



## Knowledge as a curricular response

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### ABSTRACT

The article focuses the debate on knowledge in the curriculum field, arguing that the conflict over this name marks the dynamism of a given curricular thought response that seeks to control what is read as lacking in itself, the otherness. Initially, with the contribution of the studies by Derrida and Laclau, it interprets policy as constituted through contingent processes of subjectivation in relation to otherness. In the following section, it discusses productions considered iconic in the field of curriculum, highlighting the tensions involved in the meaning of knowledge and how such conflicts tend to limit debate in the field. It concludes by highlighting that the reiteration of knowledge as property projects a binarism in curricular thinking, through the view of knowledge as data or as related to the subject-producing experience. It argues that this dynamic outlines a curricular subjectivation that aims to close the meaning of itself via control of the other.

### KEYWORDS

curriculum theory; knowledge; deconstruction; discourse theory.

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## *O CONHECIMENTO COMO RESPOSTA CURRICULAR*

### RESUMO

O artigo focaliza o debate sobre conhecimento no campo do currículo, argumentando que o conflito em torno desse nome marca o dinamismo de uma resposta de dado pensamento político curricular, que busca controlar aquilo que é lido como faltoso a si, a alteridade. Inicialmente, com a contribuição dos estudos de Derrida e Laclau, interpreta a política como constituída por meio de processos contingentes de subjetivação na relação com a alteridade. Na seção seguinte, discute produções consideradas icônicas no campo do currículo, pontuando as tensões envolvidas na significação do conhecimento e como tais conflitos tendem a limitar o debate no campo. Conclui destacando que a reiteração do conhecimento como propriedade projeta um binarismo no pensamento curricular por meio da visão de conhecimento como dado ou como relacionado à experiência produtora de sujeitos. Defende que essa dinâmica delinea uma subjetivação curricular que visa fechar a significação de si via controle do outro.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

teoria do currículo; conhecimento; desconstrução; teoria do discurso.

## *CONOCIMIENTO COMO RESPUESTA CURRICULAR*

### RESUMEN

El artículo enfoca el debate sobre el conocimiento en el campo del currículo, argumentando que el conflicto sobre este nombre marca el dinamismo de una respuesta del currículo dada que busca controlar lo que se lee como falta en sí mismo, la alteridad. Inicialmente, con la contribución de Derrida y Laclau, interpreta la política como constituida a través procesos contingentes de subjetivación en relación con la alteridad. En la siguiente sección, se analizan producciones icónicas en el campo, destacando las tensiones involucradas en el significado del conocimiento y cómo tales conflictos limitan el debate en el campo. Concluye destacando que la reiteración del conocimiento como propiedad proyecta un binarismo en el pensamiento curricular, a través de la visión del conocimiento como datos o en relación con la experiencia que produce el sujeto. Sostiene que esta dinámica esboza una subjetivación curricular que tiene como objetivo cerrar el significado de sí mismo a través del control del otro.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

teoría curricular; conocimiento; desconstrucción; teoría del discurso.

*The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which itself is beyond the reach of play.*

*Derrida, 1978, p. 279.*

## INTRODUCTION

This study raises the debate on the knowledge in the field of curriculum in order to sustain that the conflict surrounding this name marks the dynamism of a curriculum thought that seeks to control what is read as lacking to itself. To conduct this discussion, we appropriated post-foundational and post-structuralist contributions by Ernesto Laclau and Jacques Derrida in order to interpret curriculum policy as constituted by contingent processes of subjectivation in relation to otherness.

For this purpose, we approach the term “knowledge” by stressing the recurrence of its assertion as a property or curricular response to otherness. Within the logic of control dynamized by different and conflicting views of the curriculum, we draw attention to the expectation of skillful knowledge in building an adequate subject that would be capable of being fully operational in projected contexts such as the society, the world, and experience. We support that this curricular concern marks the contemporaneity of a more extensive political-curricular thinking as an identification.

Thus, we focused on recurrent conflicts in the field by arguing in favor of a tendency to circumscribe the curricular discussion in the orbit of the term “knowledge”. We highlight two readings that seem interesting for such an argument on the field. The first reading, associated with contextual experiences, aims to assert a property of knowledge in the world capable of, *a priori* from experience, training subjects for a given context. The other is based on an objectivist reading centered on the idea of valuing knowledge produced by the subject from a given experience, thus affirming an opposition to the view that knowledge would be something objective. In this scenario, we invest in questioning the maintenance of knowledge as a curricular presupposition both in these two views and in the criticisms of them.

Our expectation is to stress how much such generic readings mark the field through a binarism, which constitutes meanings that can limit the curriculum debate on knowledge, that is, the debate *on* and *in relation* to this name. Such dynamics circumscribes knowledge as a presupposition and may lead to its reiteration as the basis of the curriculum, thus projecting the deduction that the way of knowing that would be most appropriate for the subjects should be decided in order to constitute these subjects in the way that they are expected to become. This reading, in our way of interpreting, tends to symptomatize the search for what is signaled as the following binarism to be conciliated: a given objective knowledge (usually referred to science) and knowledge arising from everyday/contextual practices and experiences.

In this approach to curricular thinking, we seek to conjecture it as a subjectivation, which is a continuous process of seeking to respond to an otherness that is not found but which one seeks to control without knowing it. By considering

the conflicts surrounding the term “knowledge” as part of the search for fullness of this political subjectivation, we argue that such fullness is supposed to be achieved by affirming the possibility of building a basic knowledge, such as in the projection of a given data that is lacking in the curriculum, in a subject projected as lacking to itself in curriculum production, and in the subjectivation in which the curriculum is constituted. Such generic subject tends to be thought of as someone that the curriculum needs to be able to constitute by a knowledge that is adequate to life. From this perspective, world and life are thought of as horizons for which the curriculum must constitute skilled subjects; world and life are assumed as *things* to be solved through the definition of a given knowledge. Therefore, knowledge and subject also risk being limited to given objects.

