



# **PCERII Funded Research**

## **Progress Report**

### **Valuing Diversity: The Formal and Lived Curriculum in Prairie Schools (Stage 1)**

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## 1. **Research Problem**

Generally, gatekeepers of knowledge (GK's), drawn from the dominant culture (DC), perform certain functions such as developing, implementing, and interpreting the formal school curriculum for students. The GK's map the social, cultural, political and economic reality depicted in the curriculum, texts and related resource materials. Accordingly, socially constructed forms of knowledge claims, the values and belief systems, the cultural history and heritage, and grand narratives are compartmentalized into discrete topics and disseminated to students as school/textbook knowledge.

The Social Studies curriculum, the focus of this research project, for example, presents narratives of the founding fathers; discussions of roles, functions, and contributions of various cultural and racial immigrant groups; descriptions of social, economic and political developments; and discussions of Canada's relationships with the larger world as being unproblematic forms of knowledge to be acquired in a demonstrable, definable and quantifiable manner.

It is likely that the process of schooling and learning the written and unwritten cultural values, conventions, and behavioural patterns of the DC can be a formidable experience for minority students with roots either in the south, or in nontraditional immigrant source countries. Some visible minority and Eastern European students, for example, whose families' cultures are significantly different and/or students who do not share the attachments to the heritage, narratives, myths, and histories of the DC may find school representations and interpretations to be somewhat problematic.

**Focus:** A review of the content and form of the Alberta Social Studies (1989) curriculum to determine whether and in what ways issues of cultural and racial diversity are included in a significant, meaningful manner.

### **Key Questions Include:**

- What types of knowledge concerning other cultural/racial groups are considered of value/of merit for inclusion/exclusion?
- Concerning representation, depiction and treatment of "the other", what specific types of knowledge, issues, skills, attitudes and values, either implicitly or explicitly, are deemed to be significant?
- What approaches, perspectives, and voices are used to present and explore issues of cultural/racial diversity?
- How are specific forms of knowledge of others cultures, other countries produced and legitimated in the curriculum?
- What assumptions and perspectives concerning roles, functions and contributions of "the other" underpin the curriculum?
- What constraints and challenges inhibit the development of a truly inclusive curriculum?

## 2 & 3. **Methodology and Progress to Date**

Given limited funds, \$3000 seed money, reduced scope, and part-time involvement of the researchers, the methodology for the PCERII project is restricted to a documentary

analysis of: the Alberta Social Studies curriculum, teachers' resource manuals, and a small sample of units and prescribed resources.

Documentary analysis offers a stable, unobtrusive, non-reactive research approach to the topic, and as importantly, is cost efficient. Working within a collaborative, action research model which includes multiple perspectives, the researchers are: conducting a critical review of the provincial Social Studies curriculum, and sampling teachers' resource manuals, program of studies, selected units, and prescribed resources.

To date, much of the more general curriculum review has been undertaken. At present, a sample of units and resources is being investigated and analyzed, and a systematic content analysis, using guidelines developed and critiqued by the researchers is being undertaken.

#### 4. **Preliminary Findings: Initial Review Only**

It is not surprising that given the contradictory pressures from stakeholders, and changes within the social milieu that the curriculum appears to be quite traditional. Conditions prior to the release of the '89 Social Studies curriculum included the following: an increasingly conservative agenda for schooling demanded by, the back to the basics movement; the strength of public inputs to the provincial government's Committee for Tolerance and Understanding and response to the Keesstra incident in Red Deer; the government and corporate sectors' concerns that Alberta should be more competitive in the global marketplace, and a growing trend of centralization seen in design and development of the Social Studies curriculum. Thus, at face value, the 1989 curriculum appears to be conceptualized largely within a structural functional perspective.

