

EDITORIAL

Teaching and Educating in Our Time: A Reminder of Some Complexities

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In this issue of JET some sense of the breadth of the educational task in our time is presented with flair. Yaroslav Senyshyn raises a real worry that governments are becoming authoritarian even about university education as has happened in Britain and New Zealand. Clem Martini, Lisa Panayotidis, and Michèle Moss try to open up an entirely new dialogue between art and analysis and do it in a highly original way, a way that gave our reviewers pause. Stéphane Martineau offers us a new picture of the role of the professional teacher in Quebec, namely that a professional teacher in our time must merge four major functions – those of pedagogy, social worker, technician, and entrepreneur and so such a teacher's identity is a blending of all four. Seth Agbo looks at the opportunities for local control of education from the vantage point of First Nations people in a small fly-in reserve in Northern Ontario. Finally, in a very welcome paper from Greenland we are pleased to publish Jane Buus Soerensen and colleagues writing on the education of teachers in Greenland in a changing cultural context.

I would like first to dwell a little on the Soerensen and colleagues analysis of the cultural situation in Greenland, for in certain respects it is exactly the opposite of the situation in Canada, at least from the vantage point of the Aboriginal people. In Greenland, under the control of the Danes since the 18th century, traditional culture was conceived of as sacrosanct and so its values were not to be discussed. In the Soerensen et al., view this is due to the Danes wishing to keep the Greenlanders as *children*. For that reason, they argue, the Danes do not let the Greenlanders learn Danish either – for that would be giving them access to the colonial power and presumably to the bureaucracy in Greenland, or perhaps even in Denmark.

In Canada an attempt was made by our federal government to require that all, or at any rate most, Aboriginal people learned English

as a means of accessing the numerically much larger and powerful society. The means was to be through religiously operated residential schools scattered across the vast northern expanse of Canada. In Canada's case, although this was remarkably successful as regards the learning of English, its dark side is now being discovered, part of which is the loss of native languages. In both countries there is a kind of residual romanticism surrounding the traditional way of life that is enforced as much by official government attitudes as by the desires of the native peoples themselves. But as Soerensen and colleagues point out, not many Greenlanders have ever harpooned a seal. Nor, I suppose, have many Aboriginal Canadians either harpooned a seal or shot a stag with a bow and arrow either.

Now, however, there is a Greenlandic Home Rule Committee on Education that is attempting to look at the assumptions that have been made in the past and to correct misconceptions and improve the educational situation generally in Greenland. This has some parallels with the Canadian Aboriginal education situation in that local control is increasingly being devolved on native reserves. Thus the Soerensen et al. paper and that of Agbo in this issue are to a degree related. These are enormously important topics both for Greenland and for Canada and the implied dialogue between Soerensen and Agbo in this issue is important to flag.

Yaroslav Senyshyn's discussion of the new authoritarianism in higher education is a timely piece as well. For example, here in Alberta nearly 30 years ago now, the shiny new conservative government of Peter Lougheed attempted to bring in an omnibus Adult Education Act that would have put all post-secondary activity of whatever kind under a single act. It also would have given line item control of the budgets of all the institutions, including the universities, under the single Act. This was vigorously opposed by both the universities and the learned professions in Alberta at the time. But a year ago, almost without fanfare, a very similar act, the Alberta Post-Secondary Learning Act, was promulgated. For the last 12 years or so the government of Alberta, still conservative, and a successor to Lougheed's regime, has become increasingly interventionist in the activities of universities. As yet they have not gone so far as to fund programs department by department across the province. But the present Act does nothing to prevent their doing so should they wish. Of course the question arises, both in Britain and in Canada, as to the degree that such acts and actions are the

actions of the government of the day or of a bureaucracy that is now highly independent of government and pursuing its own agendas.

Stéphane Martineau's analysis of the professional identity of teachers in Quebec raises an enormous number of questions as to the true future of the teaching profession and certainly about what the appropriate education to produce a new generation of professional teachers ought to be. If one accepts his analysis, then a teacher is professionally occupied with at least four main functions, only one of which is normally addressed in teacher preparation institutions. Pedagogy is normally taught there, but the role of social worker, technician, and entrepreneur is not normally part of the curriculum in such settings.

In fact, I expect one could go much farther than Martineau suggests, for the teacher in our time is also the front line of the medical system generally, not just that of social work. An everyday classroom has children with Down Syndrome, HIV, fetal alcohol syndrome, and many other medically recognized disorders that affect the lives of the children, their peers, and the teachers with whom they work. And a teacher is also on the front line of the justice system and policing as well. Easily available, mood altering drugs are part of the daily life of schools and their classrooms, for example. So are conditions of abuse, both emotional and sexual and perhaps more widely, physical. Yet teachers are not characteristically taught very much about either medical conditions and their recognition and perhaps management. Nor are they taught very much about the laws of our time and how they are managed, developed, or maintained.

In all the levels of education in our time the requirements for inclusion and the understanding and embracing of diversity are putting pressure on the lives of teachers and showing the inadequacies of their prior formal education. Although teacher preparation institutions are responding, and perhaps the most striking attempt to educate for this inclusion and diversity is the program at the University of Calgary, even it is woefully inadequate to cope with the new medical, social, and legal realities.

On a happier note, Clem Martini and his co-authors offer us a fresh way to look at possible communication among disciplines by means of art. In the case of this article, the art is in fact a dramatic dialogue that attempts to display such intercommunication and also to display its difficulties, especially the difficulties of understanding across disciplines

given their deep presuppositions and embedded traditions. Thank you Clem, Lisa, and Michèle.

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