



The radical inclusive curriculum: contributions toward a theory of complete education

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Abstract

This paper contributes to curriculum theory from the perspective of a fundamental critique of education. Its objective is two-fold: to analyze both traditional and critical approaches to the curriculum and the types of education that flow from them and to propose changes that could result in significant improvements to the curricula through the radical and inclusive approach. The principles of pedagogy are redefined from the standpoint of this approach, aiming to enhance the educational potential of the curricula. The method of the paper is hermeneutic and dialectical, critically disputing the utility of curriculum theory and of the international policies that drive current educational practice. The essay's arguments are developed throughout in the dialogical space between the critique and the proposed changes. These arguments are oriented toward complementarity and aim to redefine education and the curriculum in terms of complexity and a higher level of consciousness. The conclusions suggest that the radical and inclusive approach can produce significant, thoroughgoing change in curricula, education, and pedagogy.

Keywords Curriculum · Education · Consciousness · Radical and inclusive approach to education · Radical curriculum

Introduction

The first objective of this essay is to critically review current mainstream models of the curriculum, both conventional and critical, as well as the educational practices that flow from them. The concept of “[more complete education](#)” is a reference point. The second objective is to propose principles for achieving a profound change in the understanding and development of curricula from the standpoint of the radical and inclusive approach to education. To this end, a hermeneutic methodology (Ricoeur, 1996) is adopted that contrasts two lines of argument: that of the current foundations of the curriculum and that of the radical and inclusive approach to education. Subsequently, the possibilities for radical change, based on complexity and consciousness, are explored. Throughout the essay, specific results emerge from the confrontation between the critique and the advocated

changes. These arguments represent a first step toward producing a combination of both approaches, through which we aim to build a more complete education (Arboleda, 2021).

First, however, we should clarify two notions referred to throughout the paper: the radical and inclusive approach to education and more complete education.

The radical and inclusive approach to education

The radical and inclusive approach to education, developed by the authors in previous studies (e.g., Herrán, 1993, 2003, 2011, 2018), is the perspective through which education is understood and analyzed in this essay. It is the source of the critical alternative focus applied here to mainstream thinking on the curriculum and the education that flows from it. This perspective entails a specific way of observing and recognizing partiality in education. It is structurally simple and best illustrated through an analogy: education is like a tree. When we see a tree, our attention rests on what is always visible: the trunk, the branches, the fruit (results and outcomes), etc.; thus, we tend to interpret the external visible parts as the whole. This means, however, that we ignore the elements of the tree that are under the ground and excluded from view.

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Our notion of the normality of the tree does not consider the roots, which are typically out of sight.

Nevertheless, the roots are the tree's most vital part. As the tree's "root cause," they nourish its whole being, becoming a part of all the other parts of the tree, not the inverse. Furthermore, all trees in an ecosystem, whether of the same species or not, are connected through an underground network of mycorrhiza—a symbiosis between fungi and roots—by which information and nutrients are exchanged, helping all network members to thrive.

The word "radical" is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as follows: "Denoting or relating to the roots," "relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something; far-reaching or thorough." The adjective "inclusive" signifies that the part above the ground is also included. Thus, from the standpoint of this article, "inclusive" refers to the incorporation of radical components into the education model. In this regard, it differs from the conventional concept of inclusion to refer to people. "Radical and inclusive," therefore, can mean "total," defined as holistic, more complete, and undivided.

This approach argues that current theories of the curriculum and education are highly superficial; they either ignore or do not address deeper educational concerns and this absence is reflected in curricula. Other theories of the curriculum have also scrutinized what is *not* taught, as in the case of the "null curriculum" identified by Eisner (1979), which refers to non-neutral absences stemming from particular cultural, political, social, and economic postures (McLaren, 2006). In contrast, the radical and inclusive curriculum is the application of a new pedagogical approach that aims to incorporate in the curriculum topics and issues that, although currently absent, are fundamental to all human education because they are both universal (common to all places) and timeless (independent of the historical moment; Herrán, 2018). In other words, these topics and issues are arguably deeply linked to the human condition.

From the standpoint of radical and inclusive reason, we can perceive what is normally not seen and interpret what we usually see differently. Radical and inclusive observation is achieved through distancing, by taking up an unconventional view of what is well known or familiar (Gordon, 1961), in which we cast doubt on certainties, search for lacunae, silences and absences, approach what is observed ingenuously and deconstruct to later construct. The basic educational concepts of this approach are egocentrism (abbreviated to *ego*, as understood by some Asian traditions, i.e., not as in other strands of thought, such as Freudian theory; see Cummings & Murray, 1989; Herrán & González, 2002), consciousness (e.g., Herrán, 1998; Mustakova-Possardt, 2004; Sumara et al., 2013), maturity (e.g., Herrán, 2011), the awareness of death (e.g., Corr et al., 2019; Herrán et al., 2019; Rodríguez et al., 2022), self-knowledge (e. g. Herrán,

2004; Maharsi, 2004), and meditation. Meditation in this construct is considered a practice with a meaning and scope that are both deeper and more educational (Goleman, 1984; Krishnamurti, 2002) than mindfulness, whose main goal is personal and emotional well-being. In other words, mindfulness is functional practice especially designed for Western people interested in psychology who wish to improve attention, reduce stress, and enhance well-being (Ingram et al., 2019).

In contrast, the main objective of meditation is essential self-knowledge and, therefore, a deep form of self-education aligned with the radical and inclusive approach. These pedagogical constructs (egocentrism, consciousness, maturity, the awareness of death, self-knowledge, and meditation) go beyond social and emotional learning because they are based on the growth of consciousness, which can be developed either by gaining knowledge (i.e., learning) or by losing it, as posited by some Asian traditions. They transcend the emotional and the social, because there are direct paths to a conscious life that are not based on emotions or social relationships but rather on stopping the flow of thought.

