

Waypoints: Narrative Connections for Curriculum Futures

Marcea Ingersoll  ^a

^a St. Thomas University, School of Education, Canada

ABSTRACT

In this article, I examine the intersections between culture, education, and future through the lens of curriculum studies. Drawing upon key concepts in the field (Wearing et al., 2020), I explore the relationship between culture and curriculum and situate this relationship within the broader context of education. Schwab's four commonplaces of curriculum and Pinar's four phases of currere guide this narrative exploration of curriculum thinking. By revisiting six key curriculum concepts, I show how connecting multiple curriculum constructs using keyword responses can be a method for curricular insight. Arguing for curriculum theory that is accessible to a broad audience of readers, I introduce "waypoints" as a conceptual tool for navigating future directions in education. The result is an inclusive and accessible curriculum approach that has the potential to engage scholars and teachers in conversations with young people about desirable futures. The article offers valuable insights into the narrative interconnections between culture, education, and future, and provides an opportunity for meaningful engagement with curriculum studies.

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Introduction

I come from a scholarly tradition of thinking about education in terms of key concepts (Wearing et al., 2020) and keyword writing (Luce-Kapler, 2020). Derived from Raymond Williams' (1976) notion of keywords, "the purpose of keyword writing is to arrive at new points of resonance and deepen understanding of words and their meanings in relation to self, group, and society" (The Curriculum Collective, 2007, p. 65). Typically in keyword writing, we choose one word or phrase from a reading, and respond in a way that connects our personal experience to the text. However, the juxtaposition of three key words in the title of this journal—culture, education, and future—brought me to think about the interconnection between concepts. In this paper, I would like to map these intersections by connecting these key words to my reading of other key concepts in curriculum studies. By exploring this relationship, I arrive at a new conceptual tool for navigating future directions in education: the notion of *waypoints*.

Corresponding Author Marcea Ingersoll  marcea@stu.ca  St. Thomas University, School of Education, 51 Dineen Drive, Fredericton, NB, E3B 5G3, Canada

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As you read this article, you are joining me at this location on the curriculum map and will hopefully read and write into the ideas you find here in your own unique ways. The voice I bring to this conversation is, as Tennyson famously said, a part of all that I have seen and met. I recognize the privileges that have enabled my encounters with others and how these encounters have enriched my learning (Ingersoll & Whitty, 2021). My curriculum journey is informed by and limited to my experiences, and I position myself as a learner-teacher-scholar on this continuing journey. In this article I take an approach and tone that some in the academy may consider lacking in sophistication. Others may recognize it as deliberate and conscious, an effort to speak to a broad audience of readers and make curriculum theory accessible and inclusive, in the hope that such conversations can support insightful movement toward informed, desired, and shared curriculum futures across the world. I chart a way for scholars and teachers to enter conversations with and co-construct theory for the next generation of learners, so that we might generate stories of desirable futures with one another and young people.

In curriculum work, frames of four have been valuable for thinking about the field. Schwab's (1970) four commonplaces, for instance, suggests four elements for consideration: teacher, learner, subject matter and milieu. A narrative framework invites us to, quite similarly, consider who is the teller, who is the listener, what stories are valued, and who gains from the telling (Riessman, 2020). Currere challenges us to question the regressive, progressive, analytic, and synthetic domains (Pinar, 2004) as we consider what knowledge is of the most worth, for whom, and when. Each of these conceptual frames provides guidance for the curriculum thinking that I chart next.

