Foundations in Teacher Education: A Canadian Perspective
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*T. M. Christou, theodore.christou@queensu.ca and S. M. Bullock, sbullock@sfu.ca*

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Authors
Introduction: A Timely Examination of a Rather Old Set of Ideas

Theodore Michael Christou, Queen’s University
Shawn Michael Bullock, Simon Fraser University

This is a timely book. The Canadian Association for the Foundations in Education/l’Association canadienne des Fondements de l’Éducation (CAFE/ACFE) held a pre-conference before the 2013 meeting of the Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CSSE) entitled: “Strategies for Preserving the Foundations of Canadian Teacher Education.” The use of the verb preserving indicates a very real sense that the foundational disciplines risk either subsumed into other kinds of courses or being dropped from teacher education programs altogether. The 2013 Working Conference of the The Canadian Association for Teacher Education / L’association canadienne pour la formation des enseignants (CATE/ACFE), held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, assumed the title “Change and Progress in Canadian Teacher Education.” In the same year, the Ontario Ministry of Education announced that all teacher education programs in the province would be required to undergo transformations, including a move to four terms of study (from two terms) and a doubling of practicum hours.

Teacher education is engulfed in something of a seismic shift. Foundations scholars – defined here in disciplinary terms, which encompass History, Philosophy, and Sociology of Education – have been feeling the ground shift beneath their feet for years. This book offers reflections from each of the three disciplines and from all regions of the country. The authors here were asked to respond to the following question: “What role should foundations play in Canadian preservice teacher education?” The responses are organized disciplinarily, although there is tremendous overlap between the sections.

Whilst considering the Foundations in terms of past, present, and future, the authors posed questions, which cannot be responded to without historical, philosophical, or sociological perspectives. Do the traditional definitions that circumscribe the Foundations of education, which are largely disciplinary, have value today? What values do teacher educators, teacher candidates, and the public at large ascribe to Foundations courses? Have the Foundations migrated, via some process of osmosis, into all aspects of teacher education? Why should we bother to read Comenius or, for that matter, any sources drawn from previous centuries? Are the Foundations alive, flourishing in a translated form, or withering away quietly.

The Foundations have often been dismissed—by teacher candidates and sometimes by faculty—as irrelevant to the preparation of new teachers. Foundations courses have sometimes been eschewed in favour of more practically/vocationally oriented ones such as curriculum methods courses or courses in classroom management. This book begins from the shared perspective – born out of very disparate backgrounds (Classics/Physics; Elementary/Secondary Education) – that the Foundations of education play a seminal role in teacher education. Education is more than training for classroom practice. Further the dichotomous thinking that distinguishes theoretical from practical aspects of teacher education is, in many respects, folly. As we have written elsewhere, there is nothing more practical than philosophy of education. It is the rudder that guides educationists (regarded in the broadest sense) through the storm that is life in teaching and learning contexts. History is inquiry, both etymologically and methodologically. Sociology is an avenue to social justice.
We argue that Foundations courses provide the means to do what their name implies. They have the potential to proffer foundational learning that can help to cultivate habits of mind that are invaluable in the daily problem-solving life that new teachers experience in each day and in every moment. The chapters in this volume are grist for the mill for all stakeholders in education. We thank the contributors for their diligence, their thoughtfulness, and their willingness to stand with us—albeit in contexts defined by the diverse landscape of education in the country—firmly as bastions of the educational Foundations in Canada, even as the earth beneath us quivers and shakes.

Theodore Michael Christou, Queen’s University
Shawn Michael Bullock, Simon Fraser University
Meditations on history of education as an aspect of the foundations in teacher education from Jonathan Anuiik, Shawn Michael Bullock, Theodore Michael Christou, Penney Clark, and Lynn Lemisko.
Teachers and Gender and Sexuality: Lessons on Place and Citizenship from Concepts of Childhood in Canadian History

Jonathan Anuik, University of Alberta

Introduction

This chapter sits on the precipice of research and practice. I draw on the foundation of nourishing the learning spirit and connect it to a topic in my concepts of childhood in history course: childhood, gender, and sexuality.¹ I offer this elective course annually to pre-service teacher candidates in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Students are often registered in the elementary education stream of the program. They usually take this course after completion of at least one of their two practical terms. It has been offered as a course for several decades and is one of the education elective options for students, and I consider it to be a foundations course. In this chapter, I concentrate on one weekly topic to illustrate the centrality of two ideas at the core of this history professor’s role as an educator of pre-service teacher candidates: place and citizenship. Lessons in place and citizenship emerge from my research assistant work on nourishing the learning spirit and as an instructor of my Concepts of Childhood in History course.

The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre and Concepts of Childhood in History

From 2006 to 2009, the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (AbLKC) had a mandate to conduct applied research on learning, create venues for knowledge exchange among leaders, teachers, philosophers, and researchers, and monitor and report on trends in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learning in Canada. The AbLKC was one of five learning knowledge centres of the Canadian Council on Learning, a five-year project that ran in cooperation with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The AbLKC divided its work into five Animation Theme Bundles, one of which was nourishing the learning spirit. This bundle investigated the inherent capacity of humans to learn in multiple contexts. One of the most important deliverables from the AbLKC project was the Redefining Success in Aboriginal Learning initiative. The result: three holistic lifelong learning models grounded in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit philosophies of learning. The learning models were developed in concert with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit, and organizations representing them: the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Native Women’s Association of Canada, and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada.²

Jonathan Anuik, University of Alberta
options courses: Concepts of Childhood in History. The course adopts a historical lens to understand childhood as “an ever-evolving period of human development” affected by race, gender, class, religion, and region. Students are evaluated on their ability to suggest implications for practice from historical trends. The course is an opportunity to share with students Indigenous principles of lifelong learning as they affect understandings of Canadian children, in both historical and contemporary contexts. First Nation, Métis, and Inuit concepts of childhood are Canadian concepts of childhood, and what follows is my attempt to see the topic of gender and sexuality through the lenses of the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. I shed light on how history and First Nations knowledge of learning enrich comprehension of place and citizenship in one of the weekly course topics: childhood, gender and sexuality.

First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model.


**Childhood, Gender, and Sexuality**

Gender and sexuality is the final topic of the course. In it, I return to the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, introduced in week two of the term as a paradigm to understand children, to situate gender and sexuality as part of the “way of living” in society. I frame the week as an exploration of several questions. Firstly, how do forces in a community (which includes children and families) nourish and enable and at the same time diminish and subtract from learners’ gender and sexual identities? How can teachers, who may also be mentors, counsellors, parents, and Elders, seen above as the raindrops that nurture learning, contend with such additive and subtractive forces, nourishing the capacity of learners to facilitate awareness?
Provincial ministries of education expect pre-service teacher candidates to be attentive to the needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learners. Administrators argue that learners carry distinct perspectives on education and a historical mistrust of formal school systems. Although students are now more aware of the history of institutions such as Indian Residential Schools, there is less knowledge and certainly very little appreciation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit knowledge bases. Students default often to Western and modern concepts of childhood, measured on a development chart that tracks acquisition of English and French literacy, numeracy, and citizenship skills and presupposes that all learners gravitate to this knowledge base: the missionary approach to education. They do not see Indigenous concepts of childhood and youth as Canadian concepts and Canadian educational knowledge, historical and contemporary. Although there are now curricular resources, there is not teacher engagement. The result: teachers may provide instruction but provide the content as a unit, a neat and discrete package of facts that too often portray Indigenous peoples and their communities as historical entities. The outcome: teachers place unknowingly First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learners in the past and shift their instruction toward preparation for competition in a modern society.

There is also awareness of a need to consider the life stories and safety issues of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, or as part of a sexual minority group. I suggest that First Nation knowledge of learning could help learners make sense of historical and contemporary battles over what is appropriate instruction in topics of gender and sexuality in Canada. Specifically, what parts in the history of education and childhood and youth could be revised to see neglected histories through the methodologies of Indigenous learning. History is often taught to undergraduates as a set of facts, usually educational policy and legislation and its manifestations in schools.

In this chapter, I break from this type of grand narrative to give learners the opportunity to make sense of the histories of childhood and youth, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit, education, and gender and sexuality through an appreciation of the interrelatedness of these topics. To me, the cross-cutting themes that unite the four topics are place and citizenship as they affect learning. It is my perspective that ministries of education fail currently to consider how First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education initiatives and strategies to address discrimination against sexual minority students in schools fail to consider teachers and their abilities. Teachers are too often blamed for their failure to address educational concerns but do not often have the knowledge base to become confident in their practices. To me, what is foundational about the history of education is teachers. I consider my pedagogy and practice as a university professor to be focused on how teachers may become confident professionals capable of making sense of directives and challenges at the level of policy and in the communities where they work. I want pre-service teacher candidates to go beyond facts, and engagement with hypothetical situations, to engagement with the histories of education and childhood and youth as relevant to their lives.

Confident and engaged teachers sit in a whirlwind of continuous reflection and learning, they consider knowledge gleaned from the history of education and childhood and youth in relation with the communities where they practice. They become attentive to how place and citizenship grounded in First Nation perspectives on learning can enable them to understand concepts of gender and sexuality in childhood. The teacher becomes foundational to the history of education and concepts of childhood and youth through reflection and engagement with history and comprehension of Indigenous concepts of childhood as Canadian concepts of childhood and youth. Practically speaking, the teacher appreciates also the longer history of gender and sexuality in childhood and youth as part of the history of place and citizenship in communities.
Place

I expand on the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model to share a lesson in literacy among Inuit: knowing one’s name and knowing Inuit places, and the places knowing the individual. Specifically, “Naming and how people acquire their names was the very first Inuit literacy that was named in terms of traditional literacies. Naming was the way in which people were recognized in terms of being human, and the second-most important literacy was place names, knowing the place names, and these places knowing you was the second-most-important literacy.”

Teachers come into communities where gender and sexuality are part of a larger narrative of place. It is in knowing the places where they stand as professionals, and the places knowing them, that they reflect on gender and sexuality in class. Gender and sexuality are bound in place where teachers ask several questions.

Place and History

Teachers must question the historical processes of coming to pass among students who sit outside of the norm of heterosexuality and identifications of “male and female.” Similarly, they must identify forces that affirm the norm of being heterosexual and gender that is either male or female. They must consider the lack of information and/or misinformation concerning gender and sexuality. Their learners are individuals caught between the images of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people in media, government, activism, etc. and the local and personal narrative that varies in place.

To understand place enables teachers to consider the life-giving forces enabling learners to come out safely and be affirmed: to stop passing within preconceived ideals of gender and sexuality. In place, they are able to see how families, communities, languages, businesses, schools, the federal and provincial and territorial governments, and Christianity, churches, and religious institutions stabilize and diminish sexual and gender identities and awareness of it in children and youth. They can identify pedagogy and curriculum from dominant public and Catholic school systems that stabilize and diminish learners’ evolving gender and sexual identities and awareness of it in children and youth. Overall, they become able to understand the learning environments that help draw in children and youth to learning and, similarly, diminish the consciousness and spirit of leaners, contributing to cognitive and emotional distance from past generations of families.

Teachers must consider the national and international history of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and persons who are transgender, understanding how families and communities adjust and identify in a myriad of contexts. They must recognize how lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are affirmed in provincial and territorial human rights laws. In understanding history, learners are able to come to know themselves as sexual minorities and, similarly, as part of the heterosexual majority, in place, the school community, one that has a history and is part of a larger national history.

The lesson is that knowing the place is like knowing the narrative of the learner as centre of a community, as illustrated on the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. In most communities, there are additive and subtractive forces nourishing and diminishing the stature of learners who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and also straight, as much as forces nourish and diminish the identities of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. To put it simply, “positive” and “negative” coexist. When teachers know place, they become attentive to the history and contemporary challenges that exist, enabling them to craft environments that attempt to nourish learners, while being mindful of the possible opposition that exists in communities. One cannot situate gender and sexuality outside of the community.
The “discovery” of high rates of suicide among students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender triggers attempts to build affirming environments for students. But teachers need to also think about how learners become so disconnected. The answer lies in understanding the leaves on the tree. The roots of the learner, as understood in the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, support the learner throughout the lifelong learning journey. The process is a circle, in that knowledge is carried in the roots and transmitted by the members of a community—every member of the community is a leaf with a lifelong learning journey that also has roots. When people die, the leaves fall off the tree, going back into the ground and nourishing the roots. Unfortunately, sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia get carried in learners and thus get dropped into learners, and learners are often not aware of these perceptions and instead take them to be truths. If negative depictions and perceptions of people who are LGBT are in the roots of the learner, then one can imagine that the journey of the learner is challenging, especially considering that those leaves are the learners’ family members, friends, clergy/ministers, employers, Members of Parliament and the Legislative Assembly, and so on.

Teachers are the raindrops in the life of the learner and so their role becomes critical to learners. Every encounter that a teacher has can potentially nourish the learner, particularly when contending with the negative/cutting images and lessons that continue to be conveyed in communities. However, one cannot ignore the influences of the leaves on the tree, organized in this case into the spiritual and cultural, social, economic, and political fabric of the community. And the people with whom teachers interact in the community see themselves as responsible for informing the roots of learners, taking positions that can vary sharply. However, learners’ journeys can be lopsided, as the roots can be pulled up upon coming out, for example, or dysfunctional, leading to the feeling of a split head. If there are a lot of suicides in a community, then the legacy of suicide goes into the roots of the community, as the trauma is passed along.

Continuing on the thread of community knowledge, Mary Louise Adams suggests that the tenuous challenge confronting education on sexual diversity is one between families and the public sphere. There are those who do not want knowledge of sex to take its place on the leaves of trees, preferring instead that it be shared privately, within families, a completely separate private space. In other words, gender and sexuality are private matters, to be discussed within families. Professionals such as teachers, social workers, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and clergy are only to intervene when asked. However, as Adams finds in her study of the late-1940s Toronto, Ontario, public school board, professionals thought of parental knowledge of sex and sexuality as inadequate and even if adequate, parents were unable and unwilling to candidly share such information. Parents kept “children ignorant,” and still keep children ignorant. There is a tension within the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning model, in that in a modern society, people do not see such knowledge as needing transmission in the community, as part of a community knowledge base. The result: teachers may sidestep proposals, shelving them for fear of familial objection. Adams finds that the roots of conflicts over sex education date at least to the debates/discussions/disputes in the late-1940s Toronto District School Board and are, therefore, not recent!

Similarly, the discussions surrounding sex education are tied to deficit and anxiety models of thinking in relation to communities. Adams documents public fears about venereal disease transmission and the recently identified problem of the sex offender. Janovicek, when introducing Adams’s essay in Histories of Canadian Children and Youth, a course textbook, says that in the 1980s, sex education could be a matter of “life and death” for youth. In the same anthology, an excerpt from the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives from 1975, on understanding homophobia, poses questions for communities to consider, including teachers, questions still relevant in 2013, “what is homophobia?” and “what are the causes of homophobia?” Why do the “family, educational system, church, government, business, media, legal, medical and psychiatric professions, all effectively combine to enforce the heterosexual model with its rigid role structures?”
Implications for Teachers’ Practices

So why is homophobia part of the roots of learners? How do the leaves on the tree—people in the community—perpetuate it, address it, combat it, and overcome it so that it does not suck the energies of learners, their spiritual capacities to learn? Why does homophobia enter the multitude of anxieties surrounding children and youth in society? Similarly, how does homophobia influence community norms and laws, practices of professionals of all stripes? And why is it easier to sidestep addressing homophobia, hoping that it is just going to “go away” and be taken up by parents instead of teachers?

And, similarly, why do activists seeking to combat homophobia look to children and youth with hope that it is going to “get better” in the next generation? Is it fair to ask children and youth, shielded still so heavily from the miniscule knowledge available concerning gender and sexuality, to then have to make “society [responsible for] learning to accept the homosexual as an equal,” as was asked by LGBT activists in 1975? And, similarly, is embracing a liberal/individualistic discourse of equality the only way to address homophobia in communities?

Citizenship

It is important to consider citizenship within the conceptions of childhood, gender, and sexuality. Psychologists spent the 20th century contemplating perfection in their scholarly work, reducing illness to ensure the physical and mental vitality of Canadians. It is important to recognize that the Toronto School Board staff discussed in Adams understood that venereal diseases and “sexual perversions” were character weaknesses. And my discussion of children and youth and gender and sexuality, grounded in the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, is carried by my own conception of citizenship, as it is transmitted to learners, into their roots, through the spiritual, cultural, social, economic, and political authorities responsible for the fabric of community membership (i.e., who is in? Who is out?).

Adams goes on to say that “the sex ed curriculum … had been designed to shape children into morally correct citizens.” And, therefore, the test that teachers, school boards, and communities take when addressing the presence and emergence of students who are LGBT, and the contexts that affirm the stature of students who are heterosexual, is citizenship and moral correctness, as part of the longer history of community and nation. In 1949, the best compromise on the question of sex education as part of citizenship in the city of Toronto and nation of Canada was neatly in the sanctity of “family living … being a teenager under the authority of parents and community.” This compromise keeps sex in the private domain, restricting its flow to become community knowledge. It remains absent in the tree, too often in the roots, coming out only to stigmatize or, in the case of a Toronto home for unwed mothers, as profiled in a 1964 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation story, to restore the authority of parents for the transmission of sex education. As well, to emerge when it is necessary to help children transition to families understood to be morally correct citizens of Canada.

Implications for Teachers’ Practices

Typically, teacher candidates are asked to witness a hypothetical situation, in the context of gender and sexuality, the situation surrounds an event and/or occurrence. The questions are: what if I have an openly gay student who wants to take his boyfriend to prom? What if I am a school vice-principal whose male-to-female student wants to run for homecoming queen? What if my female-to-male student wants to graduate as a man, holding a diploma, not a bouquet of flowers? Unfortunately, the above scenarios imply that all schools and communi-
ties are the same, and teachers need to respond uniformly. Where conflict arises is when local contexts are not understood, in other words, teachers not knowing the places, and the places not knowing teachers. Hypothetical situations and discussions surrounding them must be anchored to the local context considering how history and citizenship inform learners’ actions in place.

**Conclusions**

As a historian, my purpose in this piece is to demonstrate how study of individuals’ inherent capacity to learn throughout history can shed light on how to educate teacher candidates about gender and sexuality in children and youth. Too often, classes in education faculties concentrate on the instrumental aspects of teacher education through hypothetical situations taken up in lesson plans. I disrupt such practice through an investigation of how place and dominant ideals of citizenship thwart attempts at sex education. The above is a week in my concepts of childhood class. Instead of simply giving answers through prepackaged and probable contexts, I ask students to address questions with assigned reading on sex education. I leave them with the opportunity to be creators of their own practices attuned to place and Canadian history and mindful of community histories and forces that ideally nourish children’s capacities to learn. Students see gender and sexuality in children through the lenses of history to inform their awareness of place and citizenship in the school community.
Notes


8. Nancy Cooper, quoted in Ibid.


11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.


16. Ibid., 308.


19. Ibid., 301.

20. Ibid., 302.


23. This chapter began when I worked as a graduate research assistant under the direction of Mi’kmaw Educational Scholar Dr. Marie Battiste on the Nourishing the Learning Spirit Animation Theme Bundle. I thank Battiste for her supervision and financial support of my research in nourishing the learning spirit. I am enormously grateful for her help in the development of my arguments in the discussion, specifically, conversations that we had from January-April 2009 on the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Models. This chapter benefitted from conversations with James Ostime. James provided editorial assistance, as well. I thank the editors and anonymous reader for their comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.
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CHAPTER 2

History of Education as a Frame for Teacher Education

Theodore Michael Christou, Queen’s University
Shawn Michael Bullock, Simon Fraser University

Introduction

Donald Schön’s *The Reflective Practitioner* was a catalyst for teacher educators all over the world to re-think teacher education programs and coursework. Teacher candidates were encouraged to reflect on their practice as a means to access the tacit, unexamined, knowledge about teaching that they were constructing as a result of engaging in practicum field placements. Although it is common to find some devotion to the concept of reflection in articulations of vision statements across the country we feel that, in many ways, the implementation of Schön’s ideas in teacher education needs to go much further in order to truly move beyond the perils of technical rationality. We believe that the history of education offers one possible way forward.

Schön began by describing the waning enthusiasm for the role of the professions, a decline that began in the late 1960s as the quantity of professionals—physicians, lawyers, engineers, managers, and educators—in the labour force increased in response to the rhetoric of the 1950s and early 1960s that highlighted a need for technical knowledge and a concurrent professional knowledge industry. Schön referred to the “crisis of confidence in professional knowledge” that had occurred in both the general public and in the professions themselves throughout the 1970s. He argued that professionals believed that their knowledge was “mismatched to the changing character of the situations of practice—the complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts which are increasingly perceived as central to the world of professional practice.” Significantly, professionals were no longer seeing themselves as problem-solvers who deployed their vast technical expertise in particular contexts. Schön’s opined that “professional practice has at least as much to do with finding the problem as with solving the problem found” and there was “an irreducible element of art in professional practice.” Professionals were far from the unified technocrats they were perceived to be; there was significant self-awareness of the artistry in practice and in defining problems. In his words:

Complexity, instability, and uncertainty are not removed or resolved by applying specialized knowledge to well-defined tasks. If anything, the effective use of specialized knowledge depends on a prior restructuring of situations that are complex and uncertain. An artful practice of the unique case appears anomalous when professional competence is modelled in terms of application of established techniques to recurrent events. Problem setting has no place in a body of professional knowledge concerned exclusively with problem solving. The task of choosing among competing paradigms of practice is not amenable to professional expertise.
For Schön, a central tension in professionals was between the assumptions of professional education grounded in *instrumental problem solving* and the artistry of *finding the problem* in professional practice. He defined the first kind of professional education as technical rationality: “instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique.” The technical knowledge associated with problem solving is more easily defined in a professional curriculum than the tacit knowledge associated with finding a problem. Schön articulated a form of professional knowledge, knowing-in-action, that acknowledged “the know-how is in the action . . . . Although we sometimes think before acting, it is also true that in much of the spontaneous behaviour of skilful practice we reveal a kind of knowing which does not stem from a prior intellectual operation.” The key process that leads to knowing-in-action is reflection-in-action, which he described in the following terms:

There is some puzzling, or troubling, or interesting phenomenon with which the individual is trying to deal. As he tries to make sense of it, he [sic] also reflects on the understandings which have been implicit in his action, understandings which he surfaces, criticizes, restructures, and embodies in further action. It is this entire process of reflection-in-action which is central to the “art” by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict.

Schön’s reconceptualization of the nature of professional knowledge, including the knowledge of teachers, provides an interesting lens with which to examine the role of the history of education in teacher education. Despite his warnings of the limitations of technical rationality, teacher education programs are still, by and large, founded on the principle that teaching is inherently a problem-solving activity. Courses in curriculum methods and classroom management abound, with the ostensible role of providing teacher candidates with an opportunity to consider various teaching techniques during their practicum placements. There are good reasons for these kinds of courses; just like any profession, teachers are asked to solve a myriad of problems on a daily basis. We both teach methods courses in our respective home disciplines and we work hard to encourage teachers to consider ways in which they might try to respond to any number of puzzling situations in practice. We also concur with Schön’s assertion that “the situations of practice are not problems to be solved but problematic situations characterized by uncertainty, disorder, and indeterminacy.” In this chapter we explore some of this disorder by tracing the development of current thinking about digital technologies and education and the history of the development of social studies as a subject in school. In so doing, we hope to demonstrate the power of viewing teaching as an inherently problem-posing activity, particularly when the lens of history is used to trouble our assumptions.

**Teacher Training vs. The Wisdom of Teacher Education**

Teacher education, deprived of the history of education, can reduce to teacher training. Teacher educators see themselves as forward-looking and progressive beasts, on the right hand of the evolutionary image that portrays primates evolving into noble human beings. Our eyes are set upon the future. Take, for example, the current rhetoric concerning *Twenty-First Century* learning: We have the Internet, social media, and tablets. The ways that we humans interact have changed. To many, we are qualitatively transformed.

The rhetoric tells us that the path to the future is direct and that technology is a chief gatekeeper on the road to educational utopia. History is a mere digression on our charted course toward this upcoming age. This seems to be is the case in teacher education, but not in society writ large. If we take the contemporary Canadian context as an example, we see the vitality—or, the appropriation—of history. Local bookstores teem with historical narratives that the public eagerly purchase. Fantastical depictions of history abound in the form of
television shows and movies. The Canadian military has reappropriated its Royal status under the leadership of today’s Conservative government. Coinage features the Queen of England, Elizabeth II. A sense of history matters in our society. Education seems to be an exception.

We must problematize this matter. Across teacher education institutions in Canada, history of education has become increasingly marginalized. Why? How can history matter in society even as it becomes peripheral within teacher education?

The problem is complex. It implicates provincial and federal government and College of Teachers’ regulations and expectations thrust upon the Faculties of Education by practicing teachers and local school districts, as well as a general anti-intellectual climate that recognizes what works as a surrogate for what ought to be. The chapter is composed in the wake of the Ontario Educational Research Symposium (2013), which held as a banner the importance of educational reform that is driven exclusively by empirically derived, evidence-based practices. It serves as a case in point. The future – a relatively nefarious space occupied by technologically linked students and teachers who shall be cooperative and engaged citizens – was of greatest consequence. We in teacher education stand on the precipice of a new age, and we must learn to cope with what is new.

This sort of thinking reflects an overly simplistic adherence to the sort of technical rationality that Schön (1983) warned us about. The history of education can inoculate educations against strict interpretation of technical rational conceptions of professional knowledge. To understand why this kind of thinking tends to persist in professional education, we introduce the concepts of neophobia and neophilia. The former concept can best be defined as fear of what is new, whilst the latter can best be understood as revelry in what is modern, or progressive. This justification can be traced to Herbert Kliebard, who sought to interrogate contemporary curriculum thinking and examine the place of history therein. He draws upon the practical work of Emile Durkheim, who taught a course for teacher candidates in the University of Paris nearly eleven decades ago. Durkheim did not see teacher education as a process of teaching and applying “a number of sound recipes” to classroom practice.

Durkheim taught the history of education. He rejected an instrumentalist approach to the subject. As such, he understood that the ability of students to derive immediately practical lessons from his classes would be challenging. His first concern seemed to be the illumination of errors, which contemporary educationists could make by examining those of the past. There were no guarantees that errors could be avoided, but no discipline, including psychology, could make such claims. Yet, Durkheim believed, history was the beginning point of wisdom. This lofty aim depended upon the avoidance of both neophobia and neophilia.

Wisdom is a funny concept. We ask our teachers to be well versed in practices and methods that are demonstratively effective according to empirically founded studies. We ensure that attendance records are attended to and that order is maintained. We ensure that the curriculum is taught, and that students’ learning of the curriculum is assessed and reported upon. We do not ask our teachers to be wise. We do not ask them to be historically minded. Teacher education in Canada does not concern itself with wisdom, which, we argue, is the principal concern of education. Former Harvard President Derek Bok made a similar critique when he argued that one important role of undergraduate programs is to cultivate moral reasoning in students: “When it comes to helping young people to identify ethical problems and to ponder them with care, colleges can certainly make a significant contribution, especially today, when so many students come to college with an easy relativism that clouds their ability to reason about many complex questions, ethical and otherwise.”

We define wisdom in a classical sense, which pertains to a way of living in the world; it is intricately woven with philosophy, which is – quite literally – the love of wisdom. Thoreau expressed the pursuit of a philo-
sophic life as follows: “To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically.” Elsewhere, we have made the argument that philosophical mindedness is imperative in all educational contexts. To be philosophically minded, one must be sensitive and responsive to the particular context in which one lives.

To this end, Kliebard notes that teacher education should entail the cultivation of each prospective teacher’s ability to hold up his or her context and examine it thoughtfully; while evidence based research offers educators recipes that apply to seemingly universal pedagogical contexts, history offers a frame that encompasses the whole scope of educational experience:

Perhaps, more than anything, what the study of the history of education can provide is not so much specific lessons pertaining to such matters as how to construct a curriculum or how to run a school as it is the development of certain habits of thought, and the principal one among these is the habit of reflection and deliberative inquiry. It is the habit of holding up the taken-for-granted world to critical scrutiny, something that usually can be accomplished more easily in a historical context than in a contemporary one. Ideas and practices that seem so normal and natural in a contemporary setting often take on a certain strangeness when viewed in a historical setting, and that strangeness often permits us to see those ideas and practices in a different light.

History does not answer our pedagogical questions in the same way that other forms of inquiry might. If we want to know the most effective means of teaching kindergarten-aged children to identify the sounds associated with the letters of the alphabet, we ought not to reach to history for answers. That said, Quintillian and other voices from the past might be of some service. If we do seek to question, challenge, or reframe the demands that we deem to be relevant in the present, history offers a way of reframing the forward-looking parameters of our inquiries.

**History of Education and 21st-Century Learning**

Inspired by events at the 2013 Ontario Educational Research Symposium, we are motivated to think about how a deeper understanding of the history of education might assist both teachers and teacher candidates (indeed, all educationists) to frame an understanding of the current rhetoric and enthusiasm around 21st-Century Learning. In so doing, we hope to illustrate the ways in which historical mindedness can inspire wiser considerations of current initiatives.

To begin, it is helpful to define “21st-Century Learning.” The phrase implies that how we learn in this century – and thus any consideration of how we might teach – needs to be qualitatively different from previous centuries. As a recent report by the OECD states:

Initiatives on the teaching and assessment of 21st-century skills originate in the widely-held belief shared by several interested groups - teachers, educational researchers, policy makers, politicians, employers - that the current century will demand a very different set of skills and competencies from people in order for them to function effectively at work, as citizens and in their leisure time . . . . Supporters and advocates of the 21st-century skills movement argue for the need for reforms in schools and education to respond to the social and economic needs of students and society in the 21st century.

It is not difficult to find examples of calls for increased attention to 21st-Century Learning in the media, on Ministry of Education Web sites, or indeed in the professional and scholarly literature. Although it is certainly
undeniable that many people, including education professors, teachers and students, carry mobile devices with computing power that both dwarfs the processing speed of desktop computers from a decade ago and allows for ubiquitous access to the Internet, it is less clear how these devices might be productively used in formal educational settings. It is also far from clear how 21st-Century Learning might differ from similar periods of technological upheaval.

A consideration of the history of technology in western society over the last 150 years reminds us of the immense technological change that occurred both during the Industrial Revolution and in its wake. The notion that there was but one Industrial Revolution is somewhat historically contentious, as one might also divide the period into shifts toward mechanization, electrification, and the increased use of chemistry. What is clear, regardless of whether one is comfortable with the concept of “revolution” as applied to technological change, is that the early-20th century offered new technologies that could be used in schools. It is telling that one of these new technologies, the filmstrip, was thought by some to be a “revolutionary” technology that could replace the book.

In an interview with The New York Dramatic Mirror, Thomas Edison made the following comments to a reporter:

“What is your estimation of the future educational value of pictures?” I [Reporter Frederick James Smith] asked.

“Books,” declared the inventor [Thomas Edison] with decision, “will soon be obsolete in the public schools. Scholars will be instructed through the eye. It is possible to teach every branch of human knowledge with the motion picture. Our school system will be completely changed inside of ten years.”

A review of Larry Cuban’s excellent history of technology in schools, Teachers and Machines, reveals a similar tendency to extol the virtues of technology to not only improve education, but also to bring about what historian and philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn would refer to as a paradigm shift in the education system. Cuban traces the development of the use of several technologies in education, particularly educational radio and educational television. He makes the point in both cases that neither educational radio nor educational television transformed education, despite enthusiastic (and eerily similar) support and exaltation from their acolytes. In a more recent work examining the history of computer use in the classroom, Cuban usefully links the rhetoric of educational change through technology with the 21st Century Learning initiative:

Techno-promoters across the board assumed that increased availability [of technology] in the classroom would lead to increased use. Increased use, they further assumed, would then lead to efficient teaching and better learning which, in turn, would yield able graduates who can compete in the workplace. These graduates would give American employers that critical edge necessary to stay ahead in the every-changing global economy.

We would argue that this kind of thinking is a central narrative in much of the scholarly work and popular writing about the use of educational technology in schools. The rhetoric is intuitively appealing: we live in a world where children grow up with access to technologies that were the realm of science fiction only a few years ago. In order to stay relevant, to prepare children for the future, we in education must teach with tablets and offer classes in the virtual cloud. The implicit promise is that technology will make things better, that schools and higher education institutions will be transformed. One of Kuhn’s requirements for a paradigmatic shift is that the new way of thinking is incommensurable with the old. Even a cursory examination of the history of technology use in schools reveals that such a shift has not happened.

There are, however, several critics of the use of technology in schools that argue for a consideration of history in scholarship and practice of the use of technology in schools. Neil Selwyn is one prominent example of this kind of scholarship. In a recent editorial, he argues against a scholarship that frames educational technology
as “an essentially positive project,” arguing instead for a kind of productive pessimism that maintains a sense of history about the use of technology in education. Far from adopting the attitude of a luddite, Selwyn’s argument is designed to enhance both scholarly and professional discussions of the use of technology in education:

A pessimistic spirit would certainly strengthen and extend the research questions and research methods that currently dominate empirical studies of educational technology. It is simply not good enough to look only for instances of where educational technology ‘works,’ or to focus solely on examples of ‘best practice’ and the ‘leading edge.’ The pessimistic position would certainly help educational technology researchers move beyond a ‘legalistic’ approach to an ‘evidence’ approach—i.e., as a confirmatory means of establishing a case for the predetermined position that ‘technology works.’ At the moment, this ‘proof of concept’ mentality persists in much educational technology scholarship, often directing researchers and writers away from examining the compromised and problematic everyday uses (and non-uses) of technology in education.