If pedagogy is a science whose object of knowledge is education (Tourriñán, 2019), then the radical and inclusive approach to education is an original, pedagogical system that permits delving into, and innovating, a deeper-level curriculum by embracing the basic concepts described above. From this perspective, the most crucial factor is the educators' training—principally, teachers and parents. Through this training and the consciousness it brings, education and the curriculum acquire a radical dimension with numerous practical applications in schools and classrooms, enriched by the essential content and topics discussed previously. These may be introduced through various didactic and curriculum options: disciplinary subjects, cross-curricular topics, and tutorial actions.

Human beings and their education are seen differently through the prism of these constructs. We start from the notion that society and human beings are the results of their own education. Some historical figures and thinkers, such as the Buddha (see, for example, Mahathera, 2016), Socrates (in Plato, 2011, 2021), Seneca (2004), Erasmus (2003), Locke (1997), Schopenhauer (2014), Nietzsche (2000), and Gurdjieff (2012), have coincided in this analysis, which views human beings as being characterized by their egocentrism, inanity, immaturity, biased reasoning and lack of consciousness, and essential self-knowledge. The overall outcome is an "egocentric society" and a world of "generalized immaturity." Despite their importance and coherence, these observations have not been incorporated into curricula. Self-knowledge is the most important construct of all. Paradoxically, this was the challenge that spurred the emergence of pedagogy in Antiquity, both in the East, with Lao Tse (1983) and Buddha (Mahathera, 2016), and in the

West, with Socrates (in Plato, 2011, 2021). It is one of the phenomena least understood by educational science (Herrán, 2004). In light of the above, we may conclude that our ordinary approach to education and the curriculum is inadequate because it is (incomprehensibly) so far removed from radical and inclusive constructs.

More complete education

More complete education is a core concept in the radical and inclusive approach. This essay provides a basic model for interrogating mainstream educational thought. To define it, however, we first need to delineate the concept of education. Education is defined as an interior development moving from the ego to consciousness (Herrán, 1998). The ego is the source of immaturity, inanity and foolishness, and is one of the primary sources of bad educational and teaching practices (Herrán & González, 2002). Consciousness is the wellspring of clarity, wisdom and decency; it is applied in disciplines, values, virtues and competencies. From this perspective, more complete education is that attained by a person who has completely transcended his or her ego and who lives both competently and consciously.

In view of the above, we may conclude that it is normal to live in the ego, with the consciousness only in a semi-awakened state. Many authors have remarked that the education of human beings stops at a completely immature level based on the ego. Rather than simply inclining us toward making errors, this ensures that we live comprehensively in error (Erasmus, 2003; Fromm, 2013; Locke, 1997; Schopenhauer, 2014; Seneca, 2004; Socrates, in Plato, 2011, 2021). There are also remarkably lucid thinkers—for example, Heraclitus (2001), Buddha (Mahathera, 2016), James (1907), Maharsi (2004), Jung (1991), and Krishnamurti (2013)—who speak of this ego-centered state of normality. Their thesis is that human beings, educationally speaking, are asleep, living in a state of unconsciousness or unawareness. Pedagogy, thus far, has ignored this basic phenomenon.

The consequence, which thus is also the cause of this inertia, is that human beings live outside themselves as a result of centuries of indoctrination. The radical alternative consists in fostering an educational shift from the ego to consciousness, i.e., from relative immaturity to deep self-knowledge. This is a transition toward freedom and full awareness of the self. Curricula do not address the generalized problem we have outlined above; nor do they include, among the goals of education, the challenge of essential self-knowledge, which has nothing to do with the existential self-knowledge of contemporary psychology and pedagogy. The former asks, “Who am I?” while the latter asks, “How am I?” This second question is fully integrated into curricula. Current educational practice,

however, does not contribute to essential self-knowledge; instead, passing over in silence one of the most fundamental questions of human beings.

From the above discussion, it should now be clear that a more complete education is genuinely exceptional; that is, it is far removed from conventional education. Confucius (in Xi, 2017) defines a fully educated person as one who is conscious, competent, and constant; fully educated individuals first cultivate themselves, then act, and only then do they speak about something or educate others. The Chinese classic the *Zhuangzi* (2018) underscores this and depicts Confucius as saying: “The perfect men of ancient times first sought their own plenitude, and only then helped others” (p. 57). Whom can we characterize, then, as a fully educated human being? In Eastern classical culture (i.e., India, China, Japan and Korea), those whose consciousness was completely awakened were termed *buddhas* (from the Sanskrit meaning “awakened”). Their state of being brought together extreme lucidity, depth of thought, maturity, and transcendence of the ego. The key teachings of awakened beings are remarkably consistent. Not only do they affirm that everything that elevates itself converges (Teilhard de Chardin, 1999), but also that whatever arrives at the highest point coincides in all essentials, regardless of the era or circumstances. Thus, the teachings of these masters mutually confirm each other.