Navigating curriculum

In previous work with other curriculum leaders and learners (Wearing et al., 2020), I helped to explore the keyword methodology as a process of reading and interpreting experience as shared curriculum work. Together, we selected nineteen key concepts from contemporary curriculum thinking to guide our exploration of common constructs past and present. Each of the nineteen constructs—*aesthetics*, *becoming*, *complexity*, *currere*, *discourse*, *ecology*, *ethics*, *experience*, *hermeneutics*, *imagination*, *Indigeneity*, *narrative*, *normativity*, *place*, *poetics*, *representation*, *social justice*, *standards*, and *temporality*—came from our complicated conversations (Pinar, 2004) about and readings in the field of curriculum. We invited scholars in the field to write short anchor texts as theoretical entry points that could situate these key concepts within the field of curriculum scholarship. Then we sought perspectives from scholars, teachers, graduate students, undergraduate students, high school students, parents, professors, and community members. These perspectives came in the form of keyword responses, a process by which careful reading of a text is followed by the selection of a word, phrase, or idea that is resonant and serves as a key to unlocking an integrated personal, textual, theoretical experience. The keyword process is grounded in a method of curriculum scholarship that demonstrates how meaning is unlocked through collective inquiry into common constructs and that multiple individual responses guide us to new understandings and directions. In our keyword response collection, the deliberate inclusion of multiple voices located curriculum work within the realm of individuals connecting on a journey of dialogic encounter, asserting that we “are all learning in relation to others across time and place on a landscape that is historically, contemporaneously, and future-oriented” (Ingersoll et al., 2020, p. 9). Here in this paper I reflect on and extend that thinking, by contemplating how the intersections of five key concepts of curriculum provide a navigational waypoint for curricular futures: *currere*, *experience*, *place*, *narrative*, *ecology*, and *social justice* are touchpoints for this curriculum conversation.

Currere as a key concept

For this article, I write from a curriculum theory perspective that invokes the tradition of *currere*, first brought forward by William Pinar in 1975 and comprised of a four-phase method to explore the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum (Pinar, 2020). The method of *currere* integrates the autobiographical, the temporal, and the conceptual as these become reexamined and reorganized. It asks us to slow down, to remember and re-enter the past, and to meditatively imagine the future (Pinar, 2004). This process is ongoing and iterative, subjective and complex, and draws on memory and experience to imagine a curricular future.

William Pinar's notion of *currere* has influenced our educational understanding of the role of lived experiences in shaping curriculum. Seeing curriculum as an “embodied potentially educational experience that is structured by the past while focused on the future” (2020, p. 50), *currere* offers a framework for attaining curricular insight. The four phase method of *currere* includes (a) the regressive phase, invoked by returning to autobiographical school experiences of the past, (b) the progressive moment where fantasies of the future are considered in relation the intertwined dimensions of a personal, social, and political present, (c) the analytic moment where reconsideration, research, and study informs the problem of the present, and (d) the synthetic fourth phase, an opportunity for curricular insight is derived from the coherent synthesis of past, present, and future imaginings. In using this method to frame this paper, I create a navigational waypoint for others to consider, engage with, or move toward.

Phase 1: Regressive looking back to look ahead

The traditions of curriculum

Within the method of *currere*, considering the future means understanding the past and the present, and the tradition of curriculum theory has been to consider questions of knowledge. Throughout human existence, knowledge has been produced, captured, and conveyed in multiple forms. Anthropologists, philosophers, historians, elders, and other scholars have long studied knowledge—how it is gathered and shared, and by whom it is carried forward. Within the field of education, curriculum studies has emerged as a scholarly home for studying the content, context, and processes that comprise contemporary notions of education. The Encyclopedia of Curriculum Studies claims that the field “now embraces an array of academic scholarship in relation to personal and institutional needs and interests while it also focuses upon a diverse and complex dynamic among educational experiences, practices, settings, actions, and theories” (see Kridel, 2010, p. 1). University programs and projects committed to the study of curriculum are typically housed within faculties of education, where graduate students can pursue specialized study in the field (see Ng-A-Fook, n.d.). As one such program notes:

Curriculum Theory, as the interdisciplinary study of educational experience, aspires to understand educational practices within broad social and cultural frameworks, focusing on what counts as knowledge, and what knowledge is most valued, by whom, at what time, and for what purpose. Engaging experience, analysis and imagination, this field of scholarly inquiry seeks to articulate the significance of curriculum as lived and explore at the nexus of subject matter, society and self its generative possibilities. (Curriculum Theory Project, n.d.)

