Chapter 6

Acculturation, Hybridity, Cosmopolitanism in Ibero-American Curriculum Studies

José María García Garduño

Ever since Schawb (2004) declared in the late 1960s that the curriculum field was moribund, one has been reading studies signaling a permanent crisis in the field. Indeed, Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003, 425) declared that curriculum in the “US can be seen as existing in a state of perpetual crisis.” Apparently, an inherent characteristic of the curricular field is that of a permanent crisis. If this crisis is a struggle of the old and the established against the new, to a certain extent it seems natural. Certainly education in the modern and postmodern era has been in a state of constant crisis; Coombs (1971), too, cited crisis. In 1978 Pinar stated that areas such as psychology and the natural sciences regard the curriculum field as in a primitive stage of development (Pinar 1978). But 25 years later, the outlook was very different. The same author (Pinar, 2003, 27) asserted that “the central question in education is the question of curriculum.” This shift is nothing but astonishing. Curriculum started as an instrumental discipline at the beginning of the twentieth century. The explosion of knowledge, due to the scientific progress of that time, demanded a discipline that could select and organize the knowledge to be taught at school (Seguel 1966).

Despite the astounding consolidation of the curriculum discipline, it may be only momentary, as recent analyses state that it is undergoing a stage of internationalization (Pinar 2003). Others, such as the Canadian
scholar Smith (2003), are not so optimistic, calling attention instead to the dangers of globalization. Latin American scholars are more specific, referencing *satelitization* (Feeney and Terigi 2003), arguing that the curriculum field in Argentina is not independent but subordinate to the legacies, didactics, and the dictates of educational policy. In the 1980s, the Mexican curricularist Ángel Díaz Barriga (Díaz Barriga 1985, 68), influenced by Martin Carnoy (1977), whose work was widely publicized in Mexico and South America, argued that educational imports from the United States into Mexico was a US strategy to consolidate its ideological hegemony. Such hegemony ensured continued imperialism.

In this regard, Brazilian curricularist Flavio Moreira (1990) pointed out that Carnoy’s position was deterministic, assuming that the importers are passive recipients, unable to reconstruct what they now faced. The legacy of internationalization in Mexico is, then, contentious, but what becomes clear is that reproduction theories—implying only imperialism and passivity—do not adequately explain how curriculum studies as an academic discipline has reached its current level of consolidation worldwide. Nor can such theories account for how each country adopts peculiar forms that not only reflect their Anglo-Saxon origin but also display specific characteristics that render curriculum studies in Mexico different both from its counterpart in the United States and in other countries. I suggest that the concepts of internationalization and globalization are insufficient to explain the current development and progress of the curriculum field in Mexico.

In this chapter I will focus not only on Mexico, but on all four fields in Ibero-America—Argentina, Brazil, Spain, and Mexico—accenting how internationalization has helped structure their formation and current state. Study of these four nationally distinctive fields suggests that the evolution of the curriculum field has undergone the two stages of acculturation and hybridity and is currently on the threshold of a third one, cosmopolitanism. My observation derives from but is not limited to reports on the Brazilian field (see Moreira 1990, 2003; Lopes and Macedo 2003; Lopes 2005, 2008). For at least a decade Brazilian scholars have been forefronting the concept of hybridity. Does hybridity characterize each of these Ibero-American fields?

**Conceptual Framework**

In order to understand the development of curriculum field outside the United States where it originated, the concepts of globalization,