

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

EXPLORING *CURRERE* AS A CATALYST FOR CURRICULUM CHANGE IN WALES

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I have known Dr. Kevin Smith, Reader at Cardiff University, Wales, for at least 15 years. Kevin took an elective class in our doctoral program at Miami University with me in 2010 and wrote a very strong chapter about the curricula of a present-day, one-room schoolhouse that appeared in our course project, a book I entitled, *10 Great Curricula* (Poetter et al., 2011), that explored 10 manifestations of progressive, if not critical, curricula in schools and society. I had a strong feeling then that Kevin, a successful high school teacher at the time, always pushing the envelope with his students toward experiential, real-world projects and learning, would become a tremendous scholar and now a curriculum leader in Wales. And that has happened.

Possessing dual U.S. and Welsh citizenship, Kevin has experience teaching in domestic and international contexts, including Tonga, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands, and took a position in higher education at Cardiff University after a stint working as the Fellow in Curriculum at the Institute of Education with the University of the South Pacific in 'Atele, Tonga. In all of his educational experience, he had never encountered the kind of cutting-edge push toward a more student-centered, local curriculum as the one Wales had been envisioning and was attempting to implement.

Over the intervening years, we have stayed in touch, and in 2019, when I was chairing our department, I invited Kevin to give a talk for students regarding his thinking about the implications of the new national curriculum in Wales, a decentered curriculum that would give broad implementation powers over several significant focal concepts for the curricula in schools (Welsh Government, n.d.). He shared some background with us in that talk on the new curriculum in Wales while expressing concern about the degree to which school teachers and administrators were equipped to manage and lead through the significant shift of curriculum responsibility to local personnel. I thought the situation and his talk were fascinating, especially his premise that he thought *currere* could be a key aspect of curriculum leadership and scholarship to aid local teachers and administrators in exploring the possibilities for creating and delivering a new national curriculum on a local scale.

In 2023, after many conversations on email and over the phone following the 2019 event at Miami and our connection at the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing's* annual Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice in Dayton, Ohio, in 2022, Kevin invited me to give a keynote talk at the first *currere* retreat in Wales in July 2023 with teams of teachers and higher education faculty from all over the country, an event sponsored by the Curriculum and Pedagogy Collaborative Research Network, chaired by Professor Gary Beauchamp from Cardiff Metropolitan University. I really enjoyed preparing for that talk, given that I was in the middle of writing my new book, *Curriculum Fragments: A Currere Journey through Life Processes* (Poetter, 2024), and trying on new ideas and possibilities for the work myself.

I had already had some successes leading collaborative *currere* projects with doctoral students on books that emerged from course experiences centering the *currere* method on a topic

of interest primed for deep, reflective inquiry including *Was Someone Mean to You Today? The Impact of Standardization, Corporatization, and High Stakes Testing on Students, Teachers, Communities, Schools, and Democracy* (Poetter & Googins, 2015) and *Vouch for This! Defunding Private Interests, Funding Public Schools* (Poetter, 2023). So, I had some footing, and as I homed in on the potential for using and developing curriculum fragments, which I defined as stories of experience that held power and momentum for personal and broader shifts in thought and action (Poetter, 2024), I felt that the scholars on hand from Wales possessed a keen energy and commitment to taking the next steps forward. They especially seemed poised to help school personnel break the chains of doubt about their roles and actions as curriculum leaders and to deal with the workload that the new curriculum format and expectations brought to bear.

What I was especially impressed by were the reflective conversations retreat participants had following the talk and the excellent warm-up work run by Kevin and the leadership team. I listened to participants talk and share and inquire all afternoon and see threads of those conversations in the articles they produced from that work in the finished pieces included here. That continuum of inquiry—from surfacing ideas to writing them down—reveals how delving into *curre* helps educators share and reflect honestly and powerfully and allows them to take stock of the personal power of their life experiences to shape the way they think of curriculum and teaching and students on a day-to-day, moment-by-moment basis.

I have said out loud in my own university context that the way to get to “What’s next?” is to talk, and share, and reflect, and dream together. We have the power and know-how to do that generative work within us and as a community, and our colleagues in Wales are taking steps to operationalize that personal and communal power on a broader scale. At the 2023 retreat, the participants worked in teams of 3-5 school teachers/administrators and university personnel as they learned and reflected together on the project at hand. Over the past year, Dr. Smith has been working with the *curre* retreat participants to complete their writing and to get it in shape to offer up to the world in print. Four teams participated in the retreat: the Open University Team, the Aberystwyth University Team, the Cardiff Metropolitan University Team, and the Cardiff University team. Their papers/projects/reports appear in this special section in this order.

We are pleased to publish their work and hope that, as their project grows, they and others will build on their work and consider pursuing further inquiries that center *curre* as a transformational, scholarly approach to reflect on, address, and understand the curriculum work at hand. I hope that readers will appreciate the insights and possibilities that their work reveals here and take steps in their own settings to build their own inquiries together on a scale that works for them, with the hopes of building better, stronger, more viable, humane, experiential, and learning-filled educational settings through the kind of emerging curriculum and pedagogical work embodied in the pieces of this special section.

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