The tension to which we refer to is not related to a specific production or to a given defense of the term “knowledge”, but to the perspective that, even among criticisms and/or alternatives to a particular view of curriculum, it is possible to read a recurrence of this term as a proposal or assumption. Different perspectives, whether registered as efficient, progressive, critical-reproductive or even as addressing emancipation and resistance, for example, and being involved with different agendas, tend to approach a property of knowledge capable of reaching a certain curricular horizon, insofar as all signal a set of conflicts surrounding the term “knowledge”.

From the point of view of conducting possible readings in the field of curriculum, we made use of the contributions by Pinar *et al.* (1995) and Lopes and Macedo (2011) by considering such synoptic works of curricular thought as a possibility to map curricular productions with an impact in Brazil, a country where the North American influence on the curriculum studies has already been widely highlighted. Based on these works, their references, and the organization they propose to think of academic productions, we argue that, even when denied, knowledge tends to be presupposed as a curricular identification or something — a property — to which the curriculum must respond. Our expectation when revolving moments of the curricular thinking is not to affirm a mandatory foundation or path of reading. By revolving them, we seek to demonstrate how a given reading circulates in the field of curriculum, in order to think of a discursive construction that is constitutive of what we conjecture as political-curricular thinking, expressing the impossibility of separating what academic productions and productions of curriculum policies come to be. Thus, we think that there is a curricular and discursive field that is dynamized by different readings under constant translation (Lopes, Cunha and Costa, 2013), highlighting the impossibility of an origin in politics.

Our appropriations from Derrida and Laclau help to conjecture an interpretation of the curriculum field with a view to support this term as a precipitated subjectivation in response to an unknown and imponderable otherness (Derrida, 2006). The approximations between the authors incorporated in this work try to allow the reflection of subjectivation as a movement of hegemonization of a curriculum reading marked by a continuous movement of affirmation and loss of self. As Laclau (2011) pointed out, while a hegemonic reading is affirmed, this hegemony is subverted when revisiting what is believed to be the same meaning. Thus, hegemony is never fully achieved, remaining also as a political horizon.

Another important association between these authors is in the impossibility of transparency to the other in politics, given that the otherness to which one responds in precipitation is unknown, as Derrida (2006) pondered, or cheats and is furtive to control, as Laclau (1990) pointed out. The articulation of these readings enables a negative approach to subjectivation. Thus, as it is not possible to fully know what constitutes the curriculum in response, what is left for us is to try to interpret, by the answers given, what is meant to be its exterior or which threat it offers.

After pondering these aspects, this paper is organized in such a way as to focus, in the first section, on the theoretical-strategic organization through which we seek to think on interpretive opportunities for the problem in question. We introduce interpretive operators of the policy dynamics and of the subjectivation processes that constitute this policy, through decisions in response to the questioning otherness that escapes calculation. We point out the subjectivation processes as important movements for contextual meanings, which are translations performed in response to what is considered as a threat or as a questioning in a given context. With the incorporation of these discussions into curriculum studies, in the next section, we organize the curricular reading through which we think on field productions and curriculum policies.

From this discussion, we aimed to highlight how different works considered iconic in curricular thinking emphasized a perspective of precision on the meaning of knowledge in and for the curriculum. We support in our considerations that this is a skillful dynamics in defining the scope of the debate in order to reiterate a binary relationship in curricular thinking, which is to project knowledge as tied to an objective world or as related to the experience that produces subjects. This dynamics would be intertwined with a curricular subjectivation that tries to assert itself once and for all, closing the meaning of itself as (and in response to) a control of the other (not only students, teachers, amazed individuals, and suppositions, but everything/everyone who cannot be considered and who may be questioning, threatening, deciding, and interacting to the curricular cosmos).

## INTERPRETIVE STRATEGY OF POLITICS

We agree with Laclau (2011) when understanding exclusion and antagonism as constitutive in politics: subjectivity emerges as the effect of a political decision, always being relational in face of what is antagonized. Subjectivation ceases to be the unfolding of a work of recognition of what the structure would organize and becomes a political construction that goes beyond foundations. Thus, the focus of a research on politics would be found in the discussion on the subjectivities produced in the articulations of demands contingently established around certain struggles/names in politics. The subjects are not designed from an essence or life story, experience, or an *a priori* engagement with a cause that coordinates their decisions. The subjects are discursively constituted of social demands articulated in an equivalence moment, which is an effect of circulating and provisionally articulated meanings in a relationship with a signifier.

Based on this approach to subjectivation, we highlight, with a view to the logic of difference (Laclau, 2011), a character of unconsciousness in the political decision. The subject is transitorily constituted in this decision in dynamics that never cease, precisely for being uncontrollable (they are unknown). Through a logic of equivalence, movements of coalition operate in the search for reconciliation. Such closures of meaning only occur when its limit is reached, which is defined from the moment when an exterior or an antagonist of the differential elements involved in the articulation process is determined. For Laclau (2011), the system is a direct result of its excluding limit, which is constituted in response to something exterior that blocks or denies it.

This antagonism to other differences dispersed in the social whole provides opportunities to form a chain in which such differences become equivalent, even though they are never equal (Laclau, 2011). That is, they form equivalence in opposition to what externalizes them, while also producing furtive differential meanings such as infractions in silence, as Derrida (1991) pointed out when addressing *différance*.

A double movement consists of articulations of singularities that, aiming at an impossible common place, always affirm it, moving away from it. Since the meaning of the community of subjects itself is not accessible (Costa and Lopes, 2018a), there is no possibility of accessing something conceived *as their own*, leaving only an illusion of equivalence between differences in a name judged as antagonistic. As an eventual property of the claim and of the demand, what would support it would be of an inaccessible order (Laclau, 1990, 2011), in a logic of dislocation, consisting of a movement of irreconciliation, of an impossible relationship between objects, of the unnameable contained in a pulse in the decision, and of the constitution of demands. Thus, a teleological approach would no longer be part of the policy scenario, coming to present itself as just another term. To read the social aspect as constituted by processes of meaning is to conceive the inexistence of fixed centers capable of determining prior and posterior aspects of political decision and to conceive subjectivity.

