Hacking Education in a Digital Age:
Teacher Education, Curriculum, and Literacies

Editors: Nicholas Ng-A-Fook, Sarah Pratt, Bryan Smith, and Linda Radford

Storying A Call for Chapter Proposals: The institutional winds that once supported traditional organizational frameworks for public education have shifted to meet the demands of a transnational globalized digital knowledge economy. In response, teacher education programs and school boards have rewired their infrastructure and are now poised to implement different curricular programs and pedagogical strategies in the name of economic and social innovation for the twenty-first century. Now the digital curriculum must be hardwired for Smartphones, iPads, iPods, and so on—where teachers and students' bodies are plugged in more readily to the globalized multinational social imaginary and its virtual reality.

Here we might turn to *The Matrix*, a film in which Morpheus explains to Neo:

> The Matrix is everywhere; it's all around us, here even in this room. You can see it out your window or on your television. You feel it when you go to work or go to church or pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

In response, Neo asks, "What Truth?" Morpheus then replies, "That you are a slave, Neo. That you, like everyone else, were born into bondage . . . kept inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste, or touch. A prison for your mind." In this kind of social imaginary, much like Agent Smith, standardized testing has become "the cattle prods, the surgical strikes, the electrical probes that administer the first shocks" (Taubman, 2009, p. 16). In turn, testing extracts the necessary information as data to hold the system and/or revolutionary individual accountable. And in the name of standards, promises are made to level the playing field for all students while opening up our psyche to the Market. This is the virtual reality that now lives as the past juxtaposed with the future in the present.

In many ways, *The Matrix*, or the nation-state, utilizes a core curriculum and standardized testing to maintain a certain social imaginary that works in turn to imprison our capacity to imagine the potential multiplicity of subjectivities within the discursive framework of public schooling. Now when we plug into social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or Google, it uses different algorithms to calculate our historical search patterns and in turn filters our future navigations, our local, national, and international re-searches, on and across the Internet, while targeting us with personalized advertisements. Eventually, as students studying within this epistemological, discursive and material Matrix, we are "educated" toward accepting a certain future form of socioeconomic, intellectual, and disciplinary bondage to the Market, as an unquestioned faith in neoconservative and/or neoliberal ideals. In this future virtual reality the CompPsy complex has become the next coming savior for teacher education and in turn public education.

In *The Future of Curriculum*, Ben Williamson (2013) explains:

The CompPsy complex is an emerging scientific field and style of thought, then, which melds understandings of the technical and immediate social contexts of learning with the design of effective interactive technologies, informed by computational thinking, and the psychological management of student emotions it embodies certain values, concerns, and politics, and through the design of specific curricular programs and technical systems it catalyzes certain actions and experiences. (p. 81)

Within the discursive regime of "CompPsy," authority is given, as Williamson optimistically points out, "to transdisciplinary knowledge, to innovation, and to creativity in addition to self-improvement, well-being, and personal competence" toward producing subjectivities that are composed of individual entrepreneurship, ethical-economical, and psychological quality (p. 82). And yet, the CompPsy complex, like that of the nation-state or multinational corporations, still "seeks to act upon and make up persons to be self-managing [or self-consuming] in order to benefit an economy that requires expertise across informational and technical discipline" (Ibid.). Within these complexities there have been a "thorough hybridization" of our conceptualizations of "leisure time" as a "playground" and our "work" within "the factory" in relation to "Internet culture," and what Williamson calls, "the interactive economy" (p. 51–52). This twenty-first century merging "of play and work has resulted in 'playbor,' a neologism that accurately captures the ways in which the affective elements of play have now been merged into," what he calls "the value-making tasks of the expert learners" now positioned as "creative playborers whose affectiveness, well-being, and creativity are understood to be essential prerequisites for economic reinvigoration" (p. 52). The CompPsy complex has afforded us an opportunity, Williamson argues, to switch from hard to soft governance, in turn permitting a greater number of players to participate in curriculum design within public schooling and teacher education programs. The future of curriculum design and its respective theorizing, he suggests, will embody cool "soulful capitalism," if there is such a thing, and the "affective playbor of the creative and digital industries," where "the future of the economy is positioned as being dependent upon creativity and innovation that in turn are to be promoted and encouraged through new and innovative forms of schooling" (p. 63). And yet, in this edited collection, we ask readers to contemplate the implications—both as possibilities and limitations—of handing over our creative souls to a digital knowledge Market economy.