Working within such a perspective, the inclusion of cultural and racial minority voices are seen as being primarily additive and not a central issue. At a fairly generalized level, systems of making meaning of the rapid cultural, demographic and economic changes; ways of understanding the causes and effects of historical and present patterns of migrations; ways of exploring problematic intercultural/multicultural interactions, relationships and conflicts between dominant and oppressed, marginal, disadvantaged groups within the province and country; and ways of understanding the manner in which different cultures and countries view themselves and their roles in the world tend to be glossed over. Issues are presented from a structural functional perspective as problems that can either be solved or have been solved. Further, different cultural groups whether at home or abroad tend to be presented in a fairly flat, unidimensional and stereotypical manner.

The province and country are depicted as having evolved into a fair, tolerant, modern, industrial, high-tech society with a strong reputation of being non-aggressive, and a key peace-keeper on the world stage.

#### 5. **Policy Implications**

Specific policy implications and recommendations are to be mapped towards the end of the study. Prior to formal submission of the project, preliminary consultations with key decision and policy makers in major educational institutions and government bodies will be conducted.

Policy implications are framed in terms of inputs to: provincial teacher training programs, provincial curriculum design and development, resource development for schools and universities, and design and development of workshops for educators and student-teachers (See Appendix - Item 6).

6. **Staff**

On a part-time basis two graduate students, Kathy Bradford and Bing Wang, and a former doctoral student, Lynn Lemisko, PhD, have been actively involved with different components of the project (See Appendix - Item 2).

7. **Dissemination**

To date, 4 papers have been presented at regional and international conferences; 6 presentations have been made at professional meetings, special events held at the U. of Calgary, ATA Conference, Calgary, and recently in Jamaica (See Appendix - Items 3 & 4).

8. **Projected Completion**

Research to be completed	Spring - Summer 1999
Draft reports to be prepared	Summer 1999
Review with policy makers, community and professional groups	Fall 1999
Revisions	Winter 2000
Final Submissions (Reports/Docs to PCERII, Edmonton)	Winter - Spring 2000

## **Appendix**

### **Related Research Activities**

#### **1.0 Complementary Funding**

From outside sources .... Not Applicable.

(However, information from some of the preliminary documentary analysis was used for my component of the Alberta Education, Tri-University Faculty Project, entitled, "Violence in Schools" with Jane O'Odea, University of Lethbridge. \$7,000 was awarded by Alberta Education in spring 1996, details listed in Items 3 and 5 below).

#### **2.0 Graduate Student Involvement**

MA =1, Kathy Bradford, work in progress

PhD = 1, Bing Wang, work in progress

PhD =1, Lynn Lemisko, completed Doctorate, summer 1998

(**Note:** Kathy Bradford's research in progress entitled, "*A Critical Analysis of the 1989 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum: Multicultural Perspectives*", has a series of case studies drawn from the project. Bing Wang's comparative doctoral research incorporates some of the theoretical work from the project and applies it to representations of minorities in a provincial curriculum in China. Lynn Lemisko's research for her dissertation was not part of the project. She has contributed a historical dimension drawn from her own research to the project.)

#### **3.0 Papers Presented**

DePass, Cecille, Kathryn Richmond & Powerplayers. "Again & Again & Again... Students' Perspectives of Violence in Schools". Presented at the Safe and Caring Schools Conference, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, January 1998.

DePass, Cecille, Kathy Bradford, Lynn Lemisko. "Decolonizing the Mind: Dreams, Quests and Journeys". Far West Philosophy of Education Society Conference, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, California, December 1997.

DePass, Cecille. "Towards Global Citizenship in Social Studies Education". World Congress of Curriculum and Instruction, North American Division, University of Illinois, Chicago, October 1997.

DePass, Cecille. "Teacher Education in Alberta: A Personal Retrospective". 17th Annual International Seminar for Teacher Education, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, May 1997.

#### **4.0 Other Forms of Research Dissemination**

(Special Events, Panel Discussions, Performances)

DePass, Cecille. "A Structural-functional Perspective of Social Conflict and Reform: Underlying Assumptions and Implications". Norman Manley Law School, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, February 1998.