Selwyn takes his argument one step further in a subsequent editorial in which he makes “ten suggestions for improving academic research in education and technology.” Although we concur with all ten of his suggestions, numbers four and five are particularly relevant to our discussion. Educationists who are interested in the use of technology in education are asked to “always” ask “what is new here?” and to maintain “a sense of history.” In so doing, educationists are reminded “to be careful that the apparent novelty of the technological near-future does not seduce [them] into overlooking the rather more ‘messy’ realities of present” and warns against “anticipating what is about to happen with technology rather than attempting to make sense of what has already happened.”

**History and School Subjects**

Educational history’s decline as a foundational subject can be associated with a number of factors. These include but are not limited to: a) the congestion of teacher education curricula as a result of increasing regulation by provincial governments (in the case of Ontario, the Ontario College of Teachers regulates faculties of education and imposes stringent criteria upon schools of teacher education associated with the certification of teachers); b) demands of school boards and associate teachers pertaining to practical skills and strategies (which may include lesson planning, classroom management, and curriculum mapping); and c) accountability standards that increasingly emphasize evidence-based practices. These can be associated with an instrumentalist criterion, which demands each discipline within the increasingly congested curriculum of studies to demonstrate how it might increase teacher knowledge in a practical manner.

We argue that educational history is eminently practical, with the notable caveat that its practicality is of a different sort. All educationists – teacher candidates, but also practicing teachers, administrators, students, and the public – can potentially frame the ways that they understand, teach, and learn curriculum subjects differently if they have the tools to understand those subjects as historical entities. Social Studies is a case in point.

We can pinpoint the birthdate of the subject in every Canadian province. It is, perhaps, peculiar to think about a subject having a birthday, but knowing when Social Studies appeared as a formal subject in Canadian curricula helps to understand its core purposes and rationale. We can trace Mathematics to ancient civilizations, but Social Studies is a North American peculiarity.

In the United States, the subject’s development has to be understood within the context of post-World War I educational reforms and the very beginnings of progressive education. Harold Rugg of Columbia University’s
Teachers College developed what is likely the first textbook series for Social Studies, *Man and His Changing Society*. It was a wildly popular book, and it was also hotly contested.27

Rugg has been discussed in terms of a more radical aspect of progressive education termed social reconstruction or social meliorism.28 The radical element concerned a reformist vision that sought to change all of society, not merely the schools. In fact, school reform was the principal means by which society could be made more progressive in terms of social justice and equity.

*Man and His Changing Society* was a tour de force, which would make contemporary Social Studies textbooks appear tame in comparison. It challenged students to examine social class, socioeconomic differences, and national, as well as international, political questions. Social Studies, at the moment of its inception, sought to integrate history, geography, economics, politics, law, civics, and other disparate fields or disciplines in order to concentrate the student on pressing and contemporary social concerns. In order to understand, say, the gap between rich and poor, a student would need to wrestle with various disciplines, each offering particular tools, or lenses, which could be brought to bear.

Despite terrific sales throughout the Depression, and the development of fourteen different texts, which formed a series, Rugg’s Social Studies texts had a tragic fate. Following World War II, Rugg, and his work, fell under political scrutiny. The Red Scare was in full force within the United States, and Rugg was accused of being and advocate for socialism. His book series was dropped by school districts, then outright censored. There were even book burnings organized, where Rugg’s work was put to the pyre.29

The year 2013 marks the 87th birthday of Social Studies in Canada. It was first introduced in Alberta in 1936.30 Ontario followed the next year, along with New Brunswick. The subject was incorporated quite rapidly into the progressivist curricula that transformed the landscape of Canadian education in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Advocacy for a social reconstructionist perspective to educational reform within educational journals increased dramatically during the Great Depression.31

This is not surprising, particularly in light of references to the perceived instability and insecurity permeating the age. In an article titled “Education in an Age of Insecurity,” Ontario Educationist Joseph McCulley, Headmaster of Pickering College, identified how intimately linked his notion of progressive education is with the themes of social meliorism.32 He discusses religious surety, moral codes, financial stability, political faith, and the breakdown of a strong agricultural community as sources of profound anxiety among Ontarians; further, he argues that “security in all of these areas and many others has been shattered by our rapidly changing age … no longer is the classical and traditional curriculum carefully divided off into subject matter areas, sufficient to provide any understanding of the problems of modern life.”33

Social Studies in Canada never assumed the radical pose that it did in the United States, but it was nevertheless a tour de force that educationists across the country embraced. The subject offered a means of engaging students with authentic problems, of cultivating the habits of mind and the practices deemed essential for democratic citizenship, and of building cooperation within the school by relating the learning activities within it to the social life experienced by Canadians outside of the classroom. At its core, it asked teachers and students to take action within their communities and beyond.

It is hard to estimate how many Canadian teachers know the history of the subject called Social Studies. It is a relatively safe assumption to assert that educationists who are not inclined to read academic articles in the history of education are less aware of this story. Canadians who studied in any of the Canadian provinces will have taken Social Studies courses. These pervade the curriculum from Grades 1-6 and in provinces such as Alberta and New Brunswick, Social Studies persists into Secondary Studies. It is, perhaps, harder to estimate how
many Canadians remember their Social Studies classes as being revolutionary or as being contexts wherein they were challenged to change the world and make it a better place.

How is educational history practical with respect to teaching and learning Social Studies? First, Ministries of Education should be challenged to explain how teaching the Medieval Times, the Loyalists, or the Pioneers fulfills the vision outlined for the subject. Second, teachers should consider how dusty Halloween or Easter units that are sometimes taught during Social Studies periods in early elementary fit with the philosophical underpinnings of the subject, which is to say nothing of European Explorers and trips to the police station. Third, the public should educational administrators to rethink Social Studies education in light of the current crises that face Canadians and the rest of the world. The subject can be dangerous, as it encourages students to challenge the world around them. We need not belabour the point but we mean to argue that history of education does the same.

**Conclusion: The History of Education and the Development of Professional Knowledge**

We are not arguing for anything as simplistic as a dismissal of some existing coursework in favour of mandatory courses in the history of education. We believe that teacher education programs should be responsive to their individual contexts and the needs of educationists associated with institutions. These stakeholders include faculty members, local teachers, past, present, and future teacher candidates, community groups, school districts, university senates, and provincial ministries. Our thesis is that the history of education should play a greater role in the construction of teachers’ professional knowledge, particularly when we consider the importance of the artistry of finding the problem as a contribution to teacher candidates’ knowing-in-action. To put the matter bluntly, those without a sense of the history of education in Canada are less able to recognize problems in both their practice and with new initiatives in education. Teachers and teacher educators know that teaching is far more than the rigid application of particular teaching strategies to canned situations. Knowledge of possible approaches to problems of practice is important, but so is knowledge of how to frame a problem. Framing provides an initial stance from which to consider a puzzling or problematic situation. The history of education should play an important role in how teacher candidates learn how to think about their practice.
Notes

13. Henry David Thoreau, Walden (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854), p. 45
16. See Quintilianus, Marcus Fabius. Institutio Oratoria. Trans. H.E. Butler. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1920. Quintilian offered advice to Roman educators on various and diverse aspects of education, including literacy. One particularly ‘modern’ suggestion that he makes is the use of manipulatives and block letters that will permit students the opportunity to learn the shape of letters via play. There are numerous collections of readings, which include classical and contemporary texts, including the work of Quintillian. One particularly robust collection, presently out of print, is Black, Hugh C., Kenneth V. Lottich, and Donald S. Seckinger, Eds. The Great Educators: Readings for Leaders in Education (Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, 1972).


25. Ibid., p. 216.


29. Ibid.


33. Ibid. 138.
Bibliography


I take my title from curriculum scholar William Pinar, who has remarked that, in studying the past, “we might discern passages to a future worthy of those who have gone before and those who are yet to come.” A sense of amnesia pervades teacher education programs. It is hardly surprising that newly minted graduates view each curricular or pedagogical innovation they encounter as something that has never been seen or heard of before. I recall my own astonishment when, after teaching for six years, I learned in my Master’s degree program about the progressive approaches to education which were promoted in Canada from the early years of the 20th Century, under leaders such as Alberta’s Donalda Dickie and Ontario’s Thornton Mustard. I had naively believed, as a new teacher in the 1970s, that child-centered approaches, such as group investigations, activity-based projects, individualized learning, and the use of a range of resources beyond the textbook were groundbreaking innovations. I consider it unfortunate that I did not have the opportunity to take a history of education course which would have helped me to contextualize these “innovations” and learn from the experiences of those who went before me.

In the social studies curriculum and pedagogy courses I teach I have always included an examination of social studies curricula over time. In my view, it is important that students develop the understanding that the curriculum in place at the particular time they happen to be in a teacher education program is not the inevitable product of past events. Rather, it is a product of historical events and circumstances which might not have occurred or could have had other consequences. Nor is it permanent. It, too, will be replaced by a new curriculum deemed to be better suited to altered societal circumstances and expectations.

**What is the State of Scholarship in the Field of History of Education?**

The field of the history of education in Canada is in a somewhat confusing state. On the one hand, over the past twenty-five years there has been a dramatic drop in the number of historians of education working in faculties of education. On the other hand, there is abundant scholarly output.

A 2009 survey of ten mid-sized to large Canadian universities, conducted by University of Victoria historian of education Helen Raptis, revealed that in the two decades between 1988-89 and 2008-09 there was a 45% decline in education faculty members whose stated area of expertise was educational history. Every faculty of education of the ten she surveyed had experienced a decrease in numbers of historians—even those for
whom the overall number of faculty members increased. She also pointed out that of the roughly 1000 papers presented at the 2009 conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, merely 2% were historical in nature. To further support this point, she noted that, from 2006-2009, only 2% of the articles published in Canada’s flagship education journal, the *Canadian Journal of Education*, were historical.

Following on the work of Raptis, I conducted my own survey of *CJE* issues from 2010 to 2012, with identical results. Two percent of the articles were in the area of history of education or about it. I also examined the 2012 Canadian Society for the Study of Education Conference program. These findings were also identical to those of Raptis. Of approximately 1000 papers, only 2% had historical content or were about the field of history of education.

Again, as Raptis points out, between 1996 and 2002, only 8% of Canadian history of education articles appeared in education journals. It would be helpful if more articles on the history of education appeared in curriculum studies and teacher education journals, both because this would provide more publishing venues for historians of education, but even more importantly, it would expose their work more widely to curriculum scholars and scholars of teacher education. This is a useful thing to do in and of itself, but the hope is that they will, in turn, make their own students aware of this scholarship.

In spite of the reduction in the number of historians in faculties of education, Canadian scholarship in the area of history of education is thriving. The Canadian History of Education Association/Association canadienne d’histoire de l’éducation (CHEA/ACHE) holds a biennial conference which normally has well over 100 presenters, both Canadian and international. Its scholarly journal, *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d’histoire de l’éducation* publishes semi-annually and is well respected in the field, with both Canadian and international contributors.

Canadian educational historians’ recent publication output is impressive. I will provide a brief survey of that output. Monographs published since 2010 have explored a diverse range of topics. Robert Gidney and Wyn Millar have provided a richly documented description of how Canadian schools and classrooms actually worked between 1900 and 1940. Sharon Anne Cook has decoded representations of women and smoking in visual culture, including textbooks, between 1880 and 2000. Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman have used theories of print culture to illuminate children’s illustrated books from the 1800s to the present. Susan Fisher has placed children in World War One under the microscope, looking at how the war was taught in Canadian schools, as well as the wartime literature available to children from sources outside of schools. Heather E. McGregor has provided a detailed and nuanced account of the evolution of formal education in the eastern Arctic to 1999. Paul Bennett has examined public education in Maritime Canada from 1850 to present through the phenomenon of school closures. Mona Gleason has examined children's attitudes toward their medical treatment, their experiences of hospitalization and disability, and the influence of teachers and health curriculum on the development of “healthy habits” in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in the interwar period. Thomas Fleming has examined politics and labour relations in British Columbia’s public school sector. Theodore Michael Christou has detailed the impact of the progressive education movement in Ontario prior to World War Two. Kristina Llewellyn has looked at women teachers and the relationship between gender, education and democracy in the postwar period. Bruce Curtis has taken an historical sociology approach to schooling in Quebec from the conquest of New France in 1759 to the union of the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841. Anthony Di Mascio has used the lens of print culture to examine popular schooling in Upper Canada. The winner of the 2012 CHEA Founders’ Prize, Timothy J. Stanley’s *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians*, a case study of the 1922-23 Chinese student strike in Victoria, BC, examined racism and agency, using previously overlooked Chinese-language sources. In their edited collec-
tion, Paul Stortz and E. Lisa Panayotidis have investigated responses of Canadian universities to war from an historical perspective.6

Other areas in which important scholarship is taking place are Amy von Heyking’s work on history and citizenship in Alberta; Cynthia Comacchio’s research on adolescent culture; my own work on educational publishing and textbook provision; Alain Couillard’s comparative work on historical textbooks; Ken Osborne on history education; Lorna McLean on citizenship education; Paul Axelrod’s work on the history and political economy of schooling and higher education; Helen Raptis on First Nations education; Sara Burke on women in higher education; Ruth Sandwell on rural education; Rebecca Priegert Coulter and Helen Harper on women educators in Ontario, how they were shaped and the ways they expressed agency; and Elizabeth Smyth and Brian Titley on the role of women religious in Roman Catholic education. Finally, a study by Penney Clark, Mona Gleason, and Stephen Petrina on the University of British Columbia Child Study Centre and one by E. Lisa Panayotidis and Paul Stortz on higher education both won the 2012 Best English-Language Article Prize from the Canadian History of Education Association.7 These are, of course, just a few examples of the range of work taking place. Space does not permit me to explore this scholarship. I simply bring it to readers’ attention to support my point that there is a burgeoning scholarship in history of education at the same time as history of education courses are being cut and retiring faculty members are not being replaced.

It is important for teacher education candidates to be aware of the kinds of research taking place in the field of history of education. The research I have mentioned demonstrates, although it does not begin to encompass, the diversity of Canadian scholarship in history of education. It represents infinite possibilities for drawing, if not lessons, then an array of insights that can inform their understanding of why things are the way they are today, which will, in turn, help them to see how they might shape a better future.8

What Has Been the State of History of Education in Canadian Teacher Education Programs?

A study by Theodore Christou and Alan Sears clearly illustrates the diminution of the place of history of education in teacher education programs. This study traces the place of history of education in the Queen’s University teacher education program over the course of a century. History of education was a mandatory component of the program between 1907 and 1920. The program closed in 1921. When it reopened in 1968, history of education was integrated into a mandatory “foundations” course. By the 1995-96 school year both history of education and the more general foundations courses were absent. At the time of writing in 2011, both courses were offered as half-credit electives.9

At the University of British Columbia, where I am a faculty member, the state of affairs changed rather abruptly with the implementation of a new teacher education program in 2012-13. As a requirement of the previous program, students were given the option to choose from a history of education, sociology of education, or philosophy of education course. In the new program, although history may be a component of new courses such as “Education, School and Society,” its presence is likely to be dependent on the background of course instructors and therefore, will vary across course sections. (This is true of sociology and philosophy as well.) The core curriculum and pedagogy course for secondary social studies has been reduced from 66 hours of class time to 39. As a course instructor, I have always included an historical examination of continuity and change in the social studies curriculum in Canada as a key topic for exploration. In the context of a drastically reduced time allocation, this can no longer be the case.
What is the Current State of History of Education in Canadian Teacher Education Programs?

I will turn now to the current place of history of education courses in Canadian teacher education programs. Recently, Joseph Brean, writing in the National Post, commented that Canadians are mostly “unbothered by history.” Apparentlv this state of being “unbothered by history” has crept into teacher education programs. In 2012, I conducted a survey of twelve universities and did not find one that offers a compulsory history of education course. The University of Victoria offers a choice between a history and a philosophy course for teacher candidates who intend to teach secondary school. Mt. St. Vincent University offers it as one of eight electives.

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>History of Education Courses 2011-2012</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UBC</td>
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<td>Mt. St. Vincent</td>
<td>History of education is one elective among eight options</td>
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Figure 1. History of Education Courses in Twelve Canadian Universities. Note that, in 2011-12 four universities required an interdisciplinary education foundations course, which presumably has an historical component. These were Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nipissing, and UNB. *UBC introduced Education, School and Society in 2012-13.

This situation is not unique to Canada. Robert Levin points out that only about 10 to 20 per cent of the 1354 institutions that prepared teachers in the United States in 2000 had historians of education on faculty. He refers to a “retrenchment, if not, retreat” of educational foundation courses. David Vincent, at the Open University in England, has complained that the history of education has “almost collapsed as a sub-discipline, partly because those in charge of teacher education have driven history from the curriculum of training programmes.” He goes on to say that, “Teachers entering the profession at the beginning of the twenty-first century probably know less about the past of their pedagogy than any cohort since formal training began two centuries ago.”
Why do we Need History of Education in Teacher Education Programs?

So, why should we care? What does a history of education course contribute to the education of teacher candidates that other courses do not?

In order to provide a comprehensive picture, let us begin with what a history of education course does not do. What it does not do is provide facile solutions to present-day problems. The past may be always with us in some respects, but, whatever some may think, it does not repeat itself. A particular set of circumstances will not re-appear. And even when the circumstances are relatively similar, both participants and observers bring their individual lenses, constructed from their unique values, assumptions, predispositions, experiences, and present-day world views, to bear. Elliot Eisner may have said it best when he emphasized the complexity of the challenges which confront educators:

Education will not have permanent solutions to its problems, we will have no breakthroughs’, no enduring discoveries that will work for ever. . . . What works here may not work there. What works now may not work then. We are not trying to invent radar or measure the rate of free fall in a vacuum. Our tasks are impacted by context, riddled with unpredictable contingencies, responsive to local conditions, and shaped by those we teach and not only by those we teach.14

Herbert Kliebard argues, “much of the value of studying the history of education lies not in providing us with answers, but in daring us to challenge the questions and the assumptions that our intellectual forebears have bequeathed to us.”15 This involves seeking out responses that suit the contemporary and local circumstances in which we find ourselves, and recognizing that such solutions are contextual and therefore tentative.

So, again, why should we care? I will offer four reasons why history of education matters. The work of the eminent British historian of education, Richard Aldrich has been influential on my thinking here. First, history of education can give teacher candidates some sense of continuity and change. As Aldrich has put it, “Historical study shows the complexity of human events, including the co-existence of continuities and changes. Continuities are represented by values, practices and institutions that have stood the test of time. Thus the fundamental attributes of a good teacher were much the same in the seventeenth century as they are in the twenty-first.”16 Aldrich might have added that the general purposes of education have shown remarkably little change over time. However, in many other ways, education has evolved. Henri Giroux, for example, has referred to the many “ways in which curricula and discipline-based texts have been constructed and read throughout different historical periods.”17 Students need to understand that curriculum, pedagogy, institutional settings, cultural contexts, societal expectations, and student characteristics are impermanent. The hope is that if students have a sense of both the subtle and more blatant ways in which education has evolved over time, they will be more open to new possibilities for positive change in the present and future.

Second, these understandings will help teacher candidates to become “intelligently critical of their own and others’ practice.”18 Or as historian of education Marc Depaepe has put it, “For what can the professional competence of the practical educator consist other than in critical reflection on his activities past and present. . . ?19 As Christou points out, “[I]f a teacher education institution merely ‘trains’ new teachers to master and imitate ‘best practices’ in the schools, it will be merely a conservative establishment that preserves the status quo.”20 Further to this, Arnstine reminds us that if teacher candidates don’t grasp the intellectual basis for the teaching strategies they employ, their work becomes mechanical or “without study in the foundations, teaching is merely the habitual application of a set of routines.”21 And as Dewey noted, “Any theory and set of practices is dog-
matic which is not based upon critical examination of its own underlying principles.”

Teacher education programs need to include history of education and other foundations courses that incorporate “substantive inquiry, intellectual debate, and deep reflection.”

Third, while history will not repeat itself, it is still useful to have some knowledge of the pitfalls and successes encountered by educators in the past as they negotiated educational innovations. Herbert Kliebard has remarked: “One of the disturbing characteristics of the curriculum field is its lack of historical perspective. New breakthroughs are solemnly proclaimed when in fact they represent minor modifications of early proposals, and, conservatively anachronistic dogmas and doctrines maintain a currency and uncritical acceptance far beyond their present merit.”

Christou and Alan Sears colourfully point out that “we educators are prone to being spun like Ixion upon a wheel in Hades, eternally revolving and resuming past positions. The tethers of our personal learning experiences and of those who surround us will bind us.” Historians of education, while rarely invited to them, actually have something to offer to present-day policy conversations. That something is knowledge of how similar innovations have fared in the past, albeit always under different circumstances. For example, Semel and Sadovnik argue that educational reformers should “stop reinventing the wheel” and that they would do well to study the child-centred progressive schools for models of what worked, what failed and why. This is not to suggest that I would expect the context in which new policies come into being to be identical to contexts of the past; but, nevertheless, there is something to be learned. There have been a number of instances in Canada where Royal Commissions have put a call out for historical background papers. One of these was the 1973 Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishers and Book Publishing, a study which focussed on educational publishing. A chief background paper, written by Viola Parvin Day, laid out the history of policies related to textbook authorization from 1846 to 1970. In British Columbia, the 1988 Sullivan Royal Commission on Education commissioned a set of Background Papers on educational and societal change in the province over time.

Finally, history of education helps teacher candidates move beyond formulaic assumptions and enables them to consider issues more broadly and deeply. Richard Reynolds points out, “With the rest of the curriculum crowded with courses in technique and content, foundational studies [including history of education] provide the opportunity to examine the purposes of education, to evaluate these purposes, and explore realistic alternatives.”

University of Manitoba professor emeritus Ken Osborne makes the case that history of education gives students “a form of intellectual self-defence.” Knowledge of educational history “protects [them] from being misled by the taken-for-granted conventional wisdom of our own times” and helps them avoid the tendency to be “governed solely by the short-term imperatives of the here and now.”

Aldrich notes that history affords an acquaintance with a much greater range of human experience than would be possible simply by reference to the contemporary world; an enlarged understanding of that experience which may promote a richer understanding of one’s own potential and possibilities; opportunities for creating interpretations of human experience which may be of interest in themselves and which, though not directly transferable from one situation to another, may promote the capacity better to interpret other situations – both historical and contemporary; a more sophisticated awareness of the nature of knowledge and of truth.

There is an ethical dimension here. The history of education has the “potential to demonstrate not only how people have lived their lives in the past, but also how we may live better in the present and future.” A richer understanding of the dilemmas confronted by educators in the past will help students take ethical positions in the contemporary educational debates that swirl around them.
William Pinar posits the centrality of temporality: “living simultaneously in the past, present, and future.” He goes on to say that otherwise we will be “consigned . . . to the never-ending present, and what we see is what we get. When we listen to the past we become attuned to the future. From the past we can understand the present, which we can reconstruct.” This is aligned with the notion of historical consciousness, defined by Peter Seixas as: “Individual and collective understandings of the past, the cognitive and cultural factors which shape those understandings, as well as the relations of historical understandings to those of the present and the future.”

**How Should we Teach History of Education Courses?**

Historians of education who are located in faculties of education, rather than departments of history, which is most of them, have to take a pragmatic stance to the teaching of history of education courses. In order for history of education courses to regain a place within pre-service teacher education programs, they must be viewed as relevant to the issues that teachers, school administrators, and curriculum and policy developers face in their professional lives. They must also address questions which parents and the public-at-large see as important. As Ellen Condliffe Lagemann has put it, the history of education “only becomes significant when it connects with enduring dilemmas or current puzzles and, in so doing, helps one to see the present in more depth.”

In 2005, the *Journal of American History* published a forum involving six participants who were historians working in professional schools: business, divinity, education, journalism, law, and medicine. Two themes ran through their comments. First, without exception, they did not leave graduate school with the intention of joining a professional program. Every one of these historians expected to live and work in history departments. They made comments such as: “I could tell you a story about how I was always destined to teach in an education school. The only problem: it wouldn’t be true,” “I didn’t set out to become a legal historian,” or “I never expected to teach history in a business school.”

Second, every one of them chose to teach differently in a professional program than they would have if located in a history department. They focused more on the present, and the role of the past in it; using phrases such as: “perspective on contemporary challenges,” “sheds light on present-day debates,” “understanding our own time,” and “equip[ping] students with . . . the inclination for critical evaluation of law and of their own role in the legal system.” As Jonathan Zimmerman, professor of education and history at the Steinhardt School of Education, put it: “I suspect that all historians think their work is relevant to the present, in some way, even if they don’t always say why. The most challenging thing about working at a professional school is that you must say why, over and over again, in everything that you do.” Zimmerman asks his students to write an op-ed piece once or twice a term, using a history reading to inform their understanding of a contemporary issue.

The point is to help students understand that our present educational policies, curricula and organizational patterns are not inevitable. They evolved from decisions that were made by real people with particular understandings, desires, and motivations and who were shaped by the particular historical circumstances in which they lived.

**Conclusion**

It is ironic that, in a time when curriculum scholars and historians of education are calling for more attention to the history of education in teacher education programs, Canadian faculties of education are not includ-
ing history of education as a mandatory course. The courses they do provide are viewed as having more immediately practical foci and outcomes.

The rationale for the inclusion of history of education in a teacher education program is akin to the rationale for a liberal arts education; that there is more to a rich life than merely a familiarity with, and competence in using certain skills, procedures, and resources. It is challenging to break out of the conceptual cages in which we find ourselves, but history at least gives us the sense that we need to try. Its purpose in a teacher education program is not to present the past as a march of progress toward the wonderful education system we have today, but rather, it is a means to develop a sense of historical consciousness, a way of using insights gained from interpreting the past to better understand the present and work toward a better future.

A rich history of education course should not convey the impression that lessons learned from history can be smoothly applied to contemporary issues. It should assist teacher candidates to make connections between the phenomena, events, and ideas they are examining and those in other times. It should help them to grasp the range and complexity of the influences on contemporary curriculum, pedagogy, and policy decisions, and the possibilities for, as well as the impediments to, constructive change. It should help them to critically assess the merits of different viewpoints. It should enrich their understandings of where we are today and why we are in that place and help them make reasoned judgements about where we should be going and how to get there. As William Pinar has put it, “Reactivating the past reconstructs the present so we can find the future.”

*An earlier version of this paper was delivered as an invited presentation to the Canadian Association of Foundations in Education (CAFE), Canadian Society for the Study of Education Conference, Kitchener-Waterloo, ON, 29 May, 2012.
Notes


2. I will refer to people who are enrolled in teacher education programs as either students or teacher candidates, since both terms are in common parlance.


4. Universities surveyed: University of Alberta, University of Calgary, Concordia University, University of Manitoba, McGill University, Memorial University, University of New Brunswick, University of Saskatchewan, Simon Fraser University, and University of Victoria.


11. I surveyed the University of University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Manitoba, McGill University, Mt. St. Vincent University, University of New Brunswick, Nipissing University, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto, Queen’s University, University of Saskatchewan, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria.


25. Ibid., 39.


33. Aldrich, introduction, in Lessons, 2.


35. Peter Seixas, introduction to Theorizing Historical Consciousness, ed., Peter Seixas (Toronto: University of  Toronto Press, 2004), 10. Seixas references the extensive work on European historical consciousness. See


38. Ibid., Jonathan Zimmerman, 554; Mary L. Dudziak, 555; Nancy F. Koehn, 555.

39. Ibid., Dudziak, 557; Zimmerman, 557; Koehn, 558; Dudziak, 562.

40. Ibid., Zimmerman, 565.

41. For a more extended discussion of this point, see Rury, “The Curious Status of the History of Education,” 571-598.

42. Pinar, What is Curriculum Theory? xv.
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Why History of Education in Canadian Pre-service Teacher Education? A Collingwoodian response

Lynn Lemisko, University of Saskatchewan

Introduction

Why should teacher candidates examine the history of education? In what way is the educational past relevant to the problems and issues they will face as they enter twenty-first century classrooms? Do they not have urgent, present educational dilemmas that need to be addressed through understanding of present research, study and reflection?

Historian and philosopher R.G. Collingwood developed a conception of history and an epistemological approach that I propose are helpful in answering questions about the relevancy of teacher candidates studying the educational past. He argues that we cannot see clearly into our present situation, with all its problems and complexities, and work towards better solutions, unless we understand the past. But Collingwood’s response to the relevancy question does rely upon a particular conception of history. He argued that the past is not dead and gone, but rather that remnants of it are still alive in our present because ideas circulating in the past (ideas about education, for example) interpenetrate our present ideas – that past notions are the precursors or ‘determining conditions’ of our present ideas.

In the following discussion, I will take a Collingwoodian approach to addressing questions about the role that history of education should play in Canadian pre-service teacher education and to the discussion of where we have been, where we are now, and where we could/should go in the future. I will first outline Collingwood’s conception and methodology of history in more detail as these ideas are foundational to my arguments as to why history of education should play a role in Canadian pre-service teacher education. Next, I will use a Collingwoodian point of view to outline where we have been with respect to the history of education in teacher education and where I think we are now. Finally, I will explain why I think a Collingwoodian approach could underpin where we are going in the future education of teachers in the history of education, including how his approach can help teacher candidates (1) see more clearly into their present situation and (2) develop critical and reflective ‘habits of mind’.

Collingwood and the “Idea of History”

For insight into the sources of Robin George Collingwood’s conception of history and epistemological approach, it is important to realize that he worked as an archeologist, historian and philosopher in England, between c. 1912 and 1943. During this time period, the professionalization of the discipline of history was well
underway and logical positivism was deeply affecting Euro-Northern ways of thinking about knowledge construction across all disciplines. But positivism, in its purest empirical formulation is unable to explain, verify, or validate historical knowledge. To counter the predominating influence of logical positivism, Collingwood, among others, worked to develop an epistemology that supported the validity of historical knowledge. Collingwood began with the notion that history – defined as knowledge about human beings in the past or knowledge of past human action – is fundamentally different from knowledge about the natural world.

Collingwood argued that we can learn about the natural world by observing the ‘outside’ - that is, by observing what we can experientially see, taste, weigh and measure - but that simple observation cannot tell us everything about human events (past or present) because human actions have both an outside and an inside. Collingwood stated:

The historian, investigating any event in the past, makes a distinction between what may be called the outside and the inside of an event. By the outside of the event I mean everything belonging to it which can be described in terms of bodies and their movements... By the inside of the event I mean that in it which can only be described in terms of thought.³

Collingwood’s challenge to positivism and his epistemological approach are underpinned by his belief in this fundamental difference between the study of nature as compared to the study of human beings. He contended that the natural world can be understood through that which is observable, while human affairs, past and present, are “primarily concerned with the meaning of human action, and action is the unity of the outside and the inside of an event.” ⁴

**Getting to the Inside: Collingwood’s Methodology**

Collingwood maintained that a historian's re-construction of the past is guided and constrained by four fundamental notions: (a) the past survives in the present; (b) the historian must pose a question about the past to initiate her/his study; (c) the historian's picture of the past must be localized in a space and time that has actually existed; and (d) the historian's reconstruction of the past must be related to the evidence which the historian gathers from sources.⁵

According to Collingwood, the past survives in two basic forms: as concrete or material artefacts, relics and documents; and as thought.⁶ Anyone who has visited a museum, perused old family albums and letters, collected coins or postage stamps, or visited ancient ruins or medieval castles has experienced some of the ways in which the past survives in material objects in the present day. The very existence of these objects cause questions about their origins to arise in us. We wonder what the people were like who produced the objects, what they were thinking when they made them, and how the objects applied in their lives. By asking questions about what people in the past were thinking, we forge a link between us and them and begin to understand how past ideas (thought) are also alive in the present.

While questions certainly arise for us when we encounter concrete materials that survive from the past, Collingwood asserted that historians must formulate a question to guide their inquiry before the inquiry actually begins. The posing of a question locates the historian’s study in a particular time and place and points toward the particular concrete materials that will become the sources of evidence that the historian will use in her/his study. Collingwood contended that without a specific question in mind, the historian merely flounders around, collecting bits of information from sources that may or may not be related to each other. Without a specific question in mind the historian cannot know what should be considered evidence and what is not. This relation-
ship between the question asked and the evidence which addresses the question, assists in delimiting the scope of concrete materials that the historian will examine. As Collingwood claimed, “thinking means asking questions, and nothing is evidence except in relation to some definite question.”

It goes without saying then, that Collingwood also claimed that if historians do not have some type of primary sources to help them piece together what happened and what was thought about within a particular human event, including written testimony, relics, or remains, then nothing can be known about the event. Evidence from the concrete material surviving from the past provide the grounds on which we re-construct the past and a historian must be able to demonstrate the links between her/his construction and the sources from which the evidence was drawn. There is nothing magical about the fact that the past survives in the present in these materials. The materials are simply traces of the past that have been left behind and exist in the present and without these traces the historian has no evidence.

Based on these fundamental ideas, Collingwood developed a methodology for using primary source documents and relics as evidence to re-construct the past. He claimed that knowledge is constructed through a dynamic process involving the acts of questioning, re-thinking the thoughts of others by reading, criticizing and corroborating their written work, and reflection. He argued that knowledge and understanding are and must be constantly recreated by active processes of thought, three of which became the main features of his approach to ‘doing’ history: re-enactment, interpolating and interrogating.

**Re-enactment**

Collingwood argued that to make meaning about the past, we must remember that the study involves understanding human action and that human action is behaviour driven by thought. He wrote: “[The historian]...may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there: he [sic] must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent.”

Therefore, Collingwood contended, that to make meaning about past human action(s) we must think ourselves into the actions we are examining in the effort to uncover the thought of the person(s) involved - that we must make an effort to think about the situation the same way the person did, trying to look out at the world through that person’s eyes. Collingwood called this process ‘re-enactment’ and argued that historians can discern the thoughts of historical agents “by re-thinking [those thoughts] in his own mind.” Re-enactment involves the historian in using documentary evidence for “envisaging for himself the situation in which [the historical agent] stood, and thinking for himself what [the historical agent] thought about the situation and the possible ways of dealing with it.”