The historiography of curriculum as a field both traces and disputes its origins (Petrina et al., 2016). The field has been declared moribund (Schwab, 1970), dead (Huebner, 1976), under threat (Christou & Deluca, 2013), of no use (Hlebowitsh, 2014), at risk of deadlock (Paraskava, 2022), and in need of internationalization (Hébert et al., 2019; Pinar, 2003). Contemporary curriculum considers questions and uses methods that span the social sciences and the humanities, and the central pursuit of curriculum inquiry is to ask questions about what knowledge is worthwhile, why, and for whose benefit (Schubert, 2010). Schubert makes an argument for understanding curriculum inquiry as an “integration of form and substance” and identifies several types of inquiry that shape the curriculum landscape (Schubert, 2008, p. 399). Ethnography (Janesick, 2003), narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000), autobiography, (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001) artistic criticism (Eisner, 1991), biography (Kridel, 1998), phenomenological hermeneutics (van Manen, 1997), revisionist history (Spring, 2006), speculative essay (Schubert, 1991), critical theory (Young, 2003), ideological analysis (Apple, 1979/2004), feminist studies (Lather, 1991), post-modernist renditions (Doll & Gough, 2002), and cultural studies (Edgerton, 1995) are just some examples of the multiple ways of looking at and into curriculum. It is not a field without tensions, and continues to engage with the overarching question of what knowledge is of the most worth (Christou & Deluca, 2019; Schubert, 2010).

My own scholarship falls within these overlapping tensions and ongoing lack of resolution. Glancing through a notebook recently I found questions scribbled in 2008, the first year of my graduate work, are questions that brought me to pursue academic work: *Why are we driven by a need to compete and accumulate rather than a compulsion to share and protect? Are humans hardwired for such an existence? If we're not—how much longer can we exist? What knowledge is worth knowing, what knowledge can be taught to support caring, cooperative futures?*

These questions linger today. “Curriculum theory studies that support deep questioning and critical thinking in the field of curriculum are...considered important for the future of the field.” (Yaşar & Aslan, 2021, p. 251). More than a decade after I transitioned from schoolteacher to academic, curriculum theory has provided a scholarly home for my enduring questions about education as a universal human endeavour, and what knowledge is of the most worth in times of rapid change and heightened connection. The exploration of curriculum through key concepts and multiple personal narratives on these concepts has provided some degree of curricular insight.

Experience as a key concept

If we understand curriculum to be a process that embraces the writing of personal experience into curricular constructs, and the sharing of those experiences as a movement toward greater interpersonal understanding, we can approximate a more culturally inclusive approach to curriculum building for the future. Diverse perspectives that consider the relation between curriculum constructs and individual experience with those constructs can inform curriculum theory, inquiry, pedagogy, and practice as they are enacted and acted upon, and as we might act in future. Educational philosopher John Dewey called for education to be grounded in experience, eventually using the term culture instead (Dewey, 1981; Seamen & Nelsen, 2011). As Awad Ibrahim (2020) points out, our experiences are culturally and historically shaped, thereby taking and producing meanings that reflect how the self is a subject that intersects with representation, power, and curriculum. “What we end up deciding to include in a specific curriculum for example is not a question of truth and knowledge but of power: who decides, how it is decided and why, and who is included and who is excluded” (p. 179). From this view, knowledge is not

truth, but a specific set of understandings that are specific in time and space and connected to power. Ibrahim notes that opening our curriculum “so that multiple subjectivities can be ‘represented’ in the curriculum and multiple voices and stories can be heard and told” (p. 179) is the pathway to radical possibilities for curriculum across cultures.

Place as a key concept

Ibrahim notes that radical possibilities for future curriculum work would ensure that students “feel reflected in the curriculum and can locate themselves in time and space and at the same time question the adequacy of their location” (p. 179). Dwayne Donald takes up the notion of space as a curricular concept that has dominated and even displaced “place” as a key concept in curriculum. Donald reminds us that the felt meaning of the word place conjures notions of location and belonging that are more connected to human experience than Enlightenment-influenced notions of curriculum and space. In Canada, public education has created what he calls a “*relational psychosis* resulting from a decades-long curricular project dedicated to the telling of a Canadian national narrative that has largely excluded the memories and experiences of Indigenous peoples” (Donald, 2020, p. 157). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has revealed the inter-generational trauma created by Indian Residential schools in Canada and “unsettled” curricular approaches, provoking fundamental questions about whether curriculum constitutes truth and for whom, especially as we confront the “institutional and socio-cultural perpetuation of colonial logics [that] trained Canadians to disregard Indigenous peoples as fellow human beings” (p. 157). As a next step for the future, Donald challenges us to consider Indigenous stories and understandings of the unique animacy of place and interconnectedness of all lifeforms as a way to honour and nurture life.

