



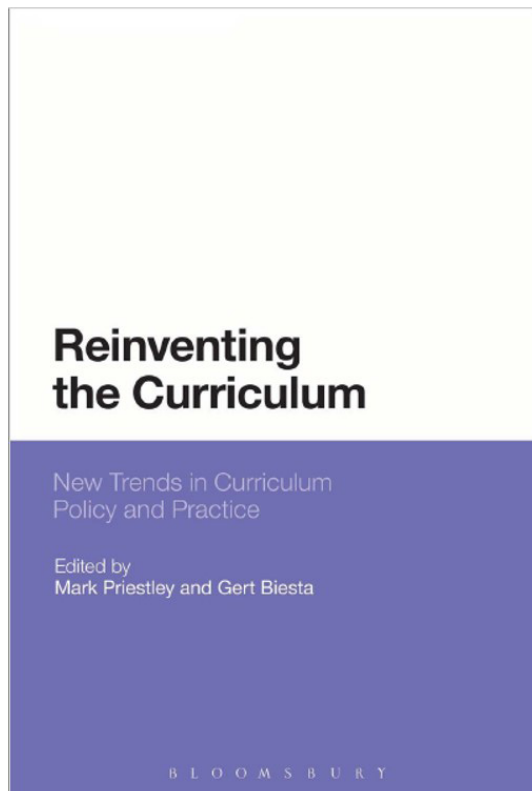
Book Review

What is New on Curriculum Policy and How it Affects Curriculum Studies?

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Book title	: Reinventing the Curriculum: : New Trends in Curriculum : Policy and Practice
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In many countries the development of curriculum always in relation to the politic and the intervention of the government. Furthermore, it brings complexities in practices when the teachers try to implement the national-official curriculum in schools' context because there are many tensions among the interest of the government, the teachers' ability to perceive and develop the curriculum in a contextual way, the slow and conservative bureaucracy in the district level, and the empirical social phenomenon and changes in the field. For instance in Indonesia, the rise of the national curriculum of 2013 is not academic in nature, but more political and we could see how the government takes many issues from the international trend to enrich the content of the curriculum and its implementation (see i.e. Alhamuddin, 2019; Mitra & Purnawarman, 2019; Perdana, 2013).

The government's role in developing the national curriculum is interesting, especially because it has full power and established system to force the national schooling system to accept and implement the official curriculum by enacting several policies. For me, it is also interesting to questioning whether the government perceived the curriculum as a field of studies or only as a public policy? In the Indonesian context, this issue is important, because it is considered as one of the reasons for the stagnation of Curriculum Studies (Subkhan, 2019). According to this issue, the edited book by Priestly and Biesta (2013) is important, because it elucidates the recent de-

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velopment of curriculum policy and how it has been practiced and developed in many ways in many countries throughout the world. Their book entitled "Reinventing the Curriculum: New Trends in Curriculum Policy and Practice" (2013) is relevant to know the position and role of curriculum policy in the development of curriculum at a national level and its affects on Curriculum Studies as well.

Although the starting point of this book is in Scotland, all issues and discourse reflect the global trend of curriculum policy. Priestly and Biesta (2013, pp. 229–230) identified several major trends in curriculum development, i.e. (1) the rebirth of seemingly "progressive education" in the form of student-centered learning approach fueled by constructivist learning theory, (2) placing teacher as a central agent of curriculum-making, and (3) tendency to formulate curricula in terms of capacities and competencies. But all these trends have its problems according to the critical analyses by Priestly, Biesta, and other contributors in this magnificent works. Thirteen authors—including Priestly and Biesta—criticizing the Scotland national curriculum as a developmental project since the early 2000s and most of them found that Scotland's problem was also a problem faced by many countries throughout the world.

SCOTLAND EXPERIENCE

This book divided into two parts, from chapter 1-7 focusing on Scotland Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), and chapter 8 onwards gave more attention to an international perspective on curriculum policymaking. In this context, Scotland national curriculum emphasis on four capacities that should be developed by the young people, i.e. (1) successful learners, (2) confident individual, (3) responsible citizens, and (3) effective contributors (Priestly & Biesta, 2013, p. 3). In the first part of the book, Biesta, Priestly, Humes, Reeves, Ecclestone, and Tisdall depict the curriculum from its early stage of the curriculum development to the implementation and analyze critically into its philosophical basis of these curriculum aims.

In chapter 2 for instance, Humes illustrates the importance of Scotland's political context to understand how politics, especially politicians and the Scottish' ideology, dominating and controlling the process of curriculum making. Humes said that this process brings CfE under-conceptualized since its beginning process be-

cause lack a strong theoretical basis and allows such supra-national organization like Organization for Economic and Development (OECD) directing the aims of curriculum and education under global economic pressure (Humes, 2013, pp. 15 & 30). Next, in chapter 3 Biesta and Priestly reveal that CfE shifting its orientation toward outcome-based education to encourage the student to be a skilled person. Critically Biesta and Priestly consider how this tendency will be new behaviorism because the learning practices will be focusing on external performance and only give little attention to the inside process e.g. understanding, judgment, reflection (Biesta & Priestley, 2013, pp. 35–44).