It is important to highlight that the signification is not stagnated due to the act of speaking, treating, accusing, defending, and recovering; these are provisional significations from names considered as important at a given moment in politics. With this view, we think that it is possible to focus on curriculum policy, the subject, and knowledge as important names to be addressed in terms of disputes over their signification, as postponements of a subsequent property, and as structuring.

Discursive structuring consists of the constant attempt to close, as is the opening of the field of discursiveness as a *surplus* of meaning. Every discourse aims to dominate the discursive field, to fix and detain the differing and, contingently, to define the core of signification.

The Derridean perspective of an *otherness of the other* (Derrida, 2006) helps to understand this gear external to an “I” in politics. It is a totally strange otherness that is never accessed and only considered, as long as its questioning is supposed to occur. Derrida constitutes, through his vision of inscriptions in the world as text, the perspective of translation as the only form of interaction with otherness.

For Derrida (2006), it is important to understand reading/translation as a producer of meaning and discourse, and as a practice of subjectivation. *Translation/textualization/writing* is the acceptance of sharing, transiting and opening communication channels toward the *other*. By this logic, the signifiers do not have their unity guaranteed and do not have a recognizable center, even if the attempts to generate them never cease. Otherness always bursts singularly, challenging the identity to decide, translate, and supplement writing. Such a conception implies bearing in mind that it is through the textualization of the world and the emptying/breaking of contexts and signifiers (and the simultaneity of demands mobilized by the search to respond to what is not known) that we iterate in politics.

It is worth considering that, with such a reading, Derrida is not proposing an anti-calculation stance, which could be read in certain contexts as anti-science or anti-knowledge. We reiterate Lopes (2018) in the statement that calculation and its metonymic substitutions — reason, knowledge, and science — as discourses situated in given power relations are capable of enabling us to know as much as possible to guide — and never to program — a decision, even though it is not possible to know everything. This *everything* is always unattainable not for being inaccessible — something that awaits us where we cannot go — but because it is always submitted to translation.

The event of the translation of knowledge is signaled in the production of the ‘new’ on the untranslatable. It does not occur from a sample or springboard of interpretation: it is the production of another text. According to Derrida (2001), even if we suppose to speak the same language, as in an idea of operating transparently in language, at most we would be able to idiomize differentially, making indefinitely translated inscriptions in the opacity of the language. Every production is always an artisanal relationship with the language, being always deployed in different languages, as in different written inscriptions in a radical contextualization. Also, according to Derrida, the difference is what cannot be appropriated, which is what resists control.

What is possible is the translation, which denies the full constitution of meaning while granting, through iteration, the production of meanings. It is a game always marked with moves whose rules are unknown to history, reason, calculation, and to a game economy. The idea of responsibility, together with singularity and otherness, is introduced by Derrida (2006) as a reflexive element on the constitution or promise of a subject/subjectivity. We are not talking about the other identified as or in the antagonistic, but about a stranger who is *wholly other* (Derrida, 2006). It is a subjectivation that takes place in/from the contemporary response to the unforeseen question that erupts and imposes the urgency of a response, of filling in what starts to wander in the structure — altered at this point and since always.

For Derrida, when seen through the eyes of the absolute *wholly other* (Derrida, 2006), subjectivity is constituted in response to this aporia, giving the first possible answer: *here I am*. This answer outlines an entire moment of Western thought of exposure to the questioning divine otherness (Derrida, 2006, p. 84). The answer, according to Derrida (2006), is the only way of presenting oneself to who/what one knows intimately, proves/tests, and signals the assumption of all

responsibility. Responding to the invocation of what escapes and is further knowledge and calculation about everything is an effort and continuous fear of what is said to be the subject.

The lack of control and means of saturation over life in Derrida's aporetic thinking allows the reading that without rationalization or calculation, an *absolute duty* is imposed, which is an obligation to respond irrepressibly to the wholly other. An absolute duty is the response that cannot be denied to the potency of an otherness of the other. Responding to the non-rational is a condition for interaction. It is not even known whether the answer or even the question is what it is supposed to touch, but a duty impels the decision. For Derrida (2006), this opportunity to respond is the moment of responsibility (an irresistible movement of response) that precipitates the subject, which sets the incapacity of appropriating knowledge about everything or that one cannot know everything; what remains is a fragile, differential, and partial apprehension of a truth, of a reality, of a social, of the subject, and of knowledge itself.

In convergence with this perspective, Laclau (1990, 2011) thought of subjectivation as precipitated in the decision, in the search to respond in politics outside of a register of reason or teleological conduct. The non-rational response in Derrida and the decision to interpret an otherness read as threatening in Laclau operate the view of the subject as a moment in politics and as a response to the assumption of a questioning to which it is not possible to escape.

We consider that a possible appropriation of discourse theory is organized in the perspective of interpreting subjectivity as in relation to a *beyond*, a constant postponement. In Laclau (2011), the *beyond*, which limits a subjective plenitude, while helping to refute a horizon, questions all action as implied in articulations aimed at the hegemony of singular horizons. The *beyond* is an interdiction, it is what escapes, it is a radical otherness/wholly other to what is said to be (or means) *me*. Due to the strangeness it causes and the impossibility of stopping its next steps/movements, it imposes the identification/subjectivation imprecisely in the decision.

The fear that encourages identity to calculation and to the expectation of control comes close to what Laclau proposes to be the attempt to close the discourse, the meaning, and the subject. This attempt is never successful, as it always deals with a dynamic strangeness that changes the rules of the game with each move (Laclau, 1990). As there are always meanings that escape articulation, founding new articulations, there is always a temporary symbolization of the antagonistic, of a center or stabilization.