We can attain the awakening of consciousness through an education based on the six radical constructs explained above: ego, consciousness, maturity, awareness of death, essential self-knowledge, and meditation. Little or nothing of this educational current, however, based on consciousness and nonknowledge (i.e., deconditioning and meditation), is embraced in curriculum theory. It is complementary, however, to the classical Western tradition, whose roots are in Socrates and which developed in terms of knowledge, learning, emotions, and competencies, among others. Therefore, the possibility arises of realizing the epistemological and historical complementarity of the two traditions, thereby laying the groundwork for more complete education (Herrán, 2018). Some writers (Fang, 2016) have explored this complementarity, which are located in the convergence of key topics in both Eastern and Western thinkers (e.g., Dewey, Confucius, Makiguchi): the link between human beings and nature, self-cultivation, the creation of value, associated living, and the joy of living and learning. Thus, more complete education embraces full consciousness, wisdom, and mastery in the area of personal and professional competencies. Since education, however, is a teleological journey over a series of stages, the existential (i.e., the social, the material, the externally successful) is not at the same level as the essential (i.e., transcendence of the ego, deep self-knowledge, and awakening of consciousness).

Development

Below, to differentiate the radical and inclusive approach to the curriculum from conventional concepts, we briefly outline the history of curriculum theory and describe the primary educational constructs and directives of the relevant international bodies. This way, we identify the main pedagogical lacunae of these approaches and what contribution the radical and inclusive approach to education can make to the curriculum.

Some background to curriculum theory

In the central European tradition, curriculum theory is an object of study in pedagogy. In its origins in the USA (Pinar, 2019), the curriculum began as an administrative designation. Pinar argues that this is crucial to understand the historical development of the field in the USA and the rest of the world. The hierarchical relationship between theory and practice that structures it reduced teaching to the implementation of objectives, with achievement measured through testing. Although Dewey (1902) had already touched on the curriculum, the general view is that curriculum theory began with Bobbit (1918), whose work draws on Taylorism (Taylor, 1911) and the psychology of Thorndike (1913). As theorists turned toward the social influence of the curriculum, tensions arose between the epistemology, teleology, and social models of the social efficiency movement (Apple, 2004; Bobbit, 1918) versus the progressive educators (Dewey, 1902; Tanner, 1991). Although the two tendencies sought agreement and alignment (Franklin, 1986; Kliebard, 1986), in the end, the first prevailed, because it fitted more closely with the political and economic priorities of the period.

Other social efficiency theorists, such as Charters (1923, 1924), widened the scope of education to embrace other social problems of adult life, while both Bobbit (1918, 1921) and progressive educator Dewey (1899, 1902) opposed traditionalists like Harris (1889) who argued for the gradual transmission of the knowledge accumulated by society. In the rural USA, Dewey (1899, 1902) identified the main problem of education as the disconnection of school learning from life needs. He developed the idea of the curriculum as “learning by doing,” a type of teaching based on experiment and students’ autonomous activity, as the basis of a functional education for life. This approach, however, clashed with the views of the traditionalists (Walter & Soltis, 2004).

Alongside Dewey (1925, 1938), other thinkers such as Rugg (1936) developed a theory of the curriculum that, aside from social and economic needs, was open to more

controversial topics, such as how to educate for a more democratic and critical society (Nelson, 1978). These more social models were systematized in a range of new curriculum models, such as Tyler’s (1949), which sought to combine the ideas of the progressives and the social efficiency movement and defined the curriculum as the product of teaching practice, the student’s school experience and social concerns (Ammons, 1964).

Taba (1962) continued Tyler’s work, centering on technical, product-based curriculum design. She saw the curriculum as a plan for learning that included the ways this learning was to be achieved, bringing together ideas from Dewey (1902, 1925, 1938), Piaget (e.g., 1954), Bruner (1963), and Vygotsky (1926, 1962). On this basis, she developed a structural model of curriculum design that involved the following steps (Taba, 1945, 1962): diagnosis of needs, formulation of objectives, selection of content, organization of content, selection of learning experiences, and determination of what to evaluate and how. In contrast, Bruner (1963) developed the “spiral curriculum,” which embraced the traditionalist imperative of transmitting knowledge from the earliest ages and consolidating knowledge of increasing difficulty, complexity and abstraction at successive levels (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

In the UK, Walker (1970) and Reid and Walker (1975) continued the pragmatic line of thinking. Stenhouse (1968, 1975) saw the curriculum as a dynamic, open, flexible, integrating project that could transcend classism in schools. He stressed the importance of the teacher and research-based education in developing both the student and the curriculum, arguing that teachers’ critical research on their own practice could include hypothesizing, testing the hypothesis, reflection, and application in an exercise that united theory and practice. Elliot (1978), in turn, highlighted action research as a method through which teachers could create dialogue and train themselves collectively in educational topics and issues from a practical perspective that could also generate theory.

The reconceptualist movement criticized the social efficiency movement, traditionalists and practical thinkers (Kliebard, 1986). Schwab (1969) proclaimed the death of the curriculum because it was excessively based on psychological theories. He put forward instead a type of curriculum design that emerged from the reflective deliberation of committed actors who would adjust the elements of curriculum development (students, teachers, context, and materials) to its means and ends. Since the disciplines are the basis of school subjects, foundations and methods were seen as inseparable (Eisner, 1984). Other reconceptualist approaches (Pinar, 1976, 1999, 2019) proposed a practical approach while at the same time theorizing on the subjective experience of the curriculum, transcendence, hegemony, and power, developing a concept of the curriculum as dynamic, complex, multidimensional, deliberative, open to criticism,

and upheld by an ethical commitment to the other. Both Schwab (1969) and Pinar (1999) saw the curriculum as a field that should be constructed through shared deliberation, adding a critical perspective. In their view, the curriculum was not something pre-established but instead a plural, interdisciplinary space where a range of different actors participated because none was in possession of the absolute truth.

