Experiencing Dialogical Spaces:
Decentralized Approaches to Curriculum

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"When it is told, it is, to the one to whom it is told, another given fact, not an idea. The communication may stimulate the other person to realize the question for himself and to think out a like idea, or it may smother his intellectual interest and suppress his dawning effort at thought. But what he directly gets cannot be an idea. Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does he think. In such shared activity, the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher -- and upon the whole, the less consciousness there is, on either side, of either giving or receiving instruction, the better."
– John Dewey (1916). *Democracy and Education.*

"In a decentralized classroom, the teacher becomes a partner who initiates learning and provides support as needed, but does not inhibit intuitive knowledge and innovative thinking in the process of performing these duties."
– Christopher Adejumo (2002). Five Ways to Improve the Teaching and Understanding of Art in the Schools, *Art Education*, *55*(5).

"Purpose emerges as something to be worked towards, rather than as something that is necessarily present at the beginning of the making/experiencing process. Demands are made throughout the process—the perception, selection, and organization of qualities and responsiveness to them. These relationships reorganize thinking in an on-going dialogue."
– Margaret MacIntyre Latta (2008). Aesthetic Education: The Task of Revisioning, *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 40*(5).

The act of learning is facilitated through an open communication process that encourages one to discover meaning within certain ideas, objects, and experiences. The traditional classroom environment, often consisting of a hierarchical relationship between teacher and student, does not always allow for this kind of open communication to occur. In a decentralized approach to teaching and learning the content is placed at the centre of the process, rather than the teacher or student, while participants are inspired and empowered through the experience. In some instances, the curriculum content is shifted aside to allow for the "emerging possibility" (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008) to occur. Decentralization in the classroom consists of a non-linear exchange of ideas between teacher and students, often leading to critical inquiry through methods of self-reflection. As the power dynamics in the classroom change, students are often motivated to become active learners as opposed to passive participants, and teachers learn to strategically listen and watch for teachable moments. The dialogical relationship between all participants becomes extremely significant in creating an aesthetic educational experience.

In *Democracy and Education* (1916), John Dewey wrote about the importance of an interactive and democratic relationship between the teacher and the student. Curriculum theorists today, such as Patrick Slattery and William Pinar, have proposed ideas for curriculum based on hermeneutic inquiry and autobiographical experience, which could be perceived as Deweyean approaches for the postmodern era. Based on contemporary scholarship in curriculum studies, this paper examines concepts and methods central to the decentralized approach to teaching, and argues for the implementation of dialogical teaching practices that alter the power relationship between teacher and student. With research from curriculum studies that includes art education and higher education, I position this paper from a pedagogical point of view, acknowledging advantages and

3

disadvantages to decentralized approaches within postmodern curriculum. I begin by describing an understanding of decentralization that stems from complexity theory and the concept of emergent knowledge as it has been addressed in recent research. Theories of power/knowledge relationships are discussed within a critical examination of pedagogies of conversation and dialogue that relate to "reflective hermeneutics" (Slattery, 2006; Slattery, Krasny, & O'Malley, 2007). Throughout the essay connections are made between decentralized approaches to curriculum and aesthetic education; this paper being a possible draft for a more developed investigation into this area. [The argument for curriculum to embrace methods of discourse from visual art as a way to increase self-reflection within critical inquiry is a topic I hope to pursue in the future]. Towards the end of the paper I discuss pedagogical approaches to the decentralized format of networked learning and suggest the internet be utilized and researched as a space for critical dialogue.

