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Abstract:

Curricula across the world is often designed for children by adults. Anyone regardless of age is more likely to participate in an activity if they have a say in what happens. If curriculum-making is activity of learning, how might children contribute ideas, perspectives, collectively decide and co-construct curriculum. Ontologies, theories and ideas which enable children's participation in local curriculum-making are discussed, including Indigenous ontologies, UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, Reggio Emilia approach, emergent curriculum, mosaic approach, national early childhood curricula, deliberative democracy, home and community learning, place-based education and posthumanism.

Keywords: children's participation, children's rights, collective will formation, curriculum-making, deliberative democracy, emergent curriculum, place-based curriculum, posthuman curriculum, rhizomatic curriculum

Children's participation in local curriculum-making

Children's participation in curriculum-making as the co-construction of learning content is the focus of this chapter. As children scarcely (if at all) have a voice in national curriculum development, the examples discussed are about curriculum-making at the local level, that is, with a class or school. Beginning with Indigenous origins of curriculum-making, influential thinking on children's participation in local curriculum-making is described somewhat chronologically, noting key influences such as the conception of mass schooling, UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, Reggio Emilia preschool approach to curriculum, emergent curriculum, mosaic approach, children as citizens, rhizomatic thinking, place-based curricula, and posthumanism.

Origins of curriculum-making

Entangled relations with all entities have informed curricula making for millennia, without demarcating children, curricula and education. By looking to the world's longest living continuous culture, traditional Aboriginal Australian culture (Behrendt, 2016), in which curriculum-making is and has been a shared inclusive relational and organic activity with all entities (plants, skies, waterways, land, climate and animals) they co-exist with (Martin, 2016; Proud, Lynch, à Beckett & Pike, 2017) for more than 50 000 years (Devlin, 2016). Children learn with the environment and community, alongside family members sourcing tucker (fish, meat, fruit, vegetables and bush honey) and telling stories (Marika, 2000) to come to know lore and kinship for living peacefully and sustainably with other living beings (Pascoe, 2014). Across in the lands that are now called New Mexico, Tewa science educator Gregory Cajete (1994) describes Pueblo ways-of-knowing-in-being (believed to be more than 1500 years (Duwe, 2020)) as an ecology of relationships porously extending to space and time to holistically be of the world rather than in. And in Aotearoa (now known as New Zealand), Māori, one of the youngest cultures in the world (estimated to be 700-800 years (Anderson, 2016) enact curriculum-making in which children are accorded mana (respect) and freedom to participate within everyday activities of their whānau (family) and hapū (tribe or clan), accompanied by their Elders imparting myths and legends of the cosmos (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1950). Curriculum-making unfolds through responsibly knowing with nature with wise others (Elders).

In western ontologies, the conception of mass schooling from the industrial age led to the regulation of curricula through state authorities. The liveliness of curriculum-making that Franklin Bobbitt (1921) described as human activity "in the light of actual human needs" (p. 607) was perhaps more widespread across the globe through master-apprenticeship model prior to the establishment of mass schooling.

Curriculum in contemporary times

In formal schooling, the people involved are mostly students and teachers, with some contribution from families and community members. Across recent decades, curricula has shifted from input regulated to output regulated (Leat, Livingston & Priestley, 2013), that is, from specification of content to specification of skills, via measurement of performance data (e.g., see Wilkins, 2011). Such cultures of performativity (e.g. Keddie, Mills & Pendergast, 2011) erode teacher and student autonomy. Curriculum in these neoliberal agendas is firmly under the control of government education policy (Biddulph, 2011). In neoliberal societies, curriculum is nationalised, and standardised to meet global performance targets. The very people school curricula are designed for scarcely have any say or are silenced (Brooker & MacDonald, 1999).

Children's participatory contributions in curriculum-making has been minimally permitted and explored in western education, as it is widely understood and accepted that teachers have the responsibility of curriculum-making (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) as regulated by state education

authorities (Levin, 2007). Formal schooling has in the most been constructed as what Paulo Freire (1970) referred to as a banking model in which teachers narrate subject content and students passively listen as containers to be 'filled'. He proposed instead that such a hierarchy be countered with partnerships between students and teachers and the world through merging of roles (student-teacher and teachers-students) in problem-based curriculum-making. Curriculum studies scholarship further theorises and advocates for greater agency in curriculum-making, through seeing curriculum as co-created inquiries (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998), a lived experience (Dewey, 1938/1998; Aoki, 2005), as an account of teachers and children's lives together in schools and classrooms (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992), as a space of emergence (Biesta, 2004; Jones & Nimmo, 1994), as a rhizomatic practice (Gough, 2007; Olsson, 2009; Chan, 2011), and as a process of living in and through the world with more-than-human entities (Ross & Mannion, 2012). These ideas of curriculum-making, open up voice and agency for children.

