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The Curriculum of the Post-method Era: Curriculum Situated Within Dialogue

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Abstract: The word dialogue and its different interpretations lend themselves well to translating the three principles of the post-method pedagogy promulgated by Kumaravadivelu. This paper aims to propose that the post-method curriculum must be one in which the key concepts are redefined dialogically. Dialogic education means teaching for dialogue as well as teaching through dialogue. In such a dialogic curriculum, an urgent need is felt for authentic, critical, and reflective dialogue at all levels of education, within the classroom walls and beyond that. It has been represented that the post-method curriculum is transformatory and emancipatory. However, the road to this transformation passes through transaction and dialogic deconstruction and reconstruction. The post-method curriculum must be developed through dialogic interaction between theorists and practitioners.

Key words: Curriculum, Post-method era, Dialogue, Dialogic, Critical

1. Introduction

Curriculum is essential for providing a clear framework for teaching and learning. It is usually designed to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to succeed and prepare them for their future societal roles. The curriculum encompasses the content, skills, knowledge, values, and assessments deemed essential for learners' intellectual, social, and emotional development. Curriculum development is a local, regional, or state/provincial process that encompasses different processes such as needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, methodology, and evaluation.

Curriculum is generally viewed as something undertaken by authorities with years of experience in the school system. Teachers and students have been mostly neglected in the process. However, successful practice in the classroom is inextricably linked to curriculum development and everyday decisions about what to teach and how to teach.

The post-method era in language teaching marks a significant shift from traditional, method-driven approaches. This era is characterized by a greater emphasis on learner autonomy, personalization, and the use of authentic materials. The curriculum of the post-method era reflects these changes, focusing on developing learners' communicative competence and intercultural understanding.

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1 Definition of Curriculum

This section provides the definition for curriculum. The term 'curriculum' has a long history that dates as far back as the ages of education writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Bobbit, and Fredrich Froebel (Print, 1993). The curriculum defines what we teach and what students are expected to learn. It is "a plan for learning" (Richards, 2001, p. 5). Richards defines it as "a blueprint for teaching and learning that specifies the goals, content, methods, and assessment procedures used in a particular educational program" (2001, p. 5).

The proliferation of global formal education has necessitated a precise and appropriate definition of "curriculum." However, there are disputes over the definition of curriculum arising from different orientations taken by different scholars. Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) provide definitions of curriculum from different perspectives. From a linear behavioral point of view, a curriculum is defined as a plan for achieving goals that involve a sequence of steps. In a humanistic view rooted in Dewey's definition of education, the curriculum includes the learner's experiences: almost anything planned in or outside school is part of the curriculum. Academics define curriculum as an academic discipline with distinct foundations, knowledge domains, research methodologies, theories, principles, and practitioners. Their focus is primarily on theoretical rather than practical considerations.

Furthermore, curriculum can be conceptualized in terms of subject matter (e.g., mathematics, science, history) or content (the organization and assimilation of information). Curriculum development should consider the specific contexts of schools and the socio-cultural backgrounds, class, ethnicity, gender, and religious affiliations of students. This definition is most often practiced in schools with subject-specific curricula rather than universities, which emphasize generic principles of curriculum that cut across and encompass most if not all, subjects.

2.2 Orientations in curriculum development

Curriculum development is the systematic planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of learning experiences that facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It involves creating a framework that guides teaching and learning activities, ensuring that students achieve the desired educational outcomes. Curriculum development is an ongoing process that requires collaboration among educators, administrators, and stakeholders to create a relevant, engaging, and practical curriculum.