The decision that marks subjectivation is considered by Laclau as the moment of political articulation. The author pointed out that in a condition of unknowing, one makes decisions in face of the threat (the unknown, interpreted as oppressive) and is entwined in what is unknown (the chain of equivalence), which is read as an opportunity to intervene and to influence a certain question without knowing the future of politics and without controlling the succession of these decisions or their context (Derrida, 1991).

There are countless constitutive/expressive responses to antagonisms symbolized in the text of any policy, including the curriculum policy examined by us.



Among such antagonisms, we draw attention to what is drawn in the relationship between two perspectives focused here as disputing the signification of the curriculum as knowledge. We interpret this movement as capable of designing a restriction of the curriculum debate by having knowledge as a foundation.

This tension, as a contextual construction in politics, enables to question what, in this movement of denying everything that is as differential as possible to be thought of as knowledge, would or would not be said in the curriculum debate on knowledge. Such hegemonized and conflicting identifications in this politics operate incessant responses at different moments in a general text of the politics, seeming to want to surround them: an imponderable otherness, an estrangement in relation to what is read as questioning the meaning of the curriculum, of the knowledge, and of the subject.

We present such arguments as responses to what is intended to be fought, as marks of the struggles for the denial of knowledge in the curriculum, which is a movement of calculation/control over the subject that is supposed to be restricted to this conflict. However, we take into consideration that the conflict and its definition tend to constrain the meaning of knowledge as a contextual and provisional event and as a subjective decision/precipitation.

Our concern is to draw attention to what is unfathomable, but capable of symbolization: the wholly other symbolized as antagonistic, but which operates the unspeakable curricular thought; what dynamizes the discursive production of what is the curriculum and the curriculum policy; the reason for every movement of signification of what is or should be knowledge, the subject, and the world.

## CURRICULUM AND KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge and the own conceptions of curriculum change in curriculum thinking as a function of the projected contexts and social purposes (Lopes and Macedo, 2011). The authors also pointed out how recurrent in the scope of Brazilian curricular thought, despite the different perspectives, is the questioning about the knowledge that matters to the curriculum.

We are interested in recovering the idea of a perspective of replacing curriculum structures and, consequently, the structuring function of knowledge for a specific operating/projected subject in a given context. At a given moment, different curricular readings agglutinated around a perspective of scientific knowledge as a basis for the construction of subjects to act in a project of society. The criticisms of these views lead, in general terms, to the following two other interpretative lines: the critical-reproductive ones and those of emancipation and resistance, which, despite the differences, advocate ways of knowing capable of raising consciousness and training subjects for a critical social reading through their recognition in the social structure of classes and their consequent capacity to mobilize for social transformation and involvement with counter-hegemonic purposes. This is the emancipation that a curriculum structure through knowledge, for example, would tend to propose as the purpose of the curriculum.

Scientific knowledge, criticism of the selection of imposed and reproductive knowledge, and emancipatory knowledge are still a property of knowledge, which does not occur randomly, but to dynamize a curricular function that would urge the formation, preparation, and construction of a subject; for a world that is possibly unknown, but that needs to be known and criticized; so that these subjects can be citizens, be aware, can know how to take attitudes, know how to produce, can subvert, produce their own knowledge, feel, and have a perspective of the world. These are recurrent readings as assumptions in and for the curriculum that they mark, even though constituting a mist as to the ultimate definition of knowledge, what is this property. We take it as an ultimate impossibility of fixation, but of a hegemony of the defense of certain knowledge for a subject in a context.

Franklin Bobbitt's works are mostly considered as the embodiment of efficient senses in the curriculum (Kliebard, 2011). As a life course, the curriculum would consist of a set of "[...] things that children and young people should do and experience to develop skills to do things well that fulfill the tasks of adult life and to be, in all aspects, who adults should be" (Bobbitt, 2004, p. 74). Although, as pointed out by Pinar *et al.* (1995), Bobbitt has not directly discussed a perspective of knowledge, the theorizing of this author approximates to scientific administration by defending knowledge derived from science, capable of guiding the production of subjects for a productive performance, whose core would be in the idea of an adult citizenship. Both knowledge and the context in which the subject must be inserted are considered data that can be calculated.

Under the assumption of lack of social efficiency through schooling, Bobbitt supported the need for schools to create means for such preparation to occur functionally, making a direct connection through the objective knowledge of science between students and the society, which is understood as production and as an economic activity. As highlighted by Pinar *et al.* (1995), among the main critical responses to Bobbitt's objectivist reading are the progressive curricular approaches, which are closely associated with the name of John Dewey. According to Lopes and Macedo (2011), through central concepts such as *social intelligence and change*, Dewey argues that the social purpose of the school should be to understand children's interests through the school experience. For the author, Bobbitt's vision marks a gap between school and student demands, neglecting children's claims in favor of training for adult/productive life.

For Dewey (1959), knowledge needs to be involved with the experience in order to be appropriated gradually and to occur as a function of the challenges experienced by children. Thus, Dewey pointed out the need to link everyday phenomena to those reconstructed by knowledge, whose constitution would be the goal of construction and thought of in the way that it should be applied in the solution of problems.

Dewey further stated that knowledge cannot be thought of as the contemplation of an uncommitted spectator (Dewey, 1959); it implies a form of control based on the theory-practice relationship in a relationship between curriculum and knowledge (Biesta, 2014), with a view to empowering subjects to deal with different situations in different contexts and to project futures with purpose. Socially accumulated knowledge

is considered as a social body capable of giving purpose to social life, with the subject being intended to build a meaning aimed at expanding and improving personal and social experience, which would have as their horizon the development of democratic attitudes (Biesta, 2014; Lopes and Macedo, 2011). The experiences produced in schools and the knowledge defined for schooling based on their interaction with students are principles of curriculum organization, thus opposing a chain of procedures for a supposedly productive adult life, as pondered by Bobbitt, or another type of horizon than that constituted by the interests and questions foreign to the students.

