” (Bouwmeester, 2017) wherein the technical in form (mandated classroom practice, scripted curriculum, pre-determined standards acquisition) becomes rationalized and made into a sort of common sense for procedural alignment of school classrooms to perceived economic needs.

Furthermore, it is of no great revelation that schools in the United States (not only the United States) are subject to an “audit culture” (Taubman, 2009) of epistemological blindness (Oliveira, 2007) wherein the only knowledge that is deemed important is that which is measurable (Price, 2014, 2014, 2016, 2017).

Also, the field of curriculum study is deemed largely irrelevant in light of the overwhelming focus on method, “clinical practice”, and residency (see AACTE, 2018). It hardly bears worth repeating, but I’ll repeat again, the curriculum studies as a field is itself ignored by current education reform efforts:

*. . . curriculum studies has long tethered itself to the ship of teacher education (for some begrudgingly so), navigating choppy and turbulent waters in order to retain some legitimacy within “official” education circles. To serve teacher education on our part is a generous gesture . . . yet increasingly one-way; the response is not mutual and curriculum studies and curricularists could almost do better if we were merely reviled. Instead, we are largely ignored, hardly recognized for being even part of the educational furniture; thus has positivism and education reform so effectively marginalized our work and importance (Price, 2017).*

This is tragic as education reform is roundly criticized by main stream education reform pundits as not working (Payne, 1998). Yet reform they continue without considering curriculum theory, social issues, nor epistemology.

To summarize, this essay is concerned with how practices that work (UDL, co-teaching, civics education) are often not supported, and how practices that are substantive in scope (representation, decomposition, and approximation) are nonetheless often trivialized (tips, tricks, techniques). But greater still is the problem that method in general (the tyranny of method as I deem it) becomes valorized and reified far beyond theory; in other words, *performativity* also eclipses *pre-formativity*, because of technical rationality, the new managerialism, and the audit culture.

Additionally, the areas or domains of knowledge concerning history, philosophy, and let's add in sociology of knowledge, political economy, and cultural anthropology, are also increasingly trivialized, eclipsed, or altogether erased, by way of a process termed *epistemicide* (see Paraskeva, 2011, 2016, 2017, 2018). Paraskeva argues that different and diverse epistemologies and/or knowledges are largely erased as a result of Colonization and the hegemonic rendering of a Western science which deems other knowledges invisible (Santos, 2016), on the other side of an abyssal line (Santos, 2007), produced by a kind of blindness (Oliveira, 2007).

In conclusion, I mention that some practices are under-examined and others entirely over-examined, but that is not the main point, only an example to share which leads to my main argument, that it is knowledge itself that is compromised and often erased in the mad rush to make schools function, which in current political and historical terms and conditions means to force students to compete for diminishing resources. Such is the game being played and the restoration of some form of epistemological justice a “different difference” as Paraskeva often invokes is greatly needed.

## Postscript: Dreams of curriculum in the “Every Student Succeeds” age

*I'm in a dream. It unfolds like this: I stand over a little button that protrudes from the floor. It is connected to a sound system which looks much like the beautifully designed, old Motorola of the last century; the ornate, hand-cranked, human-operated phonograph. Only this button when slowly pushed, starts a wheel, that operates a belt, that turns the record, and emits the music. Still in my dream, I'm fascinated, I repeatedly step on the button for what appears to be a minute or two and out of the speakers in the floors below (leading to what or whom below, it isn't yet clear) are the delightful, unexpectedly raucous chords of Lou Reed's "I'm a wild one." The concordant songs and seemingly out-of-place words emanate throughout the building.*

*But what is this place?*

*It is a factory.*

*The hall that I occupy starts to become busy, students and teachers, or are they business suits? factory workers? They seem to just mull about . . . for what? For whom?*

*I recognize some faces. They are acquaintances and friends. I speak with a few . . . actually they are my own students, who are either interns or business suits in training; they smile and offer politely that I can opt to go watch the school's basketball game on television. I don't know what this means in the cacophony, but I accept, gracefully knowing that they are politely asking me to move along while the business . . . of what? commences.*

*I notice among the group a long time radical friend of mine and can't reach him; I wonder what does he think of this odd place, of me, as I now notice, also wearing a business suit!*

*Regardless, I make my way out the door only to see my favorite basketball team playing live, in real time, in front of me, in a gym. I realize I could just linger there and see the action unfold, even though I don't have a ticket.*

*And then the dream is over and I awake.*

What would the world look like if no child was truly left behind? If every student were helped to succeed? Such matters keep some of us awake at night, imagining a better world: During a field trip with my enigmatic and phenomenological son Dongze, we are on a hunt for bugs. This is our first together, at least from his new school, where he has joined his older brother Enze, and we ride on the school bus, a form of transportation that precedes the Uber. The bus driver notes in the orientation at the beginning of the trip that few kids take anymore and thus it is important to share with this group what are the rules.

I'm always struck on the ride, and actually in the classroom, how moments of school-enforced silence always feel serene and a little surreal; they remind us of what we are supposed to revere, and yet to my sense they are actually a memorial to what has long since passed. Take for example the school bus ride; the driver stops at the railroad crossing and the little people and the adult chaperones dutifully and thoughtfully quiet their selves in order that the driver can “hear” whether a train is coming. This, in an age of electronics, where every move and semblance of action can be monitored, surveilled, recorded, digitized . . . the driver must use his physical sense to keep us safe. It is also a moment when we remember that some of

the students, drivers, and school personnel have sadly lost their lives in fatal traffic accidents, accentuating the importance of this episode of caution, quiet, and using one's ears.

In the classroom, I'm always struck by the pledge of allegiance, to a society that is much different from the one we have now; or is it? It is emphatically important, someone felt, to punctuate that the society of the free, land of the brave, have in its anthem the words "under God" to make this anthem and the society as conceived itself, more sacred.

We reached our destination, and before too long were led by a campground guide into the magic and mystery of the forest and wetlands, truly amazing. One exercise essentially had the students and chaperones identify the tiniest of creatures using a small glass type lens and bowl that could sift and winnow such creatures effortlessly and safely.

I was struck, before we embarked on this all too fleeting "field trip" by how in this classroom, like others, there is attention to the smallest details. Teachers ready their class, and once the students are in line, they turn their attention to a small lever on the wall. The teacher pulls it down and immediately reaches the school office. Like what was once called a walkie-talkie, this communication tool is not mobile, but affixed to the wall, but it works precisely the same, exacting and efficient. It actually resembles the speaker to my first stereo, from my childhood. This, my son's teacher communicates into, to report attendance for the field trip. "All accounted for." It is the most seamless technology I've ever seen; a direct connection without interruption. The reception of this otherwise ancient, throwback to another time, is crisper than any "smart phone" that adults in their business suits use, or increasingly kids in their casual attire can be seen staring at, head down, listlessly moving along in this age where "Every Student Succeeds."

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