The danger in doing so, for curriculum scholars like Pinar (2012), is that technology then infiltrates our body like a disease. And like The Matrix, the world becomes as technostructure, where our lived experiences become blurred, "crystallized in the concept of the cyborg" (p. 173). As cyborgs, our mobile devices become creative prostheses for engaging the social imaginary, where our subjectivities become ahistorical playborers, "and time itself flat-lines, as the past and the future disappear into an endless present" (p. 174). Now we might live the life perhaps not of a worker, but that of a soulful playborer, a techno-hipster, enslaved to *The Matrix* and its respective centralized cyborg curriculum that prods us with standardized testing, as shock treatments, that prepare us in turn mentally for the techno-

Market economy. Within this imagined future promise of education, our assigned workstations in life are instrumentally assigned, where, as Greene (1995) reminds us, "automatic responses are called for," and our "consciousness of agency is denied" (p. 35). We become subjectivities that navigate lived experiences with the world always only, working just on time, to meet the virtual demands of a twenty-first century digital knowledge economy.

In response to such curricular techno-provocations we seek to understand how different scholars are hacking education. In this collection we are playing with the etymology of "hacking," or more precisely to "hack," in at least the following ways: 1) cope with it or keep working away at it; 2) a person hired to do dull or routine work; and 3) illegally enter a computer system, those who write as a hobby, or code without malicious intent (see http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=hack). Contributors will be asked to play with these potential metaphorical interpretations in relation to how curriculum theorists and other educational researchers are (or are not) "hacking" education in a digital age.

Organizational Structure of the Collection: The book will be comprised of three sections. The first section will be: *Hacking Teacher Education within a Digital Age*. For this section, we will invite experienced and new scholars to write essays on the historical and contemporary ways in which they have attempted to "hack" the concept "curriculum" within their research in response to the various cultural, economic, social, and technological changes that have taken place within curriculum policymaking, teacher education, and, more broadly, public education itself. These essays will be more conceptual, historical, philosophical, and/or theoretical in terms of structure and thematic content. We will encourage authors to contribute pieces that speak to audiences within the fields of teacher education, curriculum studies, educational technology, and multiple literacies.

The section will be: *(De)Coding Cyberspace Culture: Teacher Education, Mobile Apps, and Texting*. Technology is represented by marketing departments as personal and "easy to use" while culture is often taught and represented as a set of irreducible motifs that position "us" as having a set of values and beliefs that can be known as facts. In being positioned this way, what often gets elided is the underlying complexity of each; the development of technology is rife with language largely indescribable for most people and cultural production, the intersections of the meetings between cultures and the resultant tensions can sometimes be left unresolved. Exacerbating this is the continuing entrenchment of a discourse of dependence, one in which technology is dependent on cultural patterns and culture is increasingly dependent on technology for its production and expression. Yet, critically, many questions go unresolved. In this section we will invite authors to contribute essays that present examples of their research that addresses the use of mobile applications in teacher education and/or seek to take up concepts like cyberspace and various identities that are both performed and represented within it. How might educational researchers, curriculum theorists, teacher educators, students learning to de/code and/or hack cyberspace in terms of the differing cultural, gendered, racialized, etc. representations? How do we curriculum theorize the coded language behind technology that makes digital cultural production possible? How do various cultural practices impress upon technological development? How do the languages of technology and culture intersect in non-traditional ways to

reconceptualize our ways of knowing, teaching, and learning?

The last section will be: *Snapchatting Multiliteracies: Social Media, Teacher Education, and Youth Culture*. The ever-evolving social media possibilities – from Ning.com to Tumblr to Yik Yak and Snapchat – are spaces where subjectivities are writ large as individuals write themselves into the word and the world. At the juncture between such private and public narrations of the self is desire – played out in seemingly contradictory ways: the quest for recognition, safety of anonymity, possibilities associated with restorative reconstructions of the self, and the ability to seek out dangerous spaces to perform recklessly or with justice as one chooses. Questions unfold around these often non-linear spaces where multiliteracies engage with the digital. Within these evolving mediatized spaces, we call for critical pedagogies that take up the concept of multiliteracies as self-reflexive reading praxis into virtual spaces to address issues of social justice in diverse educational contexts. For this section, authors will be invited to contribute chapters that provide examples of the innovative ways social media is being used within teacher education and/or for educational research with teacher candidates and youth, both inside and outside of public schools.

Submission Requirements: If you are interested in contributing a chapter to this collection, please submit a title, name, affiliation, and 250-word abstract (not including references) to nngafook@uottawa.ca by June 30, 2015. Our editorial committee will review the abstracts. Successful contributors will be notified by July 27, 2015. Chapter manuscripts will be due December 11, 2015 for a second round of reviews.

References:

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pinar, W. F. (2012). *What is Curriculum Theory?* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Taubman, P. (2009). *Teaching by Numbers*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Williamson. B. (2013). *The Future of Curriculum: School Knowledge in a Digital Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.