According to Jackson (1992), regarding knowledge, the different efficientist and progressivist theorists tend to come together, which somehow contributes to understanding the eclectic approach, involved with efficiency and progressivism, of Tyler's thought (Lopes and Macedo, 2011; Kliebard, 2011). Besides assuming scientific knowledge as an inexorable property, for Tyler (1949), the forms of control over the knowledge production process aim to ensure curricular success. According to the author, experiences outside the school, scientific foundation (developed by specialists), behavioral psychology, and evaluation should be taken into consideration in order to evaluate the appropriation of knowledge defined *a priori*. The curriculum reduced to methodology and systematic control of the formation of subjects would work as a social mechanism to ensure the transmission of knowledge and combat the dispersion of schoolwork.

For Jackson (1992) and Pinar *et al.* (1995), authors associated with the progressivist and efficientist thinking operate on the idea that the contents taught at school need to be based on the knowledge of academic specialists, on their knowledge, and on a philosophical-scientific reference. Such reading, although projecting social purposes and conceiving the meaning of knowledge in different ways, takes into consideration precise methodologies and systematics for teaching a way of knowing considered indisputable and critical to other ways of knowing for being involved in a purpose read as safe and desirable to all.

Once these arguments have been pointed out, we highlight debates that somehow allow us to locate a movement commonly referred to as critical, which is interpreted as opposing the efficientist and progressivist views. We followed the suggested reading by Lopes and Macedo (2011) and Pinar *et al.* (1995) by organizing critical-reproductive studies and studies regarding emancipation and resistance involved with macro- and microsystemic approaches, but which have a recognizable point in the affirmation of the centrality of knowledge.

We consider Althusser's thought as emblematic and influential in the construction of a critical-reproductive community. In Althusser's view, the character of the school's ideological apparatus is to function in the cooptation of different classes through the function of training workers and, indirectly, through acting in ideological diffusion through knowledge and attitudes based on inducing identification with the school (Lopes and Macedo, 2011). We point out that the Althusser's thought provided the opportunity for the construction of a critical thread, with an axis in the problematization of ideology, from which different works with different readings of curriculum and ideology were produced, such as those by Michael Apple, Peter McLaren, and Henry Giroux (Pinar *et al.*, 1995).

For Apple (1989, 2006), reproduction is built in the daily lives of individuals, who are constrained by mechanisms that control their activities and ways of knowing. The author supported the need for the development of a critical-reproductive reflection of the curriculum in research capable of paying attention to the school, which is something disregarded by most reproductive thinkers. Lopes and Macedo (2011) argued that, for Apple, the tension over the relationship between knowledge considered as official and the dominant interests in society matters (Apple, 1989). For Apple (2006), knowledge is not restricted to the set of officially defined contents, but also to the norms and values that constitute the curriculum.

According to Apple (2006), a whole set of political relations operating in the daily lives of schools underlies the formal curriculum, which is capable of sustaining curricular decisions, the construction of their traditions, and the design of their social purposes. Through this theoretical construct, the thinker projects the critique to progressivist and efficientist authors by arguing that the methodological focus hides a hegemonic ideological dimension of knowledge of the world based on class segregation. However, Apple's criticism pointed out that the school is not a space for the reproduction of directivities, thus moving away from views such as those by Bowles and Gintis, for example. For Apple (1989, 2006), knowledge must be designed to build critical awareness. The author considered that school networks are crossed, through the work of teachers, by non-criticized knowledge, capable of distributing values and commitments alien to a critical and/or counter-hegemonic agenda.

As pointed out by Macedo (2012), Apple reinforced the discussion about knowledge by assuming it as a property on which an emancipatory conscience of the subject must be produced. In other words, there would be no other knowledge capable of emancipating the subject, but a way of reflecting from the subject, with this way dynamizing a transforming horizon. With the perspective of ideology as a falsifier of ways of knowing, a critical position in the curriculum would introduce the possibility of emancipation by substituting one knowledge for another. The approach to structure would be maintained, but through a critical appropriation of knowledge, and this would lead to the possibility of operating forms of emancipation of the subject that cannot be operated until the subject is submitted to conscientization by a new way of knowing.

Also taking into account a critical approach, Michael Young, one of the main researchers involved in the movement of the New Sociology of Education (NSE), is also turned to the relationship between curriculum and knowledge. For Young, who assumed an update of the perspectives defended in his previous works, it is urgent to consider social changes and to modify curricular studies and proposals. According to the author, the questioning on an up-to-date curriculum must pay attention to what type of knowledge young people have received. Young pointed out that there is currently a movement to value the subjects' experiences that is capable of leading to an emptying of school contents taught through school subjects.

For Young (2007, 2011), the curriculum organization by disciplines remains the most reliable form of knowledge production. The author stated that, although knowledge is subject to criticism and change, it is the safest property that can be used

in terms of training subjects for the society. For Young, the safety of the disciplines is in their intimate connection with the knowledge produced by the communities of specialists (researchers from the fields of academic-scientific knowledge associated with the disciplines). Thus, the author considers that, as we live in a knowledge society, specialized knowledge must be central to the curriculum.

If in the traditional view it is supported as something to be fulfilled, in the logic by Young (2007, 2011), knowledge is something to be engaged in the formation of subjects for the knowledge society. By revisiting Young's work, the author presented a view of knowledge as a property to be assured to students who, once in possession of what Young calls *powerful knowledge*, would be capable of achieving a reliable reading of the world. This would confer social legitimacy to the school. Thus, not only knowledge is assumed as transparent data that is capable of being acquired and construct the subject who owns it, but also the world is assumed so, being defined by that same knowledge and becoming a criterion to reading reality.