Orientations in curriculum development provide frameworks for conceptualizing and guiding the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs. They serve as guiding principles that shape the content, pedagogical approaches, and assessment strategies employed in curriculum development. By understanding the different orientations, educators can make informed choices about the most appropriate approach to meet the specific needs of their students and the educational context. Schubert (1986) proposes four curriculum orientations: intellectual traditionalism, social behaviorism, experientialism, and critical reconstructionism (pp.14–18). For the intellectual traditionalists, the cultivation of life, education, moral character, and spiritual development of children is achieved through students' exposure to and learning of tremendous and classical works and disciplinary knowledge. For social behaviorists, the answers to a curriculum and instruction model may be 'amoral' (Schubert, 1997, p. 20), emphasizing practical learning, using successful individuals and their related attributes as models, and teaching specific skills for achieving success. For experientialists, personal experience and discovery are the basis for learning. They aim to develop students' critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and creativity. They believe that curriculum and instruction are designed and implemented for children, facilitated by educators, and enacted by those who might like to explore and understand the meanings of interests and natural life phenomena or concepts. For critical reconstructionists, curriculum is a tool for social change and reconstruction. Students develop critical consciousness, empathy, and commitment to social justice by addressing social issues and injustices through education. Such curriculum development might need to consider school contexts, socio-cultural, class, and ethnic background of students as well as their gender and religious affiliation. The first two orientations in curriculum development locate the locus of authority external to the classroom, primarily with scholars and experts who analyze exemplary scholarship and successful individuals. In contrast, the experientialist and critical reconstructionist orientations posit that the locus of authority originates primarily from children and youth. These orientations emphasize questions about the type of individuals students aspire to become, including their life goals, character, moral principles, and spiritual values.

Similarly, Miller and Seller (1985) propose three distinct orientations that contribute to comprehending the philosophical, psychological, and societal contexts that shape curriculum development. These orientations are: 1. Transmission Orientation: Rooted in the philosophies of Thorndike and Skinner, this orientation prioritizes transmitting knowledge, abilities, and beliefs from educators to students. 2. Transaction Orientation: Inspired by the ideas of John Dewey and Jean Piaget, this orientation views learners as rational individuals capable of resolving problems. Education is conceptualized as a discussion between students and curricula, whereby students construct knowledge through dialogue. 3. Transformation Orientation: Traced to Rousseau's philosophy, this orientation emphasizes personal growth and societal transformation, paying

particular attention to ecological interconnections and the holistic nature of phenomena. The transmission orientation aligns with traditionalist and behaviorist perspectives, focusing on transferring knowledge. The transaction orientation resonates with experientialist approaches that emphasize the learner's active participation in knowledge acquisition. The transformation orientation aligns with critical reconstructionist theories prioritizing transformative practices and social justice.

2.3 Post-method curriculum orientations

This study starts by reviewing the major tenets of the post-method era in order to develop a more systematic approach to curriculum planning and identify the post-method curriculum orientations within these categories.
In reviewing the significant changes in TESOL methods during the past years, Kumaravadivelu identifies three critical shifts: firstly, the shift from communicative language teaching (CLT) to task-based language teaching (TBLT); secondly, the shift from method-based pedagogy to post-method pedagogy, and thirdly, the shift from "systemic discovery to critical discourse" (2006a, p.70-71). It was in the 1990s that the L2 profession entered the so-called post-method condition, marking the end of the search for a global pedagogy applicable to all learning contexts. This flexibility and localization led to the beginning of a post-syllabus condition in which, according to Shaw (2009), language learning and teaching were becoming increasingly local, nimble, relevant, and specific, supported by developments in CALL, the move to a learner-centered focus, and the deployment of authentic target language texts and artifacts, (Shaw, 2009, p. 1266).

It is illuminating to begin the discussion by reviewing the fundamentals of the post-method pedagogy proposed by the major contributor to the ferment. Kumaravadivelu (2001) views post-method pedagogy as a three-dimensional system consisting of the pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility. These principles, or pedagogies, summarize how the post method defines L2 teaching.

