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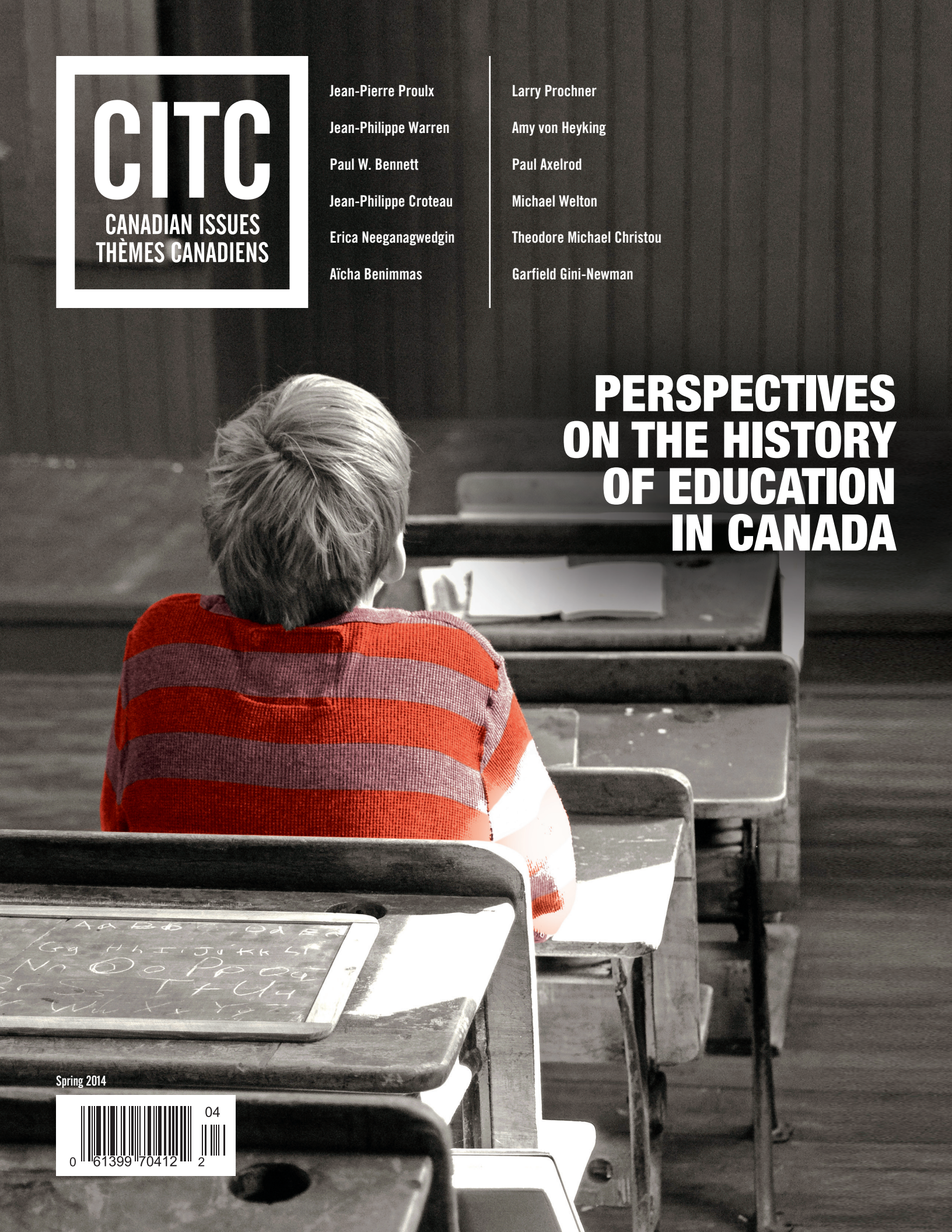
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PERSPECTIVES ON THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN CANADA



Spring 2014



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TEN CHALLENGES SCHOOLS IN QUEBEC ARE FACING TEN YEARS AFTER THE PARENT REPORT

JEAN-PIERRE PROULX holds a Ph.D. in theology from Université de Montréal (1980). He was a journalist at *Le Devoir* from 1968 to 1974 and from 1981 to 1991, specializing in issues relating to religion and education. He was a professor within the Faculty of Educational Sciences at Université de Montreal from 1991 to 2009. He has had a particular interest towards the study of educational institutions in Quebec. He has also chaired the Groupe de travail sur la place de la religion à l'école (1999) and the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation du Québec from 2002 to 2006. He has been retired since 2009.

ABSTRACT

The creation of the Ministry of Education in 1954 was the founding event of Quebec's modern education system. Its fundamental structures remain the same today. However, this system has not ceased to evolve. The system still faces important challenges, some of which are related to the changes our society has undergone over the last fifty years, some of which are due to its dysfunctions. The following article points to ten specific challenges that concern elementary and secondary education and outlines an equal amount of difficulties, some of which are very complex, that will have to be overcome. Even more challenges could easily be identified at the other levels of instruction, but these ten challenges are substantial enough given that the situations which they concern relate in most instances to difficulties that are found at the structural level. Indeed, these difficulties have their origin in value systems, institutions, practices, and even in interests, all of which have been replicated over time. Nevertheless these problems have to be tackled because of the stakes involved, or in other words because of what is "at stake" here.

The first two challenges we discuss here are of a pedagogical or psychopedagogical nature. The following three concern the organisation of educational services. The other two, the teaching staff. The last three, the organisational structures.

LEARNING TO READ, AN ABSOLUTE PRIORITY

We are well-aware of the problem of teenagers dropping out of high school. This problem is one that has been long in the making. Indeed, dropping out of high school is linked, to a significant extent, to learning difficulties that appear as early as the first year of a child's academic life.

The main difficulty faced by children is learning to read. Yet an individual's abilities in that respect condition more or less their future: their ability or inability to read can predict their future success or failure. Not knowing how to read impedes all other forms of learning. It is a personal and social handicap that reverberates well beyond

the classroom: 16% of French Canadians show a very low literacy level and 34% know barely what is necessary to get by. The stakes here are at once personal, cultural, financial and even political (given that civic participation is linked to a good understanding of social phenomena.)

Detecting reading difficulties early on is hence crucial and remedial instruction measures are thus needed. Unfortunately, not enough services are offered in this respect. Given the major stakes linked to reading difficulties, all concerned stakeholders in the education system have to make the resolution of this problem their number one priority.

GENDERED DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL SUCCESS

Girls succeed significantly better than boys and this is as true here as it is elsewhere: 82% of girls make it to Secondary 5 against 70% of boys. The others have dropped out. And amongst the ones that finished high school before the age of 20¹, there is an 11% gap in the graduation rate between girls and boys (80% of girls against 69% of boys.) Inevitably, this phenomenon is replicated at the pre-university college level: 73% of girls are accepted in a college program against 53% of boys. And then, 77% of girls graduate whereas only 65% of boys do. This head start for girls opens up more doors to them to limited enrolment programs. Finally, it is 52% of girls that are admitted to undergraduate programs against 57% of boys. The success rate of the former is 70%, whereas it is of 64% for boys². Today, women make up about two thirds of the students admitted in medicine.

Making sense of these gaps is no easy task. The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation has tried to come up with a hypothesis in this regard: girls tend to build their self-confidence by working towards reaching their teachers' expectations more than boys do; boys tend to self-realize through competition with their peers outside of school benches.³

The challenge is for schools to create strategies that will be effective in keeping boys focused on their education. But admittedly, reaching this goal will not be simple. Indeed, the gap between the success of girls and boys is evidently at the structural level.