The circumscription of the world to the specialized view of knowledge establishes limits to other readings of the curriculum, of the term "knowledge", and of being a subject in the world. Unlike authors such as Apple, and even unlike authors involved with progressivism, such as Schwab and Stenhouse, Young made a new inscription in curriculum thinking by resuming his support to studies of the NSE, although for launching the academic-scientific knowledge to the center of the debate. Through this movement of the critical subject to negligent ways of knowing, being a subject in the world becomes to be related to holding specialized knowledge that is supposed to be capable of producing safe readings of the world. Through the affirmation of the world of *knowledge*, to be included in this world is necessarily to know what makes the world or society a knowledge society. If the subjects do not have such knowledge, in view of their connections, they are excluded from the world. The subject can only be included in the curriculum defended by Young if identified as the bearer of objective knowledge.

In Brazil, Young's works resonated in productions such as those by Antonio Flavio Moreira. We agree with Macedo (2013), who stated that Moreira's work was influenced by different readings marked by the NSE's thinking in dialogue with cultural studies (Moreira, 2002) at a given time, while in more recent works, Moreira began to assume more universalist postures (Moreira, 2010), which is also similar to Young. In Moreira's works (2004, 2005, 2007, 2010), not only knowledge is assumed as central to the curriculum, but culture (an important discussion for post-structural arguments) is also indicated as the reason why knowledge tends to lose strength. The author supported, like Young (2007, 2011), the primacy of the view of curriculum as selection and distribution of knowledge. Likewise, Moreira (2010) pondered the auxiliary function of culture when thinking of it as what the concerns of knowledge are focused on. This perspective highlights the structural vision we focus on, including when supposing that knowledge is a selected extract of culture and a property of a given social context that can be used to provide a certain social result (justice and equality) when developed at school (Moreira, 2010).

Silva's (2009) works are also emblematic of this relationship between knowledge and culture, as Silva incorporated distinct post-structural readings, mostly

from a Foucault's matrix, to the field of curriculum in Brazil. By focusing on the discussion of identity in its relations with the curriculum, Silva (2009) pointed to knowledge as a means of identity construction. For Silva, knowledge would not be limited to the canons of science, also highlighting knowledge produced daily. However, as indicated by Macedo (2013), identity would be the result of learning a set of knowledge, which returns to the view that a given subjective/identity formation depends on the acquisition of meanings that are alien to the subject and that need to be appropriated.

We also highlight the productions by Saviani and Libâneo who, although being frequently associated with the field of didactics, influence the Brazilian curriculum field with approaches supported by historical materialism. Saviani's works (2003) incorporated Marxist approaches to think of the school as a space capable of promoting social change through the socialization of systematized knowledge. Saviani moved away from critical-reproductivist, progressist, and correspondence theorist views, as highlighted by Lopes and Macedo (2011), to affirm that teachers and students should act aiming to critically appropriate the socially accumulated culture. For the author, the universal knowledge produced by scientific laws is objective and, consequently, goes beyond personal interests and social moments. Such knowledge, once converted into school knowledge, is the axis of Historical-Critical Pedagogy (Saviani, 2003, 2016). Critical knowledge is at the heart of the possibilities of training conscious subjects that are skilled in producing social changes.

For Saviani (2003), as well as for Young (2007) and Moreira (2010), the curriculum should be defined by the centrality of knowledge, which should characterize the teaching work and the social function of the school as a privileged space for transmission. Saviani's thought tends to be closer to Young's perspective of powerful knowledge, also for assuming that a certain property of knowledge is capable of making the subject, even though diverging strongly from the notion of social transformation intended by Young.

Libâneo (2000), dialoguing with Saviani's thought, focused on the relationships involved with teaching by supporting the idea of a social-critical theorization of school contents. For the author, such contents, thought of as systematized knowledge, skills, attitudes, convictions, and values should be exposed to criticism with a focus on making subjects conscious of their daily reality. Although Libâneo did not consider the school as the only space for interaction with such content, he attributed to the school the role of systematizing teaching-learning processes that lead students to conceptual constructions that are critical to the world.

As we do not place ourselves in any supposedly privileged place outside of this discursive formation, we emphasize how the discourse of the centrality of knowledge was hybridized by ourselves for other theoretical perspectives. In Lopes discussion (1999), knowledge is classified and adjectived as scientific or scholar through characteristics that are frequently interpreted as inherent properties and are referred to a structure that ensures such characteristics. From this perspective, the curriculum is an extraction of a part of culture that is marked by power relations that would guide the configuration of what is extracted, like a substance after undergoing a filtering process produced by time (history) and space (school).

We also highlight that, in a movement marked by a microcosm approach to school experience, the studies of resistance and emancipation incorporate Marxist, Weberian, phenomenological, hermeneutic, and other different conjugations between these theoretical lenses. This set of works, according to Lopes and Macedo (2011), has been established as a critical flag to efficientist, instrumentalist, and behavioral theorizations, although also criticizing critical-reproductive views by accusing the latter of reinforcing reproduction by not paying attention to the school practices of teachers and students as resistance (Pinar *et al.*, 1995; Lopes and Macedo, 2011).

For the supporters of resistance, reproductive theorizations favor a political perspective of little hope for change, giving curriculum thinking the view that there is no escape from the dominant capitalist determinations. Resistance thinking supports perspectives centered on the school and on local experiences by sometimes seeking their interaction with wider social contexts and in other moments being a counter-directivity (or counter-hegemony) focused on everyday life potency, thus projecting subjects as active in the production of knowledge by the empowerment of their readings of the world through a critical appropriation of the world mediated by knowledge produced by local solidarity networks.

Giroux (1986) specifically thought of teaching work as intellectual production that, once involved with the critical agenda, would favor the production of knowledge capable of raising consciousness on forms of domination and exclusion. For him, this way of knowing tied to the commitment to social transformation is what should characterize the teaching activity. Thus, the intellectuality, which is also circumscribed to the lens of critical thinking, is reduced to the signification of the social aspect, to being a subject and to knowing the world, as in a transparent relationship with otherness in a metaphysical reaffirmation.