The parameter of particularity "seeks to facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy based on a true understanding of local, linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 537). According to Akbari (2008, p.633), the pedagogy of practicality aims to give equal importance to practitioners' theories vis-à-vis those of theoreticians by empowering teachers to construct their theory of practice by encouraging them to "theorize what they practice or practice what they theorize" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p.37). Hence, there is a shift from a top-down process to a bottom-up process. The pedagogy of possibility relates language teaching to the process of social transformation by tapping "the sociopolitical consciousness that students bring with them to the classroom" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b, p. 59). Possibility is the parameter that allows learners, teachers, and teacher educators to be socio-politically conscious and to search for identity formation and social transformation. Here, language teaching acknowledges the critical dimension of the profession.

In sum, the parameter of "particularity" contributes to the context-sensitive aspect of the pedagogy; the parameter of "possibility" takes into account students' and teachers' individuality; and the parameter of "practicality" establishes a direct link between theory and practice questioning the status of expert knowledge.

3. Argument and Discussion

3.1 The curriculum situated within the dialogue

The essence of all post-method principles promulgated by Kumaravadivelu can be compacted into a curriculum within the dialogue. Inspired by Bakhtin (1986), who sees all life as situated within dialogue, and Freire (1970), who argues that dialogue is something we must come to through a process of conscientization facilitated by his pedagogical method of 'problem-posing' education, and attending to the claim made by Morrison (cited in Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, p.78) who declares that "If there is to be a prescription for a curriculum theory, authenticity, discovery, diversity, novelty, multiplicity, fecundity, and creativity should be the hallmarks of the refashioned field" (pp. 487– 488), a dialogic curriculum is proposed in this presentation for the post method era.

Dialogic education encompasses a diverse range of definitions and methodologies. As defined by Burbules and Bruce (2001, cited in Wegerif, 2007, p. 34), Dialogue transcends its role as a pedagogical approach and is multiform in nature. Its different forms embody fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge, inquiry, communication and the roles and ethical responsibilities of educators and learners within these processes. Based on the different shades of meaning of the word dialogue and their contribution to the post-method discussion, a dialogic curriculum is put forth in which key concepts are redefined dialogically based on different interpretations of the word dialogue.

3.2 Particularity, authentic dialogue, and negotiated syllabus

Bakhtin (1984, cited in Kohonen, 2006) posits that human existence is inherently dialogic, asserting that "to live means to participate in dialogue." He underscores the pivotal role of dialogue in language acquisition. According to Sutton

(2009), one interpretation of Bakhtin's concept of dialogue is as a process of collaborative inquiry involving an ongoing exchange of questions and responses. Dialogic discourse extends beyond everyday conversations and pertains to the creation and comprehension of meaning in both spoken and written language (Wegerif, 2006). Thus, individual language and knowledge develop primarily through social interactions. Wegerif (2007) emphasizes dialogic dialogue as a pedagogical approach that fosters classroom discourse through teacher-student interactions and the establishment of communities of inquiry. In this context, dialogue entails collaborative exchange and negotiation.

Applying this dialogic principle to curriculum development leads to a necessary shift of attitude in the underlying grounds for it. For centuries, the preferred curricula were typically those linguistically determined with structures as the core of the syllabus. The advent of the communicative approach led to the prominence of the learner's role in the teaching process and, as a result, the pedagogy of particularity. It was then believed that to have a coherent and well-functioning curriculum, all the participants' attitudes must be considered in all decision-making processes. It, in turn, led to the recent emphasis on curriculum as dialogue, interaction, and negotiation and the emergence of a negotiated syllabus.

Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 149) define a negotiated syllabus as a syllabus that involves the teacher and the learners working together to make decisions at many parts of the curriculum design process. It is a way of prioritizing the recognition of learner needs and particularity in that, according to Nunan (2004, p. 15), the information about learners and, where feasible, from learners will be built into all stages in the curriculum process. So, the content and the operational features are open to discussion with the learners from the start of the program (Clark, 1989, p.133). A negotiated syllabus is thus an internally generated rather than an externally imposed syllabus (Clark, 1989, p.133). The result of this attitude was the curriculum enactment approach promulgated by Graves (2008). The quality of social interaction depends on the participants, all of whom equally contribute their time, turns, roles, and knowledge of the subject matter in a shared agenda, which van Lier (1996) called "contingent interaction" (pp. 175-180). From van Lier's (2004, p.81) ecological perspective, learning (or language development) means participation in processes that lead to higher or better processes. He emphasizes environments in which "contingent and dialogical forms of collaborative dialogue are encouraged in which learners can develop a sense of actual self-other dialogue, and hence identity and voice in the L2 (van Lier, 2004, p.81). Contingent interaction arises from multifaceted levels, including interactions between instructors and learners, as well as among learners themselves. Within a sociocultural perspective of language learning, learners' linguistic, cognitive, and affective domains significantly influence the extent and quality of social interaction.

Authentic dialogue forms the foundation of negotiated, particular, and dialogic curricula. Two essential conditions underpin authentic dialogue. The first one is respect for others. It involves acknowledging the other individual as a genuine person and subject rather than an object. As Kohonen (2006) posits, dialogue inherently requires openness to and respect for the other person, recognizing their uniqueness, and fostering genuine interaction and meaning-sharing. It also means openness to the subject, aiming at understanding the diversity of views and opinions. Thus, the pupil becomes a partner in a reciprocal relationship in which his/her individuality and otherness are accepted and respected while the aim is shared understanding. The other condition is authenticity. Van Lier (1996, p. 19) defines it as a genuine desire to learn that motivates the learner rather than some external force compelling it. In such a pedagogical stance, the teacher aims at authenticity in human encounters, relating to the pupils as persons with their own identities. The teacher who has assumed such a relationship encourages his/her students to strive for authenticity in their language learning experiences. Authenticity and otherness are the two sides of the same coin, and both take us to the second dimension of our dialogic curriculum, the pedagogy of possibility and critical dialogue. Kumaravadivelu states, "a pedagogy of possibility is also concerned with individual identity."

3.3 Possibility, critical dialogue, and the curriculum of transformation

The importance of catering to particular teaching and learning contexts in the post-method era coincides with the third significant shift in TESOL pedagogy: the shift from systemic discovery to critical pedagogy. Kumaravadivelu (2006a) explains this shift as a critical turn concerned with connecting the word with the world, considering language as an ideology that extends the educational space to the social, cultural, and political dynamics of language use rather than limiting it to the phonological, syntactic, and pragmatic domains of language usage (p. 70).

A Critical, possible, and transformatory curriculum springs from transactions of Bakhtin's sociolinguistic dialogic theories, Dewey's theories of experience and education, and Freire's (1970) theories of critical dialogue. In the postmodern era, curriculum development prioritizes discourses illuminating the curriculum's multifaceted impact on human existence, societal structures, and the environment. This emphasis extends beyond the traditional focus on planning, implementing, and evaluating decontextualized and value-neutral educational events and trivial content (Slattery, 2006). Thus, Slattery (2006) contends that postmodern curriculum becomes an aesthetic endeavor and a pursuit of deeper understanding that fosters justice, empathy, and ecological sustainability. In this context, the boundaries between the dominant and marginalized are blurred, and all learners have equitable access to knowledge. Educators and students engage with texts not in isolated silence under the unquestioned authority of a central figure but rather as active participants in a collaborative process of

meaning-making.

A pedagogy of possibility is a critical pedagogy that emphasizes empowerment and transformation through careful consideration of classroom input and interactions. Proponents of critical pedagogy recognize education as an inherently political and power-laden activity. They aim to expose its discriminatory foundations and work towards reforming it to ensure the inclusion and representation of marginalized groups based on gender, race, or social class (Giroux, 1983). In this context, Smith (2003) posits that the most challenging endeavor for curriculum development in the new millennium is to develop the deconstruction ability and cultivate the ability to critically examine and scrutinize unquestioned assumptions. Without this capacity, curriculum work will face significant limitations, even when driven by ideals of justice and equity. The key lies in overcoming these barriers and transforming the thinking that constructs them. Post-method pedagogy proposes that language learning is not only an end itself, but also a means to an end—the end being liberation. Academic autonomy empowers learners to become effective, while liberatory autonomy develops their critical thinking abilities (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