If curriculum can be understood as stories we tell about the worlds and our place in it, then we need to start telling different stories in order to renew balanced and sustainable relationships with the more-than-human entities that give life. (Donald, 2018, p. 160).

Based on Deweyan notions of experience, Connelly and Clandinin (2000) suggest three dimensions for narrative work: (a) temporality, (b) social and personal, and (c) place. They explain how a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space allows for narrative inquiry to travel *inward, outward, backward, forward*, while being *situated within place* (p. 49, 2000). Building on these understandings, experience and place are key concepts for thinking narratively about culture and education: who we are, where we belong, how and where we live, with whom and what we value, and what we must know and understand in order to live well now and story ourselves into the commonplaces of curriculum future.

Phase 2: Progressive: Interconnection and the commonplaces

In currere, the second phase of inquiry is the progressive moment where fantasies of the future are considered in relation the intertwined dimensions of a personal, social, and political present. Within the tradition of curriculum, the “autobiographical and biographical turn...emerged to address a void created by ‘the political’. It was crucial ‘to understand teachers and teaching biographically and autobiographically’ (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 516). Autobiography becomes counter history, history proper (Paraskeva, 2022), and here I will fantasize about the future by asking you as a reader to join me as we momentarily consider the autobiographical present in relation to the future.

Ecology as a key concept

The world is still recovering from the collective shock and aftershocks of a pandemic that heightened our global interdependence and connection, and interconnection. This key concept—ecology—inspires a keyword response for the present, recognizing that ecocentric thinking integrates every aspect of humanity, yet schools presently “reproduce ways of thinking and acting that are antithetical to ecocentric thinking” (Upitis, 2020, p. 73). As Upitis explains, ecology encapsulates the interconnection among human and nonhuman forms. The complexity of these systems of relation (Doll, 2008) is reflected in how the words of Upitis become connected in the mind to those of Donald, inspiring a keyword response (Wearing et al., 2020) that brings together personal autobiographical stories both impacted by and enmeshed in a global educational present.

Keyword: Enmeshed

Contemporary classrooms have been characterized as increasingly diverse in many global locales, raising questions about whose cultural backgrounds become curriculum foregrounds, and the ethics (Helfenbein & Mason, 2012) of globally (Gough, 2000) enmeshed curricular enterprises in the context of increasing of internationalization (Hébert et al., 2019).

As I write this, Russia is at war with Ukraine, and the interconnection of this geographically distant event is felt in the small Canadian island where I grew up—Ukrainian students are now embedded as newcomers to classrooms typically comprised of island children who have known one another since birth. Sitting in a kitchen in Genoa, where I spent a portion of my sabbatical, a young Italian woman shared with me how her family is one of many experiencing inflationary stressors due to rising housing, heating, and food costs around the globe. At a conference in another Canadian province, I learn how the government is removing environmental protections to a greenbelt in order to raze rich farmlands and replace irreplaceable food-sustaining places with concrete, a highway, and nature-destroying development. During a university meeting, someone announces that balloons are being shot out of the sky in an atmosphere of heightened global suspicion. Messages between colleagues express condolences, as Turkey and Syria are under a shroud of sadness from devastating earthquakes.

Views about how schools should focus on students’ skills for the future are part of the popular discourse on education, and scholars continue to challenge governmental approaches to schooling as preparation for economic participation over citizenship within the context of global educational reforms (Sahlberg, 2016). In the past few months, the local impact of global events has run a river through my scholarly networks. Ecological events especially, with colleagues reporting delays in their work in many parts of the world. In Italy the offices have been too hot to work and the air-conditioning too expensive for the university to operate, in Australia colleagues have had wildfires threaten their homes, in Canada unseasonable weather events have closed schools and campuses. The economic participation our schooling is supposed to prepare us for becomes impossible under these conditions, unthinkable on a planet that cannot sustain life. As Dwyane Donald reminds us, this is an urgent curricular challenge, and Indigenous stories of the unique animacy of places are integral to our understanding of the enmeshment of all lifeforms (Donald, 2020). Life, in all its forms—people, plants, animals, trees, rocks, are intricately connected and under threat.