Decentralized Curriculum and Complexity Thinking

In the recently published book *Engaging Minds: Changing Teaching in Complex Times (2*nd ed.) (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008), the authors describe how mechanistic understandings of teaching and learning began to change in the 1970s and 1980s with a shift towards a more collaborative approach to learning, coinciding with a broader, transdisciplinary move towards "complexity thinking." Complexity thinking rejects the use of linear, machine-based metaphors and embraces non-linear, organic notions of understanding (p. 76). In this view, learning is not a cause and effect relationship between a teacher and student; the act of learning is one part of a complex system that is dependant on many other parts. The authors describe how the process of teaching and learning is moving away from the concept of one individual passing on established knowledge to another, to the concept of collectives elaborating emerging knowledge. Figure 1 illustrates the difference between the traditional classroom experience with the teacher at the centre in red (centralized network) and that of a teaching and learning experience that encompasses a complexity approach (decentralized network).

Learning is about discovering what motivates us to a set of ideas; a traditional classroom environment, often based on a power relationship between teacher and student, does not always facilitate an open communication process for discovering those motivations (Burnett, 1999). A decentralized approach to teaching and learning does not necessarily mean that the teacher neglects planning a structure for the learning experience, rather it requires the teacher to create a structure that allows for certain ideas to trigger other ideas and for knowledge to emerge organically as participants become engaged with the process. Disadvantages to a decentralized pedagogical approach include a major shift in curriculum planning that requires the teacher to adjust instructional strategies according to individual groups, and that the teacher be willing to feel uncomfortable during an unpredictable teaching and learning experience (Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, & Abghari, 2004). Teachers sometimes find it difficult to relinquish control in order to allow students a greater sense of agency, however, this can sometimes lead to teachable moments as students are individually engaged with the content. Decentralized instruction preconditions students to access their inner feelings and intuitions in the learning process, often expressing non-linear ideas with less fear of rejection (Adejumo, 2002, p. 8). Some groups of students may be more difficult than others to engage in constructivist (or decentralized) processes but teachers who embrace these methods have found it to be worth the effort (Milbrandt et al., 2004).

Complexity thinking highlights the importance of neighboring interactions of ideas, but the means to accomplish this must be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the topic, the context, and the personalities involved (Davis et al., 2008, p. 199). In other words, decentralized approaches to teaching and learning can be complicated and time-consuming, yet most often produce an aesthetic experience that deepens meaningful understanding related to cultural issues. With this understanding of the relationship between complexity thinking and decentralized forms of teaching, the power that belonged to the teacher within a behaviorist model of learning can now be thought of as shifting amidst the social interaction within the teaching and learning experience.

In *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era* (2nd ed.), Slattery describes the act of

interpretation as something that should emphasize possibility and becoming since human consciousness can never be static (2006, p. 282). The idea of human consciousness never being static is similar to the view of knowledge being a complex system of evolving rhizomatic forms. Knowledge is understood as the result of a dialogical process through a non-linear exchange of ideas. Decentralized approaches to teaching are most appropriate for learning situations in which there exists more than one response to a topic. There must be more than one interpretive possibility to begin with and structures need to be in place for ideas to stumble across one another – this being more important than the way the physical system is organized (Davis et al, p. 199). Throughout this paper I explore the 'space' between the tangible objects and the participants that make up the teaching and learning experience. I feel it is this 'spaces, and this process of the dialogical relationship, that creates knowledge, not necessarily the teacher or the student. I am interested in how decentralized approaches to curriculum contribute to this space or process and point to how it is representative of the postmodern aesthetic experience.

The Space of Emergent Knowledge

This 'space' or 'experience' has been written about by various curriculum theorists, albeit each defining the phenomenon with different language to describe its intangible qualities. Aoki wrote about the *live(d) curriculum* as something in opposition to planned curriculum and explained the concept by using a visual illustration (Figure 2) of his "rhizomean curricular landscape" (Aoki, Pinar, & Irwin, 2005). There are similarities between Aoki's curricular landscape and the decentralized network, as the hierarchy and linear structure inherent to the traditional teacher-student relationship are removed. Aoki suggests that the rhizomean landscape signifies the multiplicity of curricula that occurs in the learning space and the relationships that happen 'between' the forms that represent the teacher and students – the exchanges of communication. In quoting Deleuze and Parnet (1987) he draws attention to the term 'multiplicity' not being a noun, since within multiplicity it is not the elements that matter but what is in between them, "…as a site

