

CURRERE – THE NEW PARADIGM OF CURRICULUM POST-MODERNITY

E. SOARE¹

¹Department for Teacher's Training, University of Pitesti,
e-mail emanuel.soare@upit.ro

The present paper proposes the researchers preoccupied with the problem of curriculum a new vision on the field. It becomes possible by introducing a new concept – currere – capable of revolutionizing the post-modern perspectives on curriculum. The concept gains the value of a paradigm and represents a specific way of curriculum projection, realizing and development. It represents a significant moment in the theory, practice and curriculum area being known as Reconceptualism. This concept will decisively influence the curriculum paradigm as it was launched by R. Tyler. The author proposes, as a method of research in the area of curriculum paradigm, a historical perspective which uses synchronic, diachronic and hermeneutical strategies. The proposed perspective is based on ethical and epistemological arguments. The longitudinal-historical approach eliminates the excesses of those subjective modes or ideologies, making the objective reinterpretations in the area possible. This approach leads to delimiting the strong epistemic nucleus of curriculum theory, possible in the case of the present theme. Reconceptualization presupposes a reflexive attitude which tries to describe the curriculum as it is experienced and which has the capacity of testing the conceptual schemes through the experience realized by all actors of education.

Key words: Currere, curriculum, post-modernity, education, historical research

A significant moment in the area of curriculum, of theory and practice, is known under the name of *Reconceptualism*. William Pinar and Madelleine. R. Grumet are the researchers whose names are linked to this movement. Reconceptualism brings into discussion the concept of *currere*. This concept is to decisively influence the curriculum paradigm as it was launched by R. W. Tyler.

Currere represents the infinitive root in Latin of the term of *curriculum*, stressing the idea of circularity, activity of running towards the self, unlike the noun *curriculum* which denotes the idea of race that has to be run, starting from one point and reaching another. It reveals the ability of the individual to reconceptualize its autobiography (his own educational route). *Currere* is the individual experience in educational contexts (Pinar, F. W., et all., 2004, p. 413).

W. Pinar și M. Grumet (1976) try to demonstrate the fact that the term of *curriculum* (mostly understood as a course to be studied) derives from the Latin *currere* which means to keep on running (*curro* / I am running). As Rita L. Irwin

(2003) argues, the term of curriculum has usually been associated to school documents while *currere* is an active, mostly contextual concept.

The advantage of this approach of curriculum is represented by the fact that it moves the stress from the level of school documents to the individual experience and the effects this experience has upon the extended social context the instruction take place in. By *currere*, educational activities have a formative role as the students become aware of their own school experiences.

Curriculum reconceptualization starts from the idea according to which, on one hand, curriculum transmits culture to the same extent it is changed, in its turn, by the latter, and, on the other hand, curriculum actually modifies the culture while transmitting it.

In the same time, curriculum is lived before it is described the same way in which an event and the thought of that event are never simultaneous and identical. First lived and then described, curriculum can represents different realities which can intersect when reflecting upon them (M. Grumet, 1980, p.24).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The research was carried out using qualitative strategies, combining the method of content analysis, data quality analysis and studies of specialty documents.

Reconceptualization presupposes a reflexive attitude which tries to describe curriculum as we live it, having the capacity of testing its own conceptual schemes through the experience lived by each student.

Currere provides the framework for a reflexive autobiography of educational experiences from a subjective and narrative perspective (Grumet, M. R., 1980) and curriculum reconceptualization is based on teacher's and students' experiences articulation.

R. L. Irwin (2003) continues the argument for this new vision on curriculum by deepening the etymological analysis of the concept of curriculum. The author stresses the fact that the term of *excursion* in Latin has a correspondent in *currere* which means "running beyond"; the term *incursion* derives from the Latin *incurrere*, meaning "running to the inner self". Therefore, excursions represent guided actions for reaching beyond, being liberating, while incursions are invasive.

From this perspective, we can identify two different sources of influence for curriculum projection and constructing the context of instruction:

1. *curriculum, excursion, incursion* means: study course, short trip, invasion, something which has to be disseminated,
2. *currere, excurrere, incurrere* means: to run, race, to run beyond, to run a race or against a race.