Reconceptualism had much in common with the sociocritical approach and critical pedagogy (McLaren, 1995), calling into question all that was taken for granted or considered self-evident and unavoidable. This had its origins in the theory of interests of Habermas (1968, 1973, 1981), the second-generation Frankfurt School thinker who continued in the critical line of Horkheimer (1937). In his *Wissen und menschliche Interessen* (Habermas, 1968), Habermas defined human interests as technical, practical, and emancipatory. His structural reorientation was transferred to pedagogical rationality (Manen, 1977) and the theory of curriculum practice, emphasizing the importance of praxis in context (Giroux, 1983; Grundy, 1987; McLaren, 2016; Popkewitz, 1984). Grundy (1987) stressed sociocritical praxis linked to the social setting, incorporating Stenhouse's (1968, 1975) recommendations. According to McLaren (1995), critical pedagogy had not been able to develop a discourse providing a solid theoretical foundation on which to build alternative approaches to the curriculum. The "postmodern" approach of Doll (Doll, 1986, 1993; Lyotard, 1984) took up Prigogine's epistemological premises and applied them to the curriculum, embracing factors, such as complexity, temporality, multiplicity, uncertainty, and chaos. From this postmodernist perspective, Doll (1993) developed another structural model, suggesting a shift from the linear (modernist) curriculum to the complex, nonlinear (postmodernist) curriculum through three groups of components: the 4 Rs (riches, relations, recurrence, and rigor), the 3 Ss (science, story, spirit), and the 5 Cs (career, complexity, cosmology, conversation, community).

Growing from roots in critical pedagogy (Freire, 2013), educational and curricular movements have emerged in recent years from traditionally marginalized social groups. Their views of the world are usually excluded from curriculum design and education policy (Apple, 2018) and their different ways of knowing, interpreting, and constructing intersubjective reality are silenced, thus perpetrating what could be called an "epistemicide" (e. g. Zhao, 2020). Some of these theories call for creating an ethical, inclusive curricula, both transnational and transcultural (Guo & Maitra, 2021), to counter hegemonic nationalist discourses. According to these theorists, a transnational curriculum could help reshape the notions of culture, race, and class and encourage reflection on discrimination and social injustice. Such approaches typically aim to foster awareness of colonialism in education and the curriculum (Abu El-Haj & Skilton,

2021), which, from the radical and inclusive perspective set out in this paper, can be considered a type of egocentrism, in this case, cultural, national, or racial. Pedagogies that confront pre-established doctrines from a critical standpoint represent an education in the consciousness of injustice and barbarism (that committed against the indigenous peoples, for instance), intending to redress these wrongs through the curriculum (Tarc, 2011). Some of the curricular constructs that critical pedagogy puts forward, such as transnationality and awareness, are also core to the radical and inclusive approach; in the latter, however, as we argue in the section below titled "Critical dialogue," they are understood from a different, although complementary, theoretical grounding.

The past and present of curriculum theory, in conclusion, have been characterized by the tensions between the demands of the social and economic environment and the development of critical citizenship.

International education policies and their impact on curricula

In this section, we discuss three educational currents stemming from international policy that have shaped curricula worldwide.

The first is competency-based education. This originates in vocational training, is aimed at the labor market (Valle & Manso, 2013) and has shaped international education policy over the last few decades (Nordin & Sundberg, 2021). It is a trend promoted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), taking its cue from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Delors, 1996; Faure et al., 1972). In compulsory education, it has been backed up by two OECD projects: *Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations (DeSeCo)*, because 1997, and the *Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)*, whose results began to be published in 2000. The European Union has also encouraged this approach, which has also influenced international curricula, particularly in Latin America. The European competencies were specified in the *Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of December 18, 2006 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (2006) and revised in 2018 (*Council Recommendation of May 22, 2018*). According to Valle and Manso (2013), competency-based education appears as the prevailing tendency for the coming years.

Other such top-down concepts include "ongoing/permanent education" and "lifelong education." "Permanent education" (from early childhood to adulthood) was first promoted by the European Union (Commission of European Communities, 1995), followed by the UNESCO's framing of the concept of "lifelong education" (Delors, 1996). "Permanent education" was later reinterpreted as "lifelong learning"

and linked to the learning and development of competencies (*Council Recommendation of May 22, 2018; Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of December 18, 2006*).

The third tendency involves global social and educational goals. The objectives are to be defined in line with the main challenges facing the world in response to shared educational problems on a worldwide scale. This approach has been established through the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (*Resolution 70/1 of September 25, 2015*), adopted by 193 member states because 2015. This includes 17 objectives for sustainable development (SDO) of the planet and its people. It is articulated in three dimensions: social inclusion, environmental protection, and economic growth. These sets of goals have the following in common: (1) they are addressed to both those with the greatest material needs and those who are most sensitive to the deprivations and injustices suffered by others; (2) their social content responds to global problems and challenges, including inequality, poverty, injustice, the climate emergency, and loss of biodiversity; (3) they are based on easily understood and socially accepted alternatives, such as attaining gender equality, empowering women and children, speeding up the development of sustainability, and closing financial loopholes; (4) they are oriented toward action, which should be immediate, responsible, just, and universal; and (5) they are linked to integrated education, aimed at developing people's abilities, happiness, and social development. All these qualities are compatible with the goals of education as defined by contemporary pedagogy.

Radical and inclusive curriculum

Education and curricula should pay attention to what is most important to human beings, whether they consciously require this or not, and not to what is generally given the most weight by society. Among the most important things for human beings are, in brief, four priorities: avoiding

extinction, surviving, developing, and achieving inner evolution (Fig. 1). The mainstream curriculum theories discussed above take their goals from the second and third priorities, which are equivalent to what is known, what is demanded by society, and what is currently researched. However, the first and third do not normally form part of conventional curricular goals. Thus, they are out of balance, possibly due to human beings' lack of evolution as a species (Callaway, 2017).

