



CURRICULUM STUDIES WORLDWIDE

Curriculum Challenges and Opportunities in a Changing World

Transnational Perspectives in
Curriculum Inquiry

Edited by

Bill Green · Philip Roberts · Marie Brennan



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Curriculum Studies Worldwide

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CONTENTS

1	Transnational Curriculum Inquiry in a Changing World	1
	Bill Green, Marie Brennan, and Philip Roberts	
Part I Decolonising the Curriculum		
2	Development, Decolonisation and the Curriculum: New Directions for New Times?	25
	Crain Soudien	
3	Smoke and Mirrors: Indigenous Knowledge in the School Curriculum	41
	Georgina Tuari Stewart	
4	The <i>Mestizo Latinoamericano</i> as Modernity's Dialectical Image: Critical Perspectives on the Internationalization Project in Curriculum Studies	57
	Daniel F. Johnson-Mardones	
5	Refusing Reconciliation in Indigenous Curriculum	71
	Kevin Lowe, Nikki Moodie, and Sara Weuffen	
6	Towards a De-Colonial Language Gesture in Transnational Curriculum Studies	87
	Weili Zhao	

**Part II Knowledge Questions and Curriculum
Dilemmas**

- 7 Bringing Content Back in: Perspectives from German *Didaktik*, American Curriculum Theory and Chinese Education** 105
Zongyi Deng
- 8 Knowledge Beyond the Metropole: Curriculum, Rurality and the Global South** 123
Philip Roberts
- 9 Curriculum Making as Design Activity** 141
Yew Leong Wong
- 10 Curriculum–*Didaktik* and *Bildung*: A Language for Teaching?** 159
Silvia Morelli
- 11 Ethical Vexations that Haunt ‘Knowledge Questions’ for Curriculum** 173
Lew Zipin and Marie Brennan

Part III Nation, History, Curriculum

- 12 Curriculum History and Progressive Education in Australia: A Prolegomenon** 197
Bill Green
- 13 Curriculum and Literacy Policies in a Context of Curriculum Centralization: The Case of Brazil** 217
Rita de Cássia Prazeres Frangella
- 14 Relocating Curriculum and Reimagining Place under Settler Capitalism** 231
Michael Corbett
- 15 Reconceptualizing the Multilingual Child: Curriculum Construction in Luxembourg** 253
Sabrina Sattler

Part IV Curriculum Challenges for the Future

- 16 Distal Confabulation and Transnational Literacy:
Complicating “Complicated Conversation”
in Curriculum Inquiry** 271
Patrick Roberts
- 17 Curriculum for Teacher Formation: Antagonism
and Discursive Interpellations** 287
Veronica Borges and Alice Casimiro Lopes
- 18 Curriculum Design in the Anthropocene: Challenges
to Human Intentionality** 303
Lucinda McKnight
- 19 From the Fossil Curriculum to the Post-Carbon
Curriculum: Histories and Dilemmas** 325
John Morgan
- 20 Afterword** 347
Julie McLeod
- Index** 351

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 6.1	Esthetic-Ethical Excerpts of the Suyang Text	95
Table 13.1	PNAIC's training structure	225



Transnational Curriculum Inquiry in a Changing World

Bill Green, Marie Brennan, and Philip Roberts

INTRODUCTION

What role does curriculum scholarship have to play in the strange and difficult times we find ourselves in? This book provides one response to that question. Bringing together contributions from across the world, it lays out a state of the art, and also an agenda for the future, with regard to what we describe here, explicitly, as transnational curriculum

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inquiry. At the same time, it is important that this be seen as a thoroughly situated articulation, epistemologically and spatially, as embodying a view from somewhere. The book follows the 6th World Curriculum Conference, held in Australia in late 2018, as the latest in a series of triennial conferences under the auspices of the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS), dating back to 2000. From the outset, IAACS's project has been to 'internationalise' the field, particularly from the perspective of its origins in the American scene—something itself complicated by what might be described as the 'Empire' speaking back, with curriculum scholars elsewhere in the world increasingly re-articulating their own distinctive and sometimes dissenting versions and visions of curriculum inquiry. That project has been an important and generative one, opening up the field and offering new understanding and imperatives, as well as challenges and opportunities, for curriculum scholarship worldwide, albeit that it still remains shaped and enabled nationally, at least historically.