Last night I dreamed of a school where children eat, learn, plant, grow, love, and live well, and awakened just as Rena Upitis introduced John Dewey and Dwayne Donald as our guest speakers. Even as I am writing and you are reading this piece, we are enmeshed.

Conjoined across time, geography, and experience, we are connected: reading the words of another is an act of cognitive magic—we can see inside the mind of another person through their words and return to a person’s thinking time and time again. We are able to access this thinking despite not being in the same place or time, and to access reality through stories of the world we know and the worlds we do not. In the traditions of keyword writing and *currere*, we can capture the personal, social, and political, drawing together key concepts from the autobiographical present to fantasize about the future.

Phase 3: The analytic moment

Phase 3 of *currere* is the analytic moment where reconsideration, research, and study informs the problem of the present (Pinar, 2020). At this juncture I return to the integral value of bringing autobiography (Pinar, 2004) into curricular conversations, and connect personal narratives of experience and keyword response writing as a method for creating inclusive curriculum conversations across cultures. Connection through personal narratives of experience has a generative power, and becomes “an act of coming to understand the world empathetically, exploring and negotiating polysemic meanings” (Bresler, 2006, p. 22). In this way, shared stories have powerful potential to create meaning across cultures. When experiences are investigated narratively, they “become curricular experiences for the inquirer—and possibly also for the audience, if the experiential narratives are read or listened to by others” (Conle, 2003). Keyword responses to curriculum constructs are meant to be read aloud and shared with others, so that writers and listeners might “hear their words anew” (Luce-Kapler, 2020, p. xiv), reorder experience, and create alternative understandings and a broader range of perspectives through this inclusive process. Inclusive does not mean aligned, and keywords inherently build commonality while recognizing difference, they “enable localized considerations of curriculum work that shape the individual and move outward to the collective community of curriculum scholars through cascading conversations, complicated by sometimes discordant, sometimes harmonious tones and overtones.” (Ingersoll et al., 2020, p. 9). As some in the field of curriculum have pointed out, curriculum conversations are not always inclusive (Christou & Deluca, 2013), and can become so complicated that they are incomprehensible, and far from practical.

Schwab (1973) provides a useful and practical frame for understanding curriculum through four components, which he referred to as commonplaces: the teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu. Inherent in the keyword process is the consideration of each of these components. If curriculum is concerned with the people, processes and contexts of education, then the key concepts of experience and place are captured by and reflected from these commonplaces. Culture is engaged through both concepts—a subjective and dialogic process of seeing the self, society, and other lifeforms in ecological relation to these concepts, since all experiences are located within a place, or milieu. Curriculum—what knowledge is of value—also necessarily involves cognition—how we come to know, and I draw on cognitive theorist Jerome Bruner’s work to connect knowledge and learning to culture as milieu. According to Bruner, knowledge is constructed actively and within social and cultural contexts (Bruner, 1997). A social constructivist, Bruner’s spiral curriculum emphasized learning as being constantly in motion and relation, asserting that cognitive growth is enabled by language, by discovery, by interaction, and that by revisiting concepts we strengthen our learning. Bruner’s work harkens to the Socratic tradition of learning, with an emphasis on dialogue and an understanding that the cultural and social frameworks that form our experiences shape how we will interpret those experiences. What we come to know is impacted by where, with whom, and how the knowledge is conveyed and selected for transmission—our cultural contexts, Schwab’s milieu.

Keywords are a form of autobiographical writing in which personal experiences intersect with the milieu that created them: they become a site for the exploration and negotiation of meaning through the words of another's experience, a process that fosters empathy among teachers and learners as they consider the subject at hand.