6

of relations which are not separable from each other" (p. 420). Slattery (2006) cites Pinar and Grumet (1976) for challenging the field to examine internal experiences rather than the external objectives by promoting the use of research in philosophy, psychology, literature, and art to inform a reconceptualized curriculum (Slattery, p. 62). Pinar reconceptualized curriculum as a process or experience that he defined as *currere*, the verb form of curriculum, which emphasizes the individual's own capacity to reconceptualize his or her autobiography (Slattery, p. 62). Schubert (1986) analyzes currere to be "a social process whereby individuals come to greater understanding of themselves, others, and the world through mutual reconceptualization …the interpretation of lived experiences (Schubert, 1986, p. 33).

In Pinar's writing he focuses more on the individual's experience, describing *currere* as an inward journey, emphasizing the importance of the autobiographical experience. Schubert's description above, similar to Aoki's curricular landscape, focuses more on the social interaction within the space of the learning environment. Regardless of the specific language used by Aoki and Pinar to describe these ephemeral aspects of the *currere* experience, both emphasize the temporal and animated nature of curriculum, something that I feel can also be applied to the understanding of knowledge.

In an article titled "The Emergent Curriculum: Navigating a Complex Course Between Unguided Learning and Planned Enculturation" (2008), Osberg and Biesta write about the 'space of emergence' in which meaning and knowledge is formed in the classroom, however, they argue that the logic of emergence be not only applied to knowledge but to human subjectivity as well. Their concern is that even though the teacher structures the curriculum to allow for emergent knowledge to occur in this space, the problem of planned enculturation still exists. Influenced by complexity thinking and research that has examined how educators can encourage the emergence of meaning in the classroom (Davis, Sumara, Luce-Kapler, 2000), the authors are less interested in the pedagogical methods that create emergence of meaning and more interested in the *kinds* of meaning that are allowed to emerge in the classroom:

"This question is important because, if meaning is understood as emergent, and if educators wish to encourage the emergence of meaning in the classroom, then the meanings that emerge in the classrooms cannot and *should not be pre-determined before the 'event' of their emergence*. This raises the question of whether it is possible to maintain an emergentist conception of meaning in an 'educational' context, which in turn raises the question of what is meant by 'education' (Osberg & Biesta, p. 314; italics in original).

The authors discuss criticisms made towards anti-authoritarian (decentralized) versions of progressive education which claim that this pedagogy has no real educational value, concluding that "for an emergentist conception of meaning to contribute to discussions about education it must not reduce the concept of education to untutored learning" (p. 316). The authors illustrate through the work of Ulmer (1985) that simply designing a pedagogy that allows for the 'invention of meaning' (or in Ulmer's terms *inventio*), does not release pedagogy from the logic of enculturation (p. 319). Osberg and Biesta argue that emergence must be used on two levels – for knowledge/meaning and for human subjectivity. They suggest that we need to abandon pre-conceived notions of *what* constitutes a human subject in order to understand *who* we are in relation to each other, and that if this process occurs as knowledge emerges in the educational space than it is possible to have curriculum that is free of enculturation. In referring to Hannah Arendt's book *The Human Condition* (1958), the authors underline the importance of maintaining individual uniqueness in students by keeping "frustrations" and differences within the dialogical classroom experience. They state that it is the relationship to others that allows our "unique distinctness" to emerge: "For Arendt, who we are is not something that exists before the other, nor is it something that appears because of the other. Rather it appears only in relation to the other (neither before no after)" (p. 322). Osberg and Biesta conclude that the 'space of emergence' for knowledge and subjectivity requires that differences amongst participants be maintained in the classroom. This suggests that the responsibility of the teacher is to enable the students to become more unique and *not* to ensure a desired end but rather to complicate the scene (p. 325). Through this research, Osberg and Biesta extend the concept of emergent knowledge beyond that of complexity thinking by emphasizing philosophical notions which are similar to those located within Pinar's writing on curriculum

theory. It also suggests that decentralization, as a non-linear and non-hierarchical approach to curriculum, could be understood to also describe the process of identity formation that occurs within the educational experience.