When focusing on *currere*, we focus on a race which has to be run; it means, at the level of curriculum, the development of understanding the phenomena occurring. Excursions are, by their nature, those trips which follow understanding beyond the original course of action, often designating circular actions, of coming back on course, while incursions represent actions realized against the course and they do nothing but stop sometimes the projected unfolding of educational action.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

By the critical reflection on educational experience, curriculum is reconceptualized in two variants:

1. With the help of free associations method, proposed by W. Pinar, experiences are updated by a process of meditation which starts by allowing the mind to wander, continuing by offering significant details and diverse descriptions, placing the discourse into a completely evoked context. In the process of lived experience expression, curriculum can be reconceptualized because this discourse requires large fields following the realized associations, a fact which represents, for the individual, the feeling of inner experience. In this stage, the meditation process centers on identifying the road to be taken and on its landmarks.

The product of this approach is the *autobiography* of what students call the own educational experience (Pinar, F. W., et all., 2004, p.24-30). It is to reunite the elements considered relevant by the students. For this reason, for each student, educational experiences will mean something completely different. The teacher does not display an active role, but a guiding one, in order to identify the patterns and the representative elements of the meditation processes. The aim pursued is that of determining the student to become active in interpreting his own past in order to become active in promoting his own interests at the level of school community.

Thus, while curriculum is being reconceptualized by the selection and criticism which reorganize the educational experience in a past which can be used, to the same extent it can be transformed into an useful present by the students who see themselves responsible for the form and texture of their own experience (*ibidem*, p.28).

2. While these discourses are to be analyzed, interests and various lacks often hidden from the normal course of experience will come to the surface. From this perspective, autobiography as a discourse or text represents the way in which an individual chooses to order and interpret experience, aspect which can reveal the nature and limits of individual freedom. Thus, educational experiences are reordered in an useful past (and present, also), having as the main aim the promotion of personal responsibility for action (M. Grumet, 1976, p.116).

CONCLUSIONS

A way of integrating reconceptualism in the main flux of thought on curriculum is that proposed by Posner (1988, p.94). In his vision, curriculum study has to draw attention on the procedures and concepts implied in the moment of the attempt regarding planning the curriculum on the basis of rational landmarks. Although this trend is not interested in procedural patterns, preferring to attack them from a political and ideological perspective, both perspectives are necessary for each curricular circular model which aims at a comprehensive status.

Reconceptualization, as a specific way of thinking, is necessary because it can make us aware of the often hidden implications of a technical pattern. It can

offer answers to the questions of the type: “how to act when the aims and priorities are unstable and changing?” (Walker, D., Soltis J., 1986, p.76).

Thus, reconceptualism refers to the activity of some researchers interested in the knowledge organically integrated in culture and history, that requires a greater focus on experience. Thus, autobiography under the form of *currere* and the curriculum theory proposed by Pinar and Grumet appear in the scheme which represents the main instrument engaged in attaining the curricular objectives.

Currere represents the idea of curricular processes, centered on the student’s activity and changes that becomes the educational premises. It reveals the ability of the individual to reconceptualize its autobiography (his own educational route). *Currere* is the individual experience in educational contexts that becomes more significant towards educational aims.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Ionescu, A.C., Popescu, D., 2002 – *The evolution of main soil physical and chemical characteristics as influenced by tillage systems and fertilizers*, Lucr. șt., seria Agronomie, vol. 45, U.Ş.A.M.V. Iași, p. 20-26.
2. Grumet, M. R., 1999 – *Autobiography and Reconceptualization*. Pinar, W. F., Lang Peter, (eds.), 1980, Contemporary Curriculum Discourses: Twenty Years of JCT, New York.
3. Grumet, M. R., 1976 – *Psychoanalytic foundations*, W. F. Pinar, M. R. Grumet. Toward a Poor curriculum. Dubuque, Kendall Hunt, pp. 111-146.
4. Irwin, L. Rita, 2003 – *Curating the Aesthetics of Curriculum*. University of Alberta.
5. Pinar, F. W., Reynolds, M. W., Slattery, P., Tauban, M. P., 2004 – *Understanding Curriculum. An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses*. -New York: Peter Lang.
6. Pinar, W. F., Grumet, M. R., 1976 – *Toward a Poor curriculum*. Dubuque, Kendall Hunt Publishers.
7. Posner, G. J., 1988 – *Models of curriculum planning*, L. Beyer, M. W. Apple (eds.) The curriculum: Problems, Politics, and Possibilities, New York, Albany State University of New York Press, p. 79-97.
8. Schubert, W. H., 1986 – *Curriculum: Perspective, paradigm, and Possibility*, New York, Macmillan.