When we combine the "local-universal" axis with the "present-future" one, fields of curricular goals and interests can be defined (Fig. 2). It is normal practice to focus on the "local-present" and the "local-future," leaving aside the universal present and future, unless this affects the local level. Therefore, what prevails in Fig. 1 is ignorance and a lack of awareness and in Fig. 2, ego-centeredness and the short-sighted view permit seeing clearly, but only what is closest to the viewer.

From this we can deduce that the educational goals of curricula almost all respond to social and personal demands. These are necessary for the social, economic, and functional development of national and international systems, but insufficient for the more complete education of humanity. They can be divided into two dimensions: that of the disciplines, which relates to the subjects flowing from them, and that of key specific competencies. The cross-curricular aspect comprises values, virtues, cross-curricular topics (e.g., road safety education, sexual education, environmental education, education for peace, for health, and for consumption), and cross-curricular competencies. All two-dimensional figures are flat and lack depth. The radical and inclusive curriculum adds to these a third, radical dimension that is essential if a more complete education is aimed for. This 3D curriculum is defined as follows (Fig. 3) (Herrán et al., 2000).

The topics in the radical dimension bring to the normal curriculum an educational depth and meaning, based on consciousness that it currently lacks. Some characteristics differentiating radical issues are illustrated in Table 1.

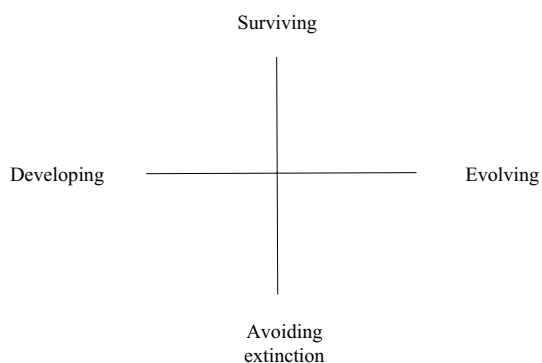


Fig. 1 Curriculum priorities

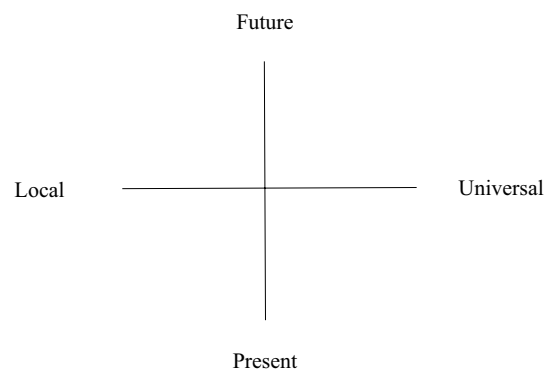


Fig. 2 Curricular goals and interests

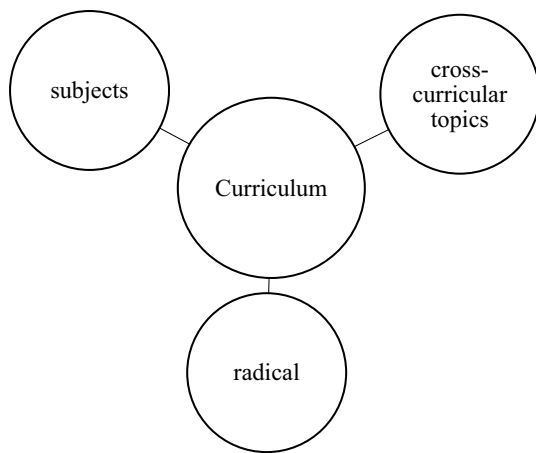


Fig. 3 Dimensions of the 3D curriculum. Adapted from Herrán et al. (2000)

The formal description of each radical topic is based on two factors: its content and its basic source, which can be the ego or consciousness. The ego and consciousness are the origin and end points of the vector represented by education from the perspective of the radical and inclusive approach. Radical topics favor this development. The origin and end point of this vector refer to two types of radical issues: those that are undesirable, which are projections of the ego, and those that are desirable, which are processes of consciousness.

Among those that are undesirable we can highlight: egocentricity, inanity or foolishness, mediocrity, dualism, biased and short-sighted reasoning, unexamined ignorance, lack of awareness, prejudice, fanaticism, hate, all types of classism, lack of sensitivity, barbarism, immaturity, and other generalized characteristics defined by their excess of egocentrism and lack of consciousness.

Among the desirable issues, we could name awareness and consciousness, death and finiteness, love, compassion, humanity, universality, the inner (or educational) evolution