The research above implies that there is a need to "complicate the scene" (Osberg & Bietsa, 2008) in the classroom experience, similar to Pinar's argument for "complicated conversation" (Pinar, 2006). The 'space of emergence' explored by Osberg and Biesta illustrates the possibility for knowledge and meaning that comes from a non-authoritative place and the possibility for student empowerment that is not planned enculturation. As with any form of hermeneutic inquiry, these concepts can of course be deconstructed but I will instead move now to a closer examination of dialogic methods within decentralized approaches to curriculum.

Dialogical Relations in Non-Hierarchical Classrooms

Decentralized approaches to curriculum place importance on conversation and dialogue within a non-linear exchange of ideas between teacher and students. The dialogical relationships that are produced in this educational experience are, in my opinion, the most significant components to a decentralized curriculum. It is not just about a dialogue between teacher and student, it is also about the conversations between student and student, between student and the content, and between the teacher and the content. The interpersonal is as important as any other part of the learning experience; the difficulty is that the structure of the traditional educational experience, both from the teacher's and the student's perspective, mitigates the value of invention and exploration (Burnett, 1999). We are shaped by our own educational experiences, which are often defined by a traditional lecture style of teacher-student interaction. Embracing a decentralized approach to curriculum and teaching can allow us to explore the possibilities of dialogue as a pedagogical tool for emergent knowledge.

Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it (Shor & Freire, 1987). In "What is the 'Dialogical Method' of Teaching?" the authors Shor and

Freire discuss democratic communication within the teacher-student relationship and the role that dialogue plays in forming knowledge: "Dialogue is the sealing together of the teacher and the students in the joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study. Then, instead of transferring the knowledge statically, as a fixed possession of the teacher, dialogue demands a dynamic approximation towards the object" (p. 14). Shor and Freire define dialogue in a similar manner to the way emergent knowledge has been defined by contemporary scholars above– a temporal process dependant on relationships in space. The authors argue for a level of openness on the part of the teacher, a willingness to relearn the content and to become engaged in the dialogue. Through a conversation of their own, the authors specifically describe how the dialogical process might work in the classroom and what the teacher should be conscious of as they become a facilitator to the discussion. They describe the role of the teacher as an artist who works to uncover key themes and access points to consciousness, recomposing them into unsettling critical investigation (p. 28). The authors use the phrase "verbal reinvention" and state, "reinventing the visual and verbal aspects of the classroom are two ways of addressing the destructive arts of passive education" (p. 30). Much of what this article describes can be thought of as similar to the workings of complexity thinking and decentralization. Along with acknowledging teaching as an aesthetic exercise that combines art and politics, the authors see the dialogical method as a form of liberatory education.

When discussing the implementation of dialogical teaching practices within curriculum, it seems necessary to talk about the nature of the hierarchical relationship between the teacher and the student. From the research I have found regarding decentralized approaches to teaching, referred to by some as constructivist (Milbrandt et al, 2004) and situational (Scobie, 1983), the main topic of debate is with the power struggle between teacher and students. The big question is: How much power should the teacher have within decentralized classrooms that incorporate collaborative learning? And, how much participation should students be accountable for?