This being said, the stake is great: the unequal society that has been advantageous for men for the longest time is slowly being transformed into an unequal society that

will mostly profit women. The latter could obviously have reasons enough to rejoice in such a reversal. But is it really an ideal worth attaining? The most desirable outcome would be that everyone, regardless of their gender and their chosen schooling path, could be academically successful. In this respect, Quebec still has a long way to go.⁴

VALUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF YOUTH

A particular phenomenon has occurred in the 1980s: young Quebeckers have massively moved away from vocational training. After reaching a peak in 1976-77 (unless I am mistaken, I believe there were 80,000 young people pursuing vocational studies at that time), the number of students has dropped of 61% between 1976-77 and 1986-87⁵. In 2011-12, there was less than 20,000 youths, including those under 20 years of age, that were pursuing vocational training. In fact, 83% of people registered at a vocational training center were aged 20 years or older.

To a certain extent, this can be explained by heightened requirements. Indeed, 10% of people in vocational programs already have a high school diploma, which is most desirable. In order to get a vocational school diploma, it is necessary to have at least passed core courses such as French, English as a second language (or vice-versa in the case of English schools) and Secondary 5 math. It is possible to complete these courses while taking vocational classes if the student has successfully completed Secondary 3. It should be noted that 21.4% of boys against 12.9% girls (of the 20 years or less age group) are enrolled in a vocational school. In short, this schooling option is now mainly the affair of adults and mostly of men. For the greatest part, vocation training is often the result of the decision to go back to school, which is often due to a loss of employment.

This phenomenon is not without its own set of difficulties. Indeed, the aspirations of those younger than 20 and of their older counterparts are not the same. Adults are much more in a hurry to complete their education. On the other hand, the majority of youths have not yet completed their core courses which they are following simultaneously to their vocational training. This also raises problems relating to pedagogical management and class management.

The main challenge is thus to interest youth in vocational training and to make sure that they receive

services adapted to their specific needs. The long term issue is socio-economic in nature: could there eventually be a shortage of trade workers in Quebec? At the moment, the campaigns promoting vocational training amongst youth have not yielded the hoped-for results.⁶

RECONCILING EQUAL ACCESS TO SERVICES AND THE DIVERSITY OF TALENTS

Our education system has progressively moved away from the equal opportunities ideal that the Parent report promoted. This can be explained by looking at history. Fifty years ago, high school and college education was strongly characterized by its elitist objectives. Up to that moment, the “natural” hierarchy of social classes was a socially accepted reality. Hence, most private institutions, which were created throughout the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, were built upon and formed by those cultural ideals. Many of these institutions have remained in operation after the birth of the comprehensive schools at the end of the 1960s in order to supply an unprecedentedly sharp population growth. The extraordinary influx of students in high schools rendered this new experience quite vulnerable. Furthermore, in the early 1970s, the public high school system went through a serious confidence crisis. The bad reputation that was given to those big composite schools comes from that era, although it has subsided for a number of years now.

Ever since then, private school attendance has kept on growing as birth rates have kept on dropping. This birth decline has rapidly affected school enrolment. However, at the same time, private schools kept on getting more enrolments. So, as if propelled by a survival instinct, public schools started embracing what kept private school successfully full: they started selecting students for special elitist programs, starting with the international school program. Today, there are numerous types of these programs.

Starting in 1974, and intensifying in 1982, the successive economic crises have heightened parents’ ambitions, especially those of the middle class, of equipping their children with the tools that will enable them to retain their competitiveness on the labour market. Thus, the motto of “working towards the success of all in consideration of the potential of every individual” has been replaced by a sense of survival of the fittest. Students are brought to compete for a place at school, be it in private or in public schools. Successfully passing an

entry exam became considered as an indicator of a child’s probable success in the real world.

The challenge faced by Quebec’s education system is thus making all students succeed in consideration of their specific and varied abilities. A substantial part of these difficulties still has its origin in socio-economic disparities and poverty. This is thus as much a social as it is a pedagogical challenge. This double-pronged challenge, despite the many efforts put in by some during the last fifty years, has not been satisfactorily met. While it is not an unsurmountable difficulty, efforts in overcoming it have been slowed by social structures that are strongly established against it. This democratic ideal of an equal society still remains to be attained.

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHERS

Fifty years ago, the Parent report recommended that teaching should become professionalized. That was to happen through the liberties and autonomy given to teachers, and through their right to be consulted in pedagogical matters. But that also has to be done by establishing requirements, such as requiring teachers to be university educated, that their knowledge should continuously undergo updates, that they establish a dialogue with parents and work collaboratively with them, and that an officially recognized code of ethics should be adopted (which would be defined and managed by the teachers themselves.)

Many of these elements are now well-established practices: the Education Act officially recognises the autonomy of teachers. Teachers in every school have certain powers of initiative; they can choose the textbooks their students will work with, they can also choose to implement new pedagogical methods, they can decide on the criteria their students will be evaluated on. They collaborate with parents on the school boards and they elaborate the propositions that will be considered in accord with the parents. They play a part, even if it is a small one, in the development of departmental programs. And since 1968, teaching has become a university-certified occupation.

However, up to this day, teachers refuse to become officially recognized as professionals. In the 1960s, they have opted to join the prevailing trend towards unionisation. In 1970, the Centrale des enseignants du

Quebec rejected the code of ethics that the teachers had drawn up. In the 1990s, teachers were heavily opposed to establishing a professional order. As for the Conseil supérieur en éducation, it proposed that teachers take a first step in that direction in 2004. Without really speaking of the methods to achieve that goal, it wrote: "Teachers have to be able to have a role in defining and managing the measures applied to their profession because they are in the best position to assess their relevance in light of their mandate and the requirements of their profession."⁷ This opinion did not gather much support.

However, problematic situations still remain. Thus, teachers have relatively no say in the development of programs since that responsibility is entirely taken up by the Ministry of Education. Teachers still accept that the unethical behaviour that might be committed by one of their peers should be managed by the Ministry of Education rather than them. Assessments and professional development (which will be addressed below) are still problematic. There still exists no code of ethics that parents or students could rely on against in the case of unprofessional behaviour.

These shortcomings raise two major issues. The first one is about the value teaching has in the eyes of those practicing this profession. What is paradoxical is that teachers seem to feel that society has a negative opinion of them, which is not the case.⁸ The second issue concerns the quality of the education being provided. Teachers should be able, through mechanisms that they would develop themselves, to assess by themselves the quality of the instruction they provide. Up to now teachers have seem to be satisfied with their employer/employee relationship. But is this beneficial for the quality of the education they provide?

ASSESSMENTS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In connection with the professionalization of teaching is the sensitive issue of evaluating teachers' performances⁹, an idea to which teachers are generally opposed to because of the fear that abusive measures might be taken by their employers. Some teachers are even reluctant to the notion of their pedagogical activities being monitored.¹⁰ These types of evaluations are however routinely performed in most professions. They are necessary in order to ensure skill competency. In this respect, Quebec already has,

since 2001, an official competency guide for the initial training of future teachers. This guide could also be a valid tool to ascertain the competency of existing teachers. This tool could and should be used precisely to evaluate each member in this profession, and could be used by individuals themselves for their own self-evaluations.

Similarly, professional development is necessarily linked to the assessment of competencies. However, despite the fact that the law asks teachers to "take appropriate measures in order to attain and maintain a high degree of professional competency," no formal requirement is imposed on them in that respect, neither individually nor collectively.