Table 1 Differentiating features of radical topics

In their relationships with society and the human being
They are universal and independent of specific contexts
They are timeless, common to all historical eras
They are complementary to local and conjunctural development needs, economic development, literacy training, etc. and to the SDOs
They are not difficult fields, but on the contrary, human and close to people
Some contain each other, but without overlapping in any way, for example, universality, the awareness of death, essential self-knowledge, and meditation
In their relationships with education and the curriculum
They form an essential part of a more complete education; without them, it is not possible to educate people fully, in the same way that an animal cannot live without a heart, and there may be information, training, indoctrination, instruction, preparation, equipping students with skills, teaching, learning, third-division education, pseudo-education, etc.—but not more complete education
With a few exceptions they are not demanded by society: they lie outside of society’s interests and are absent from the agendas of the international organizations that shape education worldwide (the World Bank, the OECD, UNESCO, the European Union, the Organization of Ibero-American States, the Arab League of Educational, Culture and Scientific Organization, etc.), from normal science (pedagogy and other educational sciences), from education systems and law, and from curricula and institutional education projects
They are not part of formal or informal educational normality and can be seen as irrelevant to education, non-educational, or belonging to other non-pedagogical fields
Their articulation with socially required education is critical because the quality of the fruit and of the whole tree itself depends on the vigor of its roots
Although at first sight they do not appear helpful, they are associated with radical pedagogies and bring greater depth to normal subject-based and cross-curricular curriculum goals—the tree root in education itself
They are not unknown to the most aware teachers and educationalists
They are currently at a low level of development, although they have been more advanced in other eras and environments. For example, the search for consciousness in the Japan of Dogen Zenji (thirteenth century) or love and humanity in Giner de los Ríos’ <i>Institución Libre de Enseñanza</i> (Free Education Institution, 19th–twentieth centuries). They have also been able to develop in informal and non-formal contexts
Despite their timeless nature, they are not necessarily static—when they are normalized, they can become cross-curricular (socially understood and demanded), like environmental education, for example, which was radical 50 years ago. If we wish to evolve in complexity and consciousness, today they cannot be ignored, although not every cross-curricular topic was once radical (for example, road safety education), and neither does every radical topic that becomes cross-curricular lose its radical condition; analogically, although roots can grow above ground, they are still roots
Their curricular development takes up hardly any place or time in classroom teaching. The roots need to remain below ground to survive, and the target audience for radical topics is not primarily others, but oneself, as they represent an act of awareness by each educational actor (each person, team, department, school, family, conventional education system, society, etc.)

of humanity, the inner unity of the human being, universal language, personal and social maturity, doubt and humility, the essentially common and nonconditioned teachings of certain masters, essential self-knowledge, prenatal education, and meditation.

In light of the above, the radical and inclusive curriculum can be defined as a standard curriculum (both the normal subjects and cross-curricular topics) that embraces the radical dimension by including some radical topic.

Critical dialogue

In this section we develop a critical dialogue between our proposed approach, oriented toward complementarity, from the standpoint of the radical and inclusive approach to education.

On the partiality of mainstream curriculum theory

According to Young (2013), curriculum theory is undergoing a deep crisis. He argues that curriculum theory should be seen in sociological, political, and empirical terms, but surprisingly does not suggest a pedagogical approach. Pedagogy is the only science whose object is education. Curriculum theory has gone through phases, shaping formal education. The prevailing views have been partial. Yet, in the critical construction of the curriculum, there is no absolute truth (Doll, 1993; Pinar, 1999; Schwab, 1969) because truth belongs to no one (Krishnamurti, 2013). The endeavor to accept and adapt to each other's positions and work together (Franklin, 1986; Kliebard, 1986) is not enough. In the radical and inclusive approach, the desire for complementarity based on the clear awareness of one's own ignorance (Confucius, in Xi, 2017; Socrates, in Plato, 2011, 2021) locates the discourse on a higher level of complexity and consciousness.

Radical and inclusive approach and critical theory

Some of the contributions of critical pedagogy to curriculum theory have been discussed above. We have seen that some of the critical educationalist's key constructs that encourage alternatives to prevailing neoliberal education systems are also central to the radical and inclusive approach. Nevertheless, the radical curriculum and more complete education, according to the epistemological view outlined in this paper, have certain features that differentiate them from critical pedagogy, because they include other essential constructs or because those notions that the two approaches share—for example, awareness and transnationality—are understood and interpreted differently, although in a complementary way.

First, the radical and inclusive approach to education, drawing on the philosophy and pedagogy of the Eastern

and Taoist masters, among others, argues that curriculum theory should transcend the dichotomy of neoliberal education vs. critical education. Dualism is a human characteristic that Dewey (1910) saw as a voice of reason. This tendency toward conceptual polarization also affects curriculum theory, reflected in both its essential rationality and its approach (Huang, 2010). Dualism produces one-sided, closed-minded thinking shared by groups who identify with it. In dualistic reason, previous knowledge is interposed between fragmented reality and fundamental innovation. From the point of view of the radical and inclusive approach, dualism is a crucial construct in education, defined as a radical problem of the reason that can be addressed through the complexity of consciousness, to the extent that it can be overcome (Herrán, 2003).

A shared dualism underlies both neoliberal and critical reasons. As we have remarked, identifying with only one type of reason is not the only possibility. Thus, just as we may criticize Darwin without falling into creationism (Sandín, 2002), we can call society into question, along with education and the curriculum, while not confining ourselves to the terms of contemporary debates that challenge society and neoliberal education. The radical and inclusive approach observes the globalized Western educational tradition and concludes, in agreement with critical currents in education (e.g., Freire, 2013; Giroux, 2007; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007), that neoliberal, globalized education can be improved. Yet it does not base itself on or align itself with contemporary, postmodern discourses that criticize neoliberal society and education, nor with critical studies by specific, often marginalized groups (racialized, indigenous, linguistic, peasant, feminist, LGBTIQA+, disabled, etc.) that dispute neoliberal ideologies of education and attempt to counter them (Tarc, 2011). It does not do this because its theory attempts to situate itself on a higher level of complexity, which includes the critical approach, its objects of criticism, and observations that can be assimilated into a causal gnoseology.

