Building Socially Responsive Curricula through Emancipatory Action Research: International Contexts

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Two educators – one in USA and the other in Brazil – explore the possibilities and challenges for building socially responsive curricula through emancipatory action research. Habermas’ works on Theory of Communicative Action and Knowledge and Human Interests provide the theoretical framework for understanding curriculum and educational research. Explorations of the impact of local and national policies on the authors’ professional practices and research activities allowed them to compare the possibilities and challenges (in each country) for building socially responsive curricula. Right now, Brazil shows greater possibilities than the US, despite its limited material resources and personnel prepared to take advantage of those possibilities. In the US, the takeover of the education system by the corporatocracy with its market fundamentalism and assault to democracy has become a major obstacle for building socially responsive curricula in schools. The teacher / action research movement, though still marginal, is helping to counteract this trend.

Key words: socially responsive curricula, emancipatory action research, Habermas’ theory of communicative action, comparative educational policies, participatory (radical) democracy

Introduction

The growing takeover of public education by the corporate ideology of market values is embedded into the educational discourse, curriculum planning,