This Introduction is written within the 'lock-down' time of COVID-19, an unprecedented global pandemic which has already changed the world, irrevocably. In some ways, the pandemic is a particularly stark manifestation of globalisation, and perhaps a defining condition for education in the age of late modernity and late capitalism, realised in new regimes of testing and accountability, in 'traveling' policy formations, in new 'edu-scapes' and supra-national reform imperatives, in increasingly global-academic mobility. Each of us has been in some manifestation of 'lockdown' and 'social isolation' in recent months, like our contributors, our colleagues, with most of us engaged in writing curriculum inquiry, in one form or another, or otherwise 'doing' curriculum. The opportunity arises therefore, and the challenge, to consider what it is to be engaged in *curriculum* praxis and scholarship, in work that is imagined and realised under the sign of 'curriculum' at this time—to ask, again, what *is* curriculum? What is curriculum inquiry? What *constitutes* curriculum inquiry? What *counts as* curriculum inquiry? What makes it curriculum? Undoubtedly the curriculum field is a broad church, and as others have noted, there is little to be gained in setting too strict a limitation on what it refers to and contains. But there is real value, looking forward, in asking such questions, if only to promote a heightened reflexivity in our conduct and our sense of ourselves as a scholarly community—a 'discipline'.

Here in Australia, for instance, a striking feature of this most recent period (April–June, 2020) has been formal government emphasis on keeping children and young people out of and away from schools. This has not meant closing schools, however, and the concomitant turn to various forms of home-schooling, distance education and online learning, as a means of providing for some measure of continuity in ‘normal’ curriculum and schooling, has meant new challenges for parents and for teachers. Little articulated, as yet, is that all this provides an excellent opportunity to rethink normative or institutionalised understandings of curriculum and schooling in their normal, ‘grammatical’ form—including the very coupling of curriculum and schooling. What does ‘curriculum’ do *for* and *to* teaching and learning? What do sequence, continuity and development mean in this regard? What ‘boundaries’ and ‘thresholds’ pertain to knowledges as they move from one context to another? Etc. These and other questions are directly pertinent to the distinctive professional and intellectual expertise of the curriculum specialist, or the curriculum scholar. And yet in Australia there is little recognition, as yet, of the challenge *and* the opportunity presented here for curriculum inquiry as a field of expertise and specialist knowledge. All the more reason, then, to encourage greater self-awareness on the part of curriculum scholars, not only in Australia but elsewhere as well, because it is more than likely that similar or related things are happening across the world, as Business as Usual is interrupted and perhaps even disrupted. Clearly, there are increasing debates, worldwide, about the purposes of education institutions, and of education itself as an institution. Concurrently, global protests around the Black Lives Matter crisis perhaps indicate that we may be entering a new phase of decoloniality in settler states such as the USA and Australia. All such shifts raise potential and probing questions for curriculum work and curriculum inquiry in universities and schools.

All this is why, in such a changing and tumultuous context, this book seeks to provide a range of accounts of contemporary curriculum thinking and activity, as a demonstration of the informed, critical curriculum mindset, at a momentous time in global history. In what follows, we shall firstly outline the conference occasioning this book—bearing in mind that while it is not a ‘conference proceedings’, it continues conversations from that event. An exploration of some of the major issues emerging from these conversations, as well as from other recent developments and debates in the field at large, is then presented. Finally, we provide an

overview of the book itself, across the various chapters, indicating some of the thematic links between them, and reviewing the project of the book as a whole.