While re-enactment, or re-thinking another's thoughts, can sound somewhat mystical in the abstract, an example of how this is done in practical life demonstrates that this is a process we regularly use to understand what has been expressed by both ourselves and others. For example, teacher educators often ask teacher candidates to keep a journal or diary recording their experiences as they progress through their professional studies. We ask this of teacher candidates so that they will have a record of their thinking, which they can reflect upon at a later date. When we ask them to reflect and comment upon how their thinking has changed, we are in essence asking them to recover, or re-think, their own past thought to compare what they thought then with what they think now, and to judge the similarities and differences in their thinking. The instructors of these teacher candidates also read these journals in the effort to understand what teacher candidates are thinking as they engage in various ongoing professional learning opportunities. The instructors try to understand the thinking of
teacher candidates by recovering and re-thinking what teacher candidates thought, by reading their written expressions. The instructors can 're-think' the thoughts of teacher candidates, although the instructors may have never thought the same things themselves.

If it is possible to recover and re-think recent thought in this manner, Collingwood claims it follows that "the historian, by using evidence of the same general kind, can recover the thought of others; coming to think them now even if he never thought them before..." Re-enactment then is not some mystical process, but a method we commonly use in trying to understand what someone means when we read their words.

Re-enactment and External Influences

While Collingwood argued that re-enactment enables the historian to re-construct the inside of human events, he warns that historians must have a good understanding of the external influences that effected historical agents. He pointed out that getting inside other people's heads and looking at their situation through their eyes requires an understanding of the historical context within which people operated in the past, so re-enactment can only be accomplished when the historian utilises all of his/her knowledge about the situation in which the historical agent was acting. Without an understanding of the historical context – i.e., the external influences - the thinking of people in the past may seem peculiar and/or so far outside of the experience of the historian that s/he is unable to rethink their thoughts. We must understand the ideological trends that may have influenced the thinking of the people we are studying and must have an understanding of some of the economic, social, political and cultural conditions that surrounded them. Hence, a reconstruction of historical context, which can be done through the examination of secondary sources (historiography), is a necessary precondition for re-enactment. Re-enactment requires 'sympathetic insight', which can only be developed through understanding of the external influences that shaped the context in which people in the past did their thinking.

Re-enactment and Internal Influences

Collingwood also contended that re-thinking another's thoughts and understanding what they mean, is an active process which involves the effort to determine the internal sources from which the thinking derived. He argued that “you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statement... In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer.” Re-enactment, therefore, requires that the historian determine the specific problems or questions that historical agents were addressing in order to gain insight into the internal sources from which their thinking derived.

Collingwood claimed that we can know what the problem or question was "by arguing back from the solution." In other words, because statements made by historical agents represent the solution to the problem they were addressing, historians can use these statements and interpolate back to the problem, even if the agents did not explicitly express the question they were asking.

Determination of such questions assists the historian in uncovering the belief system, or cluster of presuppositions, held by the thinker. Historians must understand that people of different times held different notions about the general nature of the world. These presuppositions, or ideas that people took for granted, affected their inquiries into whatever specific aspect of the world in which they were particularly interested. To understand the thought of historical agents, historians must not only uncover the questions which guided their inquir-
ies, but must use this understanding to uncover the presuppositions which affected the formulation of the questions they asked. Hence, re-enactment also rests on the ability to understand what was taken for granted by the people the historian is examining.\textsuperscript{16}

Because absolute presuppositions are those ideas that people take for granted, they are often unstated or implicit. However, historians can uncover the presuppositions of the people being studied by examining the questions they were asking. The statements made by people contain the solution to their problems; therefore, we can determine the problem by examining the solution. The formulation of the questions that people ask is affected by their presuppositions; therefore, it follows that we can determine the presuppositions by examining the questions.\textsuperscript{17}

To summarise, Collingwood claimed:

- All people take for granted particular beliefs/notions about the world, the nature human beings and the relationship between the two;
- These beliefs cause a person to ask particular questions about the world, their work, and other people;
- Whether these questions are explicitly or implicitly stated, Collingwood argued that a person’s written statements should be considered responses to the questions they ask;
- Hence, Collingwood claimed, historians can reconstruct the inside of past human events, (i.e., get to the thought motivating the action) by:
  - Examining the written statements of the person involved
  - From which can be determined the questions the person was asking
  - From which can be determined the presuppositions that caused the questions to be asked
- Thus the historian, using written documents as her primary sources, is able to get inside the heads of people who lived in the past.

While re-enactment was a unique and fundamental part of his recommended methodological approach, Collingwood was clear that simply reading and translating the words written by the author of a document would not amount to knowing the historical significance of those words and thoughts. To be able to reenact past events historians go beyond what the sources explicitly tell them in two ways, by interpolating and by interrogating.

**Interpolating**

Because the authors of our sources do not tell us everything we need to know, we must interpolate, or bridge the gaps, between one statement and another within a document, or between what the author said explicitly in a statement and what was implied, and sometimes we must interpolate between statements made in different documents. Collingwood referred to this process of interpolation as ‘constructing history’ and he offered a simple example to demonstrate how interpolation is used to construct the whole picture of a past event.\textsuperscript{18} He supposed that the sources available told us that Caesar was in Rome on one day and in Gaul on a later date, but that the sources did not tell us anything about Caesar’s journey from the one place to the other. We naturally interpolate that Caesar did undertake the journey, even though the sources do not tell us that he did so. Note however, that the historian does not fill up the imagined journey with fanciful details such as the names of peo-
ple Caesar met along the way. The historian must imagine that Caesar took the journey, because the sources do not explicitly tell us that he did, but imagining anything more about the case would be to enter the realm of fiction.  

**Interrogating**

Collingwood pointed out that interpolating is only part of the process. Historians also go beyond what the sources tell them by being critical. While he contended that the historian's "web of imaginative construction" is pegged down by, or pegged between, the statements found in the sources, Collingwood argued that historians cannot accept these statements at face value. The statements themselves must be evaluated using critical thought. Collingwood wrote: “It is absolutely necessary, when one comes across any piece of narrative which one is trying to use as historical material, to put the narrator in the witness box and to exert all one's ingenuity in order to shake his testimony.”

When historians place the narrator of an historical source in the witness box and try to shake his testimony, they must apply various critical techniques to interrogate the source. This is necessary because, as Collingwood points out, the author of a document may have intentionally or unintentionally left out information or may have assumed that the reader knows what the question was that the author was trying to answer. The historian tries to shake the testimony by asking probing questions, for example: What was the author thinking when s/he wrote this? What was her/his intention? What might the author be trying to hide from me? Can the things the author left out of her/his account tell me as much as the things that s/he decided to include? Statements must be corroborated, the biases of the witness must be taken into account, and the historian must judge whether or not the evidence makes sense in terms of the whole picture that is being constructed.

Interrogation is a vital part of the process because historians are not simply trying to find out what happened, but also what it means.

Collingwood points out that, ultimately, the entire construction created by the historian, including the pegs on which the strands are hung and the strands strung to fill the gaps, is verified and justified by application of the historian's critical mind. In summary, to reconstruct the past, we get inside the heads of people who created documents in the past and rethink their thoughts (re-enactment). In addition, we must construct our picture of the past by interpolating (filling in the gaps) and interrogating (asking questions of the sources, including: 'What does this mean?'). In other words, we critically and constructively use sources as evidence to shape our understanding of both the outside and the inside of past human events.

**Why History in Pre-service Teacher Education?**

I think that teacher education and our thinking about education and schooling in general, is particularly a-historical. With such 'present-ish' sensibilities, I think educationist remain on a treadmill, repeatedly, over time, asking the same questions about best practice, about how to educate teachers, about what should be taught and learned and so on and so on and so on, with little or no understanding of the ways their precursors addressed these vary same questions or how their present thinking about educational activity is shaped by past ideas. However, I am convinced that if we take Collingwood's position, that remnants of the past remain or interpenetrate our present, then we can develop better understanding of present activity in education by understanding where the ideas that underpin this activity have come from.
In the following discussion, I will take a Collingwoodian approach to the discussion of where we have been, where we are now, and where we could/should go in the future with respect to the history of education in teacher education. I think use of a Collingwoodian point of view to outline where we have been and where we are now will help explain why study of the history of education was (and, unfortunately in general still is) seen as irrelevant by teacher candidates. In explaining why I think a Collingwoodian approach could/should underpin our future approach to the education of teachers in the history of education, I will argue that Collingwood’s approach to history is of great practical benefit for teacher candidates as it can help them (1) see more clearly into their present situation and (2) develop critical and reflective habits of mind. In the final section, my arguments supporting the important role of history of education as foundational to teacher education will be made clear.

Where We Have Been

One approach to the study of the history of education involves tracing and describing educational events from the outside – i.e., is an approach that describes the ‘observable’ parts of educational actions and affairs. An examination of Canadian educational historiography reveals that most early studies utilised this approach and that the resulting narratives were basically concerned with telling the education story using chronological descriptions of institutional and/or pedagogical developments, or the lives of important or ‘great’ educators, without a great deal of attention to why questions or to the thought that motivated actions.

History of education courses for teacher candidates based on these studies could not help but involve an examination of the educational history from the outside. Textbooks, which were most likely the primary materials utilised for instruction, included these chronological descriptions and the pedagogical approach to instruction was primarily transmissive.

While the inclusion of this kind of approach to history of education in teacher education programs in early days matched the pedagogical approach used by instructors teaching history across the academy in the same time period, it is doubtful that teacher candidates (or other students, for that matter) who did not have some prior intellectual curiosity about the past would have found the content of such courses to be anything more than mildly stimulating. Descriptive narratives of the lives of important people and/or chronological developments can be of passing interest, but for most teacher candidates, with a primary interest in developing their professional competencies, these stories were ultimately, as Collingwood claimed, nothing more than “…a body of facts which a very, very learned man might know, or a very, very big book enumerate, in their completeness.” From a Collingwoodian perspective, it is not surprising that the study of history of education from the outside was generally seen, or came to be seen, as irrelevant by most teacher candidates.

Where We Are Now

Other approaches to understanding our educational past attempt to move further inside human events. Historians using these approaches consider motivating factor(s) which caused people to act as they did within educational situations. The examination of Canadian educational historiography demonstrates that since the 1970s/1980s, in line with the newer approaches taken to Canadian history in general, educational historians have attempted to understand educational change by placing this change within the social context. They have examined ‘bodies and their movements’ within particular contexts in the effort to understand the relationship between educational institutions and the society in which they existed. These historians have borrowed methods
and approaches from various branches of social history including for example, gender studies, the history of childhood, and ethnic history and they have explored power relationships in schooling that have been shaped by race, gender and class.\textsuperscript{26}

Canadian educational historians have also begun to use approaches that attempt to get inside past educational events by examining the role of ideas in educational change. Approaches used are borrowed from the field of intellectual history, which takes the position that although ideas are ‘false’ in that they are “the product of a particular era and social milieu and not universal [they are] a major force in shaping historical events as a whole.”\textsuperscript{27} The field of intellectual history is relatively young in Canada. However, an examination of both educational and intellectual historiography reveals that this approach has generated a number of studies that have investigated the influence of ideological trends on the thinking of university educators and professors,\textsuperscript{28} and that historians of education have used the approach to examine the thought of ‘grade school’ educators.\textsuperscript{29}

The content of history of education courses based on these kinds of studies is certainly more richly complex as teacher candidates examine the link between social, cultural and ideological contexts and schooling and the lived experiences of children, families, teachers, educational leaders. Developments in pedagogical approaches to history instruction also have the potential to provide richer, more engaging learning experiences in history of education courses. For example, with the inclusion of primary source documents, artefacts and oral history as materials utilised for instruction, teacher candidates could be encouraged to engage in construction of their own understandings of the educational past based on the evidence they examine.

However, despite the shift from history of education content that primarily involved examination of chronological descriptions of the outside of educational actions and events to content that examines the social, cultural and ideological contexts of educational actions and events, the history of education (and foundations in general) remains the least interesting area of study for most teacher candidates.\textsuperscript{30}

It has been argued that this lack of interest arises because teacher candidates lack the ability to “translate foundational knowledge into classroom practice.”\textsuperscript{31} However, from a Collingwoodian perspective, I suggest that it is not the lack of ability that is the primary reason for the lack of interest, but rather that history of education courses are not designed to help teacher candidates learn and practice how to reconstruct the past from the inside and that these courses remain anchored in a ‘professionalized’ ‘scientific’ historians’ approach which argues that the past must be separated from the present and studied for its own sake. This means that teacher candidates continue to be asked to examine the past from more external points of view rather than through application of their own critical minds and that while they may be encouraged to see that the past could hold lessons from which they can learn, they are encouraged to perceive the past as the past and not alive in the present.

From a Collingwoodian perspective, it is not surprising, then that teacher candidates, as individuals very much caught up in the effort to enhance professional practice for present purposes, see history of education as irrelevant.

\textbf{Where Could We Go?}

I claim that the study of the history of education could come to be perceived as relevant by teacher candidates if history of education courses were to be based on Collingwood’s conception of history and his methodological approach. Rather than insisting that the past be studied for its own sake, the design of history of education courses should take into account Collingwood’s claims that the past is alive in the present because past ideas interpenetrate the present, that “the sponsors of ‘new’ ideas do their work under the shadow of the ‘old’ ideas,”\textsuperscript{32} and that we study the past to “see more clearly into the situation in which we are called upon to act.”\textsuperscript{33}
Instructors of these courses should take into account Collingwood’s claim that human events must be studied through the unity of the outside and the inside and instructors should, when designing their pedagogical approach, take into account Collingwood’s claim that “…nothing capable of being memorized is history.”

If instructors of history of education courses approached the study of history thinking that the past is alive in the present, using a method of inquiry which involves an analysis that works from the inside/out, I am convinced that teacher candidates would find their studies relevant and could see how their learning about the past can apply to practical problems they face. Rather than focusing on the description of the outside of the actions of educators in the past - actions which lead to making particular curricular or pedagogic choices, for example - the study would focus on the inside of the actions, that is, on the thinking of educators as they made choices and took action. This focus on the inside of the action could help teacher candidates understand why educators and stakeholders did what they did in the past, which in turn can help teacher candidates understand the ways of thinking that are influencing choice-making in the present.

Instructors need to keep in mind that Collingwood also argued that if we are trying to understand what past action means, we cannot merely ascertain and describe “what so-and-so thought” nor can we merely read secondary sources based on historical analysis done by others. He contended that history is ‘doing’ (including re-enactment, interpolation and interrogation) and the process of historical analysis, which involves thinking critically about the thought being re-enacted.

Collingwood claimed that it is through the activity of historical analysis that past systems of thought become valuable to us. He asserted that if we develop an understanding of the problems that past ways of thinking helped solve, and an understanding of how solving these is related to other problems which that way of thinking could not solve, and if we can hold this knowledge in our minds when we examine present systems, then we have a means by which we might bring something better into existence. Collingwood maintained that ideas expressed in past ways of thinking can be used as a “heritage for our own advancement” because historical analysis prevents us from losing “our hold on one group of problems in our anxiety to solve the next.” He wrote: “To us, the ideas expressed in them [past ways of thinking] are ideas belonging to the past; but it is not a dead past; by understanding it historically we incorporate it into our present thought, and enable ourselves by developing and criticising it to use that heritage for our own advancement.”

In order for past ideas to become a heritage that teacher candidates can use for their own advancement, they need to learn and practice a methodology that allows them to engage in the processes of reconstruction. The approach to instruction in history of education courses should assist teacher candidates in posing questions about the past, in the gathering of evidence in the form of primary source artefacts and documents that have survived into the present, and in the examination of these primary sources guided by the question: What were the people in the past thinking when they wrote these statements or created the artefacts?

For example, teacher candidates could reconstruct the debate between those engaged in and those opposed to the progressive education movement in Canada during the first half of the 20th century. For instance, the examination of primary source documents produced by Donalda Dickie (a proponent of progressive education) as compared to that of Hilda Neatby (a detractor) would provide interesting contrasts. Using a Collingwoodian approach to reconstructing the debate would engage teacher candidates in critical analysis of the sources written by these historical agents to addresses questions like: What seems to be the main concerns of each of these authors? What seems to be their intentions when creating the documents? Do the authors seem to have left things out of their accounts? Why might the authors have left these things out? Can the things the authors left out of the account tell as much as the things that they decided to include? What could reasonably be imagined about the things that the authors left out? Do consistent patterns or trends emerge from the various
documents created by one author? If so, do these patterns or trends match with findings from other documents created by other authors during the same time period? What does all of this suggest about what the author(s) were thinking when she wrote this? What purposes did the educators have in mind when they engaged in their thinking? In what ways did their thinking affect their actions? And, following from this, in what ways does their thinking seem to have assisted or detracted from the achievement of their purposes? In addressing these kinds of questions the analysis works from the inside/out, in that it focuses on what people in the past were thinking and it offers teacher candidates insights into their educational heritage by engaging them in the processes of re-enactment, interpolation and interrogation.

Further to this, I would also suggest that teacher candidates be encouraged to compare the ways of thinking of Dickie as a mid-twentieth century proponent of progressive education with the ways of thinking of present day advocates of ‘constructivist’ classrooms or ‘21st century education’ as well comparing the ways of thinking of Neatby with those of present day supporters of ‘back to basics’ education.

I think the approach used in history of education courses should be aimed at making the implicit, explicit - that is, it should aim at assisting teacher candidates in uncovering the presuppositions that mediated past action. In reconstructing the progressive education debate, teacher candidates could base their explorations on the premises that arise from Collingwoodian thought, including: (1) educators and stakeholders like Dickie and Neatby held particular views of the world, of human nature, and of the relationship between human beings - although these clusters of ideas may be embedded in unstated, implicit presuppositions; (2) that these clusters of ideas in turn influenced Dickie’s and Neatby’s philosophies of knowledge, or their philosophical approaches to learning, which may be implicit or explicit; (3) that the particular ideas and ways of thinking about knowledge and learning held by Dickie and Neatby mediated their thinking about education; and (4) these ideas mediated their approaches to educational policy, pedagogy, and curriculum. By approaching the study of the educational past thought in this way, teacher candidates not only engage in critical analysis activities that uncover the presuppositions of historical agents, but also cannot help but engage in a sussing out of their own personal presuppositions and they contemplate and compare their evidence.

Utilizing the method of inquiry advocated by Collingwood, teacher candidates can uncover the particular views of the world, human nature, and the relationship between human beings held by teachers, students, educational leaders and parents who lived and worked in the past and can engage in a critical analysis of such thought to uncover how ways of thinking affected their ability to resolve educational issues. This process allows teacher candidates to see more clearly into their present situation by assisting in development of their understanding of how continuities in ways of thinking from the past to the present influence their presuppositions and that these ways of thinking actually do affect actions. Teacher candidates intend to take action to address problems like why Johnny can’t read or why Mary struggles with math and they must be empowered to take into account past attempts to resolve these problems, the ways of thinking that informed the past attempts, and how past ways of thinking influence what they now take for granted. As individuals interested in enhancing professional their competencies and arriving at innovative ways of addressing present day educational problems, teacher candidates must take into account Collingwood’s claim that “the sponsors of 'new' ideas do their work under the shadow of the 'old' ideas” and they must challenge themselves to confront their own taken for granted suppositions.

I have no doubt that learning and practicing Collingwood’s approach would help teacher candidates develop the habits of mind which many claim as one of the most important reasons why history of education and other foundational areas of study, must be retained as part of Canadian pre-service teacher education. Colling-
wood’s approach involves critical thinking processes and the learning and practice of these empowers by offering us a way to understand the past as well as a metacognitive approach to think about our own thinking.

Ultimately, for me, this is the heart of what Collingwood was arguing. If we want to 'know' anything we must not only think about the thing (in this case, the educational past) we must also think about our thinking about it. To be certain about any knowledge claim, we must be analytical and reflective, cognizant not only about the claims we are making and the evidence we are using to back them up, but we must also be cognizant of our own thinking which shapes how we arrive at our own conclusions. When we engage in reflection we not only know the thing we are thinking about, we also know ourselves.

Collingwood demonstrated throughout his writing his claim that history is a genuine form of knowledge and that its construction involves methods which should be learned and practiced by all educated people. As teacher educators we must develop an approach to the history of education that allows teacher candidates to explore the past from both the outside and the inside, that empowers them to ask their own questions and arrive at sound answers based on evidence, and that encourages them to think about their own thinking. It seems to me that history is the way to help people learn to think for and about themselves. This happens when, like Collingwood, we see history as a living process.

[History] was no longer a closed subject. It was no longer a body of facts which a very, very learned man might know, or a very, very big book enumerate, in their completeness. It was an 'open' subject, an inexhaustible fountain of problems, old problems re-opened and new problems formulated that had not been formulated until now. Above all, its was a constant warfare against the dogmas, often positively erroneous, and always vicious in so far as they were dogmatic, of that putrefying corpse of historical thought, the ‘information’ to be found in text-books. …nothing capable of being memorized is history.42
Notes


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid, 245-246.


11. Ibid, 296.


15. Ibid, 70.


17. Collingwood, Metaphysics, 32-33, 59-60, 73-74, 76 and 77.


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 242.


23. Collingwood, Autobiography, 75. Collingwood described the information found in textbooks as “that putrefying corpse of historical thought …often positively erroneous and always vicious in so far as [it is] dogmatic.”


34. Ibid., 75.


36. Ibid., 334.

37. Ibid., 236.


40. When a Collingwoodian approach is used as a pedagogical approach, teacher educators could also choose to offer teacher candidates the opportunity to represent their findings in a variety of ways. For example, teacher candidates could conduct a debate with groups taking the opposing positions – that is, Dickie versus Neatby; could represent findings in a multi-media format, or write a traditional essay.


42. Collingwood, Autobiography, 75-76.
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Meditations on philosophy of education as an aspect of the foundations in teacher education from Ann Chinnery, Michelle Forrest, Phililppe Maubant, John Portelli, and Lucie Roger.
Learning to Love the Questions: On the Role of Philosophy of Education in Preservice Teacher Education

Ann Chinnery, Simon Fraser University

Introduction

If we are to make the case for including the study of philosophy in professional programs for educators, we surely need to show that there are outcomes associated with philosophy that connect in some way with good practice. It is not enough to rest the case for philosophy on the claim that the subject is intrinsically worthwhile, even if we all agree that it is. Something more needs to be said if we are to successfully defend the view that educators should concern themselves with philosophical inquiry and reflection. What benefit can educators derive from philosophical reflection in terms of their professional work? Does philosophy have a role to play in fostering excellence in teaching and education?

When I was first invited to contribute a chapter to this volume, I thought the task would be relatively easy. But I soon realized that much of what I had wanted to say about the role of philosophy of education in preservice teacher education has already been said (and far more eloquently than I could have done). I am thinking, for example, of William Hare’s essays “Why Philosophy for Educators?” from which the epigraph above is taken, and “Reflections on the Teacher’s Tasks: Contributions from Philosophy of Education in the Twentieth Century;” Don Kerr, David Mandzuk, and Helen Raptis’s “The Role of the Social Foundations of Education in Programs of Teacher Preparation in Canada;” and Ted Christou and Shawn Bullock’s “The Case for Philosophical Mindedness.”

Consistent with all of these authors, I believe that the erosion of philosophy, history, and sociology of education in Canadian teacher education programs signals a serious shortsightedness in terms of what beginning teachers need to know. Of course we need teachers who can organize and manage a classroom; develop and deliver lessons to students from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds; evaluate, record, and report on student progress; diagnose students’ learning problems and provide differentiated instruction; participate in various extracurricular activities, etc. But it is equally important for teachers to be able to think and speak intelligently about the aims of education and schooling, to have some sense of the history of key ideas in education, to know the difference between education and indoctrination, and to be able to work through the ethical dilemmas that inevitably arise in teaching. Of course, the importance of these latter capacities rests on a conception of schooling as the social institution where students learn to lead fully flourishing lives and become critical, engaged citizens; and even a cursory glance at the current mission statements and planning documents of ministries of education across the country reveals that providing such an education is no longer considered...
the primary goal of schooling. Rather, schools are increasingly seen as the pipeline to the job market, where the emphasis is on the acquisition of so-called “21st century skills” (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication and citizenship) so students can become active producers and consumers in the local, national and global economies. It is within this context, then, that we need to reconsider what role philosophy of education can and ought to play in preservice teacher preparation. First, however, a look back.

**Where Have We Been?**

In his survey of philosophy of education in Canada up to the early 1990s, William Hare notes the often-overlooked contributions of early 20th-century philosophers of education, most of whom taught in philosophy departments rather than faculties of education. He also acknowledges those educational scholars, such as Neville Scarfe, who were not trained as philosophers, but whose work addressed key philosophical questions. However, as Hare observes, up until the mid-1960s, philosophers of education were typically not directly involved in preservice teacher preparation. The primary emphasis in teacher preparation at the time was on methods courses and student teaching, not on philosophical questions themselves or on approaching educational questions from a philosophical perspective. But with the move from normal schools to university-based teacher preparation beginning at the University of Alberta in 1945, there came increased pressure to tie teacher preparation to the disciplines so the programs would be seen as having academic weight. Required courses in the philosophy, sociology and history of education thus began to appear on the books as core requirements in preservice teacher preparation.

The ensuing rise (beginning in the 1960s) and fall (in the 1990s) of support for philosophy of education in Canada (at least in terms of designated faculty positions, graduate programs, and undergraduate courses) is well documented in a collection of reflections by key philosophers of education of that period in a special issue of *Paideusis*, so I will not repeat that story here. Rather, I want to use this “Where have we been?” section to briefly revisit three essays by R. S. Peters that are directly relevant to the topic at hand, namely, “The Place of Philosophy in the Training of Teachers,” “Education as a Specific Preparation for Teaching,” and “The Role and Responsibilities of the University in Teacher Education.” I turn to Peters for two reasons. First, in contrast to those philosophers of education who resist “getting their hands dirty” by being pulled into practical questions, I appreciate Peters’ insistence that philosophy of education should be centrally concerned with relevance to teaching and schooling. Second, since several key Canadian philosophers of education of the 70s, 80s and 90s (including Robin Barrow, Don Cochrane, Harold Entwistle, William Hare, Paul O’Leary, Douglas Stewart, and others) received some or all of their training in the UK and/or acknowledge an intellectual debt to Peters, I think it is safe to say that his work played a significant role in shaping philosophy of education in Canada.

It is no secret that Peters was a strong defender of a liberal education. The “basic task of any teacher,” he said, is “helping a new generation to make something of themselves by the development of those forms of understanding and awareness which are constitutive of what it means to be educated.” But in order to help children make something of their lives, teachers need content knowledge, “a thorough grounding in something to teach.” For elementary teachers he recommended a “liberal education in the main areas of the primary curriculum—science, mathematics, English, social studies, and one of the arts”—and for secondary teachers, presumably, a higher level of content mastery in their specific subject areas.

Peters’ next priority for teacher preparation was a “thorough grounding in teaching the skills—reading, spelling, and writing, especially reading, which is one of the ‘basic needs’ of any child in our culture.” It is interesting to note that despite his emphasis on a liberal education as a prerequisite for teachers, Peters did not advocate putting disciplinary knowledge at the center of preservice teacher preparation. That is to say, rather than having the ideas of Plato, Rousseau, Locke, Piaget, Dewey, Skinner et al. form the basis of preservice teacher
preparation, Peters preferred to have students grapple with a few key practical problems that could, over time, be clarified by philosophical thinking. His argument hinged on students’ readiness to take up different kinds of theory: “We often argue that the school curriculum should be carefully related to the needs and interests of children and to their level of cognitive development. Should not the same apply to courses for students in training?” He thus believed that philosophy of education should be introduced gradually, only after students have gained practical experience on which to “hang” the more abstract ideas and concepts.

At the start of their teacher preparation program, Peters said, students should be posed questions such as, “Should children be punished at school?” or “What is the educational significance of play?” or “When should children learn to read?” Then, as they gain experience working with children, they should come back to those questions again and again, with the idea that they will be able to answer them with increasing precision and with a deeper appreciation of the complexities inherent to the questions themselves. The main purpose of preservice programs, in his view, is to turn out teachers who are able to look at the practical problems they encounter in a more sensitive, clear-headed and informed way than they would have prior to entering the program.

“The effect of theory,” he maintained, “should therefore be long-term—the gradual transformation of a person’s view of children, of himself [sic], and of the situation in which he is acting.”

Even though Peters believed that practical educational problems should be at the core of preservice teacher preparation, he was concerned about the potential downgrading of teaching to a job that did not require university education. His worry was that first, and most immediately, the profession of teaching would cease to attract top students, which in turn would have long-term negative effects on the quality of education in schools. While he set aside that larger social question—at least in these essays—Peters believed that the relationship forged between universities and the teaching profession should be strengthened. Like medicine and law, he claimed, teaching is a profession that requires a theoretical underpinning and a broader education than can be provided by a technical institute that trains people to perform certain tasks and to solve certain kinds of problems in their field. Educational problems are complex and require a broader knowledge and experiential base than those that arise in many other occupations. The problem “Ought we to punish children?,” for example, is not the type of problem that can be resolved by one way of thinking or by subjecting the problem to a scientific experiment. It requires a reasoned analysis (e.g., about the differences between punishment and discipline), appeals to normative claims about the proper treatment of children, and perhaps some empirical evidence about the efficacy of punishment versus other interventions aimed at changing a child’s behaviour.

A second, related reason that Peters believed teacher preparation ought to be housed in universities is for the benefit to the teacher her or himself. It is not about the status conferred by a B.Ed. degree over a non-degree teaching certificate, but rather about the core knowledge and capacities required to help their own future students to lead worthwhile, flourishing lives:

A liberal education is of central importance in a society whose members can no longer accept some unitary ideal of life, whether provided by the church or by a political party. For its function is not just to present to the individual a cultural heritage in which he [sic] can try to make something of himself, but to introduce him to those studies, especially in the area of the humanities, which are likely to stimulate his capacity for choice, to make it more imaginative and better informed. For in a society like ours the individual has a wide area of discretion. It is not laid down what sort of man he should become. The onus is on him to find meaning in his life within an accepted framework of principles, such as freedom, fairness and the consideration of people’s interests…

Whether we are talking about the UK of the 1970s or Canada today, teachers need to be able to think independently—to know what they believe and why—in order to withstand the myriad pressures bearing down on
them from the media, governments, business and parents. As Barrow insists in *Giving Teaching Back to Teachers*, “the judgment of the individual teacher… must be paramount in deciding how to proceed, rather than the generalized demands of some curriculum design or otherwise imposed rules of educational experts.” However, if teachers are expected to help students discover and develop their own interests and talents, the teachers themselves must have had an education sufficiently broad that they can recognize those interests and talents in their students and know how to guide them accordingly; and in the context of policy changes such as the 1994 Agreement on Internal Trade, we can no longer assume that all new teachers will have that background. So let us now move on to look at the current situation and the attendant implications for the role that philosophy of education can and/or should play in preservice teacher preparation.

**Where Are We Now?**

In a 2009 paper addressing the potential consequences of the Agreement on Internal Trade for teacher education, Jon Young cautioned that the pressures for harmonization of teacher certification requirements across the country could contribute to a “race-to-the-bottom” rather than a “race-to-the-top.” In other words, when teaching certificates from one province have to be recognized by all other provinces, students may well start to choose their teacher education program based on the shortest road to certification. As a result, those universities that require a longer practicum or a four-year B.Ed. will start to be pressured to shorten their teacher education programs in order to compete with out-of-province competitors. This is no idle concern. As those of us who are directly involved in teacher education know, for the past several years, any proposals for curriculum change that require lengthening the path to teacher certification are likely to be dismissed in the name of needing to keep our programs short enough to be competitive in the higher education market. As Young asserts:

The era in which Faculties of Education could design and deliver their Bachelor of Education programs with little government direction through certification is over…, so too—if it ever existed—is the era when the longer periods of pre-service preparation built into Faculty of Education programs are accepted unquestioningly as necessary to the preparation of high quality beginning teachers, to the status of teaching as a profession, and to the health of public education in the province.

I too worry about the shift to shorter programs. Education takes time: it takes time to read and mull over ideas; it takes time to weigh competing claims about the aims of education, about what should and shouldn’t be in the curriculum, about what kind of society we want to have and therefore what kind of citizens we need, and so on. And while we cannot put the blame for the erosion of educational foundations in preservice teacher preparation solely at the feet of the AIT, in my view it has played a significant role in hastening the decline of the humanities and social sciences as a core feature of teacher preparation. It should be noted, however, that some programs are resisting this national trend. For example, at Mount Saint Vincent University all teacher education students are required to take at least one philosophy of education course. The key point, though, is that if schools are going to continue to play an important role in shaping society (rather than leaving that work to popular media, the marketplace, etc.), we should be wary of the current trend toward shorter certification programs that emphasize teaching skills and strategies at the expense of the deeper ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions that lie at the heart of philosophical inquiry in education. Teacher education in BC is currently at a crossroads. In the most recent BC Education Plan the number of prescribed learning outcomes has been significantly reduced in order to give teachers more flexibility and unstructured time in which to help their students discover and pursue their own interests and talents. But it seems that at precisely the same moment we are giving teachers increased professional autonomy, we are moving further and further away from properly equipping them to take it up.