The challenge, which has not been met as of yet, primarily concerns teachers themselves: it is their duty, individually and collectively, to come to the conclusion that assessments as much as ongoing training have to be institutionalized and that attaining this objective is primarily up to them. This stake is double-pronged; first of all, the quality of educational services should be improved; then, this profession should become better valued in the eyes of those that practice it and the society that benefits from it.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In the early 1980s, D^r Laurin, then Minister of Education, proposed that public schools undergo an important reform in his white paper called *Une école communautaire et responsable*. His ideas were based on the ideology of civic participation which marked the reforms public institutions had been undergoing since the 1960s. The Parent report was clearly inspired by this ideology; for the first time, the rights of parents to participate in the schools their children attend by becoming part of school committees was recognized.

This movement continued to mold the evolution of how public schools were managed. Thus, after 1980, parents became increasingly involved, first with the schools' orientation committees. However, teachers' unions, which were marked by a Marxist ideology in those years, boycotted them. It is from 1998 that the involvement of parents grew substantially when school committees were created where they could meet with teachers and other professionals. These boards gave considerable power to

all parties involved in order to oversee collaboratively and with respect to the professional competencies of teachers the direction the school was to take.

But these mechanisms and the ideology that has inspired them are threatened by an opposing ideology that has been prevailing recently: consumer ideology. Thus this project of building “responsible and community-oriented” schools is greatly weakened as long as parental individualistic tendencies are overpowering. The clearest indication of this reality is how little parents attend school boards meetings when comes the time to elect their representatives. Parents have also the right to collectively decide to have a “Parent Participation Organisation” in their schools, but many schools do not have those organisations. Admittedly, our lifestyles nowadays do not allow much time for such endeavours. Thus, the relationship that evolves between parents and schools, especially in the case of high schools, is one where the parent is a customer and the school is a service counter, albeit a slightly more sophisticated one.

The challenge is obviously to turn this tendency around and to build schools based on the involvement of the members of society that benefits from them. This is the democratic ideal we have to work to rehabilitate. Everyone is simultaneously an individual and a social being. Being only one or the other leads to the impoverishment of all. This is the fundamental social challenge that has to be undertaken.

SAVING SCHOOLS IN UNDERPRIVILEGED NEIGHBOURHOODS

The relationship between poverty and academic achievement started becoming clear during the mid-1960s, an awareness that first grew in the United States. Five years later, the Montreal Catholic School Board launched *Opération Renouveau*. Its failure was noted a few years later; despite important investments academic results in underprivileged neighbourhoods had not been substantially altered. Since, the program *Agir autrement*, which targets all of Quebec’s students (in combination with the *Programme de soutien à l’école montréalaise*), has replaced it. However, results remain uneven.

Education leads without a doubt to wealth. Over the last fifty years, education has enabled most Quebecers to improve their overall socio-economic situation. But

experience also shows that actions taken only in the academic field are not enough. Poverty has to be addressed on all levels. Hence citizens have to make political, socio-economic and cultural decisions that they believe are the most likely to create wealth, and above all, to redistribute this wealth in a just and fair manner. And the political arena is inevitably a sphere for ideological debates and political confrontations which range from the libertarian right to the totalitarian left.

The challenge faced by society and schools is to build an environment which gives every individual an inalienable liberty, but that also posits equality as a social goal that also is inalienable. And what cements liberty and equality is fraternity and solidarity between all. Schools can work towards achieving this goal by being built on those values. The objective is thus for schools to become the creators of a more just society.

REINFORCE THE AUTONOMY OF SCHOOLS

Following the Estates General on education that took place in the mid-1980s, it was agreed upon that more autonomy should be granted to elementary and secondary public schools. Schools boards were thus created to that end in 1988. The professional autonomy of teachers was also reinforced and the powers and duties of schools boards were defined.

Unfortunately, the different governments which followed from 1990 have progressively imposed constraints on schools. Schools were thus forced to map out their plans for success. In 2008, the division of powers between the Ministry of Education, school boards and schools was substantially remodeled. In a “top-bottom” perspective, all were forced to sign so-called partnership and management contracts in order for the Ministry’s strategic plan to be applied. On a lower level, each school was asked to come up with a plan aimed at preventing and fighting violence and intimidation. But that law also lists the elements that have to be included in the plan. A school director is obliged to give an account of all the actions that are undertaken in response to every complaint to the general director of the school board. The words “intimidation and violence” come up 45 times in that law!

Yet, none of these hasty measures were applied to private schools. They were trusted to achieve the same underlying objectives that were imposed through strict measures on public schools.

The challenge that Quebecois legislators thus face is to finally trust public schools by granting them the autonomy they need to attain their main objective, which is the academic success of all of its students. As international research has shown, student success is to be attained through a greater autonomy for schools.¹¹

REINVIGORATING SCHOOL DEMOCRACY

As soon as 1829, Lower Canada's Legislative Assembly considered that the education of children should be the responsibility of local communities. It is only in 1855 that a central authority was created in order to manage the educational services offered in all the one-room schools and town schools throughout the country.

Moreover, up to the 1960s, local democracy was very uneven: on the one hand, only landowners had the right to vote, and on the other hand, in Montreal and Quebec, commissioners were nominated by municipal, church and government authorities. It is only in 1973 that universal suffrage came into force. In addition, a certain lack of interest in political matters was deliberately ideologized and has marked education up to the creation of the Ministry of Education in 1964.

Also, since 1973, voter turnout has been decreasing constantly and has reached an anemic rate of almost 10% in 2007. Furthermore, 65% of officials were elected by acclamation. In addition, since 1988, only 70 school boards are still in function, some of which are in charge of very large territories. The electing citizens are thus increasingly far removed from these governments that have since become more regional. Incidentally, this is another reason to grant more autonomy to these institutions.

This widespread lack of interest towards school boards leads to a loss of their legitimacy in the public's opinion and thus to their weakening. And this is where concerns about the need for their existence are stemming from. The challenge is to get out of this political low point. The Federation of Quebec's School Boards has fortunately come up with an action plan, the results of which will only be known in the Fall elections of 2014. But the stakes are high. Indeed, school boards and school democracy will stake their future with this election.