Elstad (2006) discusses how students failed to be accountable within a laissez-faire

classroom in an elementary school study that examined the impact of computer technology on the classroom dynamic. The term "laissez-faire" was a common critical response I found while researching decentralized approaches of curriculum. Perumai (2008) found evidence of university students actively resisting dialogical practices, which led to the teacher having to reclaim authority, resulting in students then submitting to the teacher's pedagogic authority. Perumai states that power relations of pedagogical interaction will not be overcome by simply adopting different classroom practices, such as dialogic and student-centred (Gore, 2002) and that it might be more useful to analyze the kinds of pedagogical strategies and ideological normalizations teachers enact in their classrooms (teachers privilege certain epistemological stances, and disprivilege others) (Perumai, 2008). These findings reiterate what Osberg & Biesta (2008) argued for in their research of the 'space of emergence' – the need for an emergentist conception of human subjectivity to occur *in addition to* the emergent knowledge that forms in the dialogical space of the classroom. It also points to the fact that teachers need to be conscious of the level of power they possess within classroom dialogue. In the conclusion to Perumai's study, the author suggests that in some cases attempts to rid classrooms of power are futile, and that teachers should embrace power by using it more knowingly while being aware of its effects in terms of interpersonal relations (p. 397). This raises the question: Is power impossible to remove from the classroom? How should power be dealt with in decentralized approaches to curriculum?

Balancing Power in Radical Pedagogy

In *Transforming Power: Domination, Empowerment, and Education* (1992), Kreisberg distinguishes the more authoritative "power over" from "power with" which is characterized by collaboration, sharing, and mutuality (p. 61). Acknowledging the links Foucault made between power and knowledge, Kreisberg examines power relations in schools and its place in the process of empowerment of individuals. He identifies how the *power over* relationship cuts off human communication and creates barriers to human empathy and understanding (p. 47) whereas *power*

with is a developing capacity of people to act and do together (p. 71). Kreisberg addresses the dominant discourse of power in modern Western culture and states that upon closer examination, it becomes clear that conceiving power as solely *power over* is inadequate (p. 61). When determining the levels of power within decentralized approaches to curriculum, we must consider these different understandings of power, and more importantly, communicate to teachers the necessity to be mindful of power relationships within the classroom and particularly in the dialogue that takes place within group discussions.

As more educators embrace decentralized approaches to teaching and learning, more research needs to be done regarding the power relationships between teacher and students. Moreno-Lopez (2005) researched the impact of shared power between a teacher and students within a university Spanish language class in the United States. Using Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which shifts the emphasis of the learning process from assessing the student's performance to assessing the amount of help he/she needs, the author observed that this critical pedagogical approach allowed the participants to negotiate and learn successfully without the traditional roles of the teacher and students being abolished (Moreno-Lopex, 2005).

Another recent study that analyzed power dynamics in a group discussion of critical discourse specifically applied the "deep democracy" (Mindell, 2002) method as a facilitation tool to observe the level of "inner work" conducted by participants (Cohen, Bai, & Green, 2008). The authors define deep democracy as a challenge to the classical conception of democracy that values individualization and expressions of self-interest. The study was meant to create "a living experience of deep democracy" in the context of a Philosopher's Café, a format of discussion similar to a seminar class. The researchers considered it an experiment to see if colleagues who devoted themselves to the study of deep democracy methods actually applied them in practice. The group was made up of conference presenters, the discussion was to stem from the subject matter of the conference, and the experience was to replicate spontaneous and open-ended inquiry (Cohen et al, 2008). The results revealed instances of conflict, attention to marginalized members and

marginalized aspects of experience, and the use of facilitation skills by the leaders. The authors stated that a sense of community and intersubjectivity can be initiated with attention to diversity and the use of facilitation skills (Cohen et al, 2008). This study draws attention to the necessary restriction of *power over* within group discussions and the necessary facilitation of *power with*, particularly if the objective is an aesthetic educational experience.