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As I see it, once universities have given up on the business of educating teachers—at least in the traditional sense of providing them with a liberal education—there does not seem to be much of a case for keeping teacher preparation in universities. Even though the recent Canadian Deans of Education Accord on Initial Teacher Education includes a commitment to keeping teacher education in universities or university-colleges,29 I do not think it would take much to convince administrators and policy makers that something like the “School Direct” model of initial teacher training recently adopted in the UK is a more expedient and cheaper way to go. School Direct is an initiative passed by the British government in 2011 that “allows schools to grow their own new teachers by giving them the opportunity to recruit and train their own staff. They can then employ them as a qualified teacher either in their school or a school they have links to.”30 There are various models under the umbrella of the School Direct initiative, but the key point for our discussion here is that the universities once charged with primary responsibility for teacher preparation now play a secondary role. Bringing that possibility closer to home, Young observes that:

From a neo-liberal, market-driven perspective such developments may be seen as appropriate—individual employers making their own decisions about what pre-service programs they think best prepare their teachers and “service providers” responding to those assessments—but an alternative perspective would be to see such developments as a very serious undermining of the professional status of teaching and the quality of public education in the province.31

Again, I share Young’s concerns. As philosophers of education, we need to be vigilant about such moves and more proactive about the ways in which we can continue to play a role in preservice teacher preparation. It is unlikely that the once required foundations courses that have been struck from preservice programs will find their way back into the curriculum any time soon. But, in my view, there is nothing stopping us from taking a leadership role in courses on professional ethics where we help student teachers to grapple with the complexities of ethical dilemmas in the classroom, or in subject methods courses where we can bring students back to Herbert Spencer’s core curriculum question, “What knowledge is of most worth?,” or in helping them to craft their pedagogical creeds or philosophy statements. But perhaps most importantly, and thinking back to Peters’ essays on the role philosophy ought to play in teacher preparation, wherever we find ourselves working with preservice teachers, we should emphasize the importance of slowing down and attending to the questions that arise as their practical experiences in classrooms bump up against the educational theories they have learned and against their own prior knowledge and beliefs.32

In Letters to a Young Poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote:

I would like to beg of you, dear friend, as well as I can, to have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present you need to live the question.33

So too, I want to suggest, for beginning teachers, learning to love the questions and “live the questions” is a way of keeping the door open to surprises and new insights, and a way to prevent premature foreclosure on questions about what it means to be an educated person, about the role of schools in society, about student-teacher relationships, and about curriculum and pedagogy.34 This approach is also consistent with Peters’ recommendation that philosophy of education be introduced gradually, only after students have gained practical experience on which to “hang” the more abstract ideas and concepts.35
Another way in which we might rethink the role of philosophy of education in preservice teacher preparation is to play an active role on teacher education revisioning committees at our respective institutions, asking questions, for example, about the conception of “the good teacher” that underpins everything from admissions to professional standards to the selection of seconded teachers for practicum supervision. Other issues relating to teacher preparation that philosophers of education are well positioned to address include the changing role of schools in society; moral and political questions in education and schooling; the influence of technology on pedagogy; teaching critical thinking and philosophy for children; rethinking the knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers will need for the classrooms of the 21st century, etc. Much of this work is already being done by the current generation of Canadian philosophers of education, but it is crucial that we not see the erosion of foundations courses as equivalent to the erosion of relevance of the foundations for teacher preparation. Admittedly, “getting our hands dirty” with some of the hands-on work of program restructuring and curriculum redesign is less than glamorous, but if our response to the changing landscape in higher education is simply to lament the declining profile of the foundations in teacher education, it will be at our own peril. As Hare points out in the epigraph to this chapter, “if we are to make the case for including the study of philosophy in professional programs for educators, we surely need to show that there are outcomes associated with philosophy that connect in some way with good practice.” In my view, it means that we need to be out front, taking the lead in our faculties, and demonstrating by example why learning to think like a philosopher is essential to good teaching. This is the challenge before us as Canadian philosophers of education, and I look forward to working with colleagues in the field to meet it.
Notes


5. Hare, Attitudes, 9-10.

6. Hare, Attitudes, 11.

7. See Paideusis 19, 2 (2010), a special issue containing reflective essays by several key Canadian philosophers of education who were most active from the 1960s to early 2000s, and Hare, Attitudes, Ch. 1.


10. Ibid., 153 (emphasis added).

11. Ibid., 156.

12. Ibid., 157.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 163.


26. Ibid.


28. At the time of this writing, teacher education across the country is undergoing significant change. See, e.g., Rosanna Tamburi, “Teacher Ed Programs Beginning to Contract,” University Affairs, April 24, 2013, accessed April 24, 2013, http://www.universityaffairs.ca/teacher-ed-programs-begin-to-contract.aspx. It is impossible to predict with any degree of confidence where we might be in five or ten years’ time, so what follows are my observations based on the current state of affairs here in BC.


31. Young, “Teacher Education in Canada.”

32. See also Ann Chinnery, William Hare, Donald Kerr, and Walter Okshevsky, “Teaching Philosophy of Education: The Value of Questions.” Interchange, 38, no. 2 (2007), 99-118.


34. See also Christou and Bullock, “A Case for Philosophical Mindedness.”


37. Hare, “Why Philosophy for Teachers?,” 149.
Bibliography


Whose view of knowledge is of most worth?¹

Bertrand Russell takes issue with Bacon’s famous phrase “knowledge is power,” pointing out that this is not true of all knowledge (some is irrelevant to one’s needs, status or influence). He claims Bacon was referring to scientific knowledge, which in Bacon’s time was associated with the magical powers such knowledge was thought to entail and bestow upon those who convey it. Russell claims that valuing knowledge only for its obvious and immediate uses (utilitarianism fr. L. utilis useful) implies the existence of unpractical or ‘useless’ knowledge. On this view, says Russell, “the only knowledge worth having is that which is applicable to some part of the economic life of the community.”²

For Russell, “useless” knowledge has value because it promotes a contemplative habit of mind,³ not only as regards trivial pleasures or worries, but also “in relation to the greater evils of life, death and pain and cruelty, and the blind march of nations into unnecessary disaster.”⁴ Russell was referring to the evils of World War II, but his description resonates today:

The world at present is full of angry self-centred groups, each incapable of viewing human life as a whole, each willing to destroy civilization rather than yield an inch. To this narrowness no amount of technical instruction will provide an antidote.⁵

The quotation marks around the adjective ‘useless’ implies that, in arguing for the value of “useless” knowledge, Russell purposely contradicts himself. The tongue-in-cheek usage points out a difficulty in the utilitarian view. Distinguishing ‘useful’ from ‘useless’ knowledge, provokes the question of how to draw a clear line between them. Judging how to do so counters technical narrowness; therefore, ‘useless’ knowledge is useful after all. According to Russell, “such knowledge . . . inspires a conception of the ends of human life as a whole”⁶ and it is from such “large perceptions combined with impersonal emotion that wisdom most readily springs.”⁷ Since philosophy is literally the love of wisdom [fr. Gk Sophia divine wisdom + philos love], one might assume that philosophy would be our greatest hope in perilous times. Yet, faculty positions in philosophy, as in other areas of so-called ‘useless’ knowledge, are disappearing from the 21st century university.⁸ What does this mean for education and for teachers?

In his introduction to a 1990 special issue of Paideusis: Journal of the Canadian Philosophy of Education Society, Romulo Magsino, CPES President, characterized working conditions for Canadian philosophers of education:

The pressure on faculties of education to concentrate on the so-called practical and the empirical could still turn out to be the educational philosopher’s hemlock in the future. As if it were of no use to the practitio-

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ner, philosophy of education has been tolerated at best in the teacher preparation curriculum. In a number of undergraduate faculties of education, it does not exist at all.9

More than twenty years on, as we attempt to come to grips with global economic turmoil of unprecedented proportions, Magsino’s speculation about that cup of hemlock seems especially prescient. Facing hard times, with their inevitable swing to utilitarian values, will philosophy of education be tolerated at all? In 2007, Paul Standish, Editor of the Journal of Philosophy of Education of Great Britain, attributed the diminished influence of philosophy of education to the anti-intellectualism of our age and culture since the 1960s10 and the wider technicisation of the social field.11 The obsession with process, in the sense of efficiency and quality control, effectively supplants the role of good judgement on the part of the teacher and its necessary reliance upon continuities of practice in philosophy of education.12

As governmental departments of education and university academic planning committees and boards of governors face daunting, wide-spread cut-backs to publicly-funded educational institutions, the ideal of education as a public trust is at risk.13 Over the past twenty years, there is widespread concern that corporate funding of research is redirecting the university’s mission away from public service and towards the marketability of research findings, which compromise the ideals of academic freedom and integrity.14 Speaking of the risk to these ideals, James Turk, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, points to the problems of “a society dominated by a market mentality; an increasingly interventionist state, and aggressive special interests determined to shape what the university is and does.”15 In perilous times, philosophy of education is more vital than ever to teachers and educational policy-makers who must recognize systemic contradictions in order to determine responsibly how to make positive educational change.

In what follows I consider what it could mean to practice philosophy of education as a means of protecting post-secondary education as a public good. In light of current threats to academic freedom, I suggest that making the personal political in post-secondary education means finding ways to survive what McMurtry calls “market totalization,” a process whereby “the market system of competing alternatives is imposed upon the educational system.”16

**Why philosophy of education?**

Philosophy begins in wonder and the earliest methods are those of the infant in the crib, amazed by her own moving hand before her face. Philosophers down the ages have echoed the view that philosophy begins in wonder, but what does wonder mean to human development? ‘Why’ questions tumble from the mouths of toddlers as they learn to navigate their new-found powers of speech. These fledgling questions, though partly imitative of adult speech patterns and intoxicating to the child because adults tend to jump to respond, arise in conjunction with natural curiosity or wonder. ‘Philosophy’, the love of wisdom, is born of this early wonder at the world and the resultant desire to know more, to inquire more deeply.17 And yet, curiosity itself has lost its cachet as a key component in academic research; that is, research and scholarship driven by curiosity alone has lost its value for funding bodies. As McMurtry pointed out in 1991, business leaders and business-supported governments pressure universities to eschew “curiosity-oriented” research as “baggage from the past,” in order to make higher education an “engine for development.”18 In 2009, Nobel Laureate in physics Willard Boyle criticized politicians and big business for being too focused on the commercialization of research rather than appreciating “the free will, free spirit of scientists” that leads to real breakthroughs.19 In Canada, this shift away from supporting ‘curiosity-oriented’ research, formerly referred to as ‘basic’ research, is reflected in how innovation
has come to be defined by National funding agencies, as well as in the fact that the number of scholars and researchers on boards of national funding agencies is decreasing in favour of corporate representation.

Similar changes are occurring at the level of primary and secondary education in Canada in the shift towards ‘outcomes-based’ education. According to Furedi:

This is a technique through which a utilitarian ethos to academic life serves to diminish what would otherwise be an open-ended experience for student and teacher alike. Those who advocate learning outcomes do so expressly with the aim of abolishing such experiences, which is why they so vociferously target anything that smacks of ambiguity.

And yet, this sea-change in how research and formative education are being defined is occurring simultaneously with an emphasis in university mission-statements and government curriculum documents on critical thinking for engaged citizenship, which adds further evidence to the claim that Orwell’s Doublespeak is alive and well in the twenty-first century.

Striving towards critical engagement in today’s classrooms depends on teachers who can assess the educational ideal of critical thinking in light of their own practice and the systems within which they work. Teachers need to come to their own understanding that critical thinking is more than a set of discrete skills. What use are mere skills if the capacity for wonder is absent or if the application of these skills is always focused on teachers’ prescribed outcomes? When the teacher’s authority no longer drives the analytical exercise, will students continue to inquire? Without honest inquiry into matters of communal interest and public significance, the ideal of critical thinking can become a convenient slogan for the realization of predetermined classroom or political outcomes. Inquiry must be a living practice or it sinks into a kind of forensic, prescribed exercise. As Passmore points out, there are times when, in the spirit of criticism, it may be appropriate to suspend forensic analysis of what appears to be relevant. Sober second thought may be called for.

In the immediate aftermath of trauma, for example, such as that brought on by extreme, in-school violence, it can be in everyone’s best interests for teachers to temporarily suspend critical analysis in their classrooms of the causes of violence. A teacher’s inclination to immediately answer students’ questions and make current conditions into teachable moments may have to be temporarily suspended while other professionals assess the extent to which students are in shock and may require other kinds of intervention. But, how can this be reconciled with the teacher’s pedagogical responsibilities?

On the micro-level it requires an ability to sketch out the priorities within different hierarchies of value, in the case of violence and trauma, balancing health and safety concerns against pedagogical concerns. At the same time, however, one needs to tack left or right long enough to assess these opposing hierarchies of value against broader societal values and the practicalities of any crisis situation. One must know how to assess the effects of systemic incapacities to draw such vital distinctions. For example, a suicide among a school’s student population may have to be treated differently from what is dictated by policy, if a rash of other such events recently preceded it in the vicinity. Without a broader understanding that critical thinking is more than a set of skills, that it requires careful deliberation to determine if application of discrete critical tools to a crisis situation is appropriate in a given case, a teacher’s best intentions may aggravate already fragile sensibilities. Noddings’ concept of the ethic of care in teaching distinguishes it from caring as a warm fuzzy feeling. The ethic of care is relational and, therefore, it may require tough decisions that, at first glance, seem to contradict caring as an immediate emotional response. Once again, one must have the capacity to contextualize one’s immediate reactions, combining what Russell referred to as “impersonal emotion” with “large perceptions” in the process of arriving at wise decisions.
Caring for one’s students also requires that the ethic of care in education extends beyond their immediate needs. Take, for example, the working conditions under which teachers teach. To what extent, committed as they are to act in students’ best interests, are teachers able to constructively direct their critical skills to an analysis of their own working conditions and the effects these have on the quality of teaching and learning in which they are engaged? Educational ideals inform pedagogical aims and translate into real and crucial choices for teachers. It is no easy decision to vote to walk a picket line in the interest of quality education if, in the popular imagination, school teachers and professors are viewed as privileged, self-important élites who get the summers off. In the interests of quality education for future generations, difficult and unpopular decisions are made, even in the knowledge that they mean hardship for students, teachers, and communities in the short term.

Teaching becomes increasingly more difficult if one recognizes and feels responsible to respond to the pressures that negatively affect conditions for academic freedom and integrity. The continually accelerating rate by which information is disseminated facilitates a powerful global stream of opinion, misinformation and propaganda that competes for students’ attention. As Alexander Pope warns “a little learning is a dangerous thing;” . . . “shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, And drinking largely sobers us again.” How does philosophy of education help us “drink largely” and ward off the danger of “shallow draughts”?

**Philosophy of education as feminist pedagogy**

One ‘shallow’ view that has dominated public and academic discourse is patriarchy. The feminist corrective to the patriarchal reification of knowledge is the insight and practice of making the personal political, of scrutinizing the terms and conditions of one’s own work, as scholar and researcher, and as teacher and woman, to assess who and what have been left out of the ideal of the educated person. In 1981 Jane Roland Martin attacked the “ivory tower people” by countering Hirst’s narrow conception of liberal education as the acquisition of knowledge and understanding with a conception that includes feelings, emotions, and procedural knowledge. Russell’s phrase “impersonal emotion,” cited earlier, alludes to the ideals of disinterestedness, detachment, and freedom from passion that Martin associates with the ivory tower people. As she points out, detachment from passion may be appropriate in some circumstances; however, “when a regime is exterminating an ethnic or religious minority, a people free of passion is scarcely the ideal.”

Martin charges the ivory tower people with an epistemological fallacy; namely, concluding what ought or ought not to be taught or studied by arguing from a theory of knowledge. The structure we attribute to knowledge, though relevant, is not decisive in itself as regards curriculum planning and theory. In determining curriculum objectives and content, “we make value judgements about our educational purposes and we set these, in turn, in relation to the moral, social, and political order we believe to be desirable.”

If the claim of Kant, Rousseau, and Mill, that an educated woman is a contradiction, still holds today, then an educated woman who studies education and her own and other women’s experience of it must be a bundle of contradictions. Demonstrating traits, qualities and skills that, as Martin points out, are praised in men but disdained or generally considered suspicious in women is disheartening and debilitating not only for women. The ethic of second-wave feminism, that the personal is political, has important implications for education in general and for philosophy of education in particular. Part of explicating this importance is to take the feminist corrective to educational practice as necessary to philosophy of education. What exactly does it help us see?

Feminist philosophers like Martin challenged the entire Western tradition of philosophy, and philosophy’s resilience is demonstrated in the degree to which such correctives influence how we do philosophy today. The
idea that different people, in different life circumstances might see the world differently and that, therefore, if their standpoints are to be respected, they ought to figure in our accounts of objectivity, has been a hard pill to swallow. As Haraway puts it, “[f]eminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see.”

The consciousness-raising that came with second-wave feminism, intended as it was for women to share their experiences of marginalization, has inscribed upon patriarchy’s universalizing prescriptions the collateral history of oppressive practices, attitudes and assumptions perpetuated by both men and women. How to avoid being an agent of one’s own oppression requires one to “become answerable for what one learns how to see” through the process of recognizing and responding to one’s culpability.

In describing her own “trip home” from the land of “pure philosophy” in the late 1960s, Jane Roland Martin credits student protest over the irrelevancy of the university curriculum in light of the Vietnam War for showing her anew what she had learned from childhood; namely, that “no hard and fast lines should be drawn between school and work.” This made her determined to “bring her chosen field into closer connection with educational practice.” It is no mean feat to argue in an objective, reasonable and rational way for a position that, if generally accepted, improves one’s lot personally because it can be construed as acting out of self-interest.

And yet, if those whose lives are most closely affected by discriminatory attitudes, biases and practices do not speak up, who is better placed to make the case? This is the dilemma feminists continue to face, the one represented in the motto: the personal is political.

In the teaching of philosophy of education in Canada and elsewhere a common approach in recent years has been problem-based, enacted within classroom communities of inquiry. By taking up the real and pressing problems teachers face in schools, we begin from the personal and extend our analyses to larger political questions. This approach pre-dates our contemporary descriptors for it by at least a couple of thousand years. As Plato describes it, Socrates was like a relentlessly annoying fly, niggling away with his leading questions, inquiring into the truth of that to which he also admittedly did not have the answer. What is the good life and how can it be actualized? And yet, the only account he gives of “the woman next door” is in describing her proper place as subservient to the patriarchal order assumed to be natural and unassailable. As we face a future that we no longer naively assume to be endless on this planet, the question of how we can become answerable for what we learn how to see resounds ever more urgently. The good life abounds, the advertisers tell us, and yet it is not available to all.

We need to learn how to ask the crucial, critical questions of our age in such a way as to make progress in our inquiry. Lipmann’s analogy is apt: progress in philosophical inquiry is like that of the boat sailing into the wind. We tack back and forth from side to side in order to move forward. The newcomer to philosophical inquiry may be frustrated by this apparent lack of progress. One’s initiation into the process reveals that in philosophy, as in life, progress is not a strictly linear process. Just when one thinks the path is clear, other needs arise to test one’s capacity to consider their relevance, set aside cherished plans, respond appropriately, and reset one’s course. To insist on following the neat and obvious path and to resist revisiting previously traversed lines of inquiry and action is to misconstrue the very conditions within which discovery or invention are possible.

Martin had to scrutinize her practice as a philosopher in order to stand out from her own crowd and accuse her colleagues of being “ivory tower people.” What she recognized is that educated people “are indoctrinated into the educational ideology of their culture” which means that for most of them “fundamental educational change is unthinkable.” Determined as she is to bring philosophy of education into closer connection with educational practice, Martin redefines philosophy of education as necessarily open to the varied standpoints of those whose experiences are beyond the pale of accepted orthodoxies. She makes fundamental educational change thinkable by being answerable for what she has learned how to see.
Seeing the future in the rearview mirror

Standish contends that it is wrong to see philosophy of education exclusively, or even predominantly in terms of the conceptual analytical approach of the London School and those it influenced. As Standish puts it, “[i]n a sense philosophy of education is at least as old as Plato or Confucius.” He rejects the notion that philosophy of education is one of the applied forms of philosophy, such as the philosophy of science, on grounds that central philosophical inquiries (ethics, epistemology, metaphysics) incorporate questions about learning and teaching. Therefore, he says, “these essentially educational questions [. . . ] are internal to philosophy itself.” It is hardly surprising, in light of this view, that Standish embraces what he calls an inclusive account of philosophy of education; i.e., an account that “recognizes the variety of ways in which philosophical inquiry into education has taken place, and [. . . ] acknowledges the long history of this”. This account takes a broader view of what counts as philosophical and consequently sees the boundaries between disciplines as “less firmly fixed.”

It is a broader and more inclusive account of philosophy of education that holds future promise; respecting, as Standish does, the conceptual analytical contributions to the study of education while remaining open to the Continental and Eastern traditions that takes different approaches to the same human questions and problems. Admittedly, the issue of commensurability across traditions is not a simple one; however, because ours is a global society where different traditions are interacting as never before, it is important to the future of education as a public trust to attempt such rapprochements. The paradox of philosophical inquiry, whereby we approach the problem or question by tacking first in other directions, offers any educational question or endeavour the clear-headedness and calm deliberation called for by common sense. By remaining vigilant and passionate as regards the immediate conditions within which we teach and inquire, we avoid reifying detached deliberation as a primary value in our ideal of the educated person. My own experience in university and school settings suggests that the consistent practice of good judgement is still valued highly, even if its conclusions do not precipitate the change its acceptance suggests is necessary. Contradiction may be obvious to some, but often not to those embroiled in its convoluted effects. Nonetheless, as Bachelard says: “everything comes alive when contradictions accumulate.”

The challenge for philosophers of education in 2013 is to ensure that our heyday has not passed, not to save our own skins, though our personal needs are not extraneous to the discussion, but because our collective future depends upon the meta-analysis that philosophers of education are trained in and practice with teachers. In order for philosophy of education’s role to be valuable and valued in teacher education, it must be clear beyond our discipline how vital philosophy is in developing the critical experimental attitude necessary to the exercise of autonomous professional judgement. As William Hare pointed out in 1991 and 1993, the place of philosophy of education within faculties of education did not evolve without continual reassessment of values and reiteration of aims. Such processes are part and parcel of the philosophical tradition.

Is philosophy of education an inevitable victim of its own self-reflective nature? Self-reflection of any kind is not without pain, for who wants to recognize the error of her ways. However, as Martin points out, the only way to be an educated professional woman and remain a civilized human being is to “disturb the existing constitution of things.” This may well begin with disturbing one’s own complacency. If one of the characteristics of philosophy of education is that it proceeds by reflection and self-correction, is the discipline’s loss of status within teacher education partly a result of people’s reticence to do such work? The characteristic attributes of doing philosophy of education do not reduce neatly to a set of clear-cut rules because good judgements take time. With characteristic irony, Socrates says to Glaucon, Plato’s older brother:
Verily, Glaucon, I said, glorious is the power of the art of contradiction!

Why do you say so?

Because I think that many fall into the practice against their wills. When they think that they are reasoning they are really disputing, just because they cannot define and divide, and so know that of which they are speaking; and they will pursue a merely verbal opposition in the spirit of contention and not of fair discussion.52

Verbal opposition for its own sake is a currency of our times, as demonstrated in mass-mediated entertainment, ‘reality’ programming, and vituperative postings on news websites. Since fair and honest discussion requires more than the manipulation of sound bytes, the teacher’s tasks are to help students unearth the contradictions inherent in jumping to judgement, to recognize the same failings in herself and in the system in which she works, and to respond with good judgement.

Though Magsino’s 1990 allusion to the cup of hemlock is clear to all in philosophy of education today, how long will it remain clear, and what does it mean to support our traditions of practice so that the lessons of the past are carried forward? Any argument for the value of philosophy of education that relies upon a description of its tradition runs up against suspicion, the common objection being one against the hegemonic sins of the past. How can we call upon tradition, the argument goes, when the sexist and racist, patriarchal tradition was and continues to be used to shore up the dominance of society’s self-appointed élites? As MacIntyre points out, the concept of tradition has been put to ideological uses by conservative political theorists such that we are apt to be misled about the concept itself. He argues that tradition is misconceived as contrasting with reason or its stability as contrasting with conflict. “When a tradition is in good order” he says, “it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose”… “Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict.”53

Thus, philosophers of education and their students can take heart from the interventions of those like Martin who point out the contradictions in our practice. As far as we are able, we must defend academic freedom and integrity because without it the fate of education as a public trust is in peril. As those to whom it has been entrusted, we are best placed to defend it. It is not enough to teach well, research well, and be a good committee member. Balancing teaching, research, and institutional service is a performative contradiction54 if we are merely fiddling while Rome burns. Social justice begins at home, which means that, in turning our gaze inward, we scrutinize not only our individual practices, but also the erosion of the ideal of public education that our institutions claim to uphold.

Wayne Peters, Professor of engineering and President of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, argues that professors should not consider service to their professional associations as “outside our identities as teachers and scholars.” It is critical, he says, to “reposition our associations’ work in defending post-secondary education, and our profession, so as to be seen as an integral part of our normal academic duties.”55 If this is true for engineers, geographers and mathematicians, how much more true is it for those for whom education is their field of inquiry? McMurtry reminds us of one of the basic tenets of logical thought: that “we are not able to hold contradictions in our mind as equivalent so long as their contradiction is known.”56 Philosophers of education are those whose first priority is to bring contradictions to light, not just so that our students recognize them ‘out there’ in someone else’s realm of influence, but also because they exist within our own tradition of practice and within the institutions that claim to uphold the integrity of this tradition.

It is clear that we have multiple tasks before us, in the face of which, like Magsino in 1990, I remain optimistic. Socrates chose to drink from the cup and perish, but Plato survived to write the stories that continue to chal-
lenge and inform our methods today. Though it may still be premature to think of hemlock, we do well to re-
reflect on philosophy of education’s value and the courage it takes to actively engage in improving the conditions
of our educational establishments. If fairness and equity are overshadowed in universities by decreasing enroll-
ments and financial exigencies, what hope is there that school systems will fare any better in stemming the tide
of “market totalization.”57 Whatever form philosophy of education takes in the future, whether the stories of
our practice are passed on or forgotten, philosophical-mindedness58 will continue to exist as long as thoughtful,
caring people with a contemplative habit of mind take ‘useless’ knowledge seriously as a public trust and judge
well on its behalf.
Notes

1. The classic formulation of this question was made famous by Herbert Spencer’s 1859 essay: “What knowledge is of most worth?” See Herbert Spencer on Education. Edited by Andreas M. Kazamias, New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1966.


3. Ibid., 88.

4. Ibid., 90.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 91.


13. In Nova Scotia, the Canadian province in which I teach, the government of the day has unilaterally instituted new rules for how transfer payments to universities will occur. Universities have to propose cost-saving proposals to qualify for monies previously received automatically as part of the government’s commitment to post-secondary education.


17. This is not to say that all children are given free reign and a supportive environment for the unfolding of wonder.


20. The Canadian Foundation for Innovation describes itself as follows: “Created by the Government of Canada in 1997, the CFI strives to build our nation’s capacity to undertake world-class research and technology development that benefits Canadians and the global community. Thanks to CFI investments in state-of-the-art infrastructure, Canadian universities, colleges, research hospitals and non-profit research institutions are attracting and retaining the world’s top research talent, training the next generation of researchers, supporting private-sector innovation and creating high-quality jobs that strengthen Canada’s position in today’s knowledge economy.” Accessed on 11 March 2013 at: http://www.innovation.ca/en/AboutUs

21. See CAUT Bulletin 60, no. 5 (May 2013): “Canada’s Minister of State for Science and Technology . . . announced last year that he envisioned the National Research Council becoming a “concierge” service offering one contact phone number for coordination of industry research and development needs. The recent federal budget allocated $121 million — three times the amount of new money allocated to the three granting councils combined — to implement the minister’s vision for the NRC” (p. 1). Accessed on 23 May 2013 at: http://www.cautbulletin.ca/


23. The Nova Scotia Dept. of Education Learning Outcomes Framework for grade primary states: “Students will be expected to respond critically to a range of texts, applying their knowledge of

24. The same general outcome is listed for grade 6 and variously in specific subject areas at the secondary level. Accessed 10 March 2013 at: https://sapps.ednet.ns.ca/


27. Heesoon Bai claims that “inquiry is not an abstract exercise but a living practice” to which the inquirer must bring “alert and expansive consciousness, sensitivity and receptivity to people and situations, the ability to feel authentically and strongly, the capacity for sustained investigation, creative impulses, imaginative capacities for trying out different ‘realities’, and vitality and enthusiasm.” See “What is inquiry?” in Key Questions for Educators, eds. William Hare & John P. Portelli (Halifax: Edphil Books, 2005) 47.


30. Russell, Let the People Think (1941) 91.

31. Although the CAUT annual survey (2011) of Canadians’ attitudes to academic work shows that most people do not think university professors are overpaid, the opposite opinion is frequently expressed in letters to the editor, as a review of op-ed pages in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald during the recent strike (Winter 2013) at St. Francis Xavier University attests. (CAUT survey report accessed in person at CAUT Council, Ottawa, Ont., Spring 2011.)


33. For a readable and no-nonsense introduction to the concept of patriarchy, see bell hooks’ Feminism is for Everybody (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000).

34. Russell, Let the People Think (1941) 91.


36. Ibid., 178-179.


38. Ibid., 105.


40. Ibid.


47. Ibid., 332.

48. Ibid., 335.
49. Ibid. Standish contends that much of the best work of analytical philosophers has gone beyond the conceptual analysis they claim as their method and he cites the advancement by R.S. Peters and his colleagues of idea of a liberal education (333).


55. To contradict in action what one claims in theory.


58. Ibid., 37.

Bibliography


INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on education is a necessity from a social as well as professional, political and scientific standpoint. Numerous educational philosophers and pedagogues have written about their conceptions of education, and each has left their mark by bequeathing a project, an ambitious plan or even a prodigious utopia. Comenius is one such thinker. What is his educational vision? What project does he offer up? In what way is Comenius a precursor of progressive education, but also a witness to an educational conception that seeks to reconcile the school with life?

The project or general aim of the monastic school was to make the school a protected world. Medieval education not only took place behind closed doors, the cloister, it was also designed to avoid any possible psychological and sociological influence from the social world, to keep a distance from probable individual and collective encounters. “At the time, a moral ideal, founded on exemplary models and the repository of sacred texts, imbued both teachers and students.” Unlike education in antiquity, monastic education was based on a pessimistic conception of the nature of the child. Indeed, the child was “prone to evil because not yet very far from original sin.” The child was de facto evil, and monastic education was intended to produce a break from the family and social environment, suspected of nourishing evil within the family and the child. The traditional school, centred on knowledge exposure and transmission, was founded and built upon suspicion and defiance toward the world and resisted the social. While the traditional school did deliberately aim to prepare students for the social world, this preparation was seen as a mandatory, indispensable and prerequisite passage to live in society. “Once they entered civil life, students could demonstrate their qualities, they were prepared for their social and family life.”

The school, thus sheltered from life and watching the world from a distance, looked down upon the useful and advanced a free culture based on the teaching of humanities. In the spirit of the medieval school, schools promoted a free culture, which, as in the educational conceptions of Montaigne, symbolized the general education of a human mind. So-called classical studies transcended religious divisions and would constitute the humanities, becoming subjects of study and an Aristotelian condition for becoming a cultured being. Certain disciplines were banned (French, sciences) because they were perceived as utilitarian, in other words as serving social and professional aims. Sometimes, they were considered to be the ‘tools’ of professions. They did not permit the construction of Reason. The 17th and 18th centuries reinforced this conception of a school at the service of a free culture. Faced with the risk of ideological and political influence from the Protestant reformation, the Jesuits encouraged the school to open to new subjects of study. Along with sacred texts, introducing students to the Latin and Greek languages would mark this reinforcement of an accessible free culture and of the
fact that it was a *sine qua non* for entering social and professional life. The traditional school therefore remained a closed-off place where students learned to define and implement a social and professional aim by mastering the intellectual tools needed to construct reasoning and judgment. It is worth noting that the traditional school was not pedagogy-based; subjects of study were presented to students following the principle of demonstration and imitation. But if the traditional school emerged in resistance to the social world, what can be said of the new school?

The new school represents an expansion of educational space. Going beyond the immediate walls of the classroom, the new school promotes a protected social world providing a context for students’ first learning experiences. By advocating education in the countryside, as well as natural education as inspired by Rousseau, the new school values nature as a new culture centred on the child and his or her needs and interests. Progressive education therefore seeks to reconcile the individual with the school. It also aims to give meaning to the knowledge learned by students in light of their personal interests. It is an educational philosophy that has taken on various forms and been reinterpreted by numerous thinkers and pedagogues. Yet immediately following the middle ages, Amos Komensky, also known as Comenius, had already imagined the general foundations for this new form of education. Because his work is not well known, we will seek in this article to present its founding principles.

To contemplate the work of Comenius today involves seeking to grasp at and understand the seminal issues at play in teacher education. It seems precarious not to call upon Comenius’ educational philosophy at a time that we seek to formalize, even question, educational practices involved in teacher education. How is it possible to reform teacher education in light of his contributions to educational philosophy, considering his seminal role as an educational thinker? It is vital, we argue, to be instructed and informed by Comenius’ work, to engage teacher candidates in the study of his writing—an act that will engage them in analyzing and reflecting upon their own philosophies—and ask them to cultivate their own practices in light of their reading, observations, and analysis.

**Biography of Comenius**

Comenius was born in Moravia in 1592 and died in Amsterdam in 1670. A Czech philosopher, he is considered the father of modern education and pedagogy. He was a theologian as well as a Protestant pastor, but his sometimes anti-biblical or even occult ideas led to a life of exile, uprooting and hardship. Many of his numerous works have been lost because of constant flights and the many fires that claimed his workplaces and homes.

As a poor orphan, Comenius owed his social ascension not to his status but rather his education. To fight poverty through instruction, he sought to make knowledge available to all and wrote the first encyclopedia (*Pansophia*). He conceived of the first elementary school, sketched out the first textbooks and established a level-based school system. He also imposed the use of a table of contents and index in all volumes.