Child as social actor

The creation and endorsement of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) has provided a strong case for children's participation in matters that affect them, in particular Article 12 - right to express their views on all matters affecting them and for their views to be taken seriously. Article 13 (the child shall have the right to freedom of expression) furthers a case for children's contributions, and Article 30 (to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language) sanctions each child's diverse participation and contribution. Following the endorsement of the UNCRC in 1989, sociological interest in and attention to children and childhood has grown and formed burgeoning scholarship in sociology of childhood which proposes a view of "children as competent social actors" (James & Prout, 1995, p. 78) "who shape their identities, create and communicate valid views about the social world and have a right to participate in it" (McNaughton, Hughes & Smith, 2007, p. 460). In essence, children are understood as agential, inviting understandings of children as contributors and co-constructors of curriculum-making.

Children as project protagonists and collaborators

The preschools of the Italian province Reggio Emilia have attracted global attention and forged a movement in early childhood education known as the Reggio Emilia approach, for a shift away from a planned curriculum to projects that are co-created between children, teachers and families through a pedagogy of listening and a pedagogy of relationships (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998). Loris Malaguzzi (1998) (founder of the philosophy that informs the Reggio Emilia preschools) and Carla Rinaldi (2006) (world leading pedagogist on Reggio Emilia preschools) both explain that the term curriculum (and its associated terms) are not suited for representing the understanding of learning or knowledge in their practice. Instead they propose the word project to describe knowledge and learning creation at Reggio Emilia preschools. Children are understood as protagonists and collaborators in the curation of knowledge-building projects, with teachers as partners, who lead curation of children's ideas, interests and activities. Though many romantically idealise the practices of the Reggio Emilia preschools, it is important to realistically recognise the limitations of what children can actually decide on. Preschools are institutions governed by local and national rules and policies, and "even in a democratically functioning preschool, the child structurally has a specifically subordinated position" (Hočevár, Šebart, & Štefanc, 2013, p. 485).

Children as curriculum informants

One interpretation of the Reggio Emilia preschool practices was coined emergent curriculum by Betty Jones (Jones & Nimmo, 1994) and employed in early childhood education in other countries (e.g., Australia and the US). In an emergent curriculum, "children's interests, worries, desires, understandings, and activities of learning interest expressed by both children and educators are

generated as the beginning points for curriculum” relying on “developmentally appropriate” standards and “well-developed observation skills of early childhood teachers” (Wien & Stacey, 2000, p. 1) to plot in a webbed pattern as documentation of the program/pathways of learning (Nimmo & Jones). Teachers actively look for and follow the interests of the children (Biermeier, 2015), documenting a curriculum as it unfolds. The use of the word curriculum is not synonymous with the intentions on the Reggio Emilia approach, as noted earlier. Emergent curriculum is one particular idea of looking to children’s interests, ideas and activities as starting points for curriculum-making. Children are positioned as informants but not necessarily active decision-makers of an emergent curriculum,

A suite of research tools known as the mosaic approach developed by Allison Clark and Peter Moss (2001, 2017) in the UK for gathering children’s perspectives in the Listening to Young children’s study has also been applied as mechanisms for children’s input into curriculum-making. The intent of the mosaic approach as a multi-method, polyvocal approach is to “enable young children to create a ‘living picture’ of their lives” through a range of modes of expression (role play, photos, tours, map making) that are accessible to young children beyond reliance on the written or spoken word (Clark & Moss, 2001, p. 12). Ideas from the Reggio Emilia approach and the New Zealand early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki of listening to children and engaging with them as active competent participants were influential in the development of the mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2017). The mosaic approach has come to be known as a framework that enables “teachers to become the researchers of their own class in a flexible, adaptable and fun way that respects and celebrates children’s rights and strengths” (Rouvali & Riga, 2019, p. 999) offering a conduit between adults and children to discuss and negotiate meanings (Clark & Moss, 2005). Children’s perspectives of learning in the world are worked with in curriculum-making on the grounds that this is necessary for children to identify with the educational program, to attend to Brooker’s (2002) provocation that “unless adults are alert to children’s own ways of seeing and understanding and representing the world to themselves, it is unlikely that the child will ever manage to identify with the school’s and teacher’s ways of seeing” (p. 171).