Dialogical Possibilities in Aesthetic Education

In Latta's 2008 review of Granger's book *John Dewey, Robert Pirsig, and the Art of Living: Revisioning Aesthetic Education*, the author discusses Granger's use of the phrase "cultivating naivete" (a phrase borrowed from Dewey) stating, "(it) serves as a reminder to the reader of the important role of openness to the process of 'investigating our intellectual habits through a receptivity and sense of responsibility'…"(Granger, 2006, p. 23). This process of personal investigation seems similar to the inner work required in deep democracy yet perhaps with more acknowledgement of the sensory and emotional aspects. Latta discusses similarities in the descriptions of the aesthetic experiences of Dewey and Pirsig, noting how Granger emphasizes dialogue and interaction: "Demands are made throughout the process – the perception, selection, and organization of qualities and responsiveness to them. These relationships reorganize thinking in an on-going dialogue" (Latta, 2008, p. 692). Latta further discusses how Granger recognizes this back and forth process that occurs in the work of Dewey and Pirsig as "at times tactile dialogue, and at other times more visual, and sometimes more emotional" (p. 692). Speaking from the perspective of an artist/educator, this ongoing dialogue that Granger and Latta discuss as central to the aesthetic experience makes perfect sense. In art education curriculum, the non-linear nature of the creative process of making art is often reflected in the critical dialogue surrounding both artistic and academic forms of meaning. Dialogical experiences within decentralized forms of art curriculum present opportunities for self-awareness and critical thinking. The remainder of this paper addresses aspects of decentralized approaches to curriculum in a particular field noted for its

attention to aesthetics – art education.

Influenced by curriculum theorists who have been struggling with reconceptualizing curriculum to meet current social and cultural changes, some art education research has addressed the need to further merge creative production with critical reflection and vice versa. Art educators should conceptualize these processes as being interconnected if they intend to teach in ways appropriate to understanding visual culture (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004). In writing about art teachers and curriculum Erickson (2004) referred to a study by Short (1998) which concluded that the understanding of art, and the ability to transfer this understanding from one context to another, should include the critical activities of talking and writing about works of art (Short, p. 62).

Conversation within art curriculum is key to the learning process; there is value in talking to work out interpretations and differences (Kent, 2005). In *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era* (2nd ed.) (2006), Slattery discusses the nature of the classroom setting as contributing to the dialogical experience of aesthetic education. The author quotes David Orr (1992) in stating that "landscape shapes mindscapes" and attests to the significance of the seminar circle in facilitating discourse, as opposed to the rigid arrangement of single desks in rows. In studio art curriculum, the experience of the seminar circle is translated into the structure of group critiques that examine student artwork. The decentralized structure of the studio critique, with participants placed in simultaneous view of both the artwork and each other, is very much what Slattery calls for with his vision of curriculum in the postmodern era – a process of hermeneutic interpretation that ultimately leads to self-reflection and critical inquiry. The teacher can in no way predict or plan for the discussion that emerges, thus it is the perfect situation for a decentralized method of discourse and perhaps a teachable moment. The art object in between the participants becomes the centre of attention, allowing for self-reflection by both students and teacher. This decentralized and somewhat circular process of dialogue aligns with Slattery's view of hermeneutic interpretation as "…each new experience adds to the accumulated meaning of experience for each individual and sets the stage for present and future possibilities…a gestalt or heightened

consciousness" (Slattery, 2006, p. 282). This kind of aesthetic experience is something that rarely exists in a centralized approached to teaching and learning.

The atmosphere and structure of the classroom "landscape" is an important component to an aesthetic education experience. Combined with the non-linear process of dialogue, which often incorporates self-reflection and critical inquiry, the studio group critique is an empowering experience. Various media forms are included in this environment and the inclusion of digital technologies is inevitable, particularly to meet the needs of "millennial students" – (Tucker, 2006) – students born after 1980 with strong desires for social connection through the internet. Curriculum development in art education is affected by the increasing advancement of digital technology in similar ways that other academic fields are being affected.

Critical Dialogue in Networked Learning: Is it Possible?