Comenius was first influenced by the writings of Aristotle but marked a slight departure from the latter’s conceptions in terms of his esoteric influences. Over the course of his life he also communicated with Descartes, with whom he was at odds in certain respects. Indeed, while for Descartes thought was synonymous with mathematical reasoning, for Comenius, the construction of thought was associated with the importance of language development. This led him to think that “man is born apt to acquire knowledge of things.” Being Protestant, he argued for a secular school, as opposed to Christian schools. He also wished for it to be mandatory and universal, that is, a school for all children in the world, whether boys or girls.
His ideas led him to develop a system of didactics, “the great didactic.” Because he wished it to be natural, he drew examples from nature to reveal “how to teach” so that learning would be swift, solid and infallible.

Natural Instruction

The didactic of Comenius seeks inspiration in nature. When it comes to instruction, as in nature, one must respect the order of things. Indeed, it is in nature that Comenius found answers to the pressing questions of his time. Before addressing these questions, however, it should be noted that Comenius used the metaphor of seasons to situate the life of man.

The Metaphor of Seasons

The entire metaphor of seasons used by Comenius can be summed up as “waiting for the right time.” The philosopher located this metaphor in two distinct space-times: the life of man, on the one hand, and the life of a day, on the other. The education of man must therefore begin in the spring of life (early childhood), and study must likewise begin in the spring of the day (morning). In addition, like nature, learning must come at the right time (here we can recognize the idea of graduated instruction) in order to bring the student only that which he or she is able to learn. This idea would be echoed in the genetic epistemology developed three centuries later, as Jean Piaget acknowledges in an introduction to selected readings of Comenius published by UNESCO:

In this respect, regardless of the fact that the genetic conception of education proposed by Comenius and his ideas on mental development were closely tied to Neoplatonic ideas about the ‘return’ of beings, or stemmed from any other philosophical source, what matters is that, by situating this return at the level of human effort and in parallel with the training processes of nature, Comenius raised a series of problems that were new to his century: mental development, psychological foundations and didactic methods …

The great questions raised by Comenius have to do with:

How to Prolong Life

Life expectancy at the time rarely exceeded 30 or 40 years. Using the example of a tree, Comenius explained the importance of proper nourishment, rest and exercise. On a related note, he also stated that parents should avoid giving stimulating foods to children before study.

How to Shorten the Length of Studies to Learn Faster

According to Comenius, one good teacher can be enough for 200 students. Lessons must be brief (15 minutes early in the day and 15 minutes in the afternoon,) but capture the attention of students. He also emphasized the importance of students’ individual work, with the help of textbooks and supervisors. It is important to be able to say a great deal in few words and, as with the sun whose single ray bring warmth to all plants, the teacher must plan teaching on an annual, monthly, weekly and daily basis with a view to achieving one overall goal, which should be the same for all students. Activities must touch upon several educational tasks at the same time, since nature shows that it is possible to do different things simultaneously, and through one same endeavour (he gives the example of a tree’s growth, which extends first downward, than upward and outward).
How to Make Studies More Reliable (or How to Make Failure Impossible)

Next, to address the ‘reliability’ of education, Comenius, using this time the metaphor of a chick developing in an egg, shows how the didactic he suggests is a guarantee of infallible instruction. The steps are as follows:

Prepare the material before introducing the form

In other words, it is important to properly prepare all school materials before instruction to make sure that things are learned before being transmitted, that vocabulary is learned before study can begin, and that examples come before the rule. “Light must come before the one who is lighted by it,” he writes in his Great Didactic, hence illustrating that examples shed light on rules and that rules in the abstract do not explain anything.  

Prepare subjects to be able to carry out given operations

Just as a gardener begins by preparing a plant for an intended graft or layer, schools must establish order and discipline, such as regular study and perseverance, to be able to free young minds from their sterile occupations.

Accomplish each thing separately

One must “lay the foundations before raising the walls.” Students must likewise devote their efforts to one discipline at a time. This avoids confusion. The notion should not be confused with what was said earlier about the fact that one single activity can touch upon several educational tasks at the same time. Activities must “present together the things that go together.”

Start from the inside

One must first empower the mind to understand things before training the memory or language or the hands. More simply put, this brief passage from the Great Didactic suggests that Comenius did not in any way endorse memorization, either for memory, speech or actions. The important thing was to begin by understanding the fundamentals.

Proceed by degrees

In this idea one can distinguish two important elements in the thought of Comenius. First, teaching should be undertaken similar to “one building a house,” that is, beginning with the foundations, going from simple to complex and from general to specific. Second, the idea of degrees for Comenius is associated with ages of instruction. As mentioned earlier, a child should only be given what he or she is ready to learn. Comenius thereby advocates a distribution of studies across classes so that each level will shed light on the next. “Choosing exercises that are accessible to the mind and age of students” is the premise of level-based academic organization as we know it today.

See things through

The school of Comenius is intended to be not only universal, but also mandatory. Humans must be educated until they are schooled, well raised and pious. There must be no interruption and no absences. Truancy and part-time study are completely prohibited; they are bad for both the teacher and the student, as they hinder all learning. However, Comenius does not seem to specify any disciplinary measures for those who break the rules. It should be noted that in his writings, all forms of corporeal punishment (whipping) or other violence are banished.
**Avoid what is negative or harmful**

To promote reliable learning and the acquisition of strong foundations, Comenius mentions that students should not be introduced to any doubts about the subjects they are learning. It is important to understand that supplying counterexamples too soon can create inner controversy and confusion in students. Too much information and too many books can create the same problem.

As for the idea of ‘infallible’ instruction, the socio-constructivist theories that shape current programs seem to respect such an idea in certain ways. Indeed, the five learning stages proposed by the ministry must normally take into account the prior learning of students (only give them what they are able to learn). They must enable students to learn the knowledge, abilities, strategies, attitudes and perceptions needed to attain a given competency (establish the necessary foundations). They must also offer meaningful activities or tasks to allow students to attain the competency (do each thing separately). Finally, to help students develop the competency, activities should be diversified (from most simple to most complex).

**Make education and study easy**

In addition to attempting to establish an infallible method of education, which is no small feat, Comenius also sought to make education easier. To promote easier learning, children should be introduced to education from their youngest years. Hence, Comenius laid down the first rules of elementary school, which is based on discovery and being able to distinguish between things. He advanced discovery by the senses (which would later become the basis for the learning of sciences). He also explained that children should experience several sciences in elementary school so as to awaken their desire to learn.

**Awaken the desire to learn**

This awakening of the mind involves everyone; parents, schools and teachers. Subjects and methods also contribute to this awakening. Even more than the the order and discipline imposed by the school, parents, by their praise of school and teachers, or their valuing of instruction, help fuel their children’s desire to learn. The teacher is to be friendly, polite, affectionate and ready with compliments, so as to make life at school pleasant. The school’s layout, too, should predispose children to feel welcome, with trees and flowers, well-lit rooms, paintings, portraits, etc. Finally, the contents should be presented humorously and with appeal, and they should be within the reach of children.

**Avoid confusion**

In the school of Comenius, there must be only a few rules, but they should be precise, brief, clear, and accompanied by examples to allow their generalization. Children, like plants who are already contained in a seed, have within themselves all they need to grow. It is therefore important to sow the fundamental principles of disciplines and, again, to avoid confusion. Several other rules are also aimed at this goal:

- Going from easiest to most difficult
- Avoiding educational overload
- Going slowly, without rushing things
- Promoting work
- Banning what is not immediately useful
- Being consistent in one’s actions
In this regard, it would be impossible to say that the ideas of Comenius have been followed and respected over time. Today, knowledge is certainly available to all, but with overwhelming confusion and complexity. Far from pleasing Comenius, the internet—the best example of access to all knowledge—yields a vast amount of useless information and sometimes makes work lazy (copy-paste syndrome). In addition, the internet sometimes brings students confusion that subsequently causes major problems. To give an example, in matters of sexuality, they sometimes receive information for which they are not prepared, and are then unable to distinguish between pornography and sexuality. This example, although quite modern, certainly suggests that Comenius was correct about confusion.

**For Solid Education and Study**

Several Comenian principles presented above also support the idea of solid study. The following are examples:

- Not undertaking anything useless
- Not neglecting anything useful
- Not acting without a foundation or roots
- Establishing foundations first

However, in this idea of solid education, it is also possible to distinguish a few other elements drawn from the *Great Didactic*.

*Understanding things in their own right*

It is important to come back to the source to promote understanding of things. This idea of understanding things is at the origin of English empiricism, which, like the didactic of Comenius, is based on using meaning and experience to better understand the world.

*The quest for meaning*

The influences of Comenius are not echoed only in English empiricism. The quest for meaning that drove the humanist philosophy of the Enlightenment found great inspiration in Comenius, who insisted that learning must not remain sterile but find a use. Hence, education must enable the student to construct meaning and to develop as a person. The following are therefore key notions:

- Insisting on distinctions and connections, so that students know and understand what they are doing.
- Constantly being in a state of progress, based on what the student already knows.
- Constantly relating things, as education must “open students’ eyes and help them draw their own conclusions.”

Finding a balance between what one learns and what one puts into practice; one must “reflect on the use of what one learns so that nothing is learned for no reason.”

Repeating exercises; this does not mean merely repeating an action or copying a page, but rather reflecting on what is done to be able to do it better. The student must be able to identify and understand a source of intellectual knowledge.
Summary

The *Great Didactic* of Comenius is thus based on a few fundamental principles. Without pretending to list them all or to understand exactly and precisely all the subtlety of this foundational didactic, we would like to underline a few key ideas:

Learning must happen at the right time.
Learning must be planned by degrees.
Education should impose only a few rules.
Education must be conducive to work.
Education must insist on distinctions and connections.
Learning must involve repeated exercises.
All learning must begin through the senses.

Specific Teachings

Comenius in a sense wanted to reform the entire educational system. He wrote textbooks for several levels and several fields. In the *Great Didactic*, he attributes a few specificities to particular domains, namely the teaching of sciences, arts and trades, languages and morals. Here we will briefly address the first two, as they develop on what we have already presented in this text.

*The teaching of sciences*

Science, the knowledge of things, is nothing other than the inner representation of things. Acquiring science happens the same way as observation or external vision: it requires the eye (mind or intelligence), objects (things within and outside the reach of understanding), and light (the attention devoted by the student). Therefore, as we have mentioned, Comenius recommends using the senses to teach (in this case sciences). “Nothing can reach the mind if it has not first been apprehended by sensation; knowledge must necessarily begin with the senses.”\(^\text{15}\) But Comenius goes further by explaining that the teaching of sciences must allow a causal understanding of things. More than laying the foundations for empiricism, Comenius was already paving the way for phenomenology, which would only appear much later in history.

*The teaching of arts and trades*

To teach arts and trades, Comenius first stressed three essential items: the model, the subject and the instruments. These three elements must be used methodically, however, to give prudent instruction and allow frequent exercises. Prudent instruction means starting with simple rather than complex tasks. One must first permit imitation so that the student can grasp an action until it becomes natural. The learning of trades, although thought about in and through practice, always involves a component of reflectivity, which is essential in the thought of Comenius. Indeed, once the student has clearly understood an action, he or she must be able to synthesize it. Comenius goes so far as to introduce the importance of being able to analyze the work of others: “To know a road thoroughly, one needs to have taken it through and through, observing crossroads, branches and forks.”\(^\text{16}\)
In this regard, vocational education in Quebec also contains principles that lead students from simple to complex tasks and that should, as much as possible, promote repetition of exercises. But one can wonder about the share of reflectivity, or the place given to developing a spirit of synthesis and analytical capacity in programs. Comenius, almost three and a half centuries later, would have certain things to say about the current education system.

**Conclusion**

What could we say today if Comenius were to write his *Great Didactic* anew? First, that on many points it would be up to date. If we look at the general principles of the current education reform, we could say that Comenius wrote the *Great Didactic* three centuries too early. Indeed, our successive stages of education must respect the development level of students, learning by observation, personal experience and reflection, etc.

One might even say that Comenius was ahead of his time. Indeed, while the reform aims to educate responsible citizens, Comenius (who inspired humanist theories), wished to educate people to be capable of thinking, learning and judging by themselves. And even with our plurality of textbooks, methods and objectives to meet depending on the level and the nation (and even the school), the universal education of Comenius is still light years ahead of the 21st century, in spite of globalization and the internet. Today’s knowledge, now accessible to virtually everyone, would quite probably be contested by Comenius in one regard, namely the confusion it creates.

But even if Jean Piaget praised Comenius in the introduction to *Page choisies* published by UNESCO in 1957, the philosopher’s ideas are not unanimously agreed upon. The ‘infallibility’ of his method, with its large classrooms and lack of lecturing techniques, is not convincing to everyone. And it should be noted that for some, his didactic—rather than evoking the premises of humanist theories—conjures up the image of a vase to be filled with water, as conceived by behaviourist theories.\(^{17}\)

Even so, Comenius was the first and perhaps the only thinker to imagine and work towards establishing universal education with an open and natural pedagogy. He was the first and perhaps the only educational philosopher to want to give all children across the world the same knowledge, textbooks and methods; indeed, a *Great Didactic*. “Didactic means the art of teaching … Just as a spring constantly produces streams that ultimately merge into one river, I am establishing a universal art that will enable the founding of universal schools.”\(^{18}\) This is the depiction of an educational utopia worth contemplating.
Notes

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 17
9. Ibid., 124
10. Ibid., 107
11. Ibid., 128
13. Ibid., 154
14. Ibid., 154
15. Ibid., 176
16. Comenius, La Grande Didactique, 189
17. Encyclopédie de l’Agora (s.d.): Repéré à: http://agora.qc.ca/mot.nsf/Dossiers/Comenius
18. Comenius, La Grande Didactique, 29
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CHAPTER 8

Philosophy of Education as the Politics of Praxis

John Portelli and Christina Patricia Konecny,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,
University of Toronto

Introduction

It can, at times, be difficult to appreciate that the current structure of Canadian teacher certification has not always been what it is today. Professors working within faculties of education, researchers, theorists and candidate teachers enrolled in education programs would do well to consider the historical contexts from which our contemporary approach to educating new teachers has emerged. Prior to the inclusion of teachers colleges in Canadian universities in the 50s and 60s, candidate teachers were trained by an independent system of ‘normal schools.’ These schools were established in order to both prepare teachers’ classroom practice and to develop cohesive norms for curriculum, teaching and learning, which would regulate classroom practice nation-wide. Canadian normal schools were completely disbanded by the 1990s however, when all teachers colleges were officially integrated within the Canadian university system.

The presence of philosophy is dwindling in the foundations courses of many teacher education programs today. Traditional normal schools placed a heavy emphasis on the psychological and academic aspects of teaching and learning, focusing primarily on curriculum content and methods courses rather than with encouraging candidate teachers to engage with education in any theoretical or philosophical manner. The emergence of faculties of education in universities, however, was accompanied by a revived engagement with the philosophical questions bound to educational issues. Consider, for example, Sister Mary Olga McKenna’s pronouncement that in 1977, “Philosophy of education [was] alive and well in Canada.” McKenna elaborates with national statistics taken from faculties of education, which indicate that at that time the content of teacher education was taken up from three perspectives ‘historical, analytic, and normative.’ In the 1970s, 18 of Canada’s teacher training programs included compulsory foundational courses committed to introducing candidate teachers to philosophical frameworks for conceptualizing education. In addition to programs that made such courses compulsory, philosophy of education was the basis of general foundations courses in 9 other Canadian faculties, were offered as optional courses in 15, and as electives in 2. These statistics indicate that philosophy of education was, at that time, an important part of teacher training in Canada. These foundational courses, grounded by philosophical methods of inquiry and engagement, were “required in initial programs because of [their] potential to clarify educational concepts and/or give perspective and direction to the entire program.” The vigor with which scholars of education and candidate teachers engaged in philosophical inquiry was largely an effect of the impact of John Dewey and later R. S. Peters’ influential status in the field of education. But by the late 1980s the prominence of philosophy in teacher education was undergoing a gradual decline.
There are 62 teacher education programs offered in Canada today. Of those institutions, only 9 have required foundations courses that include a strong philosophical component and only an additional 12 programs include elective courses with philosophical content. In other words, of the 62 teacher education programs currently operating in Canada, the philosophy of education is present in only 21 of them. When these statistics are compared to the 44 programs that offered philosophy of education only three decades ago, philosophy’s decline in Canadian faculties of education becomes strikingly clear. Ann Chinnery recently made the astute observation that “[the] teaching of foundations courses, and in particular philosophy of education, is frequently under siege in teacher education programs across Canada, as these programs struggle to meet other demands on student teachers.” With far less than half of our certification programs offering students an opportunity to engage philosophically with their practice as educators, we believe that Chinnery’s assessment rings true.

This paper is committed not only to diagnosing the troubling decline of philosophy in education, but also to identifying some of the various factors that have contributed to it and suggest strategies for philosophy of education’s revival. In our view there are three main reasons that have contributed to the decline of the place of philosophy in teacher education: a) The misconstruction and misconception of what theory is and what relation it has to actual classroom practice; b) The general impact of Neoliberalism on Canadian education; and c) The way that philosophy has been conceived of and practiced by faculties of education and experienced by teacher candidates. In the following sections we explain each of these reasons and argue that philosophy requires a reconstruction committed to an appreciation of what we refer to as the politics of praxis. Our recommendation regarding how to construct the role of philosophy of education in teacher education is partly in response to these reasons.

**Factors contributing to the decline of philosophy in teacher education**

1. The misconstruction/conception of theory and its relation to practice

Despite the fact that faculties of education proclaim slogans such as ‘student-centered learning,’ ‘social justice education,’ or ‘differentiated learning and instruction,’ the general culture within these faculties is based on a traditional conception of theory. Such a culture contributes to a pervasive form of reductionism resulting from a misconception of the nature of theory and its relationship to practice. Within the traditional conception of theory, a strict one-to-one correspondence between theory and practice is upheld that regards theory as the process of constructing general formulas for action. It is expected that if the general precepts developed in advance through theoretical and empirical inquiry are valid and sound, they can be universally applied to any and all given contexts to bring about particular results. Such a conception of theory is modeled after the traditional approach to the natural sciences, which involves the use of generalizable, non-reducible formulas to establish reliable and verifiable standards of truth. When applied to education, the traditional conception of theory attempts to develop and promote ready-made formulas for teaching and learning that can be applied by practitioners in the classroom. The expectation is that educational theorizing is able to come up with principles for best practices that prescribe what teachers should do and what results they will get if they adhere to those prescriptions, irrespective of the contextual nuances of the classroom setting. Taking such a stance towards educational theory creates a one-directional, top-down hierarchy between theory, which is taken as the ultimate and exclusive authority with regards to pedagogy, teaching and learning, and the practice of educating students in classrooms. Theory influences practice, but the realities of classroom practice have no effect on theory.

We believe that embracing the traditional conception of theory in relation to education creates rigid distinctions between theoreticians, policy makers and practitioners, which privileges the former over the latter, thereby
creating power relations that have political effects. This predominant view of theory, when practiced within faculties of education, reduces teaching to a skills-oriented training model rather than an educational one based on developing critical, reflective habits of mind and emotionally engaged and attuned teachers. Both teacher educators and prospective teachers, via the explicit procedures and expectations as well as the hidden curriculum of current teacher education programs in a neoliberal context, reproduce the dominant conception of theory and the concomitant slavish relationship between theory and practice, which is reasserted in schools.

2. The impact of neoliberalism on Canadian teacher education

Our contemporary social and cultural context is undoubtedly a neoliberal one that focuses on excessive individualism and atomism, rampant competition, free markets, narrow accountability, and reductionism. The neoliberal foci have given rise to a renewed emphasis on the exclusively practical and instrumental. The neoliberal ethos of today is expressed by the cult of effectiveness and efficiency, where everyday practices are seen as an end in themselves rather than as a means to achieve something greater. In our tendency to accept the world as is, with little reflection as to why the world is organized as it is, and by the fatalistic belief that we cannot do or live otherwise. These neoliberal qualities militate against the development of the philosophical in teacher education because philosophy is not seen as being effective, efficient and practical, the three neoliberal cornerstones of value and desirability. As a result, teacher candidates tend to regard themselves as atomistic agents acting out predetermined methods in the interests of attaining very specific, and likewise predetermined, ends. Education, teaching and learning, are too often understood as the process of turning out productive and competitive citizens capable of success in our global free market system. When we regard education this way the philosophical is excluded or degraded as a waste of time or a frill. Moreover, teachers also interpret their context of work—the classroom and school—in an individualistic framework that pushes them to believe that education is a simplistic and solely individual process rather than a complicated and communal one.

Under these neoliberal conditions and influenced, albeit unwittingly and unwillingly, by the mentality of narrow accountability, teachers and teacher candidates make a frequent plea for the practical, demanding ‘best practices that work’ within a context that they are made to believe cannot be otherwise. Within such contexts, any philosophical ethos is denied, but it is ironically the very same philosophical considerations which are needed to realize that the ‘best practices’ sought by a plea for the practical do not exist in a decontextualized or neutral context. The local cultural, social, political, dynamics present in a given classroom matter greatly to deciding upon effective pedagogical strategies. Moreover, ‘the practical’ is a relational term; its meaning varies from context to context and it depends on the aims that one has in mind. What may be very practical in one context given certain aims may be not practical at all given a different context with different intentions. The details of context need to be clarified and analyzed before we act as professionals, making the desire to enter the classroom with an arsenal of predetermined teaching tactics, expected to work perfectly in all contexts, misguided and bound to fail.

What teachers need to be equipped with when entering the classroom are not laid-out formulas for actualizing particular learning outcomes, but the capacity for impromptu reflexivity, the ability to be mindful of the students one encounters, and a critical awareness of the political relations always-already present in any classroom. These capacities are reflective capacities of the mind. They are philosophical ways of engaging with one’s worldly context. In other words, the ‘practical’ is ultimately determined by the philosophical, whether we choose to acknowledge and attend to this fact or not.
The third factor that we believe contributes to the decline of philosophy in the foundational courses of many teacher education programs involves the way that philosophy is conceived of by teacher candidates in particular, and by teacher education in general. Teacher candidates who initially enter into philosophical inquiry through foundations courses tend to hold the view that philosophy is too abstract or irrelevant to the practice of teaching. The lived experience of teachers leads many to criticize philosophy for being too complicated or for not providing useful answers to the everyday dilemmas they often face in the classroom. We contend that this attitude toward philosophy is related to the general way in which philosophy is taught in universities today. Philosophical classes tend to be taught in a disembodied manner, organized according to a lecture/tutorial model where professors teach large classes with little opportunity for one-on-one dialogue with students. For those who are new to philosophy, this method of teaching and learning can be intimidating, challenging, and perhaps alienating.

There are, of course, numerous strands of philosophy, but scholars within the philosophy of education have tended to embrace and promote one distinct strand. The history of philosophical practice prior the 1970s and 1980s was characterized by a traditional and pre-analytic ‘isms’ approach to philosophical discourse. This approach was defined by a strict allegiance to established philosophical frameworks like realism, idealism, positivism or progressivism, which are assumed to have the capacity to provide educational prescriptions for teaching and learning in real classroom environments. Philosophy is not, however, the kind of academic or intellectual undertaking that lends itself to the reductive process of creating ready-made formulas, since it “does not have the same right or wrong character as mathematics; there are good and bad arguments, but the tests for these are different, and are themselves far more readily debatable.” The ‘isms’ approach leads to the problematic conception of theory and its relation to practice discussed in detail above, where philosophical positions are assumed to furnish static and generalizable truths in a straightforward manner. Philosophy, however, involves considering the exceptions to rules and principles more often than considering the rules themselves. It is undertaken by anticipating and accounting for counter arguments, objections and circumstances that would falsify a claim. In other words, the practice of philosophy is also the mindful engagement with and consideration of grey areas.

An inert impression of philosophy potentially gleaned by students in lecture courses, is exacerbated by the image of philosophy held by those who teach non-philosophical courses in teacher education programs. Professors of education are likely to have experienced the ‘isms’ approach during their own candidacy in the teacher training programs of the 70s and 80s. Influenced by this experience or its recollection and reproduction, as well as the popular view of philosophy as ‘the mother of all disciplines,’ these instructors pass on their negative experiences of philosophy to the teacher candidates they instruct. Those who attempt to model their pedagogical practice according to a philosophical ‘ism,’ are, indeed, likely to be left with the impression that philosophy is irrelevant and ineffectual because, as we contend, philosophy is not meant to offer final answers (although this does not imply that strong answers and support for them are possible).

**Reconstructing role of philosophy in teacher education**

The reductive, disconnected impression of philosophy held by many teacher candidates and their professors has lead to the reproduction of the view that philosophy is irrelevant to practice, and contributed to a pervasive plea for the practical. The plea for the practical has contributed to a decline in the presence of philosophy of education in foundations courses and instigated a turn toward psychology and sociology, disciplines that ‘get results’ by offering clear explanatory frameworks for teaching, learning, cognition and human behavior. While the
psychologizing of teacher education is not historically new, more recently the demand for more psychology courses has increased as a result of neoliberal reductionism and the ‘best practices’ mentality mentioned above. The assumption is that since psychology is scientifically based, it can offer concrete and conclusive formulas for practice. The increase of sociological approaches in the foundations of education has arisen for two reasons. First, as the required specific and separate philosophy of education, history of education, and sociology of education were eliminated, they were replaced by generic courses such as ‘school and society.’ As the very name of such courses indicates, the emphasis shifted to the sociological rather than the historical or philosophical. Second, issues of equity rightfully became more prominent in teacher education programs and it is popularly believed that philosophy does not have much to contribute to the discussion of such issues, while sociology is seen as necessary to effectively dealing with them. While the psychological and sociological approaches to teaching and learning may offer more straightforward and formulaic explanatory frameworks from which pedagogical strategies can be devised, they do not escape the reductionism philosophy is at times faulted with, but rather tend to reassert it.

We believe that the fact that philosophy is regarded as impractical and irrelevant to the practices of teaching and everyday life is not the fault of philosophy qua philosophy but rather, how we conceive of it. Our contemporary construction of philosophy is misguided and disingenuous to what philosophy, at its core, is meant to be. We do not need to privilege theory and dismiss practice the way we tend to do, nor is it essential that we regard philosophy as a process that will furnish us with universal formulas for action, which can be generally applied regardless of contextual details. In fact, it is in large part due to this conception of philosophy that philosophy has lost its way and requires a reconstruction.

In contrast to the popular, yet traditional, misconception we have been describing, we propose a critical-democratic conception of philosophy. This critical-democratic conception of philosophy is not committed to formulating, in advance, universal strategies for best practices or methods of teaching aimed at particular results, nor does it reduce the role of philosophy to simply clarifying concepts, though this is also worthwhile. Instead, the critical-democratic conception sees philosophical inquiry as a practice of the mind and the heart that raises a critical consciousness, encourages self-reflexivity and develops advanced reasoning skills and dispositions such as open-mindedness, creativity, compassion, patience, and curiosity in those who study it. The contrast between the traditional ‘isms’ approach and the critical-democratic philosophical stance we are advocating for rests on the distinction between philosophy as a subject to be studied versus philosophy as an activity to be enacted and practiced in critical dialogue with oneself and others. Our conception of philosophy advocates an appreciation of the limits of theory that is critical of the reductive, narrow, one-to-one correspondence between theory and practice that is traditionally expected from philosophical precepts. It places a much greater emphasis on the fact that philosophy is an activity that one engages in, a practice, that is, like any practice, susceptible to routine.

Those who seek to enact something that resembles this critical-democratic stance toward philosophy have, in recent years, made what is now a familiar call for ‘praxis.’ Motivated originally by the work of Freire, the concept of praxis is taken to mean a bringing together of theory and practice. It is believed that the problematic consequences of the traditional conception of theory’s authoritarian relation to practice will be circumvented by bringing theory and practice together such that neither is in a subjugated relation to the other. This approach to praxis can be a trap, however, when it is regarded as a simple and straightforward solution to the problems faced by teachers in classrooms because it appreciates only one aspect of what Freire meant by the term. In his book, The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation, Freire explains:
Praxis is not blind action, deprived of intention or of finality. It is action and reflection. Men and women are human beings because they are historically constituted as beings of praxis, and in the process they have become capable of transforming the world — of giving it meaning [...] It is only as beings of praxis, in accepting our concrete situations as a challenging condition, that we are able to change its meaning by our action. That is why a true praxis is impossible in the antidialectical vacuum where we are driven by a subject-object dichotomy.¹¹

Freire asserts the transformative power of praxis, arguing that human beings are radically capable of changing their condition, of doing away with what has come before and giving the world new meaning through reflective action. Altering one’s position, giving the world new meaning, changing one’s condition, are distinctly political modes of engaging with the world. As we see it then, praxis has a double meaning, what we call the politics of praxis, that is not often appreciated by those in education. By praxis Freire not only meant reorganizing the relation between theory and practice to meld the two. He also meant renegotiating the political dynamics and relations of power that exist in any relation. In this case, a true praxis must also involve altering the political condition – a condition marked by an uneven distribution of power, privilege and authority – between theory and practice.

Traditionally, theory dictated to practice and practitioners submitted themselves to the authority of theoreticians and policy makers. This constructed a one-directional, top-down power relationship between theory and practice that makes the relation between theory and practice a misbalanced or one-sided political relation. Turning toward praxis as a solution to the problems that arise when we expect an easy translation between theory and practice will fail if theory and practice are combined without changing or challenging the traditional, positivist political dynamics or relations of power that exist between the authority of theory and the subservience of practice. Without a commitment to the politics of praxis, without altering the established political relation, theory will remain the dominant force, and practice, subjugated to it. This would not be true praxis since a hierarchy of separation would remain between the two, making a genuine integration of theory and practice impossible.

If praxis is enacted in a way that is not aware of this political relationship or does not alter this power relationship then it will simply reassert the presumed one-to-one correspondence between theory and practice and retains a formulaic and decontextualized understanding of teaching, learning and pedagogy. There is a tension that necessarily exists between theory and practice, and bringing theory and practice together does not necessarily acknowledge this distinctly political tension. With Freire we contend that this tension must always be acknowledged, since there is never a neutral context and we are always, as philosophers and educators, and ultimately as human beings, involved in some kind of political relationship. There is always-already a politics to praxis present because of this tension. We must admit the tension, acknowledge it and attend to it.¹² But the popular notion of praxis tacitly implies a simple cohesion and synthesis that neglects or veils the political tension.

**The Case Study Approach to Philosophy in Education**

Anyone who knows anything about teaching knows that at the core of teaching is this tension between theory and practice. It is this tension, one that is present in any classroom, which needs to be acknowledged and negotiated constantly by teachers. One of the most important roles for philosophy within faculties of education and teacher education programs is to make future teachers familiar with the tensions of praxis and nurture their capacity to deal with them effectively. Donald Kerr makes an important distinction between how philosophy might be introduced to students in teacher education programs, noting that “[i]f we see our task in teaching phi-
losophy of education as teaching the doing of philosophy, then we see our task not so much as introducing people to completed thoughts about problems, but as helping students to think about problems, thinking about and through possible solutions, and this is a messy, often incomplete, sometimes stillborn endeavor.” With Kerr, we contend that the onus of how we take up philosophy in approaching educational issues is placed on the faculty of teacher education programs and what we conceive of philosophy as offering candidate teachers. If we understand philosophy as presenting, in Kerr’s words, “completed thoughts about problems” that new teachers ought to memorize and attempt to implement in their own classrooms, then we are perpetuating a problematic conception of theory, reproducing its dominant relationship to practice, and failing to equip new teachers with the adaptive and reflexive capacities they inevitably need to succeed as truly professional teachers.

We contend that one very effective strategy for introducing teaching candidates to the tension they will inevitably experience in the classroom between the theoretical methods taught in teacher training programs and the practical realities of classroom life is the case study approach to philosophy in foundations courses. It is our belief that we ought to take up philosophy as something to be done rather than studied by students in foundations courses. The shift in how philosophy is taken up by future educators is best facilitated by a case study approach. The use of case studies presents students in foundational courses with critical incidents as part of the curriculum of the course. These critical incidents, anecdotal situations taken from real teacher’s experiences in the classroom, would involve the kinds of problematic situations teachers often navigate in the classroom. Students are asked how they might proceed if they found themselves in such situations, give reasons for their possible actions, and attempt to grapple with them in dialogue with their professors and peers. Through this dialogue they are encouraged to consider the various possible strategies for dealing with these situations, paying close attention to the context in which critical incidents emerge, the various interests and needs of students involved, and the effect that a teacher’s actions might have on their students.

Considering case studies encourages students to philosophically engage with the potential success or failure of enacting certain theoretical precepts in classroom practice. It involves considering a problem from many different perspectives and thinking through the social, political and pedagogical implications of various solutions. Case studies require teacher candidates to reflect critically upon what is needed to resolve the dilemmas of pedagogy, teaching and learning, and to attempt to anticipate, however partially, the possibility that students might resist their methods of teaching and trouble or undermine the principles they attempt to enact in the classroom. Case studies are not only excellent learning tools, but they also offer candidate teachers the opportunity to cultivate crucial skills of critical reasoning, reflexivity and adaptability, which are required of any effective educator. They provide a practical example that can help a student access the complicated ethical, political and intellectual issues presented in theory, as well as the chance to consider the various sides of contentious issues, and to explore and develop their own perspectives as teachers and educators.