Emergent curriculum and mosaic approach are informed by social-constructivism, which foregrounds collaboration in learning and a strengths-based approach to curriculum-making. Young children are positioned as providers of knowledge and co-constructors of meaning, with teachers as facilitators or opportunity providers rather than definitive managers (Chan, 2011).

Children’s participation in curriculum-making authorised in national curricula

Early childhood curricula in some nations such as New Zealand, Australia and Canada have authorised children’s participation in curriculum-making.

In Aotearoa, New Zealand, the Te Whāriki curriculum was launched in 1996 (updated in 2017) after five years of comprehensive community and sector development. A five-year development duration is a rarity in government-initiated policy, though as one of the curriculum writers, Helen May (2012), explains “it takes time to develop and implement a curriculum that is accepted, inclusive, meaningful and makes a difference for children”. In Māori language, Te Whāriki translates to ‘a woven mat for all to stand on’, offering a metaphor for teachers, families and children weaving curriculum patterns shaped by different cultural perspectives, ages, philosophies for a child centred curriculum that grows from children’s learning dispositions. Te Whāriki was a landmark curriculum as it was the first bicultural curriculum in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The curriculum foregrounds Maori knowledge and rights and children’s, as Tilly Reedy (Ngati Porou) (1995), a Māori partner on the development of Te Whāriki asserted: “Our rights are recognised and so are the rights of everyone else... Te Whāriki recognises my right to choose, and your right to choose too” (p. 13). Children’s rights scholar, Anne Smith (2009), described Te Whāriki, as taonga (treasure) encapsulating aspirations for children based

on children's rights. The curriculum has attracted global attention, with UK esteemed early childhood provision scholar, Peter Moss (2007) observing that through Te Whāriki New Zealand was "leading a wave of early childhood innovation" (p. 27).

The first national Australian early childhood curricula, the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments, 2009) drew inspiration from Te Whāriki. The framework explicitly attends to the UNCRC broadly and Article 12 explicitly with recognition of children's right to be active participants in all matters affecting their lives. When the framework was being developed, the first version welcomed children, educators and families as active, valued contributors to learning, with children's perspectives and agency in decisions respected and responded to (Millei & Sumsion, 2011). In the final version of the framework, children are described as active participants and decision makers, though all mentions of curriculum decision-making are firmly led by educators, such as "all children and families are respected and actively encouraged to collaborate with educators about curriculum decisions in order to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful" (p. 12) aligning more with notions of children as curriculum informants. A survey of Australian early childhood teachers in child care, kindergarten and pre-primary settings implementing the Early Years Learning Framework saw that authentic comprehensive engagement of young children in decision-making was limited, with many seeing making choices, one-off agendas as decision-making and did not mention including children in decisions that relate directly to curriculum structures (Hudson, 2012).

Another example of a national early childhood curriculum which welcomes children's participation in curriculum-making is the British Columbia Early Learning Framework first released in 2008 and revised in 2019 (Government of British Columbia, 2019). This framework also responded to the UNCRC and sociology of childhood and is framed on a "image of the child as capable and full of potential" (p. 3). Children are also recognised as decision-makers, in fact it is the only mention of decision in the curriculum document. Curriculum is defined as emergent and responsive from the union of children, adults, ideas, and materials, constructing knowledge "in ways that are local, inclusive, ethical, and democratic" (p.11). The British Columbia Early Learning Framework also implements the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to explicitly decolonise curriculum by honouring First Nation communities and knowledges and contributing to lasting reconciliation and self-determination for Métis children, families and Elders.

These progressive early childhood curriculum documents counter global emphasis on high-stakes assessment dominating schooling practice, policy and decision-making, though the uptake of children's participation in curriculum-making is on the most found in small pockets, driven by individual teachers who advocate for children's participation. The lack of resources, knowledge and relevant training on how to listen to children's voices and how to include them in the decision-making process have been noted as significant hindrances (Rudduck & McIntyre 2007), along with the continuously increasing curriculum workload reducing teacher ability to dedicate time to listening to children and children's participation (Rouvali & Riga, 2019).