Narrative as a key concept

Across cultures, stories are one of the oldest forms of knowledge-keeping. Narratives have acted as containers, capturing human experience and carrying it to the next generation: narrative and knowledge are intricately linked (Fowler, 2020). Stories have also served as guideposts for how to live well and be a good person. Contemporary scholar Nel Noddings reminds us of education as a “moral enterprise, and teachers are almost universally expected to be exemplars of ethical behaviour” (2020, p. 82). Turkish scholar Sümer Aktan describes how, in Islamic educational thought, a good education included moral education and teaching children how to be good involves the telling of stories. According to Aktan, Islamic educational thinker Ibn Miskawayh, whose work was influenced by Classical Greek scholars, emphasized “that in a learning process in which behavior is very important, children's characters can be developed through poetry, stories, and historical narratives” (Aktan, 2018, p. 29). Curriculum calls us to think about what knowledge is of the most worth in life, what it means to be worthy, and what is life.

Our precommitment about the nature of a life is that it is a story, some narrative however incoherently put together. Perhaps we can say one other thing: any story one may tell about anything is better understood by considering other possible ways in which it can be told. (Bruner, 2004, p. 709)

If we consider truth, knowledge, and what is most worthy of knowing in this life, I want to emphasize the point that the stories we have been told are shaped by culture (Donald, 2020) and that life is narrative (Bruner, 2004). Narrative will continue to shape the future.

Phase 4: Future

Currere calls us to re-order time: reflecting on the past and projecting into the future is a way of understanding and transforming the self and society (Pinar, 2004). In the synthetic fourth phase, where an opportunity for curricular insight is derived from the coherent synthesis of past, present, and future imaginings. Comprehensible conversations about imagined futures are a necessary direction for curriculum theory, and keyword writing can be a form for engaging us in these conversations by bringing currere to the commonplaces. If curriculum draws its subject matter from what knowledge is most important, and who it benefits, then now is the time for a refocusing on the commonplace most dependent upon scholars and teachers getting it right for life in the future: the learners.

Keywords as waypoints for the future

Curriculum has been explored as a cultural object (Grumet et al., 2008) a cultural practice, (Kanu, 2009) and Paraskeva's (2011) *Conflicts in Curriculum Theory: Challenging Hegemonic Epistemologies* engages critical theory in his consideration of issues of culture and curriculum. Paraskeva points to a turn in the curriculum field where curriculum becomes itinerant, “a form of decolonial thinking that recognizes an ecological co-existence of varying epistemological forms of knowledge around the world,” (Paraskeva,

2022, p. 11). Pointing to the need for a move away from Eurocentric forms of curricular elitism, he notes that critical curriculum theorists have been “working fundamentally within a Modern Western Eurocentric epistemological platform, which propels an abyssal reason, thus ignoring the legitimacy and importance of non-Western non-Eurocentric epistemes” (p. 13). Accurate as this may be, I share an ongoing concern in the field that curriculum theory runs the risk of being insular, elitist, and disconnected from its public, by virtue of such obfuscating language. The commonplaces of curriculum (Schwab, 1973) remind us that teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu are central to educational practice and curriculum thinking. Yet, the language of theory can be incoherent even to others in the field (Christou & Deluca, 2013), much less the schoolteachers who “just don’t speak the same language” (Grumet, 2008, p. 141) as educators at the university level. Curricular and cultural disconnects can be repaired if we bring personal narratives of experience with key curriculum concepts together in relation to these four commonplaces. Teachers and learners must be part of the conversations about subject matter, bring global stories of the uniqueness of their locations and contexts, and scholars must be in touch with the realities of the milieu.

Social justice as a key concept

As scholars, the language we choose to form and inform the future of curriculum can be powerful without being insular or elitist. Take, for example, the following excerpt from a keyword response written by sixteen-year-old New York public school student Leanne Nunes (2020). In keeping with the keyword pedagogy, Nunes’ keyword writing focuses on and responds to one word or phrase in a text, then writes into that phrase creatively and from personal experience. Choosing the phrase “full and equal participation from all groups in society” from a curriculum anchor text on the key concept of social justice (Sonu, 2020, p. 190), Nunes writes:

I grew up with images of *High School Musical*, seeing happy students with delicious lunches, spacious buildings and clean halls. I felt through contrast with my own school experiences that it was and probably could never be real.

If “full and equal participation from all groups in society” were the reality in our school system, it would look much different than it currently does. It would look like *High School Musical* for everyone.