It is the consistent failure of teacher education programs to equip new teachers with the capacity for reflexivity that has lead us to call for the reconstruction of philosophy in education. The politics of praxis is the philosophical foundation of the reconstructed conception of philosophy. Through the critical engagement with the politics of praxis, teachers can develop an appreciation for the tensions present in the act of teaching. The politics of praxis encourages teachers to attune themselves to the affective aspects of classroom context and cultivate the habits of mind and emotional sensibilities one needs to confront the tensions present there. Taking up a case study approach prompts candidate teachers to identify possibilities for action and understand the unpredictability of teaching. Philosophically engaging with education then, as we are conceptualizing it, involves an appreciation for what, ultimately, cannot be anticipated: the always-already shifting, local and complimented context of teaching and learning.
Foundations courses are meant to offer students the foundational kinds of knowledge they need as educators. There is a sense in which, then, foundations courses ought to be foundational experiences for candidate teachers. We believe that using case studies opens up a space where a foundations course can become a foundational and transformative experience for a candidate teacher and would contribute greatly to the reconstruction of philosophy. Given the neoliberal cultural context in which teacher education currently operates and the traditional, reductive misconception of philosophy too often presented by faculties of education, there are clear hurdles to be overcome before philosophy of education can be reconstructed according to the politics of praxis. The reconstructed approach would rely on dialogue and conversation between peers in small group settings. While this is possible in foundations courses of 35 students, there have recently been moves toward expanding foundational courses class sizes to hundreds of students and returning a classic lecture approach to teacher education. We believe that this would not only pose a serious threat to philosophy of education, further intensifying the disconnected, irrelevant and alienating impression held by many, but that it would also further exacerbate the failures of equipping candidate teachers with theoretical principles and expecting their easy translation into practice.

The case study approach has been implemented in the foundations courses of teacher training programs with great success. Candidate teachers report having very positive and often transformative experiences in courses that implemented case studies as learning tools, referring to critical and reflective thinking, open dialogue with peers, and an enlarged mentality for considering difficult educational issues as some of the key benefits of taking up philosophy in this manner. Case studies reveal, often to those who have yet to experience it themselves, the politics of praxis. Once you have experienced these politics, and if you are truly interested in teaching, you cease to ask yourself questions like ‘what do I do as a teacher’ or ‘how do I teach x so that y’ and start asking complicated questions like ‘why do I teach this way’ and ‘how should I teach? What should I do? What could I do? How can I open up possibilities? How can I re-enact what seems to have worked?’

Ultimately, our argument for the importance of the role of philosophy in teacher education and the use of the case study approach, hinge on a particular conception of philosophy. We believe that philosophy should not be seen as an ‘arm chair’ discipline, detached from the tensions and struggles of the world. On the contrary, based on the politics of praxis, philosophy is at the same time, both an activity that involves analysis and clarification of concepts, assumptions, beliefs and positions, as well as an action that attempts to change the world as a result of concretely dealing with the tensions and struggles that the human predicament entails. In this way, philosophy is antithetical to spectator citizenry; of its very nature it calls for and, at its best, it exemplifies an active, responsible citizenry. Philosophy involves analysis, but not decontextualized, neutral analysis. Philosophy involves reflection, but not inactive, inert, depoliticized reflection. Philosophy involves and can be action that is both reasoned and impassioned: responsible and energetic activism is not contrary to philosophy!
Notes


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.


14. There is an important distinction between a technician and a professional. A technician would be someone who holds a proficient capacity to perform their craft. They have been trained and are fully capable to perform the given tasks of their profession. A true professional, however, has developed capacities that go beyond proficiency. We believe that this distinction hinges on adaptive capacities, with which a professional is able to navigate difficult and unexpected circumstances with self-reflexivity, mindfulness and expertise. Any professional who does not have adaptive capacities cannot refer to herself as a professional since that is what distinguished a professional from a technician.


16. Ibid.
17. We would like to thank and acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Maria Relucio who assisted us in finding relevant literature as we wrote this paper.
**Bibliography**


Understanding the Social Dynamics of Classrooms and Schools: Why Sociology of Education Matters

Rodney A. Clifton, Jerome Cranston, John C. Long, and David Mandzuk, University of Manitoba

Introduction

When university students enrol in faculties of education, they become student teachers and they often want to get out and teach—immediately! In this respect, many student teachers see their practica as being much more important to their education than learning the concepts, theories, and empirical evidence that make some ideas interesting, worthy of deeper investigation, and useful for people entering a profession.

But where do these interesting and valuable ideas come from? Many of these ideas come from the experiences of teachers and from a number of disciplines, some related to the subjects taught in school and some pertinent to the specialized study of teaching and learning. The main discipline informing practices in education, however, is psychology, a discipline that examines the individual, especially their intellectual and emotional make up and capacities. Obviously, psychology has a lot to offer teachers, but it is too limited because it focuses on the individual, and individuals act differently when they are in groups or classes.

Teaching and learning generally take place in groups, and the dynamics of group membership is the focus of sociology. It is not surprising then that sociology is concerned with a number of concepts and theories that can help student teachers understand what they need to know to be effective teachers, including what they are learning in their practica. For this reason, sociological ideas need to complement those from psychology in the education of student teachers. Specifically, having a better understanding of the social dynamics of classrooms and schools is, for student teachers, the first step in learning to teach groups of students.

In this chapter, we argue that a sociological perspective on teaching is useful, then we examine several key sociological concepts—cooperation, rituals, institutions, culture, social structure, socialization, and alienation—showing how these concepts can help student teachers understand the complex culture of the school and the classroom. In a final extended illustration, we let a student teacher talk about her first experience in her prac-
ticum school. As you will see, her experience was disheartening, but we believe it reveals the utility of a sociological understanding of schools and classrooms.

**The Social Dynamics of Classrooms and Schools**

It is useful to recall what the sociologist Willard Waller said in 1932 about educational theory and practice:

…both the theory and the practice of education have suffered in the past from an over attention to what ought to be and its correlative tendency to disregard what is. When theory is not based upon the existing practice, a great hiatus appears between theory and practice, and the consequence is that the progressiveness of theory does not affect the conservatism of practice. The student teacher learns the most advanced theory of education, and goes out from school with a firm determination to put it into practice. But he [sic] finds that this theory gives him little help in dealing with the concrete social situation that faces him. After a few attempts to translate theories into educational practice, he gives up and takes his guidance from conventional sources, from the advice of older teachers, the proverbs of the fraternity, and the commandments of principals. It is this failure of the science of education to deal with actualities that largely accounts for the slow pace of progress in educational practice.⁴

Waller’s claim is that theory and practice are not strongly linked in the education of teachers. This does not mean, however, that this should be true; in fact, we think theory, particularly sociological theory, and practice in education can and should be more closely linked.

The word “sociology” is composed of two phonemes—“socio,” which means group, and “logy,” which means knowledge or study. Thus, sociology as an academic discipline is concerned with studying groups of people engaged in “patterns of interaction,” as Tepperman says.⁵ In turn, sociology of education is the study of students, teachers, administrators, and parents involved in educational institutions.

Simply stated, education involves developing the thinking, feeling, dispositions, and behaviour of students, including student teachers, so that they come to recognize the importance of things they did not know or realize previously. Once students understand these things, they can act in more sophisticated ways.⁶ We say “can act” because students may resist their teachers’ instruction. Education is by necessity a cooperative endeavour between teachers and students, and we begin by examining teaching as a specialized “social profession” for which obtaining the cooperation of groups, that is, students, is crucial.

**The Social Professions**

If you think about the professionals—teachers, preachers (including ministers, priests, rabbis, and imams), nurses, medical doctors, and dentists, for example—you will realize that most of them interact with their clients individually, one at a time. However, two of these professions, teachers and preachers, most often interact with their clients in groups. These two professions could be called *social* professions while the others could be called *psychological* professions. For this simple reason, people in the social professions need to have a reasonable understanding of sociological concepts and theories to become more effective as professionals working with groups of people.

Thinking about the actual work of teachers and preachers highlights a few important differences in their professional activities. The work that preachers do with groups of parishioners is normally for very short periods
of time. People usually go to religious services once or twice a week for a few hours at a time. Teachers, on the other hand, interact with classes of students for many more hours and more days in a week. This difference, of course, makes teaching more difficult than preaching, and this means that teachers need a better understanding of groups and they need specific skills to work with students, both individually and in groups.

In addition, there are generally more people at religious services than in teachers' classrooms, but the number of parishioners does not normally have the negative effect that class size has on students’ learning. One of the reasons that the greater numbers don’t negatively affect religious services is because people attend them voluntarily while students are compelled to attend school. Thus, some students resist their teachers’ authority, while hardly any parishioners resist their preachers’ authority. Moreover, religious services also include parishioners of varying ages and those who know the order of service—typically elders—often help shape the behaviour of children. Not surprisingly, these elders do not want young people disrupting religious services they voluntarily attend. Indeed, most parents keep their children quiet and restrained. All of this, of course, helps to sustain the authority of preachers.

Classrooms are different because most often there is only one older, more experienced adult—the teacher—who is responsible for supporting students socially, challenging them intellectually, and constraining their behaviour. Obviously, it is easier to establish a positive learning environment in classrooms when both students and teachers are working together to achieve educational objectives than in classrooms where some students are trying to undermine the teachers’ authority. In fact, some classrooms and schools have more cooperative environments than others, which can be affected, positively or negatively, by student teachers who are practice teaching in those classrooms. Thus, student teachers need to take considerable time to gain the respect and support of their cooperating teachers and especially to gain the respect and support of the students.

**Cooperation**

Simply, to be effective in their teachers’ classrooms, student teachers need to cooperate; so do cooperating teachers, and so do students. This point is obvious, but students teachers need to realize that teaching is a tenuous social activity, particularly for student teachers, in part, because the expectations, dispositions, and behaviour of both teachers and students may vary from one classroom or school to another, from course to course, and from year to year. For this reason, student teachers must understand how cooperation can be established and maintained. If they don’t learn how to maintain cooperative and compliant working groups, student teachers may unfortunately find that classes of students can fail to cooperate with them and this would be a disaster for everyone.

Essentially, there are three aspects of cooperation that must be understood. First, human beings are interdependent. Infants, for example, depend on their parents, particularly their mothers, for their nurturing over a very long period of time. Interdependence, of course, extends beyond infancy. Second, human beings are autonomous especially when they no longer need their mothers for nourishment and comfort. Parents often talk about the “terrible twos” and the “traumatic teens” when children are especially likely to resist cooperation and assert their autonomy. Finally, because humans do not have genes that make cooperation natural, they rely on culturally-defined norms for mediating between the teachers’ needs for interdependence, on the one hand, and the students’ desire for autonomy, on the other. Classroom and school rituals, it must be noted, are especially significant in this regard because they embody culturally defined ways of dealing with the tension between interdependence and independence.
Rituals

A ritual is behaviour that has a stylized routine with significant symbolic value for those participating in an organization. Military officers saluting their nation’s flag is a good example. Religious leaders and congregations doing a number of things in a set order, standing, sitting, kneeling, reading, praying, singing, and listening, are all rituals prescribed by both tradition and the practical requirements of religious services.\(^{12}\)

Religious services are obviously ritualized—often to a high degree—while the practices used in teachers’ lessons and classroom activities are neither as obviously ritualized nor as tightly prescribed. Nevertheless, effective teachers have rituals for doing things that are, in fact, embedded in their lessons and in their interactions with students. Teachers’ rituals are not as easily understood by those outside the classroom and the school because they are not institutionalized to the same degree as religious rituals. Often teachers’ rituals are more individualistic and not institutionalized; that is, they vary from teacher to teacher and grade to grade, rather than being the same for all teachers and all grades. For example, one grade 3 teacher may hold her hand up to get the attention of students while another teacher in the same school may switch the lights off and on. Student teachers may easily dismiss such seemingly simplistic rituals as not being important. That would be a mistake.

These rituals are, in fact, a fundamental part of the social interaction, cooperation, and the exercise of authority in classrooms. Therefore, at the beginning of their practica, it is important for student teachers to carefully observe and imitate their cooperating teachers’ rituals, even the simple ones, because teachers have spent a considerable amount of time and energy establishing the rituals, which they think support their students’ learning. No matter what students teachers think, these rituals are an essential part of their teachers’ approach to teaching. Teachers cannot afford to have student teachers, or substitute teachers for that matter, change their rituals because the rituals are very difficult to reestablish. For this reason, student teachers must understand the classroom rituals, and they must master the strategies of using those rituals to help them gain and maintain authority. These seemingly simple rituals make social interaction, specifically cooperation, more predictable and certainly help student teachers distinguish between the acceptable and unacceptable behaviour of students.\(^{13}\)

Institutions

As noted, one way that sociologists think of schools is that they are culturally-defined institutions for mediating between the interdependence and independence of individuals, notably students. From this perspective, part of the responsibility of schools is to shape students to fit into society. When students are most rebellious, as adolescents, for example, having them cooperate with other students, teachers, and especially with student teachers can be challenging. Student teachers must understand this fact before they begin their practica. Whether they are classes of students or rebellious peer groups, cooperative groups, regulated by culturally-defined norms, are called institutions.

Thus, for sociologists, institutions are the way that people create and maintain cooperative groups. Jonathan Turner defines institutions as:

)`a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organizing relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment.`\(^{14}\)
Simply, institutions are groups that help fulfill the most important social needs of individuals. Generally speaking, sociologists identify five formal institutions: the family, religion, education, the economy, and politics. There are also many informal institutions, such as peer groups, cliques, and gangs which, of course, teachers may encounter in their teaching careers. All functioning societies have numerous institutions, but not all of them cooperate with each other, and not all of them help students become educated.

Normally, people specialize in doing certain things that are valuable to other members of the same institution. Certainly, some institutions also do valuable things for other institutions, and some institutions even undermine the things other institutions do. However, in the interest of mutual benefit, teachers serve the specific educational needs of students, and students serve the specific professional needs of teachers. Likewise, for other social roles and positions (formally, positions are called statuses to signify their authority in networks of social interaction), interdependence is integral to every institution. So, for example, parents cannot exist without their children, and medical doctors have significance in relation to their patients, just as teachers and students are reciprocally related. In reciprocal relationships like these, people need to give up some of their independence to serve the general needs of group members; in a word, interdependent groups need to cooperate with each other. Similarly, institutions need to give up some of their independence to serve the wider needs of society.

For teachers, the most important formal institutions are undoubtedly the schools and families. Children bring a considerable amount of culture from their families to their schools; they also take culture from their schools back to their families. Thus, student teachers need to understand how the cultures of the students’ families and peers influence the education taking place in specific classrooms and schools. More specifically, student teacher need to understand the students’ interest in formal education and their respect for the authority of their teachers and administrators.

Obviously, it takes considerable effort and time for student teachers to understand these complex and overlapping cultural demands. Soon after beginning their practica, many student teachers will realize that the demands on teachers often consume a great amount of resources because there is so much to understand and so much to do. As a result, they will begin to understand why some teachers “burn out.” The demands of teaching are often greater than the resources teachers can reasonably draw upon. For this reason, education has been called a “greedy” institution because it often demand more time and energy than teachers have readily available. In time, it becomes clear to student teachers that investing too much time and attention in teaching can lead to “burn out,” even for the most committed and enthusiastic teachers. In this way, “greed” is institutionalized in schools because it is part of the culture, and student teachers need to be prepared for this reality. Specifically, student teacher may be expected to do more work than they can in the time they are given to do it.

Culture, Social Structure, and Socialization

Clearly defining both culture and social structure is necessary for understanding how people cooperate—or not—in schools. Ruth Kornhauser distinguishes these concepts in the following way:

Culture … is restricted to the realm of meaning; it refers to the shared meanings by which a people give order, expression, and value to common experiences…. the distinctively cultural refers to those symbols by which a people apprehend and endow experience with ultimate human significance…. If culture is manifested in those aspects of behaviour enjoined by ideal patterns of belief, social structure is manifested in those aspects of behaviour enjoined by patterns of interrelationship among social positions. Social structure refers to the stabilization of cooperative efforts to achieve goals, by means of the differentiation of a social
unit according to positions characterized by a set of activities, resources, and links to other positions and collectivities.\textsuperscript{16}

In other words, culture represents a shared normative blueprint, something that people hold in their minds that guides their behaviour and gives their lives meaning, while social structure signifies the organization with its hierarchy of positions and authority that regulates individual behaviour.\textsuperscript{17} In this respect, schools and classrooms have both a culture and social structure.

The process of education is, in part, socialization, or enculturation, which is the way or ways of becoming alike or similar to others when, for example, teachers influence the ideas, values, feelings, and behaviour of students or when older gang members initiate adolescents into the gang. Ideas, values, feelings and behaviour are important aspects of culture that are obviously supported by the social structure of schools.\textsuperscript{18} Over time, most students become similar in a number of ways: they develop similar ideas, skills, norms, and values—in a word, these students have become socialized; those who have not become similar can be considered to be unsocialized or to be socialized to a limited degree. Much of the formal lessons in schools are designed specifically to socialize students by making them more similar in ways that helps build cooperative institutions within society. Nevertheless, informal peer groups, especially in middle and senior grades, can work in the opposite direction, making students less cooperative with both teachers and student teachers.\textsuperscript{19}

For schools to function effectively, that is, for them to fulfill their cultural mandate, everyone in the organization needs to respect both the established social structure and culture of the classroom and the school, which includes, of course, the authority of teachers and administrators.\textsuperscript{20} Without a doubt, there is considerable scope for independent behaviour, originality, and creativity in schools, but there are limits to individuals’ discretion and non-conformity on the part of both students and teachers. This means that ultimately coercion, which is also a form of socialization, may be needed to constrain the behaviour of students—or occasionally even teachers—from undermining the culture of schools, especially the norms of cooperation, conformity, and authority.

As you have seen, we have used a number of sociological concepts to explain how things work in schools. When things go wrong in an institution, sociologists call it social disorganization at the structural level and alienation at the individual level. Schools can be disorganized and people can be alienated from them. Let’s look at the alienation, specifically the powerlessness, of a student teacher and her colleagues during their first practicum as an example of how things can go terribly wrong.

A Student Teacher’s Experience with Alienation

Most teachers, student teachers, and indeed students know that students, and indeed teachers, can be disengaged from the culture and structure of schools. But, clearly, knowing about alienation and changing things for the better in schools are different endeavours. We have argued that some sociological concepts and theories, indeed, can help student teachers understand how things work, and these concepts can help guide their practice.\textsuperscript{21} Here, we show concretely how alienation arises when the usual social structure of the school does not enable student teachers to effectively begin their apprenticeship, socialization, as teachers.

Theoretically, alienation has five generally accepted dimensions: the most basic is powerlessness (the others are meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement).\textsuperscript{22} Alienation, fundamentally, "refers to an individual's feeling of separation from some portion of the society" or an institution.\textsuperscript{23} In turn, powerlessness refers to an individual's "sense of [his or her] inability to participate in decisions that directly affect [his or her] life."\textsuperscript{24}
Alienation characterizes the feelings that individuals develop when they cannot participate fully in an organization. People who are alienated feel that they are not functioning effectively; in a word, they feel marginalized. Powerlessness, in turn, is the feeling that people cannot control important aspects of their lives within institutions or organizations because other people make decisions for them or perhaps even ignore them altogether. As a result, powerless people are not well integrated into the organization in which they are situated. Let’s hear one student teacher’s description of her first practice-teaching experience and the sociological explanation she provides of it.

**Ms. Weber’s Experience**

In my first year in the Faculty of Education, I had to take a course called “Seminar and School Experience.” Our seminar leader informed us that the object of the course was to introduce teaching and learning in schools so that we understood the things that we must do when we went out to our practica. Frankly, I was much more enthusiastic about getting into the schools, helping my cooperating teacher, and seeing what teaching was really like, than I was in taking courses in the Faculty of Education. I thought that I would be a good teacher because I had already had years of experience in teaching gymnastics, swimming, and Sunday school.

Nevertheless, when three other student teachers and I went to our assigned school, it was obvious that the teachers and the principal were not prepared for us. When we told one of the secretaries that we had an appointment with the principal, she informed us that the principal had gone to a meeting with the superintendent at the board office. She also told us that the meeting was scheduled for the whole day. All of us were surprised because our seminar leader had told us that arrangements had been made for us to complete our practica in specific schools and that the principals were going to welcome us that morning.

When we asked the secretary if we could meet our cooperating teachers, those teachers who were responsible for us, she said that the principal had not told her that we were arriving that morning. As a consequence, she did not know which teachers had agreed to have student teachers in their classrooms. In any event, she said that she would find out, and she went into the staffroom to talk with about ten teachers who were there. We could see them through the open door, and the secretary went from group to group talking with all the teachers. Finally, after what seemed like half an hour, she returned and said that the principal had not asked any of the teachers to supervise student teachers. She apologized, and told us that the principal had been extremely busy during the last couple of weeks and our appointment at the school probably just “slipped her mind.”

At this point, we all felt dejected, and we did not know what to do. We asked the secretary what we should do, and she told us that she did not know, but the principal may come back to the school at noon. We decided to wait. That was a big mistake!

We waited in the main office from 8:45 am until 12:30 pm and the principal did not return. Moreover, a number of the teachers came into the office, walked past us, and did not even say “hello.” No one offered to get us coffee; no one offered to take us to the staffroom; no one asked who we were; and no one even talked to us. With each minute, my enthusiasm for finding out about teaching in that school decreased. It was a waste of my time! I was frustrated and I was angry! And, needless to say, so were the other student teachers. The four of us sat in the office trying to look important but feeling that we were very unimportant, of less significance than the fly that we were watching walk across the office wall.
Ms. Weber’s Explanation

It seems that my experience, along with the experience of the other student teachers, illustrated our alienation, indeed, our powerlessness. We had previously been told that we would be "welcomed" in "our" school. But, the longer we sat in the main office, the more we felt that we were separate from the people, the school, and what was happening. Obviously, the school was not “ours.” Teachers talked with each other, joking and laughing, walked right past us and did not even acknowledge that we were there. In fact, they seemed to “look right through” us. The two secretaries were talking to each other about the student teachers that had been in the school the previous spring as if we had no feelings about student teaching. In fact, they were talking about one particular student teacher who—and they called him by name—had really done a bad job. They also said that after such an experience the teachers were not very anxious about having student teachers in their classrooms this year. We didn’t need to hear that! In addition, the children who came into the office walked right past us without looking at us even though I was grinning from ear to ear and trying to “catch their eye.”

The longer we sat in that office, the more it seemed that we were unable to participate in decisions that directly affected our lives. Bells rang, teachers came in and talked with each other and with the secretaries, children came and went, and no one paid any attention to the four young student teachers sitting quietly on chairs lined up against the wall. We had little or no control over our destiny. The whole school seemed to go on as if we didn’t matter; our presence in the principal’s office did not matter to anyone. It was obvious to us, and to all the people in the school, that we were unimportant; we didn’t belong and we could be ignored.

As Webb and Sherman note, powerlessness derives, in part, from the fact that organizations are bureaucratic and individuals often have little control over the factors that affect their lives.25 At the same time, individuals feel that they should have greater control because they have a status in the organization. In this respect, all four of us had been very enthusiastic about going to work in this school. Our seminar leader supported our enthusiasm and told us that schools are “wonderful and welcoming” places. When we arrived at this school, however, we found that we were not welcomed and the only position we had was filling four chairs outside the principal’s office; we had no status and we knew it. Sadly, no one seemed to care who we were, or how long we had to wait to begin working with our cooperating teachers.

Many of the other students in the seminar had better school experiences because they were formally and warmly welcomed by their administrators and teachers. Nevertheless, most of them agreed that our situation was a good example of powerlessness. In “our school,” we were powerless to change our initial discomfort, we could not change the behaviour of other people, all we could do was sit on the sideline and watch what was happening, rather like bystanders. We felt as if we were controlled by other people; worse, we felt completely disconnected from what was happening. The only way that we could escape the feeling of impotence was to leave the building, which we did at 12:30 pm, and no one seemed to notice or care. It is not hard to see the similarity of our predicament at the school and that of workers in a capitalist workplace that Karl Marx described: "the worker is alienated [powerless] to the extent that the prerogative and means of decisions are expropriated by the ruling entrepreneurs.”26

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have defined and illustrated a few key sociological concepts that can help student teachers better understanding the social dynamics of classrooms and schools. Then we used the school experience of Ms. Weber, and her sociological explanation of it—the idea of alienation, specifically powerlessness—to show
how this conceptualization helped her understand her initial unsatisfactory experience in her practicum school. In this respect, we agree with Tepperman who notes a paradox when he says that social structures, including schools and classrooms, often “resist the efforts of individuals to bring about social change and yet they also produce social change.” Indeed, sociology of education is concerned with a number of concepts, theories, and paradoxes that can help student teachers understand what they need to know to become effective teachers.
Notes


7. See, for example, Rodney A. Clifton and Lance W. Roberts, Authority in Classrooms (Scarborough, ON: Prentice Hall, 1993).

8. Clifton and Roberts, Authority.

9. See Clifton and Roberts, Authority.

10. Ibid.


18. Clifton and Roberts, Authority.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.


23. Webb and Sherman, Schooling and Society, 12.

24. Ibid., 13

25. Ibid., 13-14


Bibliography


CHAPTER 10

Where is the Sociology of Education in Canada? Boundary Questions, Relevance, Emerging Transdisciplinary Spaces and the Sociological Introduction

Michael Corbett, Acadia University

Introduction

In this essay I will take up some issues and problems raised in 2011 at the meetings of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) in Fredericton, New Brunswick. At these meeting two invited sessions explored: a) the current state, and, b) the future of the sociology of education in Canada. In these sessions a number of prominent scholars working in and around the field of the sociology of education in Canada (Donald Fisher, UBC; Terry Wotherspoon, University of Saskatchewan, David Mandzuk, University of Manitoba; Yvonne Hébert, University of Calgary; Nathalie Belanger, Laval University; Cornelia Schneider, Mount Saint Vincent University) presented their views on present circumstances and future prospects for the discipline.

The discussions surrounding these presentations queried the fragmentation of the disciplinary space of the sociology of education in the sense that it has been expanded beyond its established interest in social inequality and challenged theoretically by critical race theory, feminism, cultural studies, multiculturalism, indigenous knowledge, and the politics of identity for example. Is the sociology of education any longer a coherent space that has anything distinct and useful to offer the study and the practice of education? There was general agreement that the boundaries of the field of the sociology of education in Canada have become increasingly permeable in recent years. If the field has become irreparably fragmented, is this a weakness or a maturation process that has seen the sociology of education extend its influence into emerging inter and transdisciplinary spaces?

Here I will address the following critical questions raised in these sessions: 1) how has the boundary between sociology and education shifted through time? 2) is the sociology of education fragmenting and declining or is it being co-opted into other transdisciplinary discourse spaces like leadership, youth studies, and cultural studies and actually maturing? 3) how does/might the sociology of education matter to the professional field of education both at the level of policy and at the level of grassroots classroom practice? 4) what does the sociology of education need to do to maintain relevance to the field of education given that the terrain of much educational discourse has shifted away from the sociological in neoliberal times? I will conclude with a discussion of what I consider to be some key future challenges.
How Has the Boundary Between Sociology and Education Shifted Through Time?

Donald Fisher opened the 2011 session on the present state of the sociology of education in Canada with a historical overview of the establishment of the field. In his remarks he spoke mainly to the establishment of the boundary between education and sociology departments and a general drifting apart. Fisher pointed to the influence of key individuals who in the 1960s established themselves as research scholars working in the boundaries between sociology and education. Fisher noted how the sociology of education developed in two camps, one housed in departments of sociology and the other in departments of education. He noted some energy and organizational work dating from the mid 1960s escalating in the 1970s undoubtedly spurred on by the increasing profile of critical and functionalist studies of education and social reproduction rising to prominence. By the early 1970’s Fisher indicated that sociologists were in evidence in Canadian Association for the Foundations of Education (CAFE) meetings.

By the early 1980s, SOCINET, a sociological special interest group of CAFE was formed functioning sporadically to try and bring together the two camps. Fisher noted particularly the 1995 revival of SOCINET and work that developed for more than a decade to bridge the boundaries between departments of sociology and departments of education. This work has flagged in recent years. He offered four explanations: a) sociology is fragmenting as a discipline; b) departments are moving away from sociology of education degrees; c) sociologists (not educational researchers) are writing survey texts; d) a general decline of publications in sociology of education journals. Fisher ended by recommending a partnership between CAFE and the Canadian Sociological Association and specifically educational sociologists working in sociology departments.

Speaking as an educational sociologist working in a sociology department, Terry Wotherspoon offered a complimentary but somewhat different history to that articulated by Fisher. He also argued that the development of the sociology of education in Canada has from its inception in the 1960s always struggled to justify its utility. For Wotherspoon, it is the very forces that led to the expansion of the academy in the 1960s and 70s particularly that have led to the construction of the university as a technical-rational space which is charged with finding solutions for problems faced by the state, society, and for key interests within the society. Thus, sociology’s claim to relevance has actually come back to haunt us as our actual social impact is called into question in a culture of surveillance and accountability.

In my reading of Wotherspoon, there has been a drive toward fixing problems with the existing system (relevance) and at the same time to offer new critiques of the existing system (sexy). What is also interesting and ironic according to Wotherspoon is how (in a context where education has become increasingly central to policy discourse at the level of the state and in civil society) academics located in leadership and administrative studies have come to dominate policy discourse. So ironically, it is in part the success that sociologist have had in identifying key educational problems such as persistent structural inequality that has led to their marginalization. This may be a bit too crude an analogy but once sociologists managed to point to key pressure points and dynamics of system dysfunction, then they were pushed aside by a managerial cadre whose job it is to fix the problems. We have been the canaries who identify the conditions under which the mine might explode, but once our job was done nobody would expect canaries to help deal with the problem. Indeed, sociologists are often considered overly negative focusing on the dark side of education and for not seeing the positive and offering pragmatic solutions. All of this raises questions about the relative independence of educational sociology and policy as well as the relationship or tension between system support and system critique. If sociology is totally independent from policy discourse, then its relevance is in question. If it is too close, then its distinctiveness and freedom to critique and report what it discovers are in question.
For Wotherspoon, one way for the sociology of education to remain relevant is through the continual generation of new databases. Another is for us to assume a more deliberately comparative focus. This would include attention to indigenous knowledge and perspectives and attention to other forms of social diversity and conceptions of education. He also called for an ongoing focus on grassroots players’ perspectives on educational questions and in educational research.

Wotherspoon went on to conclude that the sociology of education is now “all over the map” including clusters of individuals working on specific focused problems. This movement toward a diversity of topics has made collaboration between sociologists working in sociology departments and those working in education departments more difficult to achieve. So what he sees is a large group of individuals working in relative isolation and who may or may not identify themselves as sociologists. This is a situation he characterizes as “vitality without cohesion.” It is this problem I will take up next.

**Vitality Without Cohesion: Is the Sociology of Education Fragmenting and Declining or is it Being Coopted into Other Transdisciplinary Discourse Spaces?**

Each of the presenters who dealt with the current state of the sociology of education referred to the way that the sociology of education is both growing and shrinking at the same time. The aspect of growth is illustrated by the wide influence of sociological thought and methods on a wide variety of growing spaces in educational discourse and research. These range from studies of diversity, multiculturalism, inclusion, and equity issues to the development of cultural studies and its particular influence on educational research. The expansion of critical studies in education that developed out of post-1970s concerns of the new sociology of education, the sociology of curriculum and curriculum studies, feminism, and critical pedagogy for example have joined with postcolonial studies, critical race theory, globalization theories, queer theory, youth studies, studies of childhood, urban education, identity, space and place theory, technology, media studies and literacy to form a strikingly vibrant and rich set of analyses in support of more socially just schooling. Additionally, there is a good deal of sociological work that now falls under the umbrella of policy studies, leadership, globalization of/in education, and critical studies of assessment.

Simply trying to get a sense of which educational researchers consider their work to be sociological or to be significantly influenced by sociological theory and method is indeed a difficult challenge at this point in history. At the risk of mixing metaphors, it now seems as though sociology has left the stage and in a sense gone viral at least in university departments of education. It is my sense that this has not really happened in the same way in sociology departments where the sociology of education remains somewhat marginal; perhaps in part due to the “success” that sociological thought has had infecting educational researchers across a broad spectrum of work in contemporary educational scholarship.

Today intellectual fields themselves are dynamic and one part of this dynamism is the way that educational research itself has had to account for a broader dynamism in education more generally. In other words, as education changes with rapidly changing social conditions, efforts to understand and influence the nature of that change demand a sociological analysis. All of the forces I have mentioned above including globalization, the critical and post-structural revolution and the debates stimulated by these transformations have created a new space where thinking about education sociologically is now normal and widespread. So while the particular disciplinary space of the sociology of education that emerged in the 1960s in Canada may appear to be in decline, the double hermeneutic represented by the broad influence of sociological concepts and analysis throughout educational research signal that the sociology of education more generally understood is alive and well.
After the 2011 sessions on the state and future of the sociology of education in Canada, SOCINET decided to develop an expanded database of educational researchers who could be identified as sociologists. I began the mapping exercise with the group of people who identify the sociology of education as a research location for themselves by checking the box provided on the CSSE membership form. As of late February 2012, sixty (60) members of CSSE had done so. Given our analysis above though, it is clear that this group do not represent the entire picture. Beyond the list of 60, I surveyed eighteen Anglophone education departments from across Canada including a sample of large, mid-sized and small departments.

In this survey I identified 426 faculty members whose interests might be considered sociological. After a survey of OISE and UBC web pages I developed a set of fifteen primary research interest areas. These are obviously not exhaustive categories, but for the purposes of developing a preliminary database, they do provide a rough list of “sociological” educational researchers. Below is the list of research interest categories indicating the number of individuals identified as working in particular areas (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Primary research interests of potential sociologically-informed educational researchers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Critical pedagogy (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Critical race theory – anti-racism (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Citizenship (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Women’s studies and gender (25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Globalization (14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Identity (19)</td>
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<td>7. Indigenous knowledge (33)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Literacy (32)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Peace studies (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Leadership and policy studies (69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The politics of assessment (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Rural education (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Social justice (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Urban education (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Youth studies (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So if the sociology of education is relatively dormant with only 60 Canadian educational researchers identifying explicitly with the sociology of education, the above list gives a preliminary indication that the sociological enterprise is active in a broader sense. To push the viral analogy a bit further, the foundational work of the 1960s and 70s sociologists of education with their characteristic structural theory and largely dismal analyses of the failure of western schooling to produce a greater measure of social equality and opportunity to disadvantaged populations actually created the conditions for the development of transdisciplinary research areas in education that rely fundamentally on critical sociological work for their justification. The largest concentrations in the list above are in the areas of social justice, leadership and policy studies, and critical pedagogy respectively. While the division is not clear-cut, the prevalence of these three top areas represents a key tension in educational research between critical studies of educational practice and process and those studies that attempt to support institutional practice. It is to this issue that I will now turn.
How Does/Might the Sociology of Education Matter to the Professional Field of Education Both at the Level of Policy and at the Level of Grassroots Classroom Practice?