Since the beginning of the postmodern era, educators have been calling for curriculum and pedagogy that responds to the challenges of contemporary society. Art educator Efland (1995) argued for a curriculum that prepares teachers and students to approach the world of art in all its complexity, replacing earlier curricular models with a more complex and flexible one. He suggested that a spiral lattice type model (Figure 3) might better represent the learning that takes place within art curriculum and that this structure allows for multiple forms of interpretation and implementation and for students to individualize their art educational experiences.

In response to social changes in visual culture and the rapid advancement of user-friendly digital technology, Sweeny (2004) proposes a decentralized approach to art curriculum – a more complex version of Efland's spiral lattice that expands into a tree-like network, similar to the decentralized network illustrated in Figure 1. Sweeny writes about the inherent connection between the pedagogical philosophies associated with the open classroom movement of the 1960s (emphasis placed on learning in small groups with the teacher being less of an authority figure) with networked structures today that exist through the internet (Sweeny, 2008).

With the internet becoming more of an accessible tool for interconnectivity and interactivity, some art educators like Sweeny are suggesting that teachers take advantage of the flexibility that is part of the internet and use it to inform pedagogical practices. The new technologies like social networking sites and online learning systems, enable interactive and participatory collaborations, allowing for multi-directional conversations that can occur in multidimensional spaces (Davis et al, 2008). Social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) allow for a new kind of intimacy that is being described as an acute form of self-reflection (Thompson, 2008). Web-based courses are increasing in numbers, but the research of what occurs within these complex environments is lacking, particularly the study of pedagogy and collaborative discourse (Burnett, 1999; Kanuka & Garrison, 2004; Gabriel, 2004; Kreber & Kanuka, 2006; Xin & Freeberg, 2006). The principal interest has been how we shape our technologies, with less concern for how we embody our technologies (Davis et al, 2008). Before educators proceed to develop curriculum and instigate dialogical relationships in cyberspace, more research and exploration needs to occur in order to inform pedagogical practices. Teachers and students need to know *how* networked spaces can be used to facilitate meaningful discourse.

When adapting courses to the web, too often they are converted without considering the need to "pedagogically re-engineer" them to consider the new technology characteristics and learner needs (Collis, 1996). Art educators are capable of seeing new pedagogical possibilities when working with digital technology in curriculum (Wang, 2002; Wood, 2004), which suggests that networked approaches to contemporary curriculum, and perhaps decentralized curricular forms of any nature, would benefit from the work of art education researchers. Recent research in post-secondary education has shown that digital technologies, such as social networking websites, are being implemented into art curriculum resulting in better peer-to-peer interaction and creating active learners as opposed to passive participants (Collins et al., 2007). Researchers working in the area of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (S0TL) have noted that curriculum offered online encourages teachers to rethink and reflect on their current teaching practice (Kreber & Kanuka,

2006). The findings made on current research of decentralized approaches to curriculum taking place online suggest that critical thinking within teacher-student and student-student dialogue is possible, there just hasn't been enough exploration into this area. As other scholars have already stated, it is vitally important to examine networked learning and its potential for innovative curricular practices *before* we venture into cyberspace.