THE MELBOURNE CONFERENCE—CONTINUING THE IAACS PROJECT

The 6th World Curriculum Studies Conference (December 2018) was co-hosted by the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) and the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), working together with IAACS. This was the first time that the event had been held in Australia, following previous IAACS conferences in Baton Rouge (2000), Shanghai (2003), Tampere (2006), Cape Town (2009), Rio Di Janeiro (2012) and Ottawa (2015). The Conference's formal title was 'Transnational Curriculum Inquiry: Challenges and Opportunities in a Changing World'—as it turns out, a felicitous framing for the event as it played out.

Three Keynotes and three Featured panels, as well as symposia and individual paper-presentations, were distributed over three days. The Keynotes were presented by Julie McLeod¹ (Australia), Zongyi Deng (Singapore)² and Crain Soudien (South Africa), as scholars of international standing, and these presentations were very enthusiastically received, with each speaker presenting from their own work in explicit dialogue with the designated theme of that particular day. An innovation at the conference was the Featured Panels, held over the three days, with invited panellists for each day drawn from a range of countries, including New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, China, Cyprus, Chile, Norway and the USA. The themes of the Panels were as follows:

- 'National Curriculum: International Perspectives'
- 'Teachers' Work/Lives and Curriculum Making'
- 'Indigenous & Decolonising Challenges in/to Curriculum Theory'

¹ See McLeod (2019), for an account drawing on similar material to Julie's Keynote.

² He has since moved to University College London in the UK. It was important in the conference planning, however, that at least one of the Keynotes was from the Asian region.

It was conceived from the outset that the conference overall would be structured in accordance with these topics, as *meta-themes*, under the umbrella of its focus on transnational curriculum inquiry in a changing world. This was not seen as a free-for-all—we wanted to take this thematic structure seriously, and we did³; and so too did those who presented at the conference. The conference was conceived as not only an opportunity to showcase curriculum scholarship but also specifically *as* curriculum scholarship—in particular, extending lines of inquiry initiated two decades previously.

Major traces of the Panels remain in the concept and organisation of this book. They clearly raised a number of important and even crucial issues in and for the field more generally.⁴ Particularly significant in this regard, we believe, was the Panel on ‘Indigenous and decolonising challenges in/to curriculum theory’, which we saw as potentially very generative and especially appropriate for a conference of this kind held in Australia, where the state of Aboriginal education is surely a scandal, and an indictment of the nation as a whole. This is notwithstanding the point that other countries have histories just as troubled and as disturbing, regarding their indigenous people. This is truly a worldwide phenomenon, and a major curriculum challenge in and of itself. We were very keen therefore to highlight this issue at the conference and, more importantly, the perspectives and standpoints associated with it.

While this was the first time that this triennial conference had been located in Australia (or the ‘Antipodes’), it was the third time that it was held in the southern hemisphere.⁵ This seems to us significant, in terms of what it means for recent interest in notions such as ‘southern theory’ and the ‘Global South’. Practically, holding this international conference in Australia immediately raised issues of distance and travel, which clearly have an effect on participation, and hence on registration, and the financial and organisational struggles that bedevilled the conference from the outset—something perhaps worth re-considering in the future.

³‘We’, that is, the conference organising committee.

⁴Note that the ‘national curriculum’ Panel was followed up by a symposium published in the journal *Curriculum Perspectives* (Vol. 29. No. 1, 2019), comprising short papers on national curriculum developments and debates in England and Wales, Brazil, Norway, and Australia.

⁵The others being Cape Town (South Africa) in 2009 and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 2012.

A final point: the conference itself was well attended, in the end, and by all reports a successful academic-intellectual event. There were 242 registrations from all over the world, with 149 paper-presentations and 15 symposia (within which, a further 52 individual presentations⁶). Participants came from 32 countries, including Australia, with not surprisingly the largest representation, followed by China. There was a significant contribution from South-East Asia, and also from South America, while attendance was relatively small from Europe, Africa, and fewer from North America than usual. Yet this was a truly multi-national conference, and an important moment in the transnational curriculum field. The scholarship on display was wide-ranging and illuminating, and often inspirational, from the Keynotes through the Panels to the symposia and the papers. This is clearly evident in the conference as text, in both its commodified and lived forms, although of course the latter lives on now simply as memory. That was a key reason, in fact, for why we were keen to follow up the event with a material record⁷ of some kind, a marker, something manifested here in this book.

