

Kach, N., Mazurek, K., Patterson, R.S. & Defaveri, I. (1986). *Essays on Canadian education*. Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 244 pp., \$16.95 (paper).

Why, I asked myself, after I started to read *Essays on Canadian Education*, not exactly a spellbinding novel, was I unable to put it down? The answer is probably some amalgam of possible reasons derived from the following: I am intensely interested in foundations though my work is in curriculum; the essays have much to say to curriculum and instruction; I had not had a good "read" in the social, historical and philosophical foundations in education for years; and I am a Western Canadian.

I found the fourteen essays refreshing, revealing, stimulating, disturbing and essential for my continual renewal. The four authors, all professors of education from Alberta, indicate that the book has been written to serve practicing and future teachers, but primarily is intended to serve as an undergraduate text. *Essays on Canadian Education* is an outstanding addition to a growing number of Canadian books in this field such as Gosh and Ray's *Social Change and Education in Canada*, and *Canadian Education in the 1980s* edited by J. Donald Wilson.

Although the authors have not attempted it, the essays could be classified into four sections. Essays 1 and 2 have historical themes and history is the memory of education. Multiculturalism is the subject of essays 3, 9, and 10. In the third section, R.S. Patterson and N. Kach present a thorough treatment of progressive education, each author writing two of essays 4-7. Current issues in education is the fourth theme, comprised of essays 8, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

Essay 1 utilizes a historical base to display the complex Canadian social reality and the exciting educational diversities which derive from it. Essay 2 discusses changing interpretations of the history of education in Ontario and Western Canada, including the radical revisionist or neo-Marxist view of "free, public and compulsory schooling as the conscious creation of dominant groups as a mechanism of social control" (p. 32).

The authors maintain that "the specific structure and functions of Canadian public educational institutions cannot be fully appreciated without an analysis of the uniquely Canadian concept of multiculturalism" (p. 161). In essay 3, Kach uses a case study to conclude that after three decades, the educational system of Alberta, armed with compulsory attendance laws, truancy regulations, and a doctrinaire curriculum, has acculturated Ukrainians but not assimilated them. One reason for this lies in the educationally significant fact that the policy of multiculturalism is federal, while its operationalization has varied in every province. In essay 10, DeFaveri outlines four forms of multiculturalism preferring the form which "avoids internal contradiction . . . is compatible with Charters of Rights, and . . . avoids immorally restricting the lives of children" (p. 189).

Patterson and Kach present an impressive account of the implementation of

progressive education in Canada in essays 4 to 7 which could easily comprise a separate section of the book. The authors admit that the Canadian response to progressive education was more in the area of curriculum and instruction, rather than in philosophy. The authors maintain that the Canadian version of the progressive education method was actually an attempt to fuse the best of traditional methods in Canadian education with some progressive ideas, an attempt which failed because of poorly trained teachers, lack of facilities, equipment and libraries, and curriculum implementation from the top down (a problem which still plagues us). Patterson and Kach carefully analyze progressive education in Alberta. They conclude that progressive education was never fully implemented in Alberta or Canada. It follows from their analysis that the railings of Hilda Neatby and others against progressive education were for the most part directed at a blown-up strawman.

The vestiges of the enterprise approach are nevertheless still with us and are to be found in the emphasis in most teacher education programs on student-centered procedures and the activity approach, which draw support from the constructivist psychology of Piaget and Wittrock, among others.

In the fourth section of the book, Kach, DeFaveri, and Mazurek attempt to briefly outline how a number of problematic areas, varying from the feminist movement to neutrality of values in schools, must be seriously considered in the pre-service education of a teacher (essay 8). In addition, they go into much more detail than previously in discussing the dilemmas facing teachers surrounding the topics of tolerance (essay 11), values education (essay 12), environmental education (essay 13), and confidence in the teaching profession (essay 14).

The general objective of the book, spelled out on the back cover, is to encourage practicing and future teachers to assess educational programs and policies in Canada rationally; it is destined to be only partially achieved in a book which ignores educational psychology and concerns itself only peripherally with curriculum and instruction. Educational foundations are a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for rational decision making.

The second objective of the book is to persuade teachers, both present and future, who have been nurtured on ideas of social harmony, that many of the sacred cornerstones of Canadian education (cultural pluralism, the politically neutral school, the claimed professionalism of education, and the rationality and morality of educational decision-making) are problematic when one delves beneath the surface. Although some of these issues are merely introduced, while others are attacked in depth, this is a strong part of the book.

The study of the reciprocal relationship between social conflicts and educational institutions, a third objective of the collection of essays, is well done. The treatment of this theme, carried through several essays, would be enlightening to practicing and future teachers alike.

The goals of schooling and education for the authors are identified as "the child's right to an open future" (p. 151); "education as the development of free and autonomous people who have control of their lives" (p. 141), and "skills,

dispositions and knowledge needed to rationally assess the socialization they themselves are undergoing" (p. 142). If we wish to achieve these goals with students, then the goals must be first achieved with their teachers. If pre-service teachers have learned the lessons the authors are putting forth in this book, they will have made a remarkable start in preparing themselves to assist their charges in achieving the goals listed above.

In spite of the author's declaration and intentions, the book is parochial. Although much of its content is of national, and even international interest, its relevance decreases with distance from Alberta and the western prairies.

The authors in essays 11 (p. 205) and 14 (p. 228) will not win any fans in educational psychology and curriculum with unsupported comments, but it does point out the obvious need for more communication among educational psychologists, curriculum designers, and foundations faculty, particularly in curriculum design, implementation and evaluation. Cooperative and collaborative development of teaching materials and strategies in the areas of values education and tolerance and multiculturalism, as examples, could go a long way toward removing them from the area of the hidden or latent curriculum.

Beginning and advanced, pre-service and practising, teachers must have some understanding of the basic essentials provided by this book. Perhaps a cyclical or spiral approach is the answer. As part of such a program, *Essays on Canadian Education* would be very useful as a complement or supplement for a variety of courses and disciplinary perspectives.

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Karier, C. (1986). *The individual, society and education: A history of American educational ideas*. (2nd Ed.). Champaign, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 459 pp., \$34.95 (cloth), \$14.95 (paper).

Man, Society and Education was first published in 1967. *The Individual, Society and Education*, published in 1986, is a straight reprint, with the addition of two new chapters. Chapter 11, "War by Peaceful Means," inserted before the original final chapter, is an intriguing discussion of the ways in which post-war social change coupled with cold-war concerns impacted upon education during an era when progressivism flourished. Chapter 13 continues the story of the original final chapter (on "The United States Supreme Court and Education, to 1967") from 1967 to 1985, and provides what must be the concluding theme of the book; that in a period of transition, indeed a "perilous storm through which the nation