Moreover, in chapter 4 Reeves critically analyze the term Successful Learners—as one of Scotland's curriculum aims. This term underpinned by constructivist learning theory, in Indonesia we are more familiar student-centered learning approach. But he found that this notion is not followed by the change in student-teacher power relations. In fact, the outcome-based orientation of CfE has set the learning objectives tightly that should be mastered by students, so students do not have enough power and control their learning pace. In other words, CfE limited their choice and more encourage the learning processes to meet with such competencies or capacities. Reeves concludes that Successful Learners is oppressive toward students (Reeves, 2013, pp. 69–70). Such criticism from Humes, Priestly, Biesta, and Reeves reveals that Scotland's CfE is problematic because it only has little potential and space to support emancipation and the development of critical and democratic agency (Biesta & Priestley, 2013, p. 47).

If we look at the Indonesian national official curriculum, orientations such as the influence of global pressure, outcome-based curriculum, and student-centered learning are obvious. After the enactment of curriculum 2013 and OECD release their Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report in 2015 and 2018, Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture encourages to enrich the national curriculum design and its implementation with higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) that has been perceived as the most important factor to leverage the PISA's ranking among other countries (Fanani & Kusmaharti, 2018; Pratiwi & Fasha, 2015; Sofyatiningrum et al., 2018). Moreover, since 2004 Indonesian national curriculum also declared as based on competency, and since the early 2000s, the term learning and student-

centered flooded and dominating our educational discourse in Indonesia. Moreover, there are many stories in the implementation of the curriculum and its learning approaches, including its criticism (i.e. Ahmad, 2014; Muthoharoh, 2017; Perdana, 2013).

When I read this book, I realize that the problem faced by Scotland is the same problem face by many countries throughout the world, including Indonesia. This book has made it easier to see the hidden relationship and influences among several factors toward curriculum policymaking. It also shows to us how ideology, politicians, global pressure, learning theories, economics interest, shaping the curriculum, and of course the future of our Childs.

TRENDS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Moreover, in the international context, Sinnema and Aitken (2013) show trends in curriculum development in two categories, i.e. (1) common goals and (2) common emphases. The first common goals consist of four considerations, i.e. curriculum as a lever for improvement, curriculum serving equity goals, curriculum as future-oriented, and curriculum coherence. The second common emphasizes competencies, values, pedagogy, student agency, partnership, and reduce prescription.

In this context, I will underline the important trend: the relation between curriculum policy, teachers, and pedagogy. It is much interesting because the important role of teacher on curriculum making and implementation face many barriers come from the curriculum design itself and the socio-cultural context around them. While on the one side there were professionalization programs come along with the curriculum reform in Scotland, but in the other side, the top-down and centralized curriculum-making orientation make teachers do not have enough space to improve their professionalism because the curriculum has set its strict target that should be achieved by the students in a certain time. Menter and Hulme (2013, pp. 181-182) add more that it was New Managerialism within the schooling system in the form of 'performativity' regime who lead the teaching practices more focused and straight to the targets, and in reality, it was increasing control and reduce teacher's autonomy.

So, the trend of the curriculum as a lever for improvement does not have enough power

to professionalize the teachers at all. Too many barriers come from the curriculum policy itself that prevent the teachers to be an agent of change at school context. In Scotland, the orientation to revitalize the teachers' position as agents of change at schools' level in curriculum making processes facing de-professionalization policy through the regime of testing, inspection, and performativity (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2013, p. 203). Moreover, the pedagogical concern related to the curriculum reform seems has a strong link to outcome-based curriculum, whatever the term of the pedagogical theories, i.e. problem-solving, real-world exploration, practical activities, and inquiry-based learning. These pedagogical orientations explicitly apparent in such policy statements in Northern Ireland, Wales, and New Zealand. Of course in other countries, there is a lack of attention to the pedagogical domain in curriculum-making, for instance in the United State (Sinnema & Aitken, 2013, pp. 150-152).

Bringing this issue into our Indonesian context when the Ministry of Education and Culture enacted the 2013 national curriculum, it was also clear that the amount of effort to succeed in the curriculum reform was failed. There are several causal factors here, i.e. wrong strategies on professionalizing the teachers through several centralized instant training programs, the lack of support from the district supervisor and school management, and the overloaded administration tasks of teachers. Even until 2019 most of the teachers still complained about their administrative burden tasks that decrease their professionalism and pedagogical responsibility, and it is the reason why the government reduces the lesson plan into one page only ("4 Pokok Merdeka Belajar Nadiem," 2019). Moreover, in our policy statement, there is also an explicit pedagogical orientation such as student-centered, scientific learning, etc. and recently in late 2019, the government launched new teacher jargon, "mover teacher" (Guru Penggerak) ("Mengenal Konsep Merdeka Belajar dan Guru Penggerak," 2019).