In his presentation on the state of the sociology of education in Canada, David Mandzuk addressed the question of the boundary between the education professionals working particularly in schools and academic sociologists and educational researchers more generally. Mandzuk spoke to the long engagement of some educational sociologists in schools and their history of an intellectual liaison with practicing teachers. He identified what might be called sociology *in* education as opposed to a sociology *of* education. This speaks to the classroom-based qualitative inquiry and action research traditions, focused and pragmatic studies of pedagogic discourse, and largely qualitative investigations of schooling that emerged out of symbolic interactionist studies from the 1960s. While the boundary issues discussed by Fisher and Wotherspoon are intellectual and pertain primarily to systemic macro-analysis, Mandzuk’s focus was on the question of the complex relationship between the academy and the schools.

Mandzuk’s reading was generally positive and he focused on the importance of sociology to teacher’s quotidian practice. Part of his rationale addressed the pragmatic nature of sociological understandings for teachers working in diverse communities with diverse learners in an increasingly multicultural society. In addition though Mandzuk identified a number of key texts (trade books, scholarly books and academic textbooks) that have influenced key debates in and around Canadian schooling and which have had the effect of highlighting sociological problems for educators. Specifically he mentioned the seminal sociology of education textbooks such as those of Wotherspoon, Barakett and Cleghorn, Davis and Guppy, and Levine-Rasky. This work has kept the academic field of sociology of education on the map for pre-service and in-service teachers.

At the same time educational sociologists have produced a number of key trade books that have stimulated productive debate about the character of Canadian schooling in a global context and contributed to key debates around educational questions at the regional, national and global levels. The work of Charles Ungerleider, Rodney Clifton, Benjamin Levin, Michael Fullan, and Andy Hargreaves, for instance has influenced both public perceptions of educational problems and simultaneously engaged with public policy and governance (sometimes intimately as in the cases of Ungerleider, Levin and Fullan who have acted as senior advisors to government). It might be said then that the Canadian sociology of education has to a certain extent been coopted directly into the bureaucracy as Michael Burawoy has argued has been the case with Canadian sociology more generally. The result has been a somewhat distinctively Canadian sociology that has been conservative and largely concerned with technocratic systems management.

If Mandzuk’s point is that the sociology of education continues to be relevant to the practice of education and this is a hopeful sign, he also pointed to discouraging signs, notably the increasingly precarious place of the foundational disciplines in teacher education. In what is becoming a significantly polarized and politicized university environment, sociologists and other teacher educators and educational researchers working in the foundations areas have come under pressure to justify their positions. Mandzuk, and virtually all other commentators noted that way that a broader scholarly discussion about the place and purpose of schooling in a changing society has been replaced by a functional or technical-rational view of educational practice. As a result, foundations scholars in education departmental are not being replaced in many departments.

In her Fredericton presentation on the state of the field, Yvonne Hébert spoke to a different form of relevance to the field by emphasizing both the traditions of critique that characterized sociological inquiry historically and by pointing to the way that the “diversification” of sociological work has made it useful to her own scholarship in the fields of youth studies and multiculturalism. Hébert addressed the way that sociology has provided educational researchers with a lens through with to view contemporary problems in education. She ad-
dressed the disciplinary ferment and the influence of youth studies, studies of childhood, the spatial turn and attention to place, the development of feminisms in educational research, critical race theory, multiculturalism, etc. Hébert wondered whether the sociology of education would be better off strengthening its boundaries and becoming more focused as a distinct disciplinary space or whether we are better served by getting beyond strict boundary demarcation. At the same time though, she illustrated the increasingly instrumental focus of governments intent on getting measurable value out of everything the state supports.

As was the case with Wotherspoon, there was also a tension in Hébert’s analysis however, between the demand for relevance and the critical sociological traditions and influences that expose systemic problems. She argued that what has occurred in the shift in policy analysis from foundations scholars to leadership people is the relegation to sociological work to a residual category that she characterized as “context.” So rather than dealing specifically and pragmatically with the actual system problems identified in sociological, philosophical or historical research, sociological research has come to be slotted into a particular box labeled context and set to the side where it can be drawn upon by leadership and other policy scholars whose work it is to create institutionally useful knowledge. She characterized this as the sociology of education being driven “underground.” Hébert asked an interesting question with respect to this drift when she wondered if all of this actually marks an uncritical subversion of leadership and a movement away from difficult questions of social development and values into more simplistic technical and functional ways of posing educational questions.

What has resulted from this, or at least what has happened in tandem with this shift in policy emphasis to focused educational management or leadership fields is the way that foundations units and even education departments themselves have been reduced and sometimes reorganized into transdisciplinary units (i.e. The Department of Integrated Studies at McGill) focusing on equity, inclusion, leadership, curriculum studies, etc. This has created a significant tension for scholars working out of foundations traditions as granting council priorities shift toward the immediate problems of educational knowledge transfer and relevance defined in the technical sense of solving system problems.

**Maintaining Relevance in the Face of the Neoliberal Dismissal of the Social/Sociological**

It is clear that in the pressurized system Hébert describes, sociologists work in the midst of a series of key tensions. The often competing demands of critical theoretical orientations and functionalist system demands puts contemporary education scholars and particularly, foundations scholars in a space not unlike that identified by C Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959.) For Mills, the great hope or the “promise” of for sociology is that it would serve to illuminate the hidden forces that cause ordinary social actors to feel as though their lives are out of control. Yet we seem to find ourselves under siege, under pressure, caught in traps. This is not new. The sociology of education has been concerned with social reproduction as well as with social change, since Durkheim lectured to teachers at the beginning of the 20th century and this produces core tensions that are inevitable.4

In the sociology of education, the deeper irony is that the traps are, to some extent, of our own making. In an autobiographical chapter summarizing his life’s work as a seminal figure in the sociology of education in Britain from the late 1960s, Michael Young arrives at a rather depressing conclusion. In effect, he argues that capitalism and marketization of schooling are inevitable. Young bases his argument partly on his own experience as a middle class parent. He wanted his children to have the best schooling so he was selective like his middle class peers his liberal and even radical history and sociological sophistication notwithstanding. It is precisely the indi-
vidualism and desire of this social class of which he is a member that drives the system along and not sociologically informed (or misinformed) principles.  

Young’s position here illustrates the way that his own sociological imagination has been hijacked by the intersection of biography and history. It has also been hijacked by uses of sociological data that have become prominent since his career began in the heady days of system expansion and the opening up of extended educational franchise to working class, minority youth and women. Today both individual and system progress are measured by standardized sociological instruments that range from skills assessments like TIMSS and PISA to national and regional level tests of academic performance. As it turns out, the daughter born to Young had at a relatively late stage in his life has been heavily assessed and the schools she is eligible to attend have been ranked in league tables. Here our educational sociologist faces a marketplace. Rather than critiquing the travesty that this emergent educational market represents in terms of educational inclusion, our sociologist throws up his hands and says, oh well, I guess I’d better choose and choose well, there is nothing else to do. Because the neoliberal drift in educational policy moved in from the late 70s with the election of Margaret Thatcher there is the sense in Young’s writing that this is the way it should have gone, or indeed the only way it could have gone.

I think sociologists of education in Canada face a similar reckoning. How do we account for the globalization, marketization and commodification of education today and how have these forces played out in Canada? The central findings of the sociology of education from the 1960s and 70s have for the most part defined the discipline. Apart from the fact that they are entirely theorized in the United States and in Western Europe, they are, it must be said, gloomily representative the particular social divisions and political settlements in those societies. To assume theorizations from the United States or from Western Europe is one face of colonization. This is one problem. Another is that it was Mills’ point that sociology contributes to its own demise when it becomes an abstracted discourse of entrapment functioning at such a high structural level that it effectively erases the agency of ordinary social actors. I think this can happen in two ways. First of all, the perspectives of the powerful whose vision is systemic and strategic achieves preeminence over the biographical position of lesser social actors who themselves are “taught” to be content with, or at least resigned to, the narrow vision of their limited lives. Indeed, a part of this teaching and learning is a subordination of academics working on the margins of Empire to adopt theoretical lens generated within the colonizing powers. Secondly the abstracted empiricism of the sociologists and more recently the economists and even more recently the Google algorithm, or the Facebook data mine takes high level data to generate and “objective” picture of how things really are and, by extension, how they have to be. So the data are used not only to describe the present “reality” and its particular configuration of power and authority, it also reifies these power structures as objective facts. This, I think is part of what Young reflects in his comments about educational sociology.

It is these fundamental findings of the sociology of education (reproduction/correspondence, classification/framing, habitus/the logic of practice, human capital, racialization/minoritization, ablism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.) that have, in a sense, passed into the public realm and become commonplace not only in educational policy discourse, but also to a certain extent in public understandings of what schools do. An unfortunate result of all of this is arguably that the transformational potential of schooling has been damaged in the process in a way that is not unlike what Young describes or the persistent questioning of participants in the Fredericton sessions who asked of what use is sociology to teachers? These findings have also ironically marginalized the field of the sociology of education itself by stimulating the growth and development in the field of education of transdisciplinary spaces like women’s studies, queer theory, disability studies, critical race theory, postcolonial theory, inclusive education, equity studies, cultural studies to name but a few. In an important sense sociologists of education might learn from these fields that done a much better job of realizing the promise that the sociological imagination can suggest.
The question in the sessions on the future of the sociology of education that related to what particular use is sociology to teachers? What good is a sociology that effectively tells teachers and others that the game is rigged and that in a whole range of ways the system effectively reproduces itself or ends up becoming a market where self-interested, individual strategizing is the best we can do. Additionally, contemporary sociology is at a crossroads. Its conventional methods are called into question and its findings since the 1970s have been largely uninspiring. It has not kept up with contemporary developments in theory as well as it might. The question then is what fresh contributions might the sociology of education make. I will offer four substantive suggestions. Of course, there are a multitude of others that might be imagined.

The sociology of education might engender an analysis of the development of what Beck’s risk society and Bauman’s liquid modernity might offer, not so much as an inevitable development of modernity (or high modernity or postmodernity,) but rather as a distinctive educational project aimed at actively forming neoliberal subjects. It is my sense that neither of these provocative sociological thinkers has been taken up in any sustained way by educational sociologists, particularly in Canada. The development of consumer society where life is systematically set adrift from established institutional traditions and thrust into new marketized spaces where everything is subject to calculation is indeed a departure that has both influenced and been influenced by education. Education has become a metaphor for this calculation in everything from standardized testing to risk profiling and it is this reconfiguration of education that calls out for better analysis.

We need, I think, a better analysis of education as an exercise in statecraft the combines bureaucratic governance and neoliberalism in multiple ways and at different scales. Again, education is increasingly invoked as a solution to virtually any emerging or established social problem. Since education takes time, it becomes a way of deferring immediate response. The time it takes to implement educational policy and indeed to educate an individual or group is what is at stake here. Politicians can effectively deflect criticism by claiming by simply changing the curriculum, pedagogy or governance to address a particularly thorny problem or even to create a new citizenry. And since education is typically targeted at children, youth and others lacking power, it works well as a governance instrument whose aim is reforming recalcitrant populations through their own reflexive agency. The up side of this situation is that it is now widely recognized that the intersection of social class, race, gender, ability, sexuality and other structural sociological spaces is what we actually need to understand. This suggests deeper and more focused multi and transdisciplinary collaborations and connections for sociologists of education.

In some situations sociologists have discovered that education is either broken or simply not up to the tasks set for it. An “embedded” sociology of education, which is too caught up in the pursuit of practical solutions for the current system of education, functions to “add on” a sociological analysis to a dysfunctional system. This connects to the previous point. In some ways educational sociology may have been too much in league with system players (as Burowoy suggested) to be sufficiently critical to see when the Emperor is naked. An independent and critical sociology of education could potentially open up productive and imaginative conversations about how better to think about education in communities where education has been consistently failing for a long time. There is considerable evidence that such a sociology and such a critical foundations analysis is not currently considered useful in its own right. This chill effectively condemns the sociology of education to the margins and compromises its ability to offer useful and unexpected discoveries.

Finally, as Raewyn Connell has recently argued from the Australian perspective, sociological theorizing, and I might add educational theorizing, is caught up in a colonial habitus effectively universalizing and globalizing theory generated in the United States and Western Europe. It is perhaps time that scholars working under the umbrella of the sociology of education in Canada consider carefully the various consequences of adopting the-
ory from the two colonial giants who have played such a powerful role in shaping our histories and our geographies. As John Ralston Saul has written, we are a Métis nation founded on unresolved yet deep connections with the Indigenous people who populated this land before colonization and the theory it carried along to these shores. It is here perhaps that we should start looking for theory of our own, one that takes a hard and honest look at the history, structure and function of the Canadian state and its key institutions.10

Conclusions

For Mills, the enlightenment values of freedom and reason were sociology’s best hope and foundational raison d’être. He saw sociology as a tool that could be used by ordinary social actors to achieve greater measures of both. He also saw the promise of sociology in terms of resistance and the ability of ordinary people to come to know their collective position in order to change it. As a pragmatist, Mills was intent on nurturing a core self-reliance and deep Deweyan knowledge of the basic processes of social organization and also of material life. He went to Germany to purchase his fabled BMW and spent weeks taking a technician’s course there so that he would be able to fix it. He planted a large garden, build his own house and chided his students wondering why any of them would want to live in a house they hadn’t built themselves. Compare this to Anthony Giddens’ “high modern” imaginary of hot-housed, intimate relationships, credentialized expert systems that systematically deskill and infantilize ordinary people (who themselves become certified micro-specialists,) life in urban cocoons in which nobody understands much about the grids that deliver the energy and water and take away the waste.11 We end up in what Giddens calls a fundamental “ontological insecurity” born of a consciousness that one is chronically “at risk,” adrift in a runaway world.12 As Giddens himself points out from his very earliest writings, the production of sociology is not just descriptive; it also comes to take on a life of its own and becomes, in effect, an ethical position as well as a descriptive or purely abstract analytical exercise. Sociology assumes social engagement, either conscious and proactive or unconscious and reactive. It seems to me that the political implications of our established and emerging sociologies cry out for critique.

Indeed, the sociology of education has also been marked by its activism or at least by its engagement in the messiness of practice. Recent practice theory such as Actor Network Theory, engaged theorizing that directly confronts oppression and sexist, gendered, ableist and racist educational practices, and the methodological eclecticism that has marked recent educational scholarship all can provide new stimulus for a renewal of activist scholarly work. The sociology of education grew out of a suspicion that formal education was not turning into a force in support of equal opportunity and social justice contrary to its foundational liberal ideology. This suspicion remains with us today and the conservative and neoliberal retrenchment call once again for a critical sociology of education that is concerned with reform and governance alternatives. The sociology of education has never been an abstracted theoretical field and its ongoing connection to social struggle is a large part of its promise. It is clear that the sociology of education has made a difference and had influence in education at many levels.

The historic tension in sociology identified by Wotherspoon, Hébert and Mandzuk between system support and system critique has morphed in the past couple of decades into a set of vibrant and specific transdisciplinary enterprises which include leadership and policy studies, studies in equity and inclusive practices, studies of new literacies, media, culture and technology, and studies of identity and globalization. Each of these transdisciplinary spaces engages in the tension between institutional support and institutional critique in different ways. Let us not forget though that much of this critique is founded on data and analysis generated by sociological specialists who had the space to ask hard and inconvenient questions. This is a privilege we may no longer possess.
Notes


3. R. Crocker and D. Dibbon, Teacher Education in Canada: A Baseline Study (Kelowna: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2008).


Bibliography


CHAPTER 11

From Exploitation to Recognition: The Role of Sociology of Education and Foundations In Canadian Pre-Service Education

Jennifer Kelly, University of Alberta

Introduction

When considering what role foundations and Sociology of Education should play in Canadian pre-service education, I sat down with a colleague to have a detailed discussion and conversation about our own engagement with foundations in the University of Alberta’s undergraduate programmes. The fact that we both experienced our teacher education on different continents provided a useful and comparative aspect to our discussion and aided in my thinking through this chapter. As well both of us have been recently involved in working with others to revamp our undergraduate education programme; a programme that many colleagues have requested should return to foundational areas of knowledge such as history, philosophy and of course sociology. Over the years recognition of the value of sociology of education has varied according to the extent to which it could prove itself useful and of value to teachers. Also, there are many strands to sociology of education, especially in North America, where empirical-analytic and applied policy (despite more recent inclusion of interpretive empirical research) has ruled for a number of years. In making a distinction between the past, present and future of sociology of education, the 1960s and 1970s could be regarded as its hey-day with a primary focus being exploitation and in particular exploitation and social reproduction through the mechanism of social class. In the intervening years between then and now many theorists have noted an increasing shift within teacher education programmes from primarily exploitation towards a concern with issues of dehumanization or more precisely the ideas of recognition and inclusion. Along with this shift in the primary object of analysis (from class to identities) there has been a heavy take up of interdisciplinary frameworks to understand the complexities of student culture and identities.

These shifts have been intensified because of the neoliberal economic conditions that have prevailed across post secondary institutions over the past thirty years or more. During that time it has been economically expedient for Faculties of Education to appoint a generalist who has an interdisciplinary understanding of dehumanization rather than a specialist with a single disciplinary focus. The argument presented here is that the so-called cultural turn meant that there was a theoretical shift away from the macro emphasis and structural analysis of the 1960s and 1970s towards a more micro-analysis of schooling and teacher experiences that could deal with a pronounced emphasis on dehumanization, recognition and identity. The prevailing economic conditions of budget cuts articulate with discourses of post structural theory to produce employment conditions less conducive to employment of disciplinary based theorists (identified as sociologists) and more conducive towards employment of interdisciplinary theorists with an emphasis on dehumanization.
Where have we been?

My own encounter with what North Americans identify as foundational knowledge occurred in the UK during the early 1970s when I attended what was then called a teacher training college. In terms of a programme I was registered in Sociology as a major or a main subject. I also had to choose an age range and I chose Early Years of Schooling (Nursery to Infant stage). This choice of age range was based upon my own family circumstances in that my mother was an infant teacher and having visited her at work several times I became smitten with the idea of teaching as a career. In some ways I was representative of those working class children who, for a very short period of time post WWII, became socially mobile via the education system to become a professional educator. As a quasi profession, teaching has always been easier to enter than other professions such as law or medicine. In terms of selecting an age range to teach there was a gendered hierarchy intertwined with status. Many of my colleagues in the Early Years of Schooling stream were primarily women and regarded as more inclined towards practice rather than theory in comparison to those preservice teachers destined for secondary schools. My decision to combine early years of schooling and sociology was often remarked upon as strange, especially since dealing with young children was regarded as more about babysitting than anything that required abstract sociological concepts or intellectual rigour. This false dichotomy was easily debunked in conversation with peers and colleagues and in actuality I have always found that sociology had much to offer those of us involved in the early years of schooling.

The ability to have a lens that provides a different way of viewing the world was attractive to me as a young teacher. Sociological literature did provide me with the tools to raise constant questions about the every day in relation to broader structures in society. It is worth dwelling a moment on the main texts that were encountered then, and just reflect on what they indicate as to the state of Sociology at that time. A quick perusal of my bookcase reveals: *Dibs in Search of Self* by Virginia Axline (1964); *Long Revolution* by Raymond Williams (1965); *Soviet Education* by Nigel Grant (1965); and *Teachers and Teaching* by Don McIntyre and Alex Morrison (1969). Among the sociologists that I encountered during that time, whose theories have lingered with me, include Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein. Interestingly both Bourdieu and Bernstein were heavily criticized for having a deficit view of working class culture and speech codes along with a preference for middle class culture and speech codes. In summing up Bernstein’s work for his obituary Mary Douglas challenged this deficit understanding of his work:

Paradoxically, the critics in socio-linguistics suspected him of bias against the underprivileged, a bizarre perversion of his attitude. Bernstein admired the “restricted code,” as he called it, for its power, directness, wit, and vivid, dramatic effects. Alas, his own writing is not like this, dense with technical terms, very elaborated. He was also suspected of determinism, cultural or linguistic: a complete misunderstanding.  

There was a lot of discussion and theorizing social class. So I remember struggling with an essay that I had to write and having to spend my holidays reading Bottomore and Rubel’s *Karl Marx Selected Writings*. In fact when I returned to undertake a Masters in Education at the University of Alberta my main motivation was to develop my understanding of Marx but by then the class train had long left the station and there were few who would claim that label. There was also a lot more discussion about knowledge and the new sociology and the ways in which knowledge production was aligned with issues of domination. Douglas Brown suggests:

Theorists like Michael Young (1971), in *Knowledge and Control: New Directions in the Sociology of Education*, identified the processes by which knowledge hierarchies were established and validated. Curriculum was central to this discussion. The structuring power of knowledge was implicated as a force arbitrarily negotiating and sponsoring a cultural authority while underwriting a given social, cultural, and economic order.
While class and exploitation were primary topics in most of the sociology courses in the 1970s there was very little discussion about how race and racialization might affect schooling. Gender was beginning to emerge as a topic in teacher education programmes but more in terms of discussions of liberal feminism (not much serious discussion of radical or socialist feminism) which was regarded as about offering equality of opportunity to young women rather than making broader changes to structures in society. Issues concerning race and discrimination were encompassed within the topic of “immigration” and English as a Second Language. In North America, Headstart programmes (1965) became popular and exemplified the idea of cultural deficits within low-income, particularly African American, communities. The idea of this scheme was that education could in fact compensate for society. In the UK, The Plowden Report (1967) using a similar logic of cultural deficit advocated for Educational Priority Areas (EPA) that highlighted the working class as it main target. Intended to offset the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage that might restrict the educational opportunities of children many of the EPAs were premised on the idea of cultural deficit and the idea that education could compensate for society’s deficiencies through cultural change. The broader political discourses of education and sociology of education suggested that schools could bring about societal changes and without too much revolution. Social Psychology, a crossover area within sociology of education, was also regarded as a useful addition for pre-service students. The work of Canadian theorist Erving Goffman was attractive to some and Asylum was a good place to begin to understand ideas about the self-etc. I do remember encountering Durkheim, Marx and Weber while studying in the UK but very little about Parsons, or at least very little that made sense or a lasting impression on me. I suspect that most of the theorists that we were made familiar with were primarily European and British. There is, within the history of British intellectualism, a certain form of snobbery with regard to North America. English sociology of education, linked to a social democratic version of Fabianism and Marxism, concerned itself with social stratification and sociology of knowledge. On the other hand, the American educational sociology was concerned with practical sociology for institutional problem solving. Brown argues that “In North America, the new sociology was not profoundly influenced by Marxist theory until the mid-seventies, for it was not until then that the new sociology assumed its truly critical edge—a combination of American revisionist theory (Katz), British phenomenology, and critical social theory (Wexler, 1987).”

With the 1980s, a new generation of critical theorists such as Michael Apple, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren came to the fore in Sociology of education. Stanley Aronowitz in the forward to Henry Giroux’s 1981 book Ideology Culture and the Process of Schooling describes how Giroux’s work was different from the existing forms of analysis:

Henry Giroux’s work is part of a critique of the functionalist assumptions of both liberal publicist and radical critics of American education. He is among the few outstanding scholars who has tried to break from the reductionist descriptions and analysis offered by earlier writers…he is neither an economic determinist nor an ideological determinist. 

During this period we begin to see an intensification of the questioning of class as a viable and unproblematic theoretical category; a process that was intensified in the early 1960s by theorists such as John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood et. al., and their embourgeoisement thesis in The Affluent Worker. So social stratification discourse decreases and the field begins to emphasize “equalizing opportunity” along with the concept of equity – should you treat people the same or differently based on their identifications. Philosophically more questions were raised in the form of “should” rather than “what”.

The 1990s was the era when I became most cognoscente of pre-service teacher education in Canada through teaching sociology of education classes. It was also a significant time for shifts from discipline based
foundations areas to interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge generation. This shift, based not just on a decreasing emphasis on class, was also related to the economic situation in 1990s, which saw the need to conserve resources and to have, where possible, an expert theorist who could work across at least two areas rather than one. We saw that an actual restructuring of higher education in North America was justified through a form of neoliberalism and calls for encouraging the withering of the role of the state in providing public education. Sociology meanwhile was continuing to reinforce a reputation as being primarily about old white males such as Marx, Durkheim and Weber.

The broader cultural and economic shift seemed to nicely align with the move away from the earlier emphasis in teacher education programmes on exploitation towards a growing emphasis on dehumanization, recognition and identity.11 This shift was reinforced through the increasing attractiveness of post structuralism and postmodernism. It was not that pre-service teacher education was without theory; it was more that the theories were interdisciplinary rather than disciplinary based. There was an increase in social theorists who would not or could not identify themselves as sociologists. Being a sociologist was regarded as out of step and more mundane; associated with discourses of old white males who would not be able to adequately theorize the newly emerging issues around race, gender or sexualities and not able to deal with assumed complexities around issues such as student or teacher identity formation. The shift was towards subjectivism and agency along with volunteerism and contingencies rather than certainty. There was a general feeling that sociology could not really account for issues related to dehumanization; that attachment to scientific proof and a basic alignment with Enlightenment thought was not sufficient as an explanatory tool for issues related to identity. Experience in this instance often meant coming to understand “my” own experiences as racist, sexist, and homophobic. There was a confluence of factors and a strong push for the practical within teacher education programmes. Here we also see an opposite trend with the growth in courses on classroom management, curriculum and pedagogy as being really useful knowledge rather than sociology of education, which is often regarded as detached from the “real” classrooms with reduced explanatory abilities. Teachers needed the concrete rather than the abstract and practice rather than theory.

From 1990s through to mid 2005 teacher education programmes increased the visibility of issues relating to sexism, antiracism, and homophobia. Often assigned readings in education courses emphasized the broad range of identifications and experiences among students rather than just class identifications. George Sefa Dei’s research and scholarship and his book Antiracism Theory and Practice12 was an example of this growth in an area of work concerning long neglected issues of identity, race, and antiracism. Dei’s work on racism became dominant across Canada in pre-service education courses as Faculties of Education attempted to update courses to deal with long ignored issues of race and racialization for both pre-service teachers and the future students in K-12 system. The rationale for work on dehumanization can be seen in George Sefa Dei’s argument that “students attribute the difficulties they have in negotiating their individual self and group identity to a very narrow school curriculum. They complain about schools not linking questions of identity with schooling.”13 In a similar way we have the work of Bly Frank and his essay “Queer Selves, Queer in Schools Youn Men and Sexualities”14. For Blye, his main purpose was to give “direct access to the voices of young men speaking about their own lives. They became the experts in the description of what it means to be a young man”15. Initially there was also a regionalism attached to this work on homophobia and anti-racism as it was advocated and taken up in cities such as Toronto, but gained much less and slower traction in places such as Alberta. I remember hearing a professor at the University of Alberta state that antiracism was more fitting, in terms of theoretical and practical application, for Toronto than Alberta. Other theorists such as Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren continued to shift their work and dabbled with post structuralism at different times. For example, Peter McLaren’s book Life in
Giroux’s work on youth media and culture shifted his exploration to disenfranchised youth but more in terms of how marginalized youth are disenfranchised through media. As Giroux saw it, the growth in media technology was not accounted for in traditional teacher education programmes so “Educators must become more reflective about engaging and studying the production, reception, and situated use of varied popular texts, and how they structure social relations, values, particular notions of community, the future, and diverse definitions of the self.”

Texts in this sense do not merely refer to the culture of print or the technology of the book, but to all those audio, visual, and electronically mediated forms of knowledge that have prompted a radical shift in the construction of knowledge and the ways in which knowledge is produced, received, and consumed. Now within all these sociological works it was not that class was fully erased it was more to do with deemphasizing its importance while recognizing the importance of other identifiers. It is not that identity issues or concerns with identity do not relate to social class I think the main issue is that there was limited reference to how class relates directly to race, gender and sexualities to produce different yet related identities. Critical educators were taken with problematizing issues in relation to context and in the consequent analysis post Marxist theory was drawn on rather than classic Marxist theory. Pre-service students became aware of writers such as Michel Foucault whose advice to see power as not purely top down skirted oppressive simplifications while introducing the idea of context in understanding how classrooms are constituted.

The late 1990s saw a further decline in the number of foundation theorists. A number of changes occurred with regard to higher education as many institutions continued to restructure their departments and reinvent themselves without reference to a foundational past and in line with economic cuts. For example the Foundations department at the University of Alberta was merged with Educational Administration along with Adult and Higher education to become the present Department of Educational Policy Studies. While there have been questions raised as to the decline of foundations area in our undergraduate programme, we do have a recently acquired historian, a philosopher, a couple of self-identified sociologists, and some who would identify as social theorists.

Along with the decline in sociology professors, sociology as a discipline was increasingly regarded by students as unable to respond to the real issues of concern within schools. Dippo found a number of pre-service teachers had difficulty seeing the links between sociological theories of education and their future profession. Part of this inability to appreciate sociological theories and the alternative lens it offers may have been due to the fact that many pre-service teachers regard teaching as a purely practical exercise without any need for reflection or meta-reflection for that matter. It is also worth pointing out that some students do accept the need to look beyond themselves and often are receptive to the suggestion that theory is like getting a new lens on the world, one that we would not likely have and that the ability to use the new lens will allow one to think about unknown situations. However, all too often teaching is regarded as about doing and pre-service education as about the how to rather than the why. Little recognition is given to the “need to provide foundational experiences and habits of mind towards the problems faced by any new teacher.” More recently we have noted a reinforcement of the belief that the core of teacher education is classroom management and curriculum methods.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s globalization and neoliberalism were prominent discourses within education faculties with the “local” and the “global” becoming the buzzwords. Often colleagues were concerned as much, if not more with the global rather than the local. There was a shift in emphasis to issues of citizenship and back to the theme of dehumanization rather than exploitation and since dehumanization tends to emphasize the individual and not necessarily with the broader context again sociology was not a neat explanatory fit. The

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general recognition of the demise of foundations area in teacher education is recognized in a note sent to me by a publisher advocating for a book:

At a time when foundations of education in general are marginalized in many teacher education programs and teacher education reform pushes scripted approaches to curriculum and instruction, Exploring Education helps teachers to think critically about the “what” and “why” behind the most pressing issues in contemporary education.” (Routledge Taylor and Francis)  

**Future**

I think there is a form of return to disciplinary emphasis and to foundational disciplines such as Sociology, History and to a lesser extent Philosophy. The noted return is through recognition that many teacher educators are finding students unaware that their profession has a disciplinary foundation that has developed over a historical period of time. Further, this loss of historical memory has a variety of ontological and epistemological outcomes for education students who would at times seem to be rootless. It is noticeable that, sometimes, courses that are advocated for, as essential, are those that are not from a disciplinary base but rather based on “issues” and thus supposedly more able to capture the students’ attention. Enacting criticality is often constrained in teacher education programmes, as is highlighting inconvenient facts since such enactments are often dismissed as just too depressing. The idea of being able to change one’s action through knowing about social reproduction is not a possibility for some who do not see its relevancy to the education system or who regard discussing inequalities as old hat. Often thinking is not regarded as a form of doing and doing is not regarded as a form of thinking. Many pre-service teachers are looking to be “told” surprisingly there is not a strong internalization of a professional ethic of “autonomous thinking” but rather many students regard teaching as about becoming “effective doers.”

It is no longer easy to speculate as to what the future holds for Sociology of Education or predict what will occur in the future. At one time sociology was explanatory for my teaching practices I could see its application; it was regarded as useful to be analytic rather than descriptive. There was a historical moment when education was a site of contestation and possibilities but more recently it has not been regarded as so. The disappearance of sociology of education from a number of Canadian institutions over the past twenty years or more has had the double effect of students exiting undergraduate teacher education programmes without sustained knowledge of the complexities of how social class relates to issues of identification. Also with the demise of sociology of education as a distinct aspect of undergraduate programmes of education we have also seen a declining exposure to quantitative research. Peter McLaren, who was at one time an advocate for a qualified postmodern approach in education, has now shifted his emphasis stating nostalgically in a recent article: “Marxism is considered to be theoretically bankrupt and intellectually passé, and class analysis is often savagely lampooned as a rusty weapon wielded clumsily by those mind locked in the jejune factories of the 19th and 20th centuries.” Because teacher education is part of a professional programme and can be regarded as a crossing of at least three disciplines sociology of education has a difficult path to walk.

First it is an intellectual discipline in a professional faculty, which means that it has to appeal to applied and practice-based justification of existence. Second, it is part of a client-based or applied discipline and third it is part of a practice-based discipline (Adult Education). Between this complexity and being beholden to many mistresses and masters, there is no easy solution as to how a traditional form of sociology of education can find its way back. Time has passed. I can see a return but not a return to the same starting point. Sociology has many branches and what we have seen over the past years is a shifting from a traditional conception of sociology to an
emergent form that takes up more recent concerns around identification and is influenced by theoretical oeuvres such as post structuralism and cultural studies. A growing number of educators in teacher education programmes have quite rightly identified dehumanization as important and it is difficult to put the genie back into the bottle. Theoretically, sociology of education will have to take up, in some way, issues identified in the past thirty years or so. It is evident that we can no longer just rely on exploitation as an explanatory tool and class as a major factor. We will have to find a way to illustrate and theorize the complexities and relationships between race, class, gender and sexuality and how dehumanization is linked to exploitation and class in a capitalist system.
Notes

1. I acknowledge the conversations with colleague Dr. Jerry Kachur that formed the initial basis for this article.


3. This shift away from a disciplinary emphasis was highlighted for me in a recent conversation with a PhD student who shared with me that she had been with a group of grad students from other faculties and while they identified themselves in terms of disciplines she was at a lost as to how to identify herself.