NOTES

- ¹ For reasons that are not specified, MELS official statistics on high school graduation are based on individuals that are 19 years of age, not 16 years of age (16 marks the end of compulsory schooling.) They thus are taking into account individuals that have continued their schooling in Adult Learning Centers.
 - ² Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Indicateurs de l'éducation, Édition 2012. [online] http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/publications/SICA/DRSI/Indicateurs_educ_2012_webP.pdf. We rounded up to the nearest whole number.
 - ³ *Pour une meilleure réussite scolaire des garçons et des filles*, Quebec, 1999.
 - ⁴ High school graduation rates climb up to 99.3% for girls and 94.6% for boys if we take into account youths and all adults (including those 20 years and older.) From a strictly statistical point of view, this is great; it is better to graduate late than never, but from a social and economic perspective, this situation is rather problematic.
 - ⁵ Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (2004), *L'éducation à la vie professionnelle: valoriser toutes les avenues*. Quebec.
 - ⁶ A Léger Marketing survey conducted for the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon in September 2013 showed that 42% of Quebecers would "agree completely" if their teenager "wanted to follow vocational training in high school"; however, 44% would "somewhat agree" and 11% would be against the idea. Léger Marketing (October 18th, 2013), *Sondage de la Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon sur la valorisation de l'éducation et de la persévérance scolaire*. Dossier: 12989-022.
 - ⁷ *Un nouveau souffle pour la profession enseignante* (2004). Quebec.
 - ⁸ Paradoxically, in Canada as well as in other countries, 95% of citizens consider teachers (as well as doctors, nurses, firefighters and police officers) to be trustworthy. See www.opineduq.ca.
 - ⁹ See our article: "Évaluation des enseignants - Pour sortir du cul-de-sac créé par François Legault," *Le Devoir*, 14 septembre 2011. [online] <http://www.ledevoir.com/societe/education/331338/evaluation-des-enseignants-pour-sortir-du-cul-de-sac-cree-par-francois-legault>.
 - ¹⁰ Read about how the Alliance des professeurs interpret pedagogical supervision in their collective agreement. [online] http://alliancedesprofs.qc.ca/fileadmin/user_upload/APPM/Information/Publications/Fiches_syndicales/Supervision_pedagogique.pdf.
 - ¹¹ OCDE (2009), "Autonomie et responsabilisation des établissements d'enseignement: quel impact sur la performance des élèves," *dans Pisa à la loupe*, 9 (octobre 2011), 1-4. [online] <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/0/48989573.pdf>.
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WHEN HISTORY BECOMES A BATTLEFIELD. AN ANALYSIS OF HISTORY EXAMS IN QUEBEC (1970–2012)¹

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ABSTRACT This article aims to contribute to the knowledge on history teaching in Quebec by analyzing Secondary 4 final examination copies for the course History of Quebec and Canada (general education sector), later renamed History and Citizenship Education, and developed by the Ministère de l'éducation [du loisir et du sport] du Québec from 1970 to 2012. This analysis is instructive in more ways than one. Among other things, it allows not only to follow the evolution of the Department's expectations with regards to the teaching of Quebec history over a very long period, but also to follow closely the ideological biases, methodological perspectives and epistemological choices of the Department's examiners. To undertake the analysis of annual examinations is to get closer to the tensions that drive the relationship between facts and identities, history and memory.

As we know, collective memory is not a pure reflection of past experiences, but a construction nourished by both yesterday's events and today's expectations. So there are ongoing tensions between history and memory, tense relationships that never cease to structure discussions on the establishment of history education programs. This article aims to contribute to this debate by reviewing the Secondary 4 final exam copies of the History of Quebec and Canada course (general education sector), later renamed History and Citizenship Education, and developed by the Ministère de l'éducation [du loisir et du sport] du Québec from 1970 to 2012.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the study of Secondary 4 history exams over a 40-year period is that the evolution of the teaching of history in Quebec is marked by three major periods, which are far from homogeneous. The first (1970-1990)

corresponds to the relative dominance of a nationalist vision of the past, dependant on the idea of “nation building.” The second (1991-2008) made an increasingly larger place to social history, to historical interpretations invoking demographic or economic factors. The last period (2009-2012), which opens on the implementation of the new History and Citizenship Education course, proposes a conception of history which, rather than insisting on events-based knowledge or even disciplinary expertise, focuses on acquired skills and *savoirs-être*. The conception of history specific to each of the three periods is supported by distinct proponents: nationalists, academic historians and educationalists. The roles of these three groups illustrate the deep conflicts found in the expectations maintained about the teaching of history.

THE DOMINATION OF A NATIONALIST HISTORY (1970–1990)

From 1970 to 1990, the content of the questions in the Secondary 4 examinations clearly reflected the concerns of the nationalist movement. This current represented an intellectual force without real equivalent in twentieth century Quebec, and its militants invested the field of history teaching very early on. From September 1970, it is true, the implementation of a unique history program for Francophone and Anglophone students permitted to put forward a consensual interpretation of Québec society’s development. But while there were attempts to modernize the program, to break it down and free it of its most heavily apologetic features so that it could be taught by anyone (mainly Francophones, Anglophones, Catholics, Jews and Protestants), the examinations continued to be invested by a rather explicit nationalist ideology. For example, in 1979, questions 33 to 46 covered topics marked by the nationalist view as well as areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction: Henri Bourassa’s opposition to Canada’s participation in the Boer War, the conscription crisis, the actions of Duplessis and Mercier for provincial autonomy “so that Quebec fully exercises all its powers,” the founding of the Union nationale, the asbestos strike, de Gaulle’s “Vive le Québec libre!,” Robert Bourassa’s victory in 1973 (after, according to the exam questions, having “rejected the Victoria Charter”), the nationalization of electricity, the fact that Iron Ore in Sept-Îles and General Motors in Sainte-Thérèse are subsidiaries of U.S. companies, and the Patriot victory in Saint-Denis.

In the 1980s, the exam questions focused on the (by then) fixed interpretation of a collective future. At the beginning, the colony of New France appeared to have suffered from wars with Native American tribes and English armies, from the nuisances of colonial rule and supply difficulties, but it had been mainly characterized by the resilience of its people, population growth and valiant adaptation to a new environment. Then, the Conquest had plunged the French Canadians in a daily struggle for survival. The main characters and events of this period are (in bulk): Governor Craig, the 92 resolutions, the Rebellions of 1837-1838, Lord Durham, the Act of Union, the hanging of Louis Riel, Regulation XVII, both conscription crises. Finally, the 1960s ushered in a period of great revival. Abandoning the former name of French Canadians, Quebecers have shaken off the yoke of the English and Catholic Church domination and affirmed, through a regenerated state, their collective destiny. In this narrative, that which outweighed all other elements, without excluding them, was the struggle for the national affirmation of French-speaking Canadians.

Certainly, since the 1982 program, which was supposed to be more inclusive of traditionally neglected groups, reviewers gave the impression of trying to diversify the portrait of Quebec society. However, these efforts hardly bore fruit because adding isolated characters and events only served to nuance a core narrative too strong to be shaken. The exams are required to assess the core teaching of all students in Quebec, so they could not cover optional sections or variations of the program aimed at adapting it to various school audiences. Finally, these characters and events, relegated to the background of the story emerging from the questions, only informed a narrative that unfolded largely without them or, alternatively, they were immediately inserted into the national group narrative and used to consolidate the frame. By selecting which of the past should be the subject of commemorations and what should be thrown to the dustbin of history, by constructing the frame of the nation’s future from disparate and often conflicting materials, the exams ended up presenting, as noted by Jocelyn Létourneau at the turn of the 1990s, a rather coherent, unitary and homogeneous development of Quebec society, despite the implementation of a program ultimately quite progressive and the circulation of schools manuals with a rather pluralistic focus.

THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL HISTORY (1991–2008)

The exam questions from 1970 to 1990 not only betrayed a nationalist bias, they also showed a historical practice still highly focused on politics and events. This paradigm, however, was increasingly undermined in Quebec's history departments by the young generation of historians who blamed political history for a formal and institutional conception of the past.

It is not easy to say exactly when the exams started to tilt toward social history. The implementation of the 1982 program, which became mandatory in all schools in the middle of the decade, indeed required a transition period to allow teachers time to adjust to the new requirements. What can be said is that in the early 1990s, the transformation was finally completed. Sign of this trend, the authors cited in the 1986 review (Susan M. Trofimenkoff, Edgar McInnis, JMS Careless, Donald Creighton, Cameron Nish, who belonged more to the world of political and intellectual history) were replaced ten years later by the protagonists of social history (John A. Dickinson, Brian Young, Paul-André Linteau, Terry Copp.) Another sign, the focus on the 1760-1840 period decreased in favour of the second industrialization phase of the early twentieth century which was considered, by historians from the *Annales* school of history, a particularly interesting cycle from the perspective of socio-economic changes.