But I am in doubt that the jargon will work properly if there are no adequate strategies, i.e. by reducing the policy that constrained and burdened the teachers and organizing high-quality teacher professional programs. I agree with Priestly et al. (2013, p. 197) who said that teacher professionalism strongly depends on their social structures within which they are situated. In the Indonesian context, the problems on teacher

professionalism are complex. But according to Priestly and Biesta's works, the curriculum policy should be address properly by giving teachers more power to contextualize the national curriculum and create a more appropriate pedagogical approach. Unfortunately, in the Indonesian context, there are too many regulations that legitimize the curriculum (Subkhan, 2019), so it will be difficult to change the curriculum policy because always in relation to politics and the hegemonic status quo around the government that always seen education and curriculum traditionally.

Practically, this book gives much insight that what had happened in Scotland and many countries around the world already happen in Indonesia, so we become aware that behind such new orientation toward outcome-based curriculum, student-centered learning approach, personalized learning, and teacher as agents of change there are many stories about how the curriculum policy become the main barriers to achieve the main aims of education to be more democratic. We also know that the superiority and domination of supra-national organizations such as OECD are inevitable, and of course, we are in Indonesia have several additional factors such as racialism, ethnic conflict, religious fundamentalism, corruption, etc. We also know that every single idea (e.g. successful learners, student-centered) has its philosophical and theoretical basis that should be addressed properly. Through this book, Priestly, Biesta, and others give as enough ammunition to examine our national curriculum deeply and comprehensively.

CURRICULUM STUDIES

At the end of this review, I will bring this magnificent work into Curriculum Studies discourse, because I believe that what has been done by all authors of this book reflect and depict the major phenomenon of Curriculum Studies that not only emphasizes on the practical and empirical domain of curriculum, but also its theoretical underpinning. In this case, such an empirical study always has the potential to enrich the theoretical discourse on the field of Curriculum Studies. In the Indonesian context, its important was doubled, because the stagnation of the development of Curriculum Studies (Subkhan, 2019) need such rigorous example of study to reveal the clear and inevitable relation among curriculum, teacher professional development program, pedagogical orientation, political inte-

rest, global pressure, and such ideological basis.

In my previous brief review on the apparent development of Curriculum Studies in Indonesia, most of the works of curriculum scholars only as a guidance for teachers or teacher candidate student in Teacher College, and only a few publications gave much attention to develop curriculum as a field of studies critically (Subkhan, 2018). The wide range and complex relation of curriculum and the socio-cultural structures around it will expand our very basic understanding of curriculum that it is not merely related to the content and subjects that should be master by students at schools. Unfortunately, I always meet with several colleagues—including who works in Teacher Colleges—who erode the basic theoretical understanding of curriculum as a field of studies by confine it only as a taught subject for students and perceived that curriculum should be studied only in this limited scope.

There is still existing an old-fashioned view that each discipline or field of studies in education is strongly separated by several fixed object of studies. For instance, most of them exclude such studies about teacher's perspective and behavior as part of Curriculum Studies, they said that it was psychological studies, so curriculum scholars should not take it as a focus of study. For them, there are clear and strict border between Curriculum Studies and Psychology as well as with Sociology, Politics, Economics, etc. No doubt that despite its clear influence from the politics, economics and global pressure on curriculum policymaking, it seems that there are only a few attentions gave by curriculum scholars to its sociological and psychological domain in Indonesia. "Reinventing the Curriculum" shows to us how the practice of curriculum policy-making has many stories behind it, and this deep, critical and comprehensive analysis only possible when the authors use broad perspective related to the field of psychology, sociology, politics, etc.

This book can be a good model of how to study our own national curriculum development and policy using many perspectives, i.e. philosophical, historical, political, socio-cultural. It also will be a good example on how to develop Curriculum Studies in the Indonesian context by expanding the study of the curriculum into its policy, political context, economics and global pressure, socio-cultural and historical background, and philosophical basis. It seems that the only way to develop Indonesian Curriculum Studies is by conducting such research and study,

not by limiting the scope and hold strongly the old-fashioned and traditional view of curriculum as a strict discipline. Through this book, Priestly and other authors have succeeded on revealing the new trends in curriculum development and policy by giving much critical analysis and future orientation of the study. For curriculum scholars, reading this book will be a good intellectual exercise amidst the explode of many references on 21st-century skills, industrial revolution 4.0, etc. that have been accepted taken for granted.

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