While the Melbourne conference was its originating forum, the book is not simply a ‘conference proceedings’. Rather, it comprises invited contributions from conference participants, based on both their abstracts and their presentations. Those who responded to these invitations then worked on writing their chapters, in accordance with the terms of reference of our book proposal. With the book understood in its own right, we were concerned that it be as inclusive and as representative as possible, hence a genuine exercise in transnational curriculum inquiry, as a contribution to the curriculum studies field.

TRANSNATIONAL CURRICULUM INQUIRY?

What is it to seek to understanding curriculum transnationally? This has been a central organising question for the IAACS project from the outset,

⁶Many of these were either already published (e.g. Loh et al., 2018) or in press, as special issues and the like (e.g. ‘Curriculum Making as Social Practice: Complex Webs of Enactment’, *The Curriculum Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 2).

⁷While there have been several formal book-length publications associated with this conference series (e.g. Ropo & Autio, 2009; Truett, 2003), overall this aspect doesn’t seem to have been much considered, or seen as worthwhile and even strategic. That seems a great pity, and perhaps a missed opportunity—hence our own concern to follow up the Melbourne conference with this book.

and more particularly for Bill Pinar’s curriculum research program over recent decades. That program has undoubtedly been a productive and important one, and directly formative for IAACS. This is not to say that they are identical—it is crucial, in fact that critical distinctions are made in this regard, not the least because of the need to insist on the specificity of the Association and the integrity of scholarship. Pinar’s work here traces back at least to the first half of the 1990s and the monumental volume *Understanding Curriculum* (Pinar et al., 1995), which contains a chapter entitled ‘Understanding Curriculum as International Text’. The notion of ‘curriculum-as-international-text’ has become an important reference-point for much subsequent work—including that of IAACS and especially its conference series. This focus has been described recently in terms of ‘internationalism’ as a “third paradigm (2000–present)” in US curriculum studies, following on from “curriculum development (1918–1975)” as the first phase “and then reconceptualist curriculum (1976–2000)” (Jupp, 2017, p. 22). It should be noted that the reference here is to curriculum studies in the USA, as a nationally distinctive field (see also Pinar, 2013). We need to differentiate between the view of curriculum studies historically identified or associated with North America and the view from elsewhere, variously conceived—a shift in perspective, and perhaps the emergence of a programmatic *multiperspectivism* in curriculum inquiry, and a concern with not just ‘positionality’ but ‘situatedness’ as well (Reynolds, 2017, p. 1). *Where in the world is one speaking from?*—with all of these (‘where’, ‘the world’, ‘speaking from’, ‘who’) to be thematized. As is becoming increasingly recognised, it is important to distinguish between a more or less hegemonic (North) American ‘voice’ and the voices of others, from elsewhere. It matters greatly that curriculum is produced in multiple places and spaces.

Hence it is useful to consider how internationalism is understood, and its relations with terms and concepts such as globalisation, cosmopolitanism and transnationality itself. A distinction has been made, strategically and operationally, between ‘internationalisation’ and ‘globalisation’, on the grounds that the latter seems to be associated with a tendency towards homogenisation and standardisation, whereas the former preserves and indeed affirms differences and particularities. Hence, from the outset the emphasis has been, for IAACS, on “support[ing] a worldwide—but not uniform—field of curriculum studies” (Gough, 2004, p. 7). This has meant insisting, in practice, on the continuing relevance of the nation. Pinar (2010, p. 2) argues “the primacy of the

nation in curriculum reform”, proposing that “[p]rerequisite to understanding curriculum internationally is ... the primacy of the particular case” (p. 14)—in this instance, the nation. Hence: “Internationalization denotes the possibility of nationally distinctive fields in complicated conversation with each other” (Pinar, 2010, p. 3). The Australian curriculum scholar Noel Gough provides a particularly illuminating perspective on this matter. As he writes:

Curriculum studies is itself a form of contemporary cultural production through which the transnational imaginary of globalization may be expressed and negotiated, although it is more common for curriculum scholars to speak of the ‘internationalization’ of the field. (Gough, 2000, p. 88)

Elsewhere, he makes the point that “those of us who have been explicitly engaged in projects of internationalizing curriculum inquiry have addressed questions of how local knowledge traditions in curriculum inquiry can be performed together in a variety of ways” (Gough, 2014, p. 93).

Within such a perspective, the question must be asked: What about the nation? Does the nation still matter? Do questions of nationhood, nationality and even nationalism continue to be worth asking in contemporary (transnational) curriculum inquiry? As scholars such as Pinar (2010) and Reid (2000) indicate, historically and traditionally curriculum work has been conducted within the purview of the nation. This remains even now the case, as evidenced by the recent volume on the Australian Curriculum (Reid & Price, 2018) and a special issue of *The Curriculum Journal* on developing a new curriculum for Wales (Vol, 31, No. 2, 2020), under the heading ‘Educating the Nation’. Given Pinar’s (2010, p. 2) assertion of “the primacy of the nation in curriculum reform”, his focus has been on ‘internationalization’ rather than ‘globalization’:

Not only does internationalization point to the national context in which global politics is enacted but, for my purposes, the term underlies the promise of the next stage... in curriculum studies. *Internationalization denotes the possibility of nationally distinctive fields in complicated conversation with each other.* (Pinar, 2010, pp. 2–3—his emphasis)

As he writes: “Understanding the national distinctiveness of curriculum studies enables us to underscore how national history and culture influence our own research” (p. 14). It is worth noting here that mass-popular schooling, as a modernist-imperial project, was introduced into colonies and former colonies, often as part of ‘civilising the natives’. So curriculum, even if not an official ‘national curriculum’, has been inevitably tied to the self-reflexive development of citizens (‘in the national interest’, so to speak). Similarly, universities in many countries, including across China, India, the continents of Africa, Australia and South America, grew largely along European post-Humboldtian lines which emphasised national cultures alongside the science subjects. Indeed, universities became symbols of ‘modernity’ and means of entry into nation status in many instances. Their curriculum, too, took on elements of the scientific ‘world view’, which flowered along with developing country-specific cultural practices—poetry traditions and political induction in China, for example.

Indeed, if we accept that curriculum is one central mechanism whereby we tell ourselves who we are, then “[t]elling ourselves who we are involves many facets of identity, but the one that has been most clearly associated with the institution of curriculum is the question of what nation we belong to and what it means to belong to that nation” (Reid, 2000, p. 114). Moreover: “[n]ational curriculums”—by which is meant, here, simply those formal curricula arising in different countries—“are cultural artifacts, in the same way that national songs, stories, and festivals are cultural artifacts”, and “[e]ven if they use the same basic materials, what results from those materials has unique meaning for individual nations” (Reid, 2000, p. 114). That view might be countered by observing that we live now in a global era, and that nations are no longer as seemingly monumental as once they were. Nonetheless, as Pinar and various others argue, nations still matter in and for curriculum inquiry. They continue to provide a bedrock for much of what is recognisable as curriculum and schooling, as situated selections from national culture. ‘National curriculum’ thus constructs the nation as much as being shaped by earlier forms of nation. Simultaneously, ‘national curriculum’, whether official policy or not, now enrolls countries in new forms of globalism, through uses of ‘big data’. Supra-national testing regimes establish the ‘global’ as a ‘space’ of comparison of nations, in a hierarchical stratification of performances of student ‘achievement’, tied to economic performance.