Since 1982, the program of the Ministry insisted that students be trained in historical practices and not only informed of the results of their research. It was about getting students to master the intellectual and technical skills related to historical methods. Having students manipulate primary source materials, just like professional historians do, met this requirement. From the 1990s on, aided by advances in printing, exams incorporated a growing number of archival documents, either quotes or iconographic material. In 2005, no less than 35 excerpts were reproduced in the examination, while in 1970 there were none and in 1985 only 13.

Another major change: the narrative emerging from these exams was not an epic. It was no longer about making history alive for students. The expertise that they sought to develop was intended to be objective and empirical. Tables, figures and statistical curves were involved in this effort of "scientization." It also emphasized the *longue durée*; the exact dates became less important than the

general chronology. Finally, the socio-economic relations that deeply structured the development of Quebec society were highlighted more than ever. Political developments were interpreted, ultimately, as a series of adjustments of the superstructure to the disruptions of the infrastructure.

While not forgotten, Francophones were no longer the preferred reference group. The poor and the workers were covered by more exam questions. In 2004, the images reproduced for the period after the Rebellion illustrated, in order, a load of wood hewn from Quebec to Great Britain, the public works program for the unemployed, the role of hydropower in industrial development in Shawinigan, female workers examining cannon shells during the Second World War, a direct aid coupon, the front page of *Le Devoir* announcing the Crash of 1929, a public dormitory, the gathering of the Front commun at Paul Sauvé arena in Montreal, factory work, the workers' strike at the Port of Montreal and the interior of a working class home. The impression looming behind this string of iconographic documents is that of a people more defined by social status than by language or culture, even if elements such as the adoption of Bill 101 or the conscription crisis were mentioned in passing. It is also the power relations that pitted primarily the poor against the rich. We perceive that the writers are implicitly trying to show students that, far from being united and homogeneous as one might think, Quebec society was once divided by deep conflicts of interest.

One would think that this fragmented presentation of the past would mark the end of a global interpretation of Quebec. Such is not the case. Despite constant calls from the Ministry to diversify the national narrative transmitted in the history course, the implicit frame that emerges when reading the exams remained very ethnocentric and focused around the tribulations of the Franco-Quebécois group. The Amerindians were hardly the subjects of direct questions, Anglophones and immigrants remained mainly defined as enemies or threats, and the feminist movement, if it was even the subject of questions (in which were recalled, for example, the actions of Claire Kirkland-Casgrain and Idola Saint-Jean, the suffragettes, the right to vote in provincial elections and the law on pay equity), seemed too often added as an aside for reasons of political correctness. Basically, it was understood that the popular class described by social history was French and that behind the struggles of the unionized or the downtrodden, the protests of Franco-Québécois stood out above all.

THE TRIUMPH OF A NEW INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH (2009–2012)

Recognizing the increasing influence of researchers in the faculties of education on the issue of teaching Quebec history, the introduction of the new History and Citizenship Education course revolutionized the writing of Secondary 4 history examinations. These changes were much easier to implement than those from 2009 to 2011 and, therefore, the Ministry could use them as “laboratories” to test some innovative approaches. In turn, this also means that these exams have exceptional value and we have to be careful about generalizations that can be drawn from this period which is, moreover, very short.

Let us note at the outset that in 2008, on the eve of the replacement of the History of Quebec and Canada course by the History and Citizenship Education course, the examination had already undergone profound changes since it has been implemented twenty years earlier. Already in 1991, seven essay questions had been inserted in what was previously an exam that consisted only of thirty multiple choice questions. In 2004, a comprehensive section was added, tasking the student to demonstrate, with the help of historical documents, the ability to perform a synthesis by establishing coherent links between the main elements of a historical reality. One can note that an effort was made to ensure that the exam required students to do a real work of understanding, reasoning and mapping, instead of simply gauging his/her ability to store information. The reform introduced in the year-end exam in 2009, however, went much further.

Since at least the 1980s, there had been attempts to bring the study of the past closer to the interests of high school students. This intention was reflected in the greater proportion of the total number of questions focusing on the recent period and an effort to link the issues of the past with contemporary issues. The 2009 reform intended to build on this momentum and worked harder to make the connection between the study of the past and the present, using yesterday's events first and foremost to understand today's society. The fact that we had decided to present the historical content as a chronology in Secondary 3 and a thematic form in Secondary 4 is no stranger to this intention expressed in reports and departmental directives.

The study of examinations from 2009 to 2012 confirms a partial erasure of temporal and narrative dimensions. First, the exams from 2009 to 2012 required a much less

energetic diachronic effort than before. For many, it was for the students to know or establish the precedence or posteriority of facts. The questions were not presented in chronological order from New France to the present day, but in accordance with the Ministry's program, in sections which were called “Population and Settlement,” “Culture and thought movements,” “Power and Powers” and “Economy and Development.” Sometimes we could go, in a leap, from New France to the late nineteenth century and then the 1980s, before returning to New France in the same section, which was not the case in the previous period's exams. The chronology was necessarily blurred.

Then, the old narrative-based nationalism (more obvious in the case of political history, more subtle and veiled in the case of social history) disappeared without really being replaced, as some have said using other indicators, by the grand narrative of Quebec parliamentarism. The nationalist movement was mentioned, certainly, but it was right next to a series of other currents that relativized its scope, such as imperialism, liberalism, feminism, secularism, Americanism and Aboriginalism. Not located in a general narrative framework, the questions ended up floating in space and taking a rather abstract character. The exams covered very loosely the impact of immigration and birth rates on the demographic and social composition of the population in the first half of the nineteenth century, the occupation of northeast America by the three Aboriginal language groups in the sixteenth century, prosperity and mass consumption in the post-war period, the role of agroforestry in the colonization movements, currents of thought in the transformation of Quebec society starting in 1960, the influence of liberal ideas on political institutions and the formation of public opinion until 1848, etc. All these events or phenomena were flattened, unable to find their thickness in the richness of an overall story, as was the case when the nationalist narrative (which lasted until the end of the second period) ensured the implicit consistency of the questions and their order of presentation in the exam.

In the exam copies from 2009 to 2012, information related to indigenous peoples, women and immigrants are more frequent. However, one would be hard pressed to find in these matters any ideological bias, apart from a simple concern for political correctness and a quite natural will to adapt exams to a collective discourse having become less ethnic and more inclusive. What emerges most from looking at these exams is how the

narrative increasingly represented a material used for something other than teaching history. It was used much like the wording of “Mary eats four of her six apples” in math workbooks. This procedural perspective is highlighted not only by the marginalization of historical knowledge (which was hardly evaluated on its own, although it was required in order to pass the exam), but also in the very elaboration of the exams. From 2009, the reference documents were included in a separate booklet. Students were to use these documents to make intellectual operations for which said documents became somewhat of a pretext. The important thing was to be able to determine the explanatory factors and consequences, to establish causality or to relate the facts. We witness the development of exams that resembled, in some respects, an internet web, with students whose task was to draw connections from scattered sources.

It is commendable that the authors of the exams wanted, by adopting a new approach, to allow for full ownership of history. Students should be able to read the issues and position themselves in relation to them. That is why the answers to the questions were not only multiple choice, but included short and direct answers. Another point that many observers considered positive: for the first time, Quebec's representation conveyed by the examinations was diversified and really complexified. Amerindians were described as a group that was self-sufficient, without linking them immediately with the interests of the settlers of New France.