Children as citizens in curriculum-making

Democracy as the participatory practice of citizens (Loenen, 1997) in education is not new, it has been discussed and theorised since its inception in the *polis* of Athens. An individualistic conception of democracy in education is based on the thinking of Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant (1784/1992), which translated into curriculum-making emphasises freedom of expression and choice for individuals. A social conception of democracy in education, based on the influential text *Democracy and education* (Dewey, 1916), emphasises group cooperation played out through

both children and adults considering the direction of actions in reference to others. A political conception of democracy in education, informed by Hannah Arendt's (1958/1998) theory of action views the first step as taking initiative. In curriculum-making, it is through actions, that people bring something new into the world that are responded to by others. It is in the interplay of initiated actions and supportive responses to those initiated actions that democracy is practised.

The positioning of teacher authority reduces student agency and enablement of full democracy in curriculum-making. As mentioned earlier Freire (1970) opposed the banking model of education. Instead he proposed that the relationship between teacher and student be transformed to be equitable, forming a collective in which the democratically minded educator consciously critiques ethics in participation. To Freire (1998), democracy in education is a respectful practice, where teacher and students collaborate and involves teachers respecting the autonomy, identity, and knowledge of students orchestrated through cultivating a balance between freedom and authority.

To authentically embrace children's rights and citizenship in curriculum-making it is not just about making choices, but rather citizenship practices of offering ideas, discussing, deliberating and reaching consensus with groups. To reach a collective decision requires the civic art of deliberation, that is, deliberative in the sense of deliberative democracy, striving for agreement about what to do (collective-will formation) (Samuelsson, 2016). Samuelsson recognises that attention to deliberative democratic skill building in education has in the most been minimal. Deliberative democracy in curriculum-making involves all members of a learning community having the opportunity to state claims, give reasons, listen to and reflect on others' suggestions and ideas, and work towards locating curriculum un-folding in collaboration with others. Tomas Englund (2006) offered a roadmap for deliberative democracy in curriculum-making working towards deliberative communication between students without teacher facilitation. Collective will formation processes are at the core of deliberative curriculum-making, that is, reaching joint agreement about what to do. Equitable participation of all parties (students, teachers, community members) in curriculum-making involves decision-making through collective-will formation. Deliberative curriculum-making has been found in empirical studies (e.g., see Andersson, 2012) to increase knowledge, articulation of points of view, civic capacity and participation. Children and young people are more likely to participate in the curriculum if they are active constructors of the curriculum (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2010) and their views have been included (Harris & Manatakis, 2013).

Children in rhizomatic curriculum-making

Application of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic philosophy as non-hierarchical, heterogeneous, multiplicitous, and acentered to curriculum-making offers a means for organic equitable unfolding curriculum-making. Through such an ontology, preconceptions of children/ students and teachers are abandoned with all participants in the learning community engaging in a dynamic ongoing negotiated process of transformational learning (Olsson, 2009). Rhizomatic curriculum-making is a shift away from essentialist curricula based on lack or deficit framing ("you don't know this or can't do this, so I need to teach you"). Curriculum-making approached from a rhizomatic onto-epistemology is multiplicitous, adventitious, nonlinear and nonhierarchical assemblages to other things. Children's desires, ideas, questions are listened to and valued, producing new and multiple thinking, action and creation. Children are not homogenously constructed, rather everyone, regardless of age, is understood and engaged with in a constant state of "becoming." The common becoming of human life is embraced. The British Columbia Early Learning Framework (Government of British Columbia, 2019) recognises learning as rhizomatic "moving in unexpected and surprising directions as children are in relationships with people, place, ideas, and materials" (p. 25). Rhizomatic curriculum making is therefore "impossible to predict, plan,

supervise or evaluate according to predefined standards” (Olsson, 2009, p. 117). Through rhizomatic curriculum-making, all involved form rhizomes with the world.

What spurs rhizomatic curriculum-making is desire, as the state of the unconscious forces and “the principal and primal force in everything, the immanent source of all production” (Chan, 2011, p. 117). Desire fuels curriculum-making produced through rhizomatic mapping. Chan suggests “we must consider the ways in which children’s desires can be related to curriculum making. Doing this would require us to think, question, and critically analyze our ways of knowing and to open ourselves to otherness, complexity, and multiplicity” (p. 118). The binary of teacher and student is dissolved, and rather the collective is understood as an education community (children, families, educators, community members) “working together in an ongoing process of constructing and reconstructing the problem” (Chan, 2011, p. 119). Decision-making participation of all parties regardless of age across all domains is welcomed, as opposed to behaviourist model curriculum-making in which teachers emphasise the importance of getting children to make the *right* decisions to follow social and community rules (Hudson, 2012).