Speaking from somewhere continues to matter, and this includes nations, among other ‘places’⁸, within a complex, dynamic, global field of flows and spaces, ‘scapes’ (Appadurai, 2010). Yet speaking from somewhere implies not only, or simply, a geographic notion of place. Curriculum development for both schools and universities has long been associated with dominant forms of nationalism and national identity formation. While curriculum contestation in many sites has raised questions of which knowledges and whose knowledge is included, these remain problematic. The early 1970s debates in the edited collection *Knowledge and Control* (Young, 1971) highlighted this for England and France, through the sociology of knowledge via the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein. More recent contestation includes the ‘decolonise the curriculum!’ protests in South African universities from around 2015. The locus of enunciation has shifted.

In particular, it becomes increasingly generative to take account of what, appropriating Gramsci, might be called the ‘Southern Question’—the notion of the Global South, as a new and perhaps necessary consideration in and for transnational curriculum inquiry. This is crucial to questions of power, positionality and situatedness, as well as ‘enunciation’ (Macedo, 2011). There are two aspects of this. One is to acknowledge a longstanding historical view of the world in terms of a dominant North and a subaltern South, based in politico-ethical considerations of modernity and colonialism. Connell (2007) has provided a provocative and somewhat controversial argument in this regard, organised around the motif of ‘southern theory’. This is appropriately referenced here, as an avowedly Australian perspective on knowledge and social theory. “[S]ocial thought happens in particular places” (Connell, 2007, p. ix): it is produced somewhere, and it is directed and oriented somewhere—often somewhere else. Connell’s Australian location remains significant, even if the audience is potentially a worldwide one, especially if that location is understood biographically and historically—as it was for Connell (e.g. p. 203), and it is for us, as curriculum scholars. Curriculum inquiry happens in particular places, too. Of course, writing from the Antipodes, as we do, does not definitively shape and inform our account, or give it any particular epistemological warrant. What it does do is indicate

⁸Both those subordinate to the nation (e.g. states, provinces, etc.) and those superordinate to it (e.g. region).

where we are speaking from, i.e. the periphery of the curriculum field, worldwide.

This is partly why the issue of the ‘South’ is relevant here.⁹ We understand the project of transnational curriculum inquiry as an attempt to re-balance the scene, to allow for and indeed to actively promote voices and perspectives from elsewhere, as a matter of principle. It is important, nonetheless, not to misrecognise the ‘South’ as a literal geo-political reference. Rather, it is a metaphor. Hence: “... ‘the South’ and ‘the Antipodes’ are more of a state-of-mind or condition, rather than a place” (Stewart et al., 2017, p. 62). As de Sousa Santos (2018, p. 1) points out, with particular relevance to curriculum:

It is an epistemological nongeographical South, composed of many epistemological souths having in common the fact that they are all knowledges born in struggles against capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. They are produced wherever such struggles occur, in both the geographical North and the geographical South.

That is, recognising the ‘South’ is a political statement. In this regard, de Sousa Santos (2014, 2018) has pointed to the ways in which knowledges other than the Euro-centric have been excluded and refused: what he terms the construction of an “abyssal line”, dividing the world. On one side is ‘reality’ and the existence or invisibility of anything beyond the ‘abyss’. As this plays out in curriculum terms, knowledges from the colonised cannot be recognised, or seen, let alone included. Hence, de Sousa Santos develops the term ‘epistemicide’, marking the violence of that exclusion, which he sees as built into the institutions of the colonies and of new nations—including their schools and universities. In Australia, the deplorable treatment of indigenous peoples, killing off hundreds of languages and rich cultural knowledges, is still very much an open issue, a ‘wound’ (Grant, 2016). Australia’s more recent geo-economic relations with Asia adds to the sharp irony, historically, of its White Australia Policy, so long a centrepiece of its national identity. de Sousa Santos’ (2014, 2018) concern for the recovery of and reconstructions of “epistemologies of the South” thus become a means of, and opportunity for,

⁹Notwithstanding criticisms such as that of Papastergiadis (2017), who has argued that “[t]he emancipatory ideas that were embedded in the idea of the South have faded” (p. 85).

curriculum renewal for schools and universities, and for communities, more broadly. In discussing the necessary moves towards cognitive justice through educational institutions, De Sousa Santos points to new ecologies of knowledges—not to gain new generalisations or universalisations but rather, to engage in pluriversities, erasing the abyssal line in the process of engagement across knowledges (de Sousa Santos, 2018). There is, of course, much more involved in curriculum renewal along such lines, as Paraskeva (2016) intimates.