I’ve gone to schools where students are segregated racially, economically, religiously, and through language and culture. Many people have enough privilege to not have to think about how a poor education impacts others, and don’t feel like they have to, but for many marginalized students across New York City and the country, it is our reality. (Nunes, 2020, p. 193).

Verisimilitude is a literary term that refers to how stories can create a semblance of truth or reflection of reality, what Bruner calls a “truth-likeness” (2010, p. 45). Nunes’ keyword response demonstrates how the reality of Schwab’s commonplaces of milieu and learner are revealed through the power of personal narrative. Philosophers have long considered the question of what is the good life, and Nunes reveals the disjuncture between popular depictions of idealized schooling and the reality of her own. Complexity thinking reveals that education is a “slow domain”, and formal education “out of step with the times” (Davis, 2020, p. 43). If we look to the field of futures studies, there is evidence that “strong misalignment in the school system exists between the a-temporal or historically oriented teaching approaches and the need to support the young to construct visions of the future that empowers actions in the present” (Barelli et al., 2022, p. 2). Young people today are

increasingly confronted not only with questions of the good life, but with whether there will even be a future that can sustain human life. Students at my institution are marching with posters that our house is on fire. My cellphone news alert just flashed across the screen—the headline appearing and disappearing, flashing a warning that immediate action is needed to ensure a livable future for all. Under the conditions of planetary crisis and youth despair (Sanson & Bellemo, 2021), contemporary curriculum theory must contend with what knowledge is of the most worth for today’s learners, and whether we as scholars are willing to listen.

Whether in classrooms or communities or nature, each of us is situated as an individual in relation to and with others. Do we as curriculum scholars see ourselves in relation to today’s learners? Each of the curriculum scholars who writes themselves into the complicated conversation is and was a learner and brings authority of perspective in this way. However, it is worth considering whether our voices are more representative of curriculum past than curriculum present, and how we can engage more productively with one another and those closer to the everyday processes and contexts of contemporary schooling. As noted earlier, as curriculum scholars, we are called to ask difficult questions about the field, and here are two: 1) how many of us are long disconnected from the curricular spaces we theorize about? If, looking back from this waypoint we are stopping at, we have travelled so far from those spaces we cannot see or hear others on the journey, then 2) what does this curricular distance imply about the validity of our theorizing? As scholars we may observe the classrooms in which contemporary curriculum is practiced, but where are we in the commonplaces? We may write about these classrooms, contexts, and processes, but for whom do we write? The voices of the learners who are the subjects that curriculum scholars theorize about (and ostensibly for) are seldom present in scholarly texts on curriculum theory. As Nunes shows us in *High School Musical Not!*, her keyword response to the construct of social justice, when learners are part of the curriculum theorizing they have much for us to listen to, and learn from.

Conceptualizing waypoints

If we conceptualize curriculum as a journey, I’d like to offer the term waypoint as a metaphorical point of reference for thinking about the conceptual locations where we might navigate toward new curriculum futures. Navigation is considered both the art and science of locating a position enroute to a destination (National Geographic, 2022) and curriculum comprises the art and science of learning. Waypoint as a navigational term has been used to indicate stopping places along a journey, places where travellers can locate themselves and determine their next directional steps. Waypoints recognize that we are enmeshed within larger grids of connection.

Just as currere calls for the incorporation of the autobiographical in curriculum thinking, in our work on key concepts in curriculum, we asserted that curriculum theory comprises a “constellation of perspectives surrounding theoretical centre points, where the meeting places, the multiple paths that lead there, and those who travel the pathways constitute the whole” (Wearing et al., 2020, p. 2). We recognized that curriculum is a dynamic process that involves movement as method, and personal narratives of experience with key curriculum concepts can be important points of individual awareness.

As we journey, we are constantly coming to know where we have been, where we are, and looking in anticipation toward the journey to come. We are in relation to others and see ourselves in relation to our surroundings, and to our place on the curricular journey. (Ingersoll et al., 2018, p. 4).

If curriculum centre points are the spaces where we share common constructs, then we need to find our way to these centre points. We must know where we are in order to journey forward.