The concept of possibility takes us back to Freire's dialogic vision of an education that empowers individuals, inviting them to express themselves and shape their realities. Freire's pedagogy was grounded in anti-authoritarian, dialogical, and interactive principles, aiming to explore issues of power dynamics for students. Integrating social and political critiques of everyday life into the curriculum was central to his approach and at the core of the curriculum, regardless of the official content. He emphasized that education should not focus solely on knowledge transmission but on the collaborative and collective production of knowledge rooted in students' lived experiences. The traditional banking model of education, as Freire (1984, cited in Keesing-Styles, 2003) described it, is characterized by domestication, while the liberating or humanizing approach fosters critical thinking and action. Freire's pedagogy aims to develop learners who possess critical thinking abilities and actively engage in critical action.

The maintenance of criticality in language classrooms requires two essential conditions. Firstly, it necessitates a teacher-learner relationship characterized by mutual recognition and respect, where both parties are acknowledged as "knowing subjects" engaging in dialogue (Freire, cited in Keesing-Styles, 2003). The lynchpin of Freire's approach was critical conversation (Lyn Hartley, 2007). Freire believed education should focus on dialogue rather than a highly structured curriculum. A symbiotic relationship is created between the learner and the educator that hinges on mutual respect and working collaboratively and tries to give voice to the people who typically do not have a voice. In order to implement the pedagogy of knowing, attention must be directed to architecture, the classroom milieu, the natural environment, and the inner environment of students and teachers. It demands teachability on the part of the teacher and a relationship between the teacher and learners as peers to transform lessons into dialogues. These align with van Lier's (2004, 85) ecological perspective on educational democracy, which focuses on building democracy from the bottom up. The democratic educator instigates democratizing processes at the interactional level in the classroom, and who knows at the same time what the constraints are that operate in the setting in terms of power and control.

3.3 Practicality, reflective dialogue, and retrospective syllabus

A pedagogy of practicality pertains to the relationship between theory and practice. Kumaravadivelu argues that the teacher's theory informs the teacher's practice and not that of some theorists far removed from the classroom situation. Kumaravadivelu points out that it is through teachers' research, which is motivated by their "own desire to self-explore and self-improve," that teachers develop the ability to construct their theories for their particular context and put them into practice in their particular classroom (2001, p. 550). Thus, the pedagogy of practicality leads to the pedagogy of possibility for teachers.

Teacher autonomy is a fundamental tenet of the post-method era (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Within the post-method paradigm, teachers are autonomous researchers and decision-makers. This autonomy encapsulates teachers' inherent knowledge in pedagogical practices and acting autonomously within institutional constraints and curricular limitations.

Post-method teachers are also reflective as they observe their teaching, evaluate the results, identify problems, find solutions, and try new techniques. Zeichner and Liston (1985) argue that a reflective teacher assesses his works' origins, purposes, and consequences at all levels. In pursuing their professional self-development, post-method teachers perform teacher research involving the triple parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility. Van Manen (1977 cited in Salmani, 2006, p. 179) outlines three levels of reflectivity: technical, practical, and critical. In order to reflect such a radical role assigned to teachers, Giroux characterized them as "transformative intellectuals. A reflective teacher as a transformative intellectual thinks beyond the need to improve his instructional techniques. Being reflective draws on the need for asking "what" and "why" questions to open up the possibility of transforming everyday classroom life. By being critical, a teacher can see his actions in relation to the historical, social, and cultural context in which his teaching is embedded. Reflective teaching entails a 'retrospective syllabus' that deliberately engages in reinterpretation. Candlin (cited in Hall, 1997, p.14) suggests that the syllabus should be written as a retrospective record of the social outcomes within the classroom. To be transformative and emancipatory, reflection must lead to change and a redefinition of principles and concepts.