Unlike the critical approaches mentioned, the radical and inclusive approach is a hermeneutic pedagogical system, aimed at interpreting and transcending the observer's fundamental partiality. It is not a partial alternative, nor is it based on dualistic criticism. It does not seek a confrontation between partisan views; instead, it addresses complementarity and completion by including these at the very outset, through education theory and the training of consciousness. It is based on observation and the quest for a form of understanding that goes beyond the ego, which can also be of an epistemological nature. It puts forward educational inquiries, reasons, implications, and constructs of its own from the standpoint of an epistemological model distinct from critical theory and its premises cannot be assimilated to the other approaches with which at first glance it might seem

to be identified. Applied to the dualism discussed above, it starts by accepting both neoliberal education and its critics. It includes them both—hence the adjective “inclusive”—and broadens the education of the observer who examines them. Subsequently it investigates the personal causes of social effects and arrives at alternatives aimed at making higher level syntheses.

For example, one point of departure for critical education is raising awareness of social injustice (Wrigley, 2018), which gives rise to indignation (Freire, 2004) and the desire to humanize society (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2015). A key-stone of the radical and inclusive approach, on the other hand, is the notion of the education of the observer as a cause of what is called into question. The latter is observed from the standpoint of the concept of more complete education, defined as a synthesis between the Western educational ideal, based on knowledge (teaching, learning, subject knowledge, and competencies) and that of the classical East, based on nonknowledge (ego, consciousness, self-knowledge, and meditation: Herrán, 2018). According to this model, one can recognize one’s own consciousness, observe one’s own dualism, and investigate one’s own partiality, rooted in the conditioning personal and/or collective ego, etc. From this, we derive the possibility that through self-education and the complementarity and complexity of consciousness, the distance between the phenomenon of education and the knowledge of the phenomenon can be shortened. Thus the concept of more complete education could contribute to defining a novel, transcendent epistemology in pedagogy and education, to inquire into and educate people in a type of rationality that would not only be more complex but also more conscious, human, and competent.

From the perspective of the radical and inclusive approach, it is not only a question of orienting and expanding the social sciences and pedagogy toward increased consciousness (Abu El-Haj & Skilton, 2021; Freire, 2013; Wallerstein, 1996) or of fomenting social and pedagogical debate. The essential point is to observe personal, social, and educational reality differently, not according to its effects, but in terms of its cause, i.e., the observer’s own human reason, normally conditioned, dual, partial, and egocentric or immature. Thus, we endeavor to complement constructs that are limited when we focus only on their appearance and effects. From the standpoint of the radical and inclusive approach, fundamental consciousness—linked to self-knowledge—comes before critical awareness and underpins it. Moreover, the consciousness of humanity and universality—constructs that were not unknown to some of the fathers of modern pedagogy, such as Comenius—transcends both nationality and transnationality (Guo & Maitra, 2021).

In conclusion, the radical and inclusive approach shares concerns with studies critical of neoliberal education and their dissatisfaction with globalized forms of education. But

its approach, its constructs and its treatment of the problem are different. In Table 2 below we present a comparison that distinguishes the two approaches in terms of a range of important criteria.

On competency-based curricula

In the radical and inclusive approach, organizing education around a single element of the curriculum or around socially required topics is a “pedagogical contradiction” (Herrán, 2005). Ontologically, nothing can be equivalent only to a part of itself.

Basing teaching on competencies means organizing all the components of the curriculum around what students are expected to be able to do (Bolívar, 2010). This approach anchors teaching and learning to the surface of education, like a buoy floating in the water. The more detailed prescriptive designs of competencies are the less they develop personalization, creativity, innovation, and critical sense. In terms of models, they are aligned more with the social efficiency movement (Eisner, 1967; Waldow, 2015) than with the practical (Eisner, 1984), sociocritical (Pinar, 2019), or postmodern (Doll, 1986, 1993) educators. The most serious problem with this approach is that it is backed by education systems and international educational organizations through external assessments and reports, such as PISA. The unanimity around this approach is worrying, at the very least, from the pedagogical perspective. The monolithic consensus and the absence of any doubt over what should be done distances curricula from a fuller education for all. For this reason, the international expansion of competency-based education may only be the illusion of success in the area of real educational development.

All the internationally and nationally promoted competencies are formulated positively: they equate their acquisition with educational gains. It is striking that none is negative because growth, in educational terms, means its loss. Broadly speaking, the positive-conventional competencies can be identified with consciousness and the negative-non-conventional with egocentricity. Every educator needs to learn how to eliminate it. Furthermore, but the loss of an old skin also signifies growth.

On lifelong learning in curricula

We could make similar comments on lifelong learning. It is assumed that the competencies, knowledge, and learning are desirable. Yet there are “negative competencies” and “biased competencies” which once learned, lead to the educational deformation of people and society. It is crucial to understand that not all meaningful and important learning is educational (Herrán & González, 2002). For example, we may learn biased knowledge, half-truths, lies, impoverished

Table 2 Some differences between currents critical of neoliberal education and the radical and inclusive approach