Waypoints can be a way of situating ourselves on the landscape: recognizing our locations and travelling to other waypoints will enable us to consider what the constellations of curriculum look like from above, below, and across the world. Each of the concepts in this article—experience, place, ecology, narrative, currere, social justice—are stars on their own, but in bringing them together and connecting them they become a constellation, a waypoint for future conversations. Each star of a constellation may shine on its own, but it is through their connection that these constructs gain form and become a new waypoint.

I draw the distinction between waypoints and centre-points to recognize (a) the inner and outer realms of experience on the curricular journey—the parts we create imaginatively and those we share, (b) the differences between place and space—understanding that space is more centralized, constructed, and frequently cosmopolitan, whereas waypoints are conceived as more contextual, local, and naturally occurring. Space in a curricular sense is often connected to temporality and referred to as a pressure—we do not have enough space in the curriculum, it is crammed, jammed, full. Conversely, we do not need to make time or space for place—because we are already there, already connected, already existing within. Our oldest waypoints have been natural landmarks, and our oldest knowledge told through stories—the reordering of experience through currere and consideration of the commonplaces presents a new constellation, drawn here through the concepts of experience, place, ecology, social justice, and narrative. In looking backward, forward, inward, and outward to locate myself on the curriculum journey—this waypoint connects me as a teacher and learner to concepts (subject matter), and culture (milieu). By bringing together seven key concepts of curriculum and connecting them through a keyword response (Enmeshed), I offer a new conceptual and temporal waypoint, from which to draw upon, explore, and create narrative networks for navigating transcultural curriculum futures.

The next waypoint: Curriculum commonplaces to chart new constellations

as I locate myself at this waypoint along the curricular journey, the words I bring to the curricular conversation are mine, and not mine. My perspectives are individual, collective, and limited: I am a part of all I have seen and met along the journey thus far, but I have more of you to meet, more to learn, and more to know. At some point in time I may wish to change these words, take them back, or replace them: because as we learn we grow. We grow out of particular words and ideas, and into others: we grow out of and into knowing. Currere acknowledges that knowledge can be partial and provisional, and the notion of waypoints recognizes that stopping points are places from which to navigate the next destination but are not an entire map.

The metaphor of waypoints recognizes that even as I stop along the journey, even if I am travelling alone, I did not get here alone. My story is intricately connected to and embedded in the stories of others. By definition a story contains at its most basic level a plot, setting, and characters—none of which can function as a narrative in isolation. Narrative is connected and it connects. Stories have long been conveyors of human values and a valued currency of human exchange, and intercultural connections that bring together the sharing of stories recognize the importance of narrative as a conveyor of self and society. Before we had theory we had narrative--it has been a vehicle for transmitting our cultural pasts and capturing our cultural presents and its enduring nature reveals its potential as a tool for shaping a journey through culture, with education, into the future.

For curriculum maps to be mutually intelligible, we need common navigational tools for the journey, the course, the currere. Shared stories that revisit key curriculum concepts in connection with one another can provide future direction. By identifying key concepts, situating them within the field, and connecting them narratively, this paper creates a waypoint for others to do the same. Teachers, learners, scholars are invited to select and story their own curricular experiences with the nineteen constructs—aesthetics, becoming, complexity, currere, discourse, ecology, ethics, experience, hermeneutics, imagination, Indigeneity, narrative, normativity, place, poetics, representation, social justice, standards, and temporality (Wearing et al., 2020)—to create their own waypoints. Transcultural, contextualized, relational, individual responses that connect curricular constructs can simultaneously broaden and deepen our collective understanding, and create new constellations: new narratives about key concepts in curriculum can serve as waypoints along the journey to curricular centre-points past, present, and future. At this waypoint, let us consider how—through inclusive and comprehensible approaches—scholars can bring learners into the curriculum conversation and create new waypoints that highlight our responsibility for learners’ desired futures.

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About the author(s)

Marcea Ingersoll is an Associate Professor in the School of Education and a member of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Narrative at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Building on her experiences as an international teacher and teacher-educator, Dr. Ingersoll’s scholarly work is situated at the crossroads of curriculum, narrative, teacher education, and international schools and their communities. E-mail: marcea@stu.ca

Orcid

Marcea Ingersoll  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8704-4863>

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