

## CONCLUSION

# Theorising Responsiveness and Potentialities in Curriculum Studies

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Curriculum studies is a field of complexities and contextualities which make for interesting discussions in and around education. Curriculum inadvertently dictates the value and potentiality of education, thereby orienting it towards responsiveness, as the case might be. These chapters in this edited volume were written around several fundamental issues or questions centring on education and the future of the same on the African continent. A few of these questions or issues were the future of education in Africa in general, and curriculum studies in particular; alternative ways of experimenting with new philosophical paradigms in curriculum studies on the African continent – developing policies that fundamentally orient Africa towards alternative futures, rather than repeating the mistakes of the West. Has education in Africa preconditioned the theoriser to only explore traditions from the global North, rather than experimenting and articulating alternative pathways for education in Africa? Must curriculum theorising in Africa follow the traditions of theorising laid down by the global North in general, or can such traditions be used as a springboard for the articulation of alternative perspectives, as we strive to develop African curriculum matters? These questions and issues oriented the chapters in this book and provided a springboard for a variety of theorising patterns which constitute the context and orientation of this book, curriculum theory, curriculum theorising, and the theoriser. However, this is not the end of the conversation – it is only the beginning. The reader is encouraged to join the conversation to reorient curriculum theory, theorising, praxis, and the theoriser on the African continent.

Weenie (2008) and Phelan (2015) argue that curriculum is what gives credence to education; and this credence is what makes for responsiveness. Curricular theorising encompasses an array of philosophical views that serve as a foundation for how knowledge is constructed and construed. Effective curriculum theorising borders on addressing the way we view curriculum. It acknowledges the vantage points in terms of the biases and assumptions, and the interpretive lens brought into the curriculum by theorists. Phelan (2015, p. 4), speaking on curriculum theorising, posits that curriculum theorising is

“a form of practical-theoretical reason that draws on and reconfigures conceptual schema from the Humanities and the Arts in the hope that new and potentially more fruitful ways of talking about curriculum – lived, official, hidden, null – will be forthcoming.” In this light, the curriculum theory and/or theorist sees curriculum as “a cultural object with a social history, anchored in ideology, and nested in layers of meaning that call for clarification and interpretation. It is also a transaction that takes place among program coordinators, teacher educators, school teacher-mentors, teacher candidates, and students within institutional contexts with perspectives requiring a recapitulation of education in the context of responsiveness” (Grumet, Anderson, & Osmond, 2008, p. 137). Curriculum theory and curriculum theorising establish the borderline principles for the theoriser to go about education in the present dispensation, thereby guaranteeing responsiveness. These orientations therefore address the effectiveness of curricular responsiveness and pillars of learning. These two key areas sum up the constructs articulated in this book.

This book is divided into six parts dealing with curriculum theory (theorisation of curriculum), indigenous knowledge and curriculum (history of curriculum), decolonisation of curriculum, trends in curriculum (modernisation and curriculum), curriculum and social discourses (self-identity) and curriculum implementation (curriculum in use). It makes a case for the reorientation of curriculum theorising efforts on the African continent. Such a reorientation would produce new shifts and paradigms for education and learning in Africa. Zhaou (2000) and Zhou and Yunxiao (2001) argue that scholarship has seen changing positions on education and learning; from understanding that learning, as patterns of schooling, only happens for the brief time students are in class; to a more nuanced understanding of life-long learning. The argument expands from a narrow, disciplinary base and understanding of curriculum, to a more critical, open, and responsive understanding. This means that education, especially in this era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, deals with much more than just learning a few facts, reproducing them in assessment tasks. It touches on what is known as the four pillars of learning; learning to know, learning to be, learning to do, and learning to live together. Learning to know would speak to disciplinary responsiveness by ensuring that students master the instruments of knowledge. This way, students do not only consume knowledge, but understand the rudiments of knowledge construction; and what it takes to make alternative knowledge relevant and valid within the context of higher education. The parts dealing with decolonisation and indigenous knowledge attempt to ensure this in the theorisation process. Learning to know within the frames of disciplinary responsiveness would also ensure that students learn how to learn; so they can discover and benefit from alternative

possibilities of learning. And such learning would only be meaningful if the rudiments of knowledge construction, and what it means to know, are reorientated and theorised from an African perspective. Disciplinary responsiveness would also see to it that students develop the agencies of imagination, memory, critical reasoning, and problem-solving. Such would make students stakeholders within the disciplines they belong to, and within the knowledge community as a whole. Learning to know within the confines of disciplinary responsiveness would validate African approaches and pedagogical know-how in the knowledge economy. This would also ensure that curriculum studies is able to disentangle itself from the global North's curriculum and educational traditions. Curriculum studies would then develop a more nuanced, focused, and responsive pedagogical outlier, reflecting contextual relevance and global excellence.