Reflective teaching is said to be patterned in such a way as to enable teachers to develop the pedagogical habits and skills necessary for self-directed growth and to prepare them to actively participate, individually or collectively, in their making of educational decisions (Salmani, 2006, p.179). Reflection can have two different meanings; on the one hand, reflection involves the relationship between an individual's thoughts and actions. On the other hand, it involves a relationship between an individual teacher and his membership in a larger collectivity called society. This study refers to these two concepts as dialogic reflection and reflective dialogue. Dialogic reflection entails a self-reflective discourse, a discourse with one's self that explores potential reasons. While various reflective practices, such as journaling, diary keeping and autobiography, have been implemented, they have faced many criticisms. To address these limitations and to transform reflection into a community empowerment tool, collaborative participation, and reflective dialogue are advocated. Dialogue fosters connections through shared discourse, bridging moments of reflection and action together (Shor, 1992, cited in McInerney and Univer, 2002). Díaz-Maggioli (2004) recognizes the detrimental effects of isolated research in exacerbating a culture of isolation and proposes collaborative practice among colleagues. By examining educators' daily experiences and routines, they can uncover hidden meanings and patterns that may positively or negatively impact student learning. The subsequent dialogue forms the foundation for a situated theory of education tailored to specific student and teacher needs in that school context. By a postmodern perspective, curriculum experiences must be open to reflection, necessitating recursive interpretation. This interpretation requires collaborative interpretation among teachers, who respect the interplay of individuals and anticipate challenging and rewarding experiences (Marsh, 2004). Once engaged in this hermeneutic dialogue, teachers engage in forthright interpretation, clarification, deconstruction, and critical inquiry across all areas of study (Marsh, 2004, p. 23).

4. Implications: Toward a dialogic curriculum

In the post-method era of language teaching, the curriculum is no longer seen as a fixed set of materials and activities delivered to learners in a standardized way. Instead, the curriculum is increasingly being understood as a dynamic and flexible entity that is situated within dialogue. The word dialogue and its different interpretations lend themselves well to a translation of the three principles of the post-method pedagogy promulgated by Kumaravadivelu. Hence it has been proposed that the post-method curriculum must be one in which the key concepts are redefined dialogically.

Dialogic education means teaching for dialogue as well as teaching through dialogue. In such a dialogic curriculum, an urgent need is felt for authentic, critical, and reflective dialogue at all levels of education, within the classroom walls and beyond that. This dialogic view of the curriculum emphasizes the importance of communication and interaction between teachers and learners in the design and implementation of the curriculum. It recognizes that the curriculum is not imposed on learners from above but co-constructed through negotiation and collaboration. Such dialogic curriculum aims to educate a democratic citizen, which, according to van Lier (2004, p.80), has the three following characteristics: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented in an educational context that is mainly characterized by "community cooperation rather than corporate competition" (Slattery, 2006, p. 108). Such a dynamic community fosters critical thinking, discovery learning, theological inquiry, autobiographical analysis, ecological sustainability, aesthetic wide-awakeness, social justice, compassion, and ecumenism. (Slattery, 2006). Curriculum development becomes more like a communal conversation (Lee,2020) with a "holistic process perspective rather than reductionism" (Slattery, 2006, p. 109). It results from political, economic, social, moral, and artistic interactions. It highlights the importance of critical engagement with content, teacher autonomy, and reflective practices in language education. It values dialogic reflection, collaborative participation, and situated learning theories in empowering teachers and students and creating meaningful educational experiences. Referring back to the three orientations mentioned at the beginning of this study, it can be concluded that the post-method curriculum is transformatory and emancipatory. However, the road to this transformation passes through transaction and dialogic deconstruction and reconstruction. The post-method curriculum must be developed through dialogic interaction between theorists and practitioners.

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