DePass, Cecille, Gail Kingwell, Robin Melting-Tallow, Rosemary Brown, Kathryn Richmond and students. "Contextualizing Teachers and Teaching: Polyphonic Voices in a Multicultural Choir". University of Calgary, Master of Teaching Program, November 1997.

DePass, Cecille, Doreen Spence, Robin Melting-Tallow, Lisa Hari, Lauri Laudermilch, Julie Hendrickson. "Conflict is Bad? Voices of Challenge, Continuity & Change". University of Calgary, Conflict Resolution and Education Group, October 1997.

DePass, Cecille, Lynn Lemisko, Monika Zahnd, Kim Rous. "Voices of the Past, Present and Future in Multicultural Education". Alberta Teachers' Association Social Studies Council, Calgary, October 1997.

DePass, Cecille, Monika Zahnd, Cyndi Reymond, Kathryn Richmond and students. "Conflict is Bad! Students Perspectives". Safe and Caring Schools Conference, University of Calgary, July 1997.

DePass, Cecille. "Representations of the Other in Social Studies Education". EDER 699.81 Colloquium, Issues in Immigration and Integration, Faculty of Education, University of Calgary, January 1997.

#### **5.0 Publications**

DePass, Cecille, Kathryn Richmond, Cecilia Martel. "Some things just don't change by magic... A synthesis". In Malicky, Grace (Ed.) "Serious Disruptive Behaviours and Violence in Schools" (working title). Edmonton: University of Alberta (in press).

#### **6.0 Potential Contributions to Educational Policy and Resource Development**

Towards the completion of the critical analysis of the Social Studies Alberta Curriculum, draft reports of preliminary findings will be submitted for review and comments by key policy/decision makers in the following institutions and government bodies:

- \* University of Calgary, Faculty of Education, Master of Teaching Program
- \* Calgary and Catholic Boards of Education
- \* Alberta Education

**Rationale:** At present, there are two major initiatives for which the findings of the research would be relevant: (1) the provincial Social Studies curricula in Alberta and western Canada are being revamped, and (2) the Social Studies courses at the University of Calgary are under significant review.

The first initiative, is a part of a comprehensive educational thrust to create a common curriculum in selected subjects in several western provinces. The second, is part of the new Master of Teaching Program at the University of Calgary.

**Utility:** Information and recommendations from this \$3000 CERIIM seed research project are likely to be used in the following ways:

1. **Curriculum Development**

- inputs to the new Social Studies Common Curriculum as an unsolicited part of the Western Protocol's curricula review
- inputs to the Master of Teaching Program, University of Calgary

2. **Resource Development**

- resources for student teachers, University of Calgary
- background resources for new Social Studies Curriculum
- background resources for future professional development workshops for educators In Alberta, Western Canada & Caribbean

## 7.0 **University Support**

Sabbatical awarded (1998-1999).

The Social Studies Curriculum review for the PCERII project is one part of C. DePass' sabbatical research (largely self-funded).

**New Course Development:** Collaborative work to design and develop 2 new graduate courses to showcase immigration research in progress at the University and within the Calgary community. Work for this successful venture was undertaken with Yvonne Hébert (course coordinator) and several professors within the Faculty. The courses were: EDER 699, initiated winter 1997, Issues in Immigration and Education; EDER 659.06, initiated fall 1996, Seminar on Educational Aspects of Immigration and Integration.

**Human Resource Development:** 2 graduate students & 1 former graduate student are involved in the curriculum review research project (See Item 2); 3 senior level undergraduate students were involved in presentations at the U. of Calgary and for the ATA.

**Types of Professional & Community and Linkages Developed:** 9 members of the educational and ethnocultural communities with 8 high school students took an active part in different presentations. Attendance at several presentations ranged from 150-200 interested graduate and undergraduate students, professors and educators (See Item 4).