Learning 'to be,' on the other hand, speaks to political responsiveness. Such ensures that 'the being' (which is by its very nature political), becomes conscious of 'the being' and the nature of 'the being.' This brings curriculum on the continent to alternative pathways of seeing it as a verb, and no longer a noun; as well as 'the being' often enshrined in the curriculum discourse, in this case the theoriser. Since the development of human potential to its greatest capacity (especially in the current dispensation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution) should be the ultimate aim of education, curriculum theory and theorising become principal tools for such development, taking centre stage to ensure that curriculum produces its best. Education in Africa is a means to an end, and not an end itself. As such, the development of 'the being' is critical, especially on the African continent, with numerous socio-political crises and crises of identity, as well as xenophobia ravaging certain parts of the continent. Learning 'to be' within the parameters of political responsiveness would ensure that 'the being' is able to demonstrate individual agency, personal commitment, and responsibility for the public good. The parts on curriculum theory, trends in curriculum, and social discourses to an extent have concentrated on this 'being'; and alternative ways of developing its agency that would prioritise contextual relevance, not forgetting global excellence. Learning 'to be' would therefore propel the individual to new creative heights, as he or she seeks to find new and alternative paths for 'the being' on the continent. To this end, education and the curriculum would become politically responsive. Education and the curriculum serving it would not only recognise and take advantage of the political nature of the curriculum and 'the being.' They would also shape the politics and politicking within the nations, by constantly reorienting what it means to be within the nation; and how 'the being' should be enacted, offering alternative ways of going forward.

Learning to do, as another construct, borders on pedagogical responsiveness. This centres on skills which would be honed through the educational process. Skills which would be necessitated through learning and doing within the teaching and learning process would ensure that the continent begins to meet its developmental targets and needs. Learning to do within the framework of pedagogical responsiveness, would also ensure that social skills are developed. Such are necessary to eliminate the numerous tribal and ethnic conflicts across the continent; not forgetting those social and politically motivated. The part of curriculum in use expatiates on such. It theorises how implementation processes can ensure pedagogical responsiveness, since pedagogy is enacted in the implementation process. Doing, as a pedagogical pathway, becomes necessary on a continent rich in mineral resources, but lacking in technical skills and/or know-how to process most of such resources. As such, the global North has to do all the harnessing and refining on the continent. Doing, therefore, is critical for pedagogical responsiveness. Students need to enact procedures and skills vital for making Africa a contender on the global stage in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Changes to the world will be experienced with the rolling out of 5G technology. Learning to do becomes a pathway not only for transformational learning and skills development in alternative areas; but as a vehicle for pedagogic responsiveness and the ultimate responsiveness of education.

Learning to live together as the last construct is critical for cultural responsiveness. The African continent has experienced untold socio-cultural crises as well as identity conflagrations. Apartheid in South Africa, the genocide in Rwanda, the religious conflicts in Nigeria, the civil wars in Sudan, Mali, and Democratic Republic of Congo, just to name a few, are amongst the numerous plagues which Africa has witnessed. Such discord is a result of the inability of its people to live together in peace and harmony, regardless of their differences. Peaceful coexistence must be a function of education and cultural responsiveness. Thus, education must not only address the cultural nuances and challenges, but also tabs from it to ensure that culture, which is a crucial part of the being and the society in which all people live, is at the centre of education. The part on curriculum and social discourses along the lines of self-identity address this notion. The part examines ways in which the curriculum can respond to social nuances, orientating the current and future generation on better ways of handling issues. Since this makes for current and future cultural capital, such cultural capital cannot be neglected in the drive to make education responsive at any level; therefore culture, and the need for peaceful coexistence within the parameters of education would go a long way to ensure that Africans discover one another. Africans must appreciate the diversity of

the human race found within the nations. They must learn about, know, and appreciate themselves, be receptive of others, and engage in dialogues as an alternative pathway to conflict resolution. African peoples should care for and about others; and, above all, manage and resolve conflicts on the continent. Cultural responsiveness actioned through learning to live together prioritises the continent, and necessitates that the curriculum theory and theorising be reoriented by the theoriser on the continent, to make Africa the base and centre of it all.

Curriculum theory, curriculum theorising, and the theoriser, as an edited collection, therefore provides alternative pathways for education through the curriculum, to define new paths, reach new goals, and create new ecosystems on the continent. Such will make for contextual relevance and global excellence. If Africa would have the highest youthful population in the world by 2050, it follows that the curriculum and the theoriser should orient this population, and those who would raise this population, to make Africa great again.

### References

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