6. Headstart programmes began in the US in the 1960s and continued for a significant period of time. Regarded as making up for the assumed educational and cultural deficit in low income and African American homes, Headstart allowed the blame for school failure to be laid at the door of students rather than teachers or the economic structures.


10. Ibid., 2


14. Ibid., 51


16. Ibid., 46


19. Despite discussions at various points since the 1990s we have not moved towards changing the name of the department. The formal foundations area has shrunk from about 15 academics in the early 1990s to about 7 faculty members in the Theoretical Cultural and International Studies in Education Group.


Bibliography


Introduction

Every debate about the purpose of education has significance for teacher education including the discussions about what kind of citizen we envision our students becoming.1 We shall argue, following Nussbaum, that the neoliberal educational agenda seeks to drain the curriculum of precisely that vital content which promotes the values of, and the skills related to, active engagement by citizens in democratic decision-making.2 There is no reason to believe that, if left to their own devices, new teachers will undertake to teach the values and skills associated with democratic involvement. To undertake this task requires an interest in and a degree of familiarity with a range of public issues, a desire to keep well informed, and the benefit of having taken a focused professional preparation in how to present such issues to their students. For the most part, teacher-candidates are themselves highly successful products of the very system of schooling to which they are returning: an environment that is deeply influenced by neoliberal thought. How then can new teachers undergo the transformation necessary to effectively challenge the complacency of their own students with respect to deepening democracy and encouraging participation in public life? Can the process of teacher-education provide them with the opportunity to develop a passion for learning about what are often characterized as controversial issues and teaching these topics in an age- and grade-appropriate way? We argue that the social foundations of education (SFE), despite the hard times that have befallen our field, continue to provide a privileged space in teacher-education programs in which to prepare new teachers to critically engage their future students as thoughtful and motivated participants in both civil society and in the traditional political process.

The Neoliberal Attack on Education for Democracy

American philosopher Martha Nussbaum in Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities offers a very persuasive argument related to neoliberalism’s threat to democracy and to democratic habits of mind. She argues that “radical changes are occurring in what democratic societies teach the young”3 in that educational policy makers, motivated by neoliberal world views, are shearing away the humanities and the arts at all levels of education from primary schools to postsecondary institutions.4 According to Nussbaum, this attrition results from a view that the latter disciplines are mere “frills” that must be replaced by more immediately useful (i.e., applied) academic programs “in order to stay competitive in the global market.”5 While focusing her argument
on the threat to the humanities and the arts, she recognizes that what she calls the “neoliberal attack” on education also targets other disciplines:

Indeed, what we might call the humanistic aspects of science and social science—the imaginative, creative aspect, and the aspect of rigorous critical thought—are also losing ground as nations prefer to pursue short-term profit by the cultivation of the useful and highly applied skills suited to profit-making.\(^6\)

Despite her alarm about the growth of applied disciplines at the expense of the humanities, Nussbaum does not share the view of much of the critical literature that neoliberal models in education pose a false binary—education as job preparation versus education for citizenship. She argues that the skills required for good citizenship are very similar to those expected of responsible and creative employees. Employers who support the neoliberal agenda to gut the creative and critical academic disciplines are actually working against their long-term interests. “A flourishing economy,” she notes, “requires the same skills that support citizenship, and thus the proponents of what I shall call ‘education for profit’ … have adopted an impoverished conception of what is required to meet their own goal.”\(^7\)

Such a perspective is undoubtedly far too liberal for those whose priority is to generate profit above all else. Nussbaum notes that even if the skills required for citizenship and for employment were compatible, such compatibility must be “subservient to the argument concerning the stability of democratic institutions, since a strong economy is a means to human ends, not an end in itself.”\(^8\) Clearly, many do not agree with this statement, as evidenced in the U.S. by the widespread support for Mitt Romney’s platform during the 2012 presidential campaign or, in Canada, for Stephen Harper’s highly ideological conservatism.

Nussbaum eloquently contrasts democratic views of education with the now dominant utilitarian, neoliberal model of academic programming:

I shall argue that cultivated capacities for critical thinking and reflection are crucial in keeping democracies alive and wide awake. The ability to think well about a wide range of cultures, groups, and nations in the context of a grasp of the global economy and of the history of many national group interactions is crucial in order to enable democracies to deal responsibly with the problems we currently face as members of an interdependent world. And the ability to imagine the experience of another—a capacity almost all human beings possess in some form—needs to be greatly enhanced and refined if we are to have any hope of sustaining decent institutions across the many divisions that any modern society contains.\(^9\)

Wilfred Carr and Anthony Hartnett’s *Education and the Struggle for Democracy: The Politics of Educational Ideas* is an earlier but still highly pertinent study of neoliberalism’s impact on education and democracy that documents, within a framework drawn from the philosophy, history, and sociology of education, the steps taken by neoliberal educational policymakers during the Thatcher era in Great Britain to thoroughly transform education. Carr and Hartnett situate such educational reforms firmly within a framework of social theory and of the strongly resisted but ultimately successful neoliberal transformation of the British economy.

Carr and Hartnett, like Nussbaum, avoid what they see as the false binary in the “debate about the extent to which education prepares individuals *either* for public life *or* for the world of work;”\(^10\) it is rather “a debate about whether education should respond to political demands to reproduce the particular ‘world of work’ which contemporary society has created by implicitly accepting the political ideology on which recent educational changes have been erected.”\(^11\)
The above reference to a constructed world of work suggests that how, why, and for whom we work are subjective social constructions, and this is equally true in respect to how we are governed. Governance models, however much they may be sanctified by the passage of time or by patriotic rhetoric, are socially constructed. Both are therefore subject to change by human intervention as any political history or history of the organization of work will reveal. Such intervention, however, requires that a population—or at least a critical mass—can critique the shortcomings of the current situation, have a vision for what might be, and believe that such changes can be effected. Currently, as Marginson points out, there is no widely accepted alternative vision to the neoliberal worldview and, until there is, little change will occur. This addresses a key debate about the role of education. To what extent does education address issues of possible social change, improvement, or transformation? Do educators view such issues as being too complex or inappropriate for discussion in mainstream classrooms? Neoliberal ideologues, as many observers have documented, are working hard to keep such discussions entirely out of primary and secondary schools, and to even close the space for such discussion at the post-secondary level.

In response to the neoliberal agenda that seeks to stifle such troubling discussions, critics such as Nussbaum, Giroux, Apple, and hooks counter that such discussion constitutes the heart and soul of democratic education. All students should have sufficient exposure to “subjects such as the humanities, literature and the liberal arts” with a view to “the development of the qualities of mind that participation in social life requires.” It is precisely these creative and critical opportunities that have disappeared or are in danger of disappearing as the neoliberal project strengthens its hold on education. Putting an end to the eradication of opportunities to develop the very skills required to participate fully and consciously in society is the challenge facing all educators who value the role of schools as the place where students are given the opportunity to develop their full human potential.

Neoliberal Ideological Influence Within the Teaching Profession

Foundationalists and scholar/practitioners from all disciplines that value creativity and criticality face the challenge of finding a way to overcome the single most important obstacle to realizing the potential of a truly liberal education—that is, the widespread acceptance by the public at large, including many educators, of the neoliberal project and its associated ideology. In the case of educators, one of the forms that it takes is expressing scepticism about (or outright hostility towards) the value of courses in the foundations of education. Crocker and Dibbon report that the sceptics include numerous Faculty of Education instructors and, therefore, not surprisingly teacher-candidates who state that their course(s) in the social foundations were the least valuable experience in their teacher-education program. Other sceptics identified by Crocker and Dibbon are found among in-service teachers and school principals. In short, the foundations curricula have suffered a damaging decline in credibility throughout the profession. Such findings, which reflect the conclusions of similar studies in the United States constitute evidence that the neoliberal worldview has become hegemonic even among educators who, we might reasonably expect, would have a more nuanced understanding of the role of education and the importance of foundational issues. Still, while neoliberal ideologies may be pervasive in education, the widely documented decline in the perceived relevance of the social foundations constitutes prima facie evidence that foundationalists have not responded effectively to the neoliberal challenge.

With respect to the influence of neoliberalism among university students, philosopher Mark Kingwell commented on how the core values of neoliberalism influence—indeed determine—student educational choices. Citing a survey published in Maclean’s magazine, Kingwell noted that 70% of student respondents said they attend university “to get a good job” or “to train for a specific career;” only a very small minority (9%) said they went to university to get “a good general education.”
Whatever their motivation for attending university, we might hope that students would find their neoliberal complacency and world view challenged during their years of postsecondary study. Kingwell, however, notes that this is not likely to happen. Far from defending a more critical and democratic model of education, universities are complicit in encouraging and reinforcing such utilitarian attitudes. He notes that in their recruiting drives for new students, university public relations materials emphasize that the “knowledge economy” is growing and that “there’s more demand for university grads in the workforce than ever.”19 Universities, he notes, are fond of claiming that an undergraduate degree is worth about $1 million in extra income during the graduate’s working life. He points out, however, that there is increasing evidence that such a claim is highly exaggerated. Exaggerated or not, the point is that simply by making this argument, the university legitimizes the public’s thinking that the value of a postsecondary education (or the raison d’être of postsecondary credits, certificates, and/or degrees) corresponds merely and primarily to more dollars and to career preparation.

Such an approach by universities has become what Kingwell (2011) refers to as the standard position.20 He argues that this standard position constitutes a succinct statement of the neoliberal ideology applied to education, which he summarizes as follows:

University education must be judged according to its ultimate usefulness. That usefulness will be understood as career success of one sort or another, especially as measured by wealth. The position then adds what I call the soft option: get a degree because the “knowledge economy” will otherwise crush you.21

Certainly teacher-candidates are not immune to the allure of utilitarian credentialism as demonstrated by a recent study conducted for the Ontario Ministry of Education.22 In a survey conducted with new teachers who had recently graduated from their pre-service programs, the respondents suggested that in their professional programs they would have liked to have had “more practicum, and more emphasis on assessment, special education and classroom management.”23 Not surprisingly, given the negative attitude referenced above (with respect to the views of the recently graduated new teachers towards the social foundations of education) none of those surveyed complained that too few courses in the foundations were offered.

Diem and Helfenbein comment that student complicity diminishes the social foundations of education; these students have accepted the logic “that teacher education is learning about lesson plans and classroom management” and they are resistant when “they get a discussion on neoliberalism and its impact on the discourse of accountability and testing.”24 This speaks to the power of a dominant worldview that attaches more importance to the utility of a professional credential than to the educative process that should form the essence of the learning experience. If this is the bad news, there is a more optimistic scenario. Many students, when actually presented with an alternative vision, respond positively to it and embrace pedagogical approaches that run counter to the neoliberal logic. Obviously this does not always happen—far from it. The aforementioned student comments that place the SFE as the least pertinent learning experience in their teacher education program make it clear that the scholar/practitioners of the foundations have a long way to go to convince 21st-century teacher-candidates that the foundations are relevant to them and provide them with important intellectual and practical professional skills.25 At the same time, however, there is reason for optimism given the number of successful documented experiences involving the infusion of criticality into pre-service programs through the social foundations of education, global citizenship education, critical pedagogy, urban education, and other approaches.

Before citing these examples, we wish to clarify why it is so important to infuse such criticality into teacher-education programs. We have drawn attention to Nussbaum’s argument about how the humanities provide students with the essential thinking skills required to sustain “the stability of democratic institutions” and how their absence puts democracy in danger.26 To reverse the threat to democracy the population as a whole and educators in particular must be aware of, and motivated to confront, the dangers to democracy posed by the
dominant neoliberal ideology. It is essential that educators be prepared both as professionals and as citizens to understand the necessity to envision social and educational alternative models to the current utilitarianism that now so characterizes our collective worldview. The educational models touched on below offer evidence that what we do within the framework of our teacher education programs can contribute to preparing teachers who feel empowered to creatively address these challenges.

It is important to note that the examples, which follow, are not all drawn from what is usually considered the social foundations of education. It is our view, consistent with the point made by Tozer et al. that the foundations must continually evolve to remain relevant. Approaches to creativity and criticality represented, for example, by critical pedagogy and global citizenship education must now be considered allied fields of study. Another key point to make is that those who value creativity and criticality can become impatient with the demand by student-teachers or in-service teachers that their courses or their professional development experiences be immediately or directly applicable to the classroom. Foundationalists are, after all, keenly interested in and enthusiastic about the philosophy, history, and sociology of education. Our enthusiasm for the theory may influence our presentation of the material leading us to present our arguments in such a way that contemporary teacher candidates will not find them immediately relevant to their perceived needs. These needs are defined largely in terms of learning to cope with the demands of the diverse urban classrooms that they will soon be facing. Any course which they consider overly theoretical will be quickly dismissed as irrelevant.

Fortunately, there is a reason to be optimistic about our potential ability to reach students through the SFE and what we think of as allied disciplines or fields of study. Herbert et al.’s Teacher Preparation and Success report to the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) is instructive. Consistent with the expectation of pre-service students that their teacher education experience prepares them in very practical ways for the classroom, the report noted that recent faculty of education graduates wanted more time spent on core issues related to classroom management, assessment and evaluation, and special education. However, Herbert et al. also reported an encouraging mindset among an important minority of the students. We refer to the positive comments of one-hundred percent of the thirty graduates of OISE’s two-year Master of Teaching (MT) program which includes streams in global citizenship and urban education. Respondents commented very favourably about how their program offered them the opportunity for “thinking critically and creatively about educational issues.” No such comments were made by new teachers from the other faculties of education from which the respondents were drawn.

The OISE MT program runs two years and thus offers much more time for teacher educators to go deeply into foundational issues. This, in turn, gives legitimacy to these issues and allows the students time to process the practical implications of what might otherwise be thought of as theoretical musings about the philosophy, history, and sociology of education. If students can see that understanding the issues facing their diverse students makes them more confident and effective teachers, then the foundations becomes a more relevant exercise without compromising the mandate to develop the students’ intellectual and critical skills. The report to the OME recognized as much and indicated in reference to the OISE program that “the faculty that emphasized understanding diversity and cultural difference had graduates who felt more prepared to teach and work with students whose first language is not English/French and to work with students whose background is not like their own.” While there are numerous examples of entire cohorts of student-teachers and new teachers who, as Crocker and Dibbon point out, dismiss the importance of the foundations, there are also examples of stories where students recognize the importance of the foundations. We can only assume that the difference is in how capably the material is presented and perhaps even more importantly in what context it is presented—as a stand-alone course which forms part of a conventional teacher education program or as an important element of a specialized stream that validates a creative and critical approach to teaching.
Appleyard and McLean studied student attitudes with respect to their experience in an optional global citizenship education professional development opportunity. This study was conducted at a university, which was not included in Herbert et al.’s report to the OME study. They discovered teacher-candidate support for this program because it successfully addressed the anxiety of these future teachers about teaching controversial issues by giving them the tools necessary to teach with a degree of comfort from a global perspective. Indeed it was precisely the fact that the experiences provided were practical that led students to “demonstrate enthusiasm” for the program. One student commented that this experience made something that she originally recognized as being complex more realizable. She said that going into the activity, she hadn’t expected it to be practical—she used the term “concrete.” Despite her initial scepticism about how useful the professional development session would be, she found that it provided her with an ability to translate what she felt was an abstract idea—teaching from a global perspective—into a tool that she now feels that she can integrate into her classes, as she put it, “on a daily basis.”

This case represents a very different scenario from the OISE MT program. This global citizenship education professional development activity was a brief but intensive add-on to an eight-month B.Ed. program, while the two-year MT program is organized in specialized streams. Appleyard and McLean note that an eight-month program is too short to fully prepare teacher-candidates for the challenges they face in today’s diverse urban classrooms. We agree with this assessment and increasingly two years is becoming the norm, including soon in Ontario. However, the essential ingredient that causes teacher-candidates to embrace a critical analysis or to feel comfortable with potential controversial topics is not merely the time spent on particular issues. Equally important is the value that their instructors attach to an examination of these issues and their success at demonstrating the applicability of this material to the classroom.

Teacher-candidates require a curriculum that convinces them that the material under consideration and the pedagogies being proposed are practical and will help them reach and motivate their students. They need the opportunity to develop a range of related skills and practice them with support once they are in classrooms. The values associated with global citizenship education and urban education and the commitment to critical thinking are deeply imbued within their program and within their practicum. Because of this, we suggest that the MT students were able to internalize them and come to reflect them as these values were legitimized within their respective streams. While they offer the usual courses in classroom management and assessment and evaluation, such programs are also infused with a social and cultural content that provides students with an intellectual skill set that prepares them for today’s diverse classrooms.

The foregoing example draws upon a global citizenship education program but the same can be shown to be true for social foundations. There is ample documentary evidence that the social foundations, if properly conceptualized and delivered, can be a highly relevant pedagogy which prepares students for the 21st-century urban classroom.

Butin explains the widespread frustration of foundations students with reference to the way the foundations are often taught. He refers to “predigested perspectives and pre-packaged secondary sources that cannot adequately convey the critical conversations, intractable dilemmas, and potential effectiveness of American education.” He also sees the problem as being related to the result of policies that are designed to “instrumentalize” (i.e., routinize) teacher skill sets in order to “control the everyday work of teaching.” This approach presumes that solutions to problems facing diverse urban students primarily involve more professional development (as in the Ontario student demands for more preparation in special education) and are not related to issues of socio-economic inequity. While we would never suggest that professional development is unimportant, it is entirely different than, and no substitute for, developing in teacher-candidates the necessary analytical tools, the knowledge, and the perspective to successfully prepare them for the challenges that will face them in contempo-
rary urban classrooms. This is achieved by allowing students to “think through the urban educational terrain” and to “facilitate decision making around issues of practice.” In order that the foundations play this role, SFE courses must address new teachers’ concerns about what they will face in the classroom.

Carter cites a pre-service teacher’s comment, which sums up the challenge facing SFE instructors as they meet with a new intake of pre-service student teachers. This young woman entered the teacher education program wanting to be told “what to teach … and how to teach it.” She was not interested in social theory. She stated that as a result of her SFE course she came to understand the complexity and challenges that will face her in the classroom. Carter argues, based on this kind of feedback that, if properly presented

it is within their course work of the SFE that students begin to elucidate their emerging perspective of the field, articulate their understandings of what it means to be a teacher in urban America, and in doing so, place themselves within critical debates about “what highly qualified teachers” find most germane to their preparation.

The approach advocated by Carter is not anti-theoretical. It can be described perhaps as applied theory. Another pre-service teacher, summing up his positive experience in his social foundations class, reported that he and his classmates had read material on a variety of issues—“social justice, race, gender, etc.”—and commented on the diversity in the classrooms of his city. What made the course successful for him was his ability to apply the material in the readings to the reality of the local classrooms. He concluded his remarks by saying that “for a teacher to be successful, his/her foundations and understanding of the issues have to be well cultivated. … I am glad that I took this course because it gave me much needed knowledge about what I’m going to encounter.”

What characterizes the positive student experiences documented by Butin and others is that the SFE courses in question are perceived as being practical even as they engage the prospective teachers in critical theorizing. Carter cites a pre-service student who spoke of learning in his SFE class about how systemic issues are responsible for student failure and how, as a result of what he learned in this class, he felt motivated to “question the motives of politicians, administrators, and superintendents” and to engage in advocacy. Such an attitude speaks of a democratic frame of mind, of an educator prepared to engage with his students and with his community on behalf of the young people he teaches.

**The Educational Challenge in its Political Context**

Despite many encouraging examples of students coming to recognize the importance of developing their creative and critical intellectual skills as part of the professional preparation to assume their duties in the modern classroom, the challenges facing the advocates for democracy and social change are great. It is, for example, almost impossible to overestimate the ability of a dominant ideology to penetrate the thinking of all members of a society, even—and some might argue particularly—the well-educated. It is, after all, the official role of educational institutions to teach the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are inherent in the prevailing common sense. At the same time (and this constitutes the inherent contradiction), educators are expected to prepare students to cope with the complexity of contemporary society. It is this second mandate that provides the space where critical voices can and must make themselves heard.

In effect, educational institutions have two contradictory mandates, one conservative and the other critical/ transformational. Political philosopher Nicos Poulantzas argued that the institutions of the state are sites of conflict (i.e., they are contested). Michael Apple makes the same point describing educational institutions in exactly the same terms—as “sites of conflict.” The specific balance of power between conservative and critical forces within any component of the state apparatus including educational institutions is in constant motion.
What is happening in educational institutions is a good example of a state agency in which critical and questioning voices can and do struggle to influence curriculum in a critical, transformative, democratic way. Other forces (e.g., those representing neoliberalism), push back in an attempt to silence those critical voices. Unquestionably at this time, the progressives in this struggle have been put on the defensive and are very much the subordinate element. However, as Marginson (2006) notes, despite setbacks, “the democratic tradition in education is too deeply rooted in the practices of professionals and in popular expectations about education to declare that it is in crisis.”

Certainly Nussbaum would not agree with this assessment but Marginson does recognize that education is suffering “a malaise” that is characterized, in part, by cynicism and disengagement.

How can we use the space contained in this very particular state institution—the institutions of public education—to challenge the crisis/malaise of education and the anti-democratic neoliberal project and ask student-teachers (and in-service teachers for that matter) to become agents of change? Marginson suggests the need to think beyond the impact of neoliberalism on education and to envision a political strategy that tackles the vast socio-economic project that is neoliberalism and of which its vision for education is only a part. Specifically he argues that “this means focusing not just on contestations over public education and democracy within education, but on the larger environment of democratic practices.”

He notes with disappointment that much of the educational literature on the impact of neoliberalism give little attention to such formative trends as the emptying out of the democratic content of mainstream politics; post-welfare state forms of government, and the roles of education and expertise within government; the potential for local activism in a more ubiquitously governed and networked social environment; the evolution of media and communications and the kinds of public spaces they constitute; and changes in youth culture.

Marginson is arguing that in order to begin to reverse the impact of the neoliberal attack on education, educators must understand that any successful effort in this regard must be situated within a larger strategy, which seeks to undermine the global neoliberal social project. This is due to the fact that neoliberalism is not simply an educational project but also, as Carr and Hartnett point out, a much broader social economic project which needs to be countered by an equally broad counter-proposal. This will not emerge exclusively, or even mainly, from educational institutions. The challenge to the dominant neoliberal ideology will come from broad-based social movements, not only or even mainly, from educators. Dewey recognized this in “Education and Social Change”: “It is unrealistic … to suppose that the schools can be a main agency in producing the intellectual and moral changes … which are necessary for the creation of a new social order.” Schools, he noted, are “but one educational agency out of many, and at the best is in some respects a minor educational force.” Further, he suggested that educators must be involved with the movements for social change that are external to the institutions of education in order for schools to become a part of such change. The need for critical educators committed to social change to be engaged beyond the institutions of education is no less true today that it was at the time that Dewey made these observations.

Conclusion

Nussbaum analyzes (and laments) the assault on the humanities, the arts, and other disciplines that neoliberals view as being inimical to the process of profit making. It is, however, not possible to limit our strategic thinking simply to a defence of the liberal arts model or, in the case of teacher education, to assert the importance of the social foundations of education. The world in which the liberal arts and the SFE were major forces on the educational landscape is well in the past. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to romanticize that model. We need only remember the critique made by C. Wright Mills of the failure of American education in the 1950s to prepare citizens to understand the great issues of the day. The teachers of that era who failed to bring their
students to such an understanding were the products of the liberal arts model that prevailed at that time and very likely sat through courses in the foundations in their teacher education program. Clearly, while much of what the liberal arts and the SFE represent is important and worth retaining, a simple return to past models does not address the educational requirements of contemporary globalized post-industrial society.

Marginson, as noted above, argues that there is no widely accepted alternative vision to neoliberalism and until there is, as he reminds us, little transformational change at the level of national or global society is possible. While it is necessary to discuss the way things are and to envision how they might be, scholars and practitioners of the SFE certainly cannot be so presumptuous as to presume that such an alternative vision will emerge from our work at the university or from the work of teachers in their classrooms. Nonetheless, developing the critical habits of mind necessary to conceive of such an alternative and the motivation to engage in the intellectual and professional work required to expand the critical and democratic space in the institutions of education is an important role that progressive educators can and must play. Ultimately our ability as educators to effect programmatic change in schools will be related to the ability of social and political movements in society to effect larger changes that successfully challenges the basic values and practices of neoliberalism. Educators need to form a part of such movements and act as links between the schools, colleges and universities, and the larger society.

In order for that to happen it is essential that the SFE be made relevant to a new generation of teachers. The examples of effective practice referred to above and the extensive literature on successful models of critical education constitutes compelling evidence that exceptional educators in the tradition of John Dewey, SFE founder George S. Counts, and Paulo Freire can provide intellectually and personally liberating experiences for students which open their eyes to new ways of understanding the world and how to function creatively and critically within it.
Notes


3. Nussbaum, Not for Profit, 2.


5. Nussbaum, Not for Profit, 2.

6. bid.

7. Ibid., 10.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.


11. Ibid.


14. bell hooks, Teaching Community (New York: Routledge, 2004); Ibid., Teaching Critical Thinking (New York: Routledge, 2010); Ibid., Teaching to Transgress (New York: Routledge, 1994).


17. See, for example, Butin, “How Social Foundations Matters,” Educational Studies 38, no. 3 (2005); Ibid., “Is Anyone Listening,” Educational Studies 38, no. 3 (2005); Ibid., Teaching Social Foundations of Education (Mahwah: Lawrence Earlbaum, 2005); Diem and Helfenbein, eds. Unsettling Beliefs (Charlotte: Information Age, 2008); Tozer, Foreword to Unsettling Beliefs (Charlotte: Information Age, 2008); Tozer et al., Handbook of Research in the Social Foundations of Education (New York: Routledge, 2011).


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.
22. Monique Herbert et al., Teacher Preparation and Success in Ontario (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, Teaching Policy and Standards Branch, 2010).

23. Ibid., v.

24. Diem and Helfenbein, Unsettling Beliefs, xix.

25. Crocker and Dibbon, Teacher Education.


27. Tozer et al., Handbook of Research.


30. Herbert et al., Teacher Preparation, v.

31. Ibid., vi.

32. Crocket and Dibbon, Teacher Education.


34. Ibid., 11.

35. Ibid., 16.


38. Ibid.


40. Ibid., 222.

41. Ibid., 234.

42. Ibid., 223.

43. Ibid., 235.

44. Ibid.

45. Butin, Teaching Social Foundations.

50. Ibid., 206-7.
51. Ibid., 218.
52. Ibid.
53. Carr and Hartnett, Education and Struggle.
55. Ibid.
57. Marginson, “Dynamics.”

Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
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Authors

Jonathan Anuik is an Assistant Professor in the theoretical, cultural and international studies in education specialization in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He teaches courses on concepts of childhood in history and history of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education. His research focuses on 19th- and 20th-century Indigenous childhood and youth as well as education for Métis families and communities in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Shawn M. Bullock is an Assistant Professor of science education at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. His research interests include the epistemological problem of how science teachers learn from professional experiences, the pedagogical use of models in 19th-century physics, and the relationship between laws and explanation in science education.

Ann Chinnery is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. Her research addresses philosophical and ethical issues in teacher education focusing especially on recent theoretical shifts in the area of rights and responsibilities, the complexities of classroom dialogue in pluralist societies, and the challenges of preparing teachers for work in increasingly diverse classrooms.

Theodore Christou is an Assistant Professor at Queen’s University. From 2009 to 2012, he worked as an assistant professor at the University of New Brunswick. Theodore’s teaching and research pertain to the history and philosophy of education. Prior to beginning his doctoral studies, he worked as a public school teacher in the Toronto and Durham District School Boards. He is the author of two books, one prose and
one verse, titled *The Problem of Progressive Education* (University of Toronto Press, 2012), and *an overbearing eye* (Hidden Brook Press, 2013).

**Penney Clark** is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia and Director of The History Education Network/Histoire et éducation en réseau (THEN/HiER). She is past president of the Canadian History of Education Association (CHEA). Her research interests centre on the production and provision of elementary-high school textbooks in historical contexts, the historical development of history and social studies curricula in Canada, and institutional history. She has published on these topics in the *History of the Book in Canada*, volumes two and three, *Canadian Journal of Education, History of Education* (UK), *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, *History of Education Quarterly*, and *Historical Studies in Education*.

**Rodney A. Clifton** is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Manitoba and a senior fellow at the Frontier Centre for Public Policy (www.fcpp.org). He received his B.Ed and M.Ed. from the University of Alberta, his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto, and his Fil.Dr. from the University of Stockholm. He has taught at Bishop’s University, Memorial University, the University of Manitoba, and the University of Toronto. His most recent book, *What’s Wrong With Our Schools and How We Can Fix Them*, was published in 2010 and was written with Michael Zwaagstra and John Long.

**Michael Corbett** is a Professor in the School of Education at Acadia University. The principal areas of his teaching and research are in educational foundations, the sociology of education, literacy studies, qualitative research methods, rural education, and curriculum theory.

**Jerome A. Cranston** is the acting Associate Dean for undergraduate education and an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. He received his B.Sc. and B.Ed. from the University of Alberta, his M.Ed. from the University of Lethbridge, and his Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba. He is a member of an interdisciplinary, international “community of inquiry” research group that explore formal and non-formal teacher preparation and the ethical dimensions of school lead-
ership. His work uses critical perspectives to uncover how organizational structures and the behaviour of members can act as blinders to social justice and equity.

Michelle Forrest, a trained singer and actor, was a secondary-school language arts and drama teacher who now teaches philosophy of education. Her research interests include aesthetics in learning and teaching and chance operations as heuristic in scholarship and research. She has recently contributed to two edited collections on the value of educational foundations in teacher education, and collaborates with co-writers on narrative in teacher education and improvisation as a strategy for openness in teaching and research.

Jennifer Kelly is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Educational Policy studies, University of Alberta. She has a PhD in Education with a specialization in foundations of education from the University of Alberta. Her areas of research are race, racialization, youth culture, and politics of education. She is the author of two books: *Under the Gaze* and *Borrowed Identities* as well as several journal articles and conference papers. *Under the Gaze*, published by Fernwood Publishing, presents the educational experiences of high school students. *Borrowed Identities* examines the formation of Black identity through consumption of US based youth culture. Her most grants have been for researching the social historical formation of African Canadian communities in Alberta. She was the researcher and co-producer of the play *West Indian Diary* which told the story of the immigrants from the Caribbean who came to Alberta in 1960s.

Christina Patricia Konecny is a doctoral student in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice education at OISE/University of Toronto. Christina teaches junior kindergarten at community cooperative preschools in the Toronto area. Her scholarly interests include phenomenology, psychoanalysis, critical human geography, queer theory, and existentialism. Her current research engages with gender, sexuality and imaginative play in preschool classrooms.

Lynn Lemisko is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Foundations in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Her teaching
experience includes seven years of work in Alberta in the Calgary and Fort McMurray public school systems where she taught students in grades four through nine, and many years of teaching post-secondary students courses in Canadian and European history, trends and issues in curriculum development, social studies curriculum and instruction and the history of education,. Her research interests include explorations of issues in teacher education, social studies and citizenship education, and the history of education.

John C. Long is a Senior Scholar at the University of Manitoba. Educated in Alberta, where he received a B.Ed., M.Ed. and Ph.D., he is recently retired from a 32-year career in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. During his career, he frequently supervised student teachers in the schools and was a member of the faculty task force on initial teacher education whose report led to a major reform of the B. Ed. program in 1999. He is a co-author of the chapter on “Religion in Canadian Education” in The Courts, the Charter, and the Schools (2009) and of the book What’s Wrong With Our Schools and How We Can Fix Them (2010).

David Mandzuk is the Dean of Education at the University of Manitoba. Previous to his appointment as Dean, he was the Associate Dean for undergraduate education for nine years. He received his B. Ed., M. Ed. and Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba, and he spent over 20 years teaching in the public schools in Winnipeg. He was the President of the Canadian Association of Foundations of Education from 2005-2010, and is the chair-elect of the International Council on Education for Teaching. His most recent book, Slices of Life: Managing Dilemmas in Middle Grades Teaching, published in 2010 was published in 2010 and was written with Shelley Hasinoff.

Philippe Maubant is a Professor at the University of Sherbrooke in Canada. He led from 2009 to 2013 the institute for research on educational practice (IRPE). He is director of the e-journal Phronesis. He co-hosts the International network-observatory about professionalization (ROIP). He is an associate researcher at the Centre for Research on the formation of CNAM (CRF). He has a postgraduate degree from the University Paris 8, a doctorate in educational sciences from the University of Lyon 2 and a
higher doctorate at the University of Lille 1. His works are interesting by professional learning as are part of the current research in adult education.

**Ewelina K. Niemczyk** is a doctoral candidate in the joint Ph.D in educational studies program at Brock University. Her research interests include preparing future generations of researchers, mentoring in higher education, and research ethics.

**Michael O’Sullivan** is an Associate Professor of education at Brock University. He teaches in the social, cultural context of education stream with a particular interest in global education.

**John P. Portelli** is a Professor in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education, and Co-Director of the Centre for Leadership and Diversity, OISE, University of Toronto. His research and teaching interests focus on democratic theory and pedagogy, student engagement, and equity and social justice in educational policy and leadership. He has authored or co-authored 8 books and two collections of poetry.

**Lucie Roger** completed a doctorate in educational sciences at the University of Nantes in 2012. Her research focuses on understanding the process of building professional learning training, particularly in considering the cultural dimension of professional learning, the non-continuing process of the professional learning and the analysis of professional knowledge. Her research is based in particular on the work of Gaston Bachelard. She is currently associated with the centre for educational research scientist at the University of Nantes and copy editor of the scientific e-journal *Phronesis*. 