Children’s curriculum-making with place, home and community

Attention to children and young people’s curriculum-making beyond classrooms is growing. Huber, Murphy and Clandinin (2011) reconceptualise children’s curriculum-making as inclusive of family and community members in home and community places, decentring curriculum-making as school-centric. In essence they propose curriculum of lives featuring children, teacher, family and community member identities. Ross and Mannion (2012) applying Tim Ingold’s (2000) notion of dwelling and see curriculum-making as a process of living in and through the world with more-than-human entities, beginning “with a concern with the material context of learning and/or the lived experience of participants” (p. 304), so that curriculum is a lived story.

Many across the globe identify with home and community-based curriculum-making and place-based curriculum-making. Through growing movements of un-schooling (learning through life at home and in the community) and place-based education, that may be enacted through forest schools, place-responsive pedagogies, place-conscious pedagogies and environmental education centres. Forest schools see curriculum-making unfolding between child and nature explorations. Place responsive pedagogies create curricula through teachers collaborating with students and others, as historically embodied subjects, who explicitly seek to create new place-based practices and place-based relations (Ross & Mannion, 2012). Place-conscious pedagogies produce curricula through educators with an intimate knowledge of the ecology, history and pedagogical possibilities of the place, engaging students in sharing, questioning, and inquiring (Renshaw & Tooth, 2018). In essence these approaches see curriculum-making unfolding through children’s interactions with places, home and community. Children’s agency is foregrounded, though not necessarily through explicit collective decision-making.

Decentering the child in posthuman curriculum-making

A posthuman approach to curriculum-making seeks to decentre the child, and more broadly the human centric focus. Fikile Nxumalo (2020) proposes an uptake of “both critical posthumanisms and Indigenous relational ontologies that suggest we cannot continue with the universalized, individual human developing child as the center of what we do” (p. 199). Rather posthuman curriculum-making invites embracing learning with and from other entities, be they living or inanimate, following their rhythms, instead of all non-human matter being there to serve humans in the education project. Quantum physicist and feminist philosopher Karen Barad (2000) prompts ethical considerations in the decentring of the human in curriculum-making by asking: “what kind of (curriculum and) pedagogy help students (and teachers) to learn about practicing responsible science?” (p. 239) that does not continue colonising, dispossessing and manifesting

ecocide. Barad (2007) offers a theory of agential realism, which applied to curriculum-making, would see curriculum and all other participants emerge in intra-actions. Curriculum and participants are not predefined, but rather they become defined in actions of “learning how to intra-act responsibly within the world” (Barad, 2000, p. 237).

In precarious times of climate crises and global pandemics, sustenance for planet Earth is prime. Kroeger and Myers (2019) propose that curriculum enhances children’s understanding and centrality with Earth, so rather than placing the child at the center of the curriculum (such as developmentally appropriate curriculum, Reggio Emilia approach, emergent curriculum, mosaic approach), it is the Earth that is at the center. Drawing from critical, feminist, Indigenous, post-colonial, post-foundational and post-human ideas, they propose that curriculum-making is a more-than-human activity of reciprocal relations between Earth, Elders and children. And to attend to the global crises, the United Nations asserts that it is necessary that children and youth are actively included in international communities “to achieve peace, security, justice, climate resilience, and sustainable development for all” (Clark et al., 2020, p. 616-617).

Conclusion

Batched approaches to teacher-led curriculum are not working as demonstrated through the most frequent unproductive behaviour evidenced by teachers being disengaged behaviour (Sullivan et al., 2014). Children need to feel connected to the curriculum to be motivated to learn, otherwise they switch off from teacher directed learning and partake in disruptive practice (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Children feel connected to the curriculum if they contribute to curriculum-making so that the curriculum aligns with their interests, needs, strengths, capabilities and pace (Subban, 2016). They then are more likely to experience school education as relevant, valuable preparation for life. Education prior to formal schooling often has greater freedoms to collaborate with children and families to collectively make curricula, as in the examples provided by Quintero’s (2015) book on child-led participatory curriculum. Compulsory schooling years are regulated by state written standardised curricula, restricting school freedoms to hear from the very people education is designed for through children’s participation in curriculum-making. Independent and community governed schools are more likely to welcome children’s participation in curriculum-making. The COVID-19 global pandemic has interrupted and shaken education in monumental ways that require reconceptualising education and curriculum-making so that the voice of children is heard to ensure the curriculum is relevant and customised to their precarious and precious lives.

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