

Pinar and The Reconceptualization

The field of curriculum study changed on October 4th 1957, with the successful launch of the Soviet Union's *simplest satellite, prostetishy sputnik* (PS1), or *Sputnik I*. Following perceived weaknesses in American science education, the National Science Foundation were tasked with extensive curriculum reform. William Pinar (1978a), declared “[c]urricularists were used infrequently during this time, and then primarily as consultants. This bypass was a kind of deathblow to a field whose primary justification was its expertise in an area now dominated by cognate-field specialists.” (p. 6) Economic hardship and dissatisfaction with a traditionalist approach (Tyler, 2013)—descended from the *Tyler Rationale* of 1949—led Pinar to conceptualize a “new curriculum theory” (Pinar, 1978b, p. 205). A movement from technical curriculum development to curriculum understanding—a *reconceptualization*. Though he conceded this suggested more “thematic unity among the curriculum writing characterized as the ‘reconceptualization’ than, upon close examination, appear[ed] to exist.” (p. 206)

Pinar considered the reconceptualization as “fundamentally an intellectual phenomenon, not an interpersonal-affiliative one” (Pinar, 1978b, p. 211), with difficulty defining it himself, “[t]he answer, at this point, is a slippery one” (Pinar, 1978b, p. 205). Yet publications such as the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* and the American Educational Research Association, Critical Issues in Curriculum and Cultural Studies Special Interest Group, demonstrate Pinar’s reconceptualization has grown from “an opposition to the mainstream field and its tradition” in the 1970s, to become today’s field, “complicated, with several centers of theoretical formation” (p. 167), suggesting the reconceptualization has occurred.

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References

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