A further aspect of the ‘Southern’ question is pertinent here is the issue of language, or more particularly, of ‘English’ as the means by which transnational curriculum inquiry has largely (hegemonically?) been conducted to date. What problems emerge when this is problematised?—when what is sometimes called ‘anglification’ is reckoned into account, in considering matters of globalisation and internationalisation? Paraskeva (2016, p. 209) is sharply emphatic in this regard, referring to “... the linguistic imperialism framed by the English language and culture as an aspect of [curriculum] genocide”. As Jupp (2017, p. 7) writes: “Through to the present, efforts to internationalize curriculum studies have generally advanced the coloniality of knowledge through using ‘international’ English as lingua franca”. He further notes: “This use of English emphasizes the assumption that curriculum studies’ internationalization represents an expansion of the US-centered and Anglophone field’s third paradigm” (p. 7). Here he points to the more constrained understanding of ‘internationalisation’ as part of the ‘advancement’ of American curriculum studies, which has been already alluded to. This has been a marked feature of the IAACS program as well, with the conferences all conducted in and through English as the primary means of communication and exchange, although this certainly doesn’t mean that other languages haven’t also been in play. The same must be said of books such as this one, published in English as it is, even though it features scholars writing from South America and elsewhere, for whom English is not their first language (L1), or indeed their preferred language.

What is important here, however, is the question not so much of the language of transnational curriculum inquiry but of opening it up to other epistemologies, ontologies and cosmologies, and other forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. This might be described, following Derrida, as a necessary supplement. It is not about displacing Western knowledges (and even English-language scholarship, contemporary or classical), rather of building new relationships across diverse knowledges. How this might

be done is, of course, another matter altogether. Jupp (2017, p. 13) calls for “... a South-led transnational curriculum studies South-North global dialogue that emphasizes Southern voices, epistemologies, and readings of the Global North from the periphery”. This might be best conceived as a crucial initial phase, with hopefully a recalibrated discourse to subsequently emerge, as a re-energised feature of the curriculum field, worldwide.

So how best to understand what we have named here transnational curriculum inquiry? Calling for a new emphasis on notions of mutuality, negotiation and cosmopolitanism, Jupp (2017, p. 9) refers to “the emergent transnational curriculum studies field”. For us, however, ‘transnational curriculum inquiry’ has greater resonance and value, certainly for our purpose here, in introducing and framing this book. This is partly because it was introduced early on by our fellow Australian, Noel Gough, as the Foundation Editor of IAACS’s journal *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry*. As he wrote in his inaugural Editorial, regarding “the *idea* of transnational curriculum inquiry”, this is about more than just producing yet another journal or generating more publications: “it is also a site for research and for producing intercultural understanding and actively valuing cultural diversity” (Gough, 2004, p. 7). This creates new opportunities “for reconceptualising curriculum work that can be generated by considering how we should respond to, and progressively consolidate, the formation of new publics – democratic, multicultural, and transnational citizenries” (p. 4). Furthermore, it involves “reconceptualising curriculum inquiry as a postcolonialist project” (p. 7). We endorse that understanding. While this book is by no means wholly to be read along such lines, overall, it is certainly intended as a gesture in that direction, and as such, a call for further work along such lines. How it is to be understood, and realised, remains a project still to be fully and properly articulated.

THE BOOK, THE READER AND A FINAL NOTE

The book that you are reading comprises nineteen chapters¹⁰ by authors from around the world, and more specifically from Aotearoa New Zealand, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, England, Hong

¹⁰Plus an Afterword, by Julie McLeod, commenting on the volume as a whole.