However, overall, it is difficult to see how students could actually get to build their own historical reference from the knowledge and skills mobilized by history exams. It seems that, for them, the choice still arose between the acceptance of the arbitrary nature past events, torn between contingent forces and interests, and the recapture of education in a more familiar grid. Leaving the field open to the instrumentalization of a past left somehow available to everyone, the Ministry exams from 2009 to 2012 contributed in having history play a simpler role of accompaniment.

CONCLUSION

The preparation of these exams is subject to three forces that are more often than not in opposition. Indeed, ideological groups as well as researchers in history departments and those in the faculties of education have all, to one degree or another, interest in offering their vision of what should be the teaching of history in Quebec. However, it is rare that their proposals converge, which condemns them to eternal dissatisfaction. As this article confirms, and as many other studies, the teaching of history itself has a history, and this history is the precipitous continual wrangling between (among others) historians, educationalists and ideologues. The result of these tensions can be found in the Quebec history exams which illustrate, quite eloquently, the often tense exchanges between the political, historiographical and educational fields. For if, in the presentation we chose to adopt, the nationalists, the historians in history departments and the educationalists in faculties of education successively occupy a privileged position in the field of education at the secondary level, it goes without saying that this authority is never complete or exclusive. It is normal to find that unanimity, in these matters, is impracticable and that the debates caused by multiple reformulations and reorganization of the history curriculum in high school for over 40 years are far from over.

NOTES

- ¹ This article is based on a summary of the analyses presented in Jean-Philippe Warren, “Enseignement, mémoire, histoire: Les examens d'histoire de 4^{ème} secondaire du secteur de la formation générale au Québec (1970-2012),” *Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*, 25(1), Spring 2013: 31-53.

CONSOLIDATION, BUREAUCRACY AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE FORMATION OF THE MODERN BUREAUCRATIC EDUCATION STATE, 1920 TO 1993

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ABSTRACT

The creation of a unified Quebec Ministry of Education (MEQ) in 1964 was a much celebrated modernization project that set Quebec on the path to becoming a modern bureaucratic education state. While Quebec's "Great Leap Forward" in education was delayed until the early 1960s, Paul W. Bennett reminds us that it was only one of a number of educational modernization initiatives surfacing at the time elsewhere in Canada. Quebec was a late bloomer in the big shift because, elsewhere in Canada, the forces of modernization and centralized administration hit much earlier and were driven more by school closures and district consolidation. Massive administrative reorganization, precursor to the triumph of the bureaucratic education state, appeared first in Alberta, began gathering from the 1920s onward and achieved dominance from the early post-war years until the late 1960s. Three decades after the creation of the MEQ, consolidation, bureaucracy and public education came to be so closely intertwined in Canada's provincial school systems that it became impossible to answer the question "Who's in charge?" Modernization had further accelerated the trend toward a new form of administrative centralization and state managerialism without much public accountability or attention to student performance results. It was not a situation that Canadian state education reformers of the sixties had expected or foreseen.

Fifty years ago, in April 1963, a Quebec Commission of Inquiry on Education, headed by Msgr. Alphonse Parent, Vice-Rector of Laval University, set the wheels in motion. After seven months of public hearings, 325 individual briefs, and junkets

across North America and into Europe, Parent and his eight fellow commissioners recommended the creation of a Quebec Ministry of Education. In merging the existing Council of Public Instruction with the Department of Youth in the new mega department later that year, Quebec joined Canada's other provinces in embracing a more secular, modernized education state. Swept up in the buoyant spirit of the so-called "Quiet Revolution," most Quebecers welcomed the change, responding favourably to this modernization project without worrying about its potential, largely unintended consequences. While Quebec's "Great Leap Forward" in education was delayed until the early 1960s, it was only one of a number of educational modernization initiatives surfacing at the time elsewhere in Canada.

ORIGINS OF THE QUEBEC BUREAUCRATIC EDUCATION STATE

Establishing a Quebec Ministry of Education was a response to grave public concerns being voiced about the former education regime. The mounting criticism can be traced back to a stinging November 3, 1959 letter to *Le Devoir*, written by an obscure Catholic brother using the name *Frère Untel* (*Brother Anonymous*) so as to protect his identity, and blaming the schools for being archaic and out-of-touch with the emerging modern urban industrial society. Five months later, encouraged by *Le Devoir* editor André Laurendeau, the vocal priest expanded his critique in *Les insolences du Frère Untel* (*The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous.*) This *cri du coeur* tapped into deep discontent over the excesses of clerical rule, selling 100,000 copies in the first four months. Laying aside the "delicate" and "nostalgic" temperament of his religious order, Brother Anonymous claimed that the Department of Public Instruction, controlled by clerics, was insular and inefficient and, for 20 years, had failed to provide "civic or patriotic education." He called for closing the old Department and retiring the officials with new medals, including one for "Solemn Mediocrity." Overall, he claimed that religious authority had produced pious, isolated teachers and bred a fear of liberty and freedom of expression. "Education for Heaven" was not good enough and, according to Brother Anonymous, only served to perpetuate what he termed "shrivelled, timid, ignorant Catholicism reduced to a morality" that retarded social advancement.

Elected with the famous slogan *il faut que ça change* (It has to change), Jean Lesage and his Liberal Government did succeed in modernizing Quebec public education between 1960 and 1966. Under a new Minister, Paul Gérin-Lajoie, a series of educational reforms were initiated that not only laid the foundations for a modern education state, but also closed the gap between Quebec and other Canadian provinces. Government grants were made available to school boards; all parents, not just property owners, secured the right to vote in school board elections; compulsory school attendance was extended by a year to age fifteen; free public education was finally extended to the end of high school; and initial moves were made to improve technical and vocational education.

The key Quebec education reform initiative, Bill 60 (1964), placed education more directly under civil rather than religious authority, but measures still had to pass through the Superior Council of Education, where the old Catholic and Protestant clerical elites still held sway. Subsequent reports from the Parent Commission, issued in 1964 and 1965, paved the way for a reorganization of elementary and secondary education, and the establishment of a new polyvalent college system, later named *Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel* and commonly called CEGEPs. While the Lesage reforms met stiff resistance and eventually claimed the government, the education reforms survived. In 1967, the Superior Council approved the "neutral state" system recommended by the Parent Commission and in June of that year, all schools were given the right to declare, within one year, whether they wished to remain denominational. Religious instruction was made optional at the secondary level, but it remained in the core of the elementary curriculum, unless parents chose to exempt their children. General implementation of a more secular school system, while underway, would take considerable time to come to full fruition.

THE RURAL-URBAN SHIFT AND SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

Quebec was a late bloomer when it came to fully embracing the modern bureaucratic education state. With the implementation of Bill 60 and further modernization reforms, the province came more into line with other provincial systems. Elsewhere in Canada, the forces of modernization hit much earlier and were driven

more by school consolidation. Massive administrative reorganization, precursor to the triumph of the bureaucratic education state, appeared first in Alberta, in the period between 1913 and 1919. A broader Canadian movement to consolidate schools began gathering from the 1920s onward and achieved dominance from the early post-war years to the late 1960s. In this respect, as in many others, Quebec was not a province like the others until it joined the state education reform movement.