Criteria	Critical education	Radical and inclusive approach
Epistemological identity	Critical studies by often marginalized groups, challenging liberal education ideologies	Pedagogical system whose objects of observation and, secondarily, criticism are society, the person, pedagogy as a normalized science, and education as a whole
Epistemological grounding	Social movements, critical education philosophy, critical sociology, critical theory, critical pedagogy	The synthesis between teachings of the Taoist masters, the Buddha, Socrates, and other types of wisdom based on consciousness and the Western curricular tradition
Justification, motivation	Injustice, dehumanization, indignation, social liberation	Ignorance, unconsciousness, egocentrism, conditioning, generalized immaturity
Approach	Predominantly social	Predominantly personal and self-educational
Object	Social and economic relations	Education of the observer
Goals	Social and personal Emancipation	Awakening the consciousness of the observer
Constructs	Criticism, democracy, social injustice, consciousness raising, social commitment, politics, hope, globalization, social change and transformation, emancipation	Interiorization, ego, consciousness, self-knowledge, awareness of death, humanity, love, conditioned reason, dualism, partiality, short-sightedness, self-criticism—rectification, complete education, meditation, human evolution
Methodology	Social criticism, activism, social struggle	Observation, non-dualistic criticism, a priori inclusion of opposites, self-training based on the awareness of a possible synthesis
Key subjects	Society, groups seeking change	Every person as an observer, social leaders
Complexity	Dualism: identification with critical premises	Synthesis: a priori, de-identification with critical currents and neoliberal society and education, re-identification with elements belonging to the approach
Bases of education	Learning, knowledge, social awareness-raising, experience, emancipation, social change, and transformation	Ego, consciousness, self-knowledge, inner growth, awakening consciousness, learning, deconditioning, unlearning, meditation, nonknowledge, and congruence, in addition to learning subject knowledge and competencies
Concept of education	Meaningful and relevant learning, values and cross-curricular topics, social commitment, democratic living	Personal and social evolution of the ego toward consciousness, including learning, knowledge and competencies, inner-outer, and personal society congruence
Emphasis of curriculum	Education in values and cross-curricular topics, learning to learn, learning to do, learning to live together and with others, learning to be	'Rooting' the dimension of subject knowledge (specific knowledge and competencies), cross-curricular knowledge (values and key competencies) and radical topics
Social and epistemological proximity	Close to students, teachers, political leaders and educationalists identified with their critical posture or belonging to globally recognized social groupings	Abstract and far from the experience of students, teachers, political leaders and educationalists. Close to anyone with a minimum of inner awareness
Differential qualities	Investigates the socio-educational causes of exclusion and injustice, for awareness-raising and transformation toward social justice and the improvement of democratic societies and their education	Investigates the roots of personal education to interpret and transcend the observer's education, moving from the ego to consciousness and, from there on, to mitigate and develop external reality
By way of conclusion	Critical education theory is highly complementary to the radical and inclusive approach, because they both form different parts of the tree of society and education. An epistemological synthesis can be imagined that would yield more complex and completely scientific, social, and pedagogical outputs. In other words, the radical and inclusive approach understands, accepts, and integrates the principles of critical pedagogy, in addition to the models of the other educational paradigms. Our approach endeavors to complement these paradigms by introducing new pedagogical dimensions centered on consciousness and the inclusion of radical content and topics	

meanings, conditioning, fanaticism, hatred, indoctrination, how to hurt, etc. Given this possibility, what meaning does it have to promote “lifelong learning,” whether it is linked to the competencies or not? It is for this reason that we suggest expressions like “educational learning.” However, what utility will this have if education and training are organized around pedagogically misleading conditioning, learning, and competencies?

Conclusion

The education contained in national curricula and promoted by the international educational organizations is far from being more complete education, for three reasons.

Firstly, it represents a globalized response to social and personal demands of a functional, economic, political, cultural, nature, etc. These ideas and citizens’ interests define what is normal and in turn, this depends both on the social, national, ideological, cultural, etc. interests of the egocentric context and on the specific conjuncture. Secondly, it is based on constructs (teaching, learning, knowledge, competencies, disciplinary, cross-curricular, and cultural knowledge) that are insufficient for a more complete education, as they do not include the six basic radical constructs and other radical topics, nor do they encompass an approach based on the real complexity and depth of the phenomenon of education. Lastly, this socially accepted education is necessary for people’s personal, professional, and civic development and for the profitability of the systems they belong to. Yet, if we take more complete education as a model, these aspects lead us only halfway along the path of the potential educational process. For this reason, “higher education” is not university education, but refers to any stage of education (from prenatal to old age) in which the educator and the student—who are in essence the same person—are fully aware, wise, and competent in a particular field.

If more complete education is not the current model, it may be because pedagogy, the international educational organizations, the educational institutions, and schools themselves are ignorant and, in a certain way, negligent or fraudulent. There was a time, with “*paideia*” (Jaeger, 1986), when society was more aware of its educational potential. This old flame has now gone out. Today’s education situation is chained to external results and superficial dispersal in the curriculum and the whole field.

Only one of its wings is being strengthened. The wing of our inner life, that of deconditioning, self-knowledge, and the awakening of consciousness, is absent from our education. Without two strong, well-coordinated wings; however, we cannot fly. Flying, seeing, and acting to evolve beyond the ego is the beginning of more complete education.

The process of giving roots to what is seen as education and curricula can be useful in transcending short-sightedness in education and the curriculum and for coming out of the cave of conditioning, in which and for which a contradictory *pseudo*-education is offered and to which wing-clipped curricula contribute.

Pedagogy and didactics, in addition to education, exist in a certain epistemological twilight, in terms of consciousness. This is difficult to perceive because our sight has grown accustomed to it. Change in education consists primarily in becoming aware of our conditioning, in order then to respond to it educationally. The radical and inclusive approach affords a principled foundation for bringing our conventional education and its curricula closer to more complete education.

This theoretical approach has implications that can be directly applied to improving education, at least from two basic perspectives. The first consists of understanding that teaching practice is an effect of training. Therefore, the didactic priority is to develop a form of teacher instruction that goes deeply into theory, oriented toward enhancing awareness of educational communication. This is consistent with the meaning of the term “theory” (from the Greek *θεωρέω*, to see or consider), which nourishes the teacher’s awareness. The second has to do with enriching education and training through the inclusion of the radical fields discussed in this paper, at the core of a consciousness-based education that is fully compatible with the competency-based approach. This, then, would represent a shift from learning-based to consciousness-based education, but without renouncing learning, thereby enriching curriculum design, development, delivery, and evaluation in the sense of more complete education.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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