Although deviating from reproductivist thinking, Giroux (1986) reaffirmed a perspective of curriculum based on knowledge, whose construction or possession constitutes the (intellectual) subject. The position supported by Giroux, which is emblematic of the thought of resistance, safeguards the affirmation of knowledge as a property (or criterion for correct reading) in the world, shifting it from a macro approach to the following microsystemic construction: the school practice, which is supported as the center of a structure of knowledge production and subject empowerment through a given way of knowing that is required for the subject to be critical/intellectual. Such centralization that is critical of objective scientific visions extends from science to militancy the privileged context of construction of a given knowledge to condition readings of the world toward a desirable horizon for the subject.

In a reading similar to that by Giroux, Willis (1991) highlighted ways of refuting or appropriating the knowledge imposed on the school by students. Except for the directivities proposed to the school, there would not be an ultimate control of the subjects, as they interact with knowledge taking into consideration the meanings produced in the experience. The author read the curriculum as a proposal and the resistance as a counter-curricular production, highlighting emancipatory knowledge as derived from an informal involvement of young people, thus constituting

a sense of critic of class. Similarly to Giroux or even Apple, the subject is thought of as constituted by knowledge read as a property to be acquired. The sense of class as critical consciousness characterizes the emancipated or conscious ontology for emancipation. In this case, knowledge would structure life itself and the perspective constituted on that life, also assuming, even if under different readings, the centrality of a curricular logic of social change.

Thinkers such as Paulo Freire have their theorization as a reference for many works of resistance, such as those by Giroux and Peter McLaren (Pinar *et al.*, 1995). Lopes and Macedo (2011) considered that Freire's work resonates widely in the critical movement from a wide dialogue between Marxism and the perspectives of phenomenology and existentialism. This interaction provides opportunities for the support of dialogue with the subjects of the school, the support of interlocution, and the production of an emancipatory knowledge that would be guided by a critical view of the world and the contextual production of meanings for knowledge that would be meaningful for the lives of the subjects, being capable of empowering them against the forms of oppression produced by the educational system.

Thus, even if subjected to a macrostructure, individuals could operate in an emancipatory and subversive way through the relationship with a powerful knowledge for the transformation of consciousness. In this context, it is through autonomous and reflexive construction that emancipated subjects are constituted in the construction of the knowledge of themselves in the world where they are inserted.

In Brazil, we highlight in this focus the studies of/with everyday life, which gained strength in the 1990s through the works by Nilda Alves, many of them in partnership with Regina Garcia. Such works are strongly supported by the thought of Michel de Certeau, also dialoguing with Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari, as well as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Alves, 2003; Ferrazo, 2007; Oliveira, 2007, 2012, 2013). They emphasize the practical nature of involvement in curriculum production and in the production of everyday knowledge. The interaction of different contexts in the networks that constitute them provides opportunities for reflection on the production of knowledge and subjectivities (Alves, 2000, 2003). The proposition of such approaches is organized as a criticism of modern views of knowledge and subjectivity, proposing the advancement of linear and hierarchical approaches, interpreted as enlightenment characteristics (Lopes and Macedo, 2011).

According to Lopes and Macedo (2011), the vision of studies of everyday life moves away from agency perspectives that restrict specific actors as policy producers and, thus, consider that they are formed in the networks in which they participate in life. They also criticize theorizations of emancipation and resistance regarding the univocity of the ways of reading the world by assuming a theory that, although focusing on the school, knowledge, and their subjects, does so not taking them into consideration or even restricting emancipation to certain ways of knowing and conceiving the world. For such studies, what matters is an involvement with the emancipatory culture of a school in its singularities.

Although the search for criticism of modern and/or enlightenment markers is a motto in studies of everyday life, they tend to support a reading of subjective consciousness with power to operate emancipatory processes of subversion and/or



inversion of what has been instituted (Fiorio, Lyrio e Ferráço, 2012; Oliveira, 2013). By producing a given way of knowing and being a participant, the subject becomes capable of making decisions while moving against the structure. Such conceptions reinforce the proximity of studies of everyday life to the perspectives of emancipation and resistance, since they interpret and may even reiterate the structure as an origin and as the producer of those read as subordinated and their networks.

In an approximate study that sought to think of the relationship between critical studies, Ellsworth (1989) considered that, despite the different contributions, there is a dynamics of recurrence in the maintenance of the structure that supports the object of criticism (the authoritarianism, the reason for knowledge, and the domination). Thus, Ellsworth stated that the goals proposed by the criticism are unachievable precisely as they maintain what they criticize. Issues such as empowerment, critical attitudes, and knowledge that are propagated by critical thinking, as highlighted by Pinar *et al.* (1995), are thought of in such a wide way and removed from the experience of the subjects that they end up not being seen as possibilities in different local cultural contexts. Thus, Ellsworth highlighted the existence of an emancipatory authority, such as an authoritarian perspective that critical movements would use to still impose perspectives on schools and subjects, making the same movement they criticized in efficientist and progressivist thinking.

Ellsworth's (1989) argument is aimed at combating a concept of subject conditioned or restricted to generic aspects, such as economic, sexual, and religious aspects or any other oppression. For Ellsworth, fixed readings of the subject, the future, of society, and agency would move away from the true problematics of the curriculum, marginalizing them. For the author, what matters is to criticize the limits of critical approaches in the support of priority knowledge. The author also highlighted that the clash between different critical studies built structuring assumptions for the subject, the society, and knowledge, designing a scope that, per se, established terms for the conception of knowledge, leading to a dynamics of replacement of versions of the world to be appropriated by the subject. Thus, it is not enough to criticize one way of knowing with the proposition of another, produced in a context of consciousness/resistance of the subjects, as it reiterates structural ways of knowing in order to be a subject in the world, leading to excluding processes and circumscriptions that tend to deny a radical emancipation.