Outside of Quebec, the gradual migration of rural people to urban places after 1920 gave rise to a wave of consolidation or larger units of administration, signalling the beginning of the end of small, mostly one-room rural schools. Teachers college officials like W.E. MacPherson, writing in 1924, identified what was known as “the rural school problem.” Educational commissions in Manitoba (1923) and later in British Columbia (1938) identified wide rural-urban disparities and recommended changes, including complete provincial tax support for education and the elimination of small administrative units. The Saskatchewan government fell in line, passing the Larger School Units Act in 1944 and, one year later, placed all northern schools under one giant administrative district, funded entirely by the province.

The appeal of larger organizational units, along with the financial difficulties besetting poor rural districts, gave impetus to the Alberta consolidation drive. In 1929, Perren Baker, Alberta’s Minister of Education under the U.F.A. Government, attempted in vain to reorganize the province’s 150 school districts into twenty large divisions. It was eventually implemented by the Social Credit government of William Aberhart which swept into office in 1935 committed to the large unit scheme of school organization. The division system was introduced and, in 1937, 774 rural districts were amalgamated into 11 divisions; and, by 1941, school governance was organized into 50 large divisions. In 1950, Alberta’s County Act gave county councils the powers of divisional school boards, and, by 1965, 28 county boards had been established.

School consolidation came to the fore once again in Nova Scotia in November 1938 when the Council of Public Instruction initiated a Commission on the Larger School Unit. It reported that, as of 1940, the provincial school system remained predominantly rural and still essentially organized in one-room school sections. Of the province’s

1,758 total school sections, 1,490 (84.7%) were rural sections, 233 (13.3%) were village sections, and 45 (2.5%) were urban, located in incorporated towns and cities. The fate of the one-room schools would ultimately come down to a matter of “dollars and cents.” The financial advantages of consolidation were presented without any reference to social costs in terms of lost identity or community stability. In 1946, Nova Scotia’s Angus L. Macdonald government followed up with a plan to develop a provincial system of rural and regional high schools. Consolidating schools and centralizing administrative facilities to achieve financial efficiencies became official Nova Scotia Department of Education dogma after the publication of the 1954 Pottier Commission report. The old one-school sections, with boundaries dating from the founding of the Common School system in 1864-65, were eventually swept away. Despite the existence of a fair number of school officials championing consolidation, public opinion in rural Nova Scotia and elsewhere remained steadfast in its support of the small, local unit of organization.

CONSOLIDATION AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL PANACEA

School consolidation gradually came to be seen by the rising “educratic” class as an organizational panacea. Much of the rationale for, and momentum behind, consolidation was driven by a new breed of North American educational planners. Foremost among them was Dr. Edgar Morphet, a leading American professor of educational administration who rose to be Chief of School Finance in the U.S. Office of Education. Morphet exerted considerable influence on Canadian education planners and administrators. His papers and textbooks extolled the virtues of larger administrative units and school consolidation. Morphet’s planning principles and models were required reading and became a virtual catechism for aspiring principals and administrators. In applying educational finance principles, he and his academic disciples did much to entrench a new bureaucratic ideology, based upon economies of scale, operational efficiency, optimal school size and the allocation of pupil places. It was “top-down” organizational planning in its rawest form.

One of Morphet’s ardent Canadian followers was Professor George E. Flower of Toronto’s Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, a staunch advocate of larger school districts.

He welcomed the prevailing trend toward larger local education authorities with their advantages for financial control and educational planning. In 1964, he published a widely-read textbook book, *How Big is Too Big?*, and adopted that theme for his Quance Public Lecture that year on the challenges facing public education. Reacting to the common criticism that smaller units fostered closer personal relationships, he began to argue that public accountability could be decentralized and preserved within the larger local unit. "Larger and fewer school districts," he wrote in December 1967, were the wave of the future as the "tiny horse-and-buggy district" gave way to "the larger motor-car area." Every possible objection to "bigness" was summarily dismissed, even public concerns that larger districts were "too monolithic, too impersonal" and he relished the prospect of "greater centralization" in the form of provincial control over local school authorities.

THE BIG WAVE – CONSOLIDATION IN THE SIXTIES

The "Bigger is Better" philosophy in education gave a powerful, unrelenting impetus to the next phase of massive school consolidation. This consolidation movement was signaled by the introduction of regional schools, a modernist invention marking the arrival of what John Kenneth Galbraith once called the "technostructure" and only compounding the problem of rural depopulation. Such bureaucratic systems and ways of thinking were highly incompatible with the prevailing values in most local communities. It took a young economics professor, Jim McNiven, to see, back in 1978, that the advance of systematized forms of organization, including larger school districts, was a harbinger of fundamental social change. "School reorganization," he contended, exemplified "a multi-faceted attempt to remould the nature of rural society, and failing that, to depopulate those rural areas where resistance to this process is greatest."

Ontario experienced what Robin S. Harris aptly described as a "Quiet Evolution" in public education. After the unceremonious shelving of a 1950 Royal Commission report, produced by Justice John A. Hope, and calling for major restructuring, organizational change came gradually, in stages. Under Minister of Education and later Premier John Robarts (1959-1962), a massive school building boom was initiated and the high school program completely organized into three divisions: academic, commercial, and science, technology and

trades. His successor, William G. Davis, presided over a massive integrated K-13 education budget, authorized the establishment of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (1965), and a new community college system, known as the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. The school system was regionalized with townships being the smallest units of administration and, as of January 1969, county-size school boards were established promising a greater range of program services in rural communities. Even though the June 1968 report, *Living and Learning*, popularly known as the Hall-Dennis Report, spelled the end of the Robarts Plan of 1962 and encouraged more "child-centred learning," the trend to regionalization and bureaucratic management remained unabated.

Maritime advocates of the Larger School District model drew inspiration from New Brunswick's 1962 Royal Commission on Finance and Municipal Taxation. The Byrne Commission proposed a sweeping reorganization of that province's school system. It recommended a drastic reduction in the number of school districts from 422 to just thirty-three, and the total takeover by the province of the funding of education. The Louis Robichaud government endorsed the plan in January 1962 and gave it a name, the Programme of Equal Opportunity. In the Maritimes, New Brunswick would lead the way in consolidating the entire system, cutting back significantly on the responsibilities of local school authorities. The Byrne-Robichaud plan drew heavy critical fire as a centralizing scheme but was implemented after Robichaud won re-election in October 1967. It was welcomed by consolidators like Flower as a needed dose of "fiscal reality" which would "make sure that total available revenues for education" were "expended equitably over the whole province." The appealing popular mantra of equitable "educational opportunity for all" was beginning to morph into "one-size-fits-all" to provide "educational value for every dollar spent."

Nova Scotia responded with a Comprehensive School System Plan of its own. Larger school units were identified as the solution for many of the system's ills, particularly at the senior and junior high school levels. In 1968, Premier G.I. Smith's government passed legislation to permit the amalgamation of school boards in selected regions designated as an "amalgamation area." Municipal authorities were authorized to enter into negotiations aimed at securing amalgamation agreements. Instead of imposing a New Brunswick-style regime, the province attempted to "broker" agreements between the Urban

and Rural School Boards Association and the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union. Unlike New Brunswick, Nova Scotia inched toward "unified comprehensive services" through a protracted series of negotiations. The "let's make a deal" approach guided by Education Minister Gerald Doucet secured compliance while ruffling fewer feathers.

