Reading the Curriculum World

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Background

• National curriculum is as significant a change for Australian teachers as the school-based curriculum development movement from the late 1960s
• A.C. has significant implications for teachers’ work yet less infrastructure to support curriculum work than for earlier generations of teachers
• The political, economic and educational domains have shifted significantly since late 1960s and 1970s
Futures?

- Trend extrapolation
- Tsunami-determining
- Doomsday scenarios
- Individualised – positive psychology, entrepreneurialism of the self –
- Techno-solutions – STEM as ‘the’ answer
- TINA
- Continuities of bio-eugenics: ‘ability’, family background in discourses of NAPLAN explanations
The National Curriculum constructed as a political solution
...and at the same time constructing the problem as being one a curriculum could solve
(Bacchi 2000)

• Seeks to construct a national narrative at a time when ‘nation’ is problematised via globalisation, using borrowed policy strategies (esp. England’s national curriculum) at a time when other federated countries did not have national curriculum

• Set in place a content-oriented definition of curriculum and located teachers as pedagogical ‘implementers’ of heavily politicised content decisions.
Why teachers go along with AC?

• New teachers: helpful structure and resources
• ‘Better than what we have’
• Used to obeying state authorities’ policies
• Tied to funding
• Don’t feel much option
• Find cracks that make sense
• Spaces between official, enacted and co-produced
• In some schools can clearly make space for teachers to do excellent pedagogies
• The assessment regime is not in place, so the option for schools to take it up as makes sense can work.
Why do you think Australian schools and teachers took up Australian curriculum?

• AND WHY NOW?
How do teachers construct their role?

- Intellectuals?
- Implementers?
- Individual responsibility or school-oriented?
- Subject-specific/generalist? context
- Community-leaders? Community members?
- Advocate for students?
- Good relationships and knowledge of students?
Other versions of curriculum?

- Negotiated
- Experience-based
- Funds of knowledge; Place-based
- Integrated
- Problem-based
- Inquiry or Discovery learning
- Apprentice
- Practitioner/performer

.....

Each with different role/s for teacher, school, student, and for the (nation) state
What infrastructure do teachers need for reading the curriculum world? And for doing good curriculum work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1970s-80s DOMINANT TENDENCIES</th>
<th>DOMINANT TENDENCIES NOW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISE advisors</td>
<td>Expensive and rare ISE</td>
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<td>Publications</td>
<td>Little in way of advisors, consultants</td>
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<td>Networks</td>
<td>International publishing houses and textbooks; digital resources</td>
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<td>active teacher committees;</td>
<td>Surveillance</td>
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<td>Spaces between official SBCD</td>
<td>League tables of testing</td>
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<td>and school practice</td>
<td>Teacher work intensification</td>
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<td>Leverage between state and</td>
<td>Managerialism and</td>
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<td>federal govts.</td>
<td>authoritarianism</td>
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<td>Mostly benign neglect by</td>
<td>Emphasis on ICTs</td>
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<td>state politicians, esp</td>
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<td>disadvantaged schools</td>
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<td>Participatory school processes</td>
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Education as salvation --- as long as it’s backward-looking, ‘best knowledge’, fixed

- Continual deferral of future
- Abstraction as central to school knowledge
- National narratives and pseudo-universalism seen as ‘fixing’ the uncertainties
- ...

What options are there now for good curriculum work by teachers?

• Not just ‘under the radar’…
• Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment re-connected by teachers
• Finding spaces requires professional judgement and collaboration
• GLOBAL networks and resources: how to keep up
What’s happened to other National curriculum projects?

• England: ‘iron cage’ on modernist national model of inspection, assessment-driven, content-focused and driving a stratification process of ‘failing’ schools, without guarantees of public provision

• South Africa: content-focused/discipline-oriented curriculum with weekly tests, also driving a growth of stratifying processes among schools

SO WHAT DOES THAT IMPLY FOR OUR MONITORING?