We agree with Pinar *et al.* (1995) by understanding that such studies are alternatives to the efficientist and behaviorist logic of Tyler's thought, and simultaneously join them in criticism of reproductive or macrosystemic theorizations. The knowledge produced in the negotiations and subversions elaborated by the subjects assumes an emancipatory condition, since it is constituted through the experiences and challenges faced by the individuals, even if in continuous negotiation with science.

The studies involved with what we understand as an emancipation and resistance movement focus, in a scenario of regulation and attempts to control, on the agencies, tactics, practices, and reinterpretations carried out by the subjects based on their worldviews, beliefs, and knowledge produced in/by everyday life experience. Such works carry the affirmation of the school and of everyday practices in the

production of knowledge that would go beyond affirmations that are projected by a controlling expectation of the school (Lopes and Macedo, 2011).

The contributions of different studies that focus on the daily life mark, according to Pinar *et al.* (1995), a moment of curricular thinking guided by the volatilization of truths that guide different nuances of the critical movement. Firm certainties and fixed emancipatory horizons, with their projections of autonomy, knowledge, and subjectivity, became to receive intense criticism, and no longer due to the opposition of a clearly organized movement, but due to the conception of a pulverization of different ways of thinking of the social claims of groups that do not interpret themselves as belonging to ready-made categories and/or support presupposed visions of the future, from the perspective that subjects do not find themselves or are not incarnated in an individual, instead consisting of momentary movement, response, affirmation, and decision.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

For Pinar *et al.* (1995) and Lopes and Macedo (2011), the assertion of the centrality of knowledge in the critical movement focuses on the assumptions of neutrality in efficientist and progressivist approaches, drawing attention to how different proposals, even if they confront each other, reduce the debate on knowledge to the methodological or systematic concern in curriculum production. The criticism of the neutrality of knowledge punctuates politicization and confronts the maintenance of social inequalities.

With these arguments, we consider that different theoretical directions have intensified the search for a reading that assumes the impossibility of an actual access to reality, to the subject, to culture, and to politics. When addressing what happens in schools, the objective reference of subjectivity and/or knowledge to be understood remains. Agreeing with the emphasis made by Lopes and Macedo (2011), even though the works are oriented toward collective subjects and are produced in an entangled or contextual way, contextual reality is taken as an analytical essence or foundation that possesses meaning. Sometimes, although the singular character of expression/interpretation is considered, the subject is conjectured in the modern perspective, which is based on consciousness granted by the apprehension of a given knowledge, or in the possibility of building/refining it for a previously defined purpose to act in a given compulsory context of life.

Although they have distinctions such as traditions, the different theoretical arguments discussed tend to remain under the logocentric logic of control and calculation over otherness and the development of different contexts of practices due to the assertion of a property of knowledge. The practices, in turn, are commonly assumed as what would be restricted or should imbue the actions of teachers and/or students in the school environment. We think that such readings reduce the perspective of political action, being limited in face of the idea that all statements about contextual practices are also contextual practices. Therefore, there is no possibility of being outside/limited to a context or even controlling it (Derrida, 1991).

In this reading, different curricular studies are presented as searches that, motivated by the definition of their object, are dynamized based on the aspiration to precisely understand the best proposition of ways of knowing the/in the world through curriculum guides for educational networks, through understanding what happens in the daily life of each school and how subjects think of a wider whole where they would be inserted.

When approaching different moments of curricular thinking, we think it is interesting to indicate the polarization introduced in the projection of a knowledge property to guide the subject of the curriculum and what is the curriculum. To affirm the centrality of the term “knowledge” and its spectralization in the conflict for the signification of the curriculum does not intend to reiterate a certain power in the field. However, we draw attention to how even works critical to the centrality of knowledge tend to respond to this term as a form of inclusion in the curriculum debate, reiterating its preponderance in the mention of the curriculum.

From the scenario we have tried to address so far, we are interested in highlighting how knowledge tends to be launched, on the one hand, into the condition of a socially accumulated product and which must be protected in the reflection on the purposes of schooling. On the other hand, knowledge is taken as what, in opposition to the directive (what is accumulated and transmitted at school), is produced in the forms of resistance of school subjects. It is important to highlight the tendency to reiterate the relationship of the terms knowledge and subject as having the proposition that they underlie the reading of the curriculum, sometimes conditioning the production of the latter to the definition of the former or even proposing that a (transcendental) consciousness of the latter would lead, by their relationships or contextual experiences, to the formulation of the former.

The dispute in the movement of curricular affirmation through knowledge as a way to ensure a subject or through the subject as having the ability to operate in a given context provides an internal tension in the field. We think of a tension for the possession of a given knowledge with the power to dissolve questions to the curriculum, give a transparent meaning to itself, to respond to what is not deciphered in the relationship with the otherness that makes the curriculum, and to subjectivize in order to continue responding, seeking to respond from once and for all. We argue that this dynamics is powerful in the circumscription (and structuring) of the curriculum debate surrounding the term “knowledge”.

Thus, it follows the reiteration of the name knowledge as a foundation for the subject and, in this dynamics, as a curricular structure (a search for the fullness of what can only be curricular subjectivation). We think that, despite considering the differences between different perspectives and defenses they tend to carry, both discourses operate a logic that we believe that focuses on a similar horizon, which is the assumption of knowledge whose learning would aim to train a subject for a pre-determined world and for a context for which subjectivity must be already prepared. Thus, these discourses are re-editions of the curriculum as control, re-editions of a stabilizing and controlling concern of difference, and re-editions of what is the other.

We do not intend that such dynamics will be overcome, as if it was possible that such a stabilizing and controlling concern for difference would be erased from our curricular traditions and we could place ourselves outside this history to rewrite it. We have the intention and perhaps the simple bet that with the presentation of such reading possibilities we can, once again<sup>1</sup>, support the radical investment in interpretive processes over which we do not have full control and which are presented as the possibility of a radical critique to the reification of knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> See Lopes and Borges (2015), Costa and Lopes (2018b).

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