In order to address issues of networked learning and the impact these 'spaces' have on dialogical relations between teachers and students, decentralized approaches to curriculum first need to be incorporated into traditional classrooms to create emerging possibilities for meaningful learning experiences. I believe that the aesthetic experience can occur in any learning environment as long as curriculum developers and teachers are open to creative approaches that embrace non-linear methods of communication. Freire described the teacher as both an artist and a politician (1987, p. 12). Others have described the teacher as the ultimate curriculum-maker. When one incorporates hermeneutic inquiry and dialogical pedagogy into the mix, perhaps we can begin to also understand the teacher as a psychologist or sociologist who negotiates the aesthetic experience of curriculum.
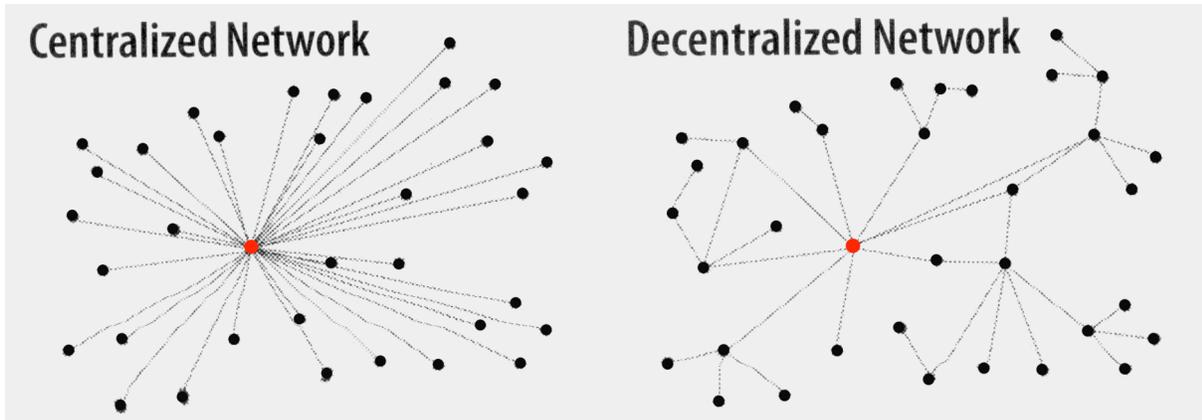
Figure 1 – red added to original illustrations from Davis, B., Sumara, D, & Luce-Kapler, R. (2008) *Engaging Minds: Changing Teaching in Complex Times* (2nd Ed.), New York: Routledge.
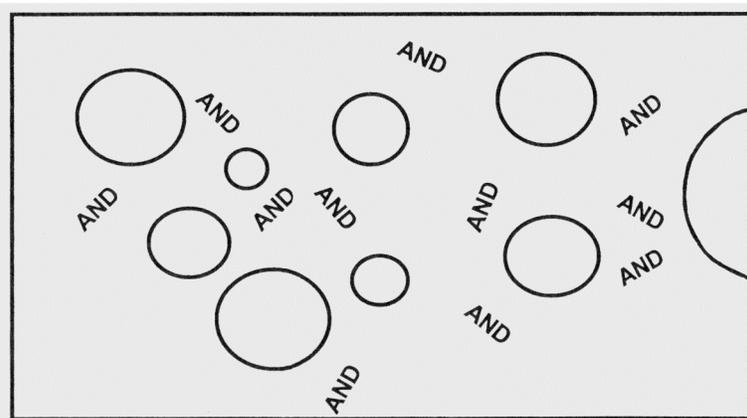
Figure 2 – from Aoki, T. T, Pinar, W., & Irwin, R. (2005). *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki. Studies in curriculum theory*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
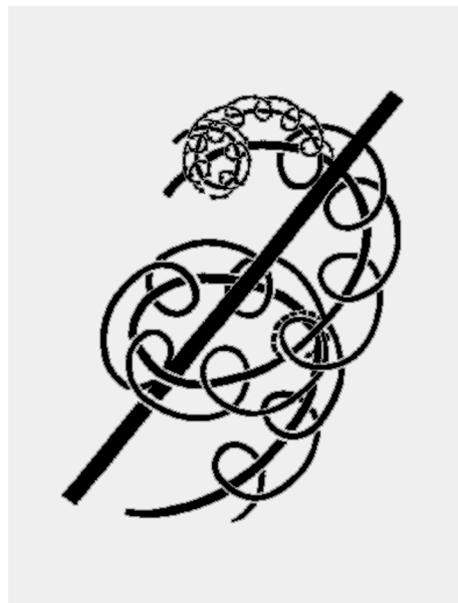
Figure 3 – found image to represent Efland's vision of a spiral lattice

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