In Prince Edward Island, the long-delayed consolidation of schools was achieved through a virtual "educational revolution" aimed at eliminating small rural schools and extending high school education. A Royal Commission on educational finance again laid the groundwork. After years of vacillation, Conservative Premier Walter Shaw finally moved to build a network of regional comprehensive and vocational high schools and, by 1963, fifteen rather standardized brick box high schools were scattered across the Island. A youthful and dynamic Liberal Premier, Alex Campbell, toppled the Shaw government in July 1966 and unleashed a torrent of organizational change and stirred up an Island hornet's nest. A Toronto-based firm, Acres Research and Planning, guided by researcher Dr. Alan F. Brown of OISE, produced an August 1967 consultant's report which claimed that the public school system was full of antiquated one-room schools. Out of 25,265 elementary school children, nearly 16,000 attended schools judged physically inadequate. PEI's Comprehensive Development Plan, guided by General Manager Del Gallagher, plowed ahead with a 10-year timetable (1966 to 1976) eliminating all 252 one-room schools and all 258 two-to-five roomers, sending shock waves through many villages and rural communities. For a whole generation of students, consolidation brought a first encounter with school buses, children of other faiths, and schoolyard cuss words. In the case of PEI, the number of districts was slashed from over 400 to 5, sweeping away the province's deeply rooted one-room school system.

THE RISE OF "ONE BIG SYSTEM" THINKING

School consolidation in PEI represented a radical shift, but in Canada's urban and suburban communities bureaucratic forms of school organization and management grew more naturally out of post-war prosperity and expansion. Major metropolitan areas came to be served by mammoth, sprawling school system bureaucracies. The emergence of the Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, school system provides a typical example. Up until 1960, Dartmouth was an incorporated town – and the Town and the outlying suburbs operated their own

schools. The completion of the Angus L. Macdonald Bridge spurred a Dartmouth population explosion and gradually changed the small-town atmosphere. The days of long line-ups and daily conversations at the Dartmouth Ferry dock came to an end. School consolidation in the booming municipality of Dartmouth did not come easily. Beneath the veneer of solidarity, local Dartmouth Councillors were unsettled by the bewildering changes and muttered about "losing a feeling of family" in the old town. Mayor I.W. Akerley rose above the fray, forged alliances, and pursued consolidation with vigour. His successor, Mayor Joe Zatzman, promoted system expansion from a businessman's point of view. The biggest test came in 1966-67 with amalgamation of the former Catholic schools and integration of the oft-forgotten Department of National Defence schools. School board politics added to the unpredictability, especially after elections, when half the municipal representatives might turn over. School Superintendents like Carmen F. Moir of Dartmouth came to exert considerable influence over an increasingly complex, bureaucratic local education system.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE "THREE BS" – BIGGER, BETTER AND BUREAUCRACY

School promoters and consolidators in the 1960s and early 1970s believed that "Bigger is Better" in public education. School superintendents in Canada, with few exceptions, accepted the trend toward larger administrative units and were completely swept up in modernizing the entire school system. Swollen student enrolments, driven by the arrival of the Baby Boom generation, produced massive expansion, raising concerns about the rising cost of education. Cost conscious Canadians were concerned about bringing a system that now consumed a much greater share of taxes under some kind of control. Further school system consolidation was spurred in the 1960s by the need to wring more operational efficiency out of a system growing like an untended weed. In all Canadian provinces, elementary and secondary education come under more direct provincial control and the number of school districts was reduced drastically.

Most political leaders and education bureaucrats in Canada's English-speaking provinces heralded consolidation as the wave of the present, and future, but a few lonely voices remained skeptical about the latest educational panacea. One of the first academics was an American revisionist educational historian, Professor

Michael B. Katz. After recently arriving at OISE from Columbia University, he wrote a controversial 1968 article calling into question the ideology and objectives of modern public education. His fresh perspective not only cut against the grain of the Canadian educational establishment, it also encouraged a flurry of critical thinking. Small bands of academic skeptics, based in Toronto at OISE or associated with *This Magazine is About Schools*, began to question their previous assumptions about the beneficence of public education.

Katz proposed a new way of looking at the origin and motives of publicly-funded education. In "Class, Bureaucracy and Schools," he contended that school reform, since the mid-1900s, was actually driven by "conservative social forces" who created and upheld a system expressing and reflecting their aspirations, fears, and interests. Public school systems, he argued, represented "the attempt of the 'better people' to do something to the rest." From the 1880s onward, Egerton Ryerson's Ontario model, like its American counterpart, had assumed a fixed form, remarkably resistant to change. The whole system exemplified the following core characteristics, as expressed in his words: "it was universal, tax-supported, free, compulsory, bureaucratic, class-based, and racist." From the beginning, the school system promoted middle class or "bourgeois" social values, and favoured bureaucratic regulation over the fostering of individual rights. While public school promoters professed to support "equal opportunity" for all, Katz claimed that they acted differently, favouring bureaucracy as a means of controlling or strictly limiting the potential for social mobility among the common people.

Few Canadians were influenced by Katz and the academic skeptics, but similar sentiments were voiced by those local citizens steamrollered by the educational bulldozer otherwise known as school consolidation. Closing down schoolhouses and introducing families to the joys of school bus transportation aroused anger, frustration, and feelings of powerlessness in many small communities. Most teachers were rooted in, and often strongly attached to, the rural school communities, even though larger consolidated schools and junior high schools did open up wider career opportunities and the potential for higher salaries. Expressing skepticism about "bigger and better" schools was frowned upon by the authorities, so it was best kept to oneself. Away from the

school and in retirement rural schoolteachers such as Dorothy Elderkin Lawrence, editor of *Telling Tales Out of School* (1995), were more candid in their views about the loss of community identity incurred through the passing of the one-room schoolhouse.

The public mood in Canada's English-speaking provinces, as in Quebec, remained fairly buoyant in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A Centennial Year commemorative booklet, *Nova Scotia: Three Hundred Years in Education*, captured well the spirit and temper of the times. Modernizing forces were in the ascendancy and voices of dissent were muffled in the effervescent, celebratory atmosphere. Consolidated schools had arrived or were coming to most small towns and larger villages, and hundreds of older abandoned wooden schools were facing extinction or an uncertain future. Older teaching philosophies and methods were also under attack. Amidst all the clamour, Dr. William B. Hamilton of the Atlantic Institute of Education, was one of the few educational insiders who openly expressed his reservations about the new directions. The overriding theme was "bigger is better," he wryly observed in 1979. "Whether that system is superior," he continued, "is a matter to be decided by some future historian."

Over the next two decades, consolidation, bureaucracy and public education came to be so closely intertwined that it became impossible to answer the question "Who's in charge?" Modernization had further accelerated the trend toward a new form of administrative centralization and state managerialism without much public accountability or attention to student performance results. Prominent education analysts like the Toronto *Globe and Mail* education reporter Jennifer Lewington and OISE professor Stephen B. Lawton had come to describe the school system as a "bureaucratic fortress" maintaining strict boundaries between "insiders" and "outsiders" in education. Public education in the early 1990s was now said to be impenetrable and facing "a crisis of public confidence." Leading education critics like Lewington, Graham Orpwood, Andrew Nikiforuk, and advocacy groups like the Ontario Coalition for Education Reform confronted the modern bureaucratic education state, largely erected since the 1960s, and called for "the walls to come down."

The triumph of the modern liberal education state had not led to nirvana. In 1992, the Quebec Ministry of Education marked its 30th year by attempting to significantly change its direction. The new Plan of Action, *Joining Forces* (1992), recognized the limits of centralized direction and the need to “make the education system more flexible in order to give freer rein to those who work closely with the student.” It was not a situation that Quebec’s Brother Anonymous or Canadian state education reformers of the sixties had expected or foreseen.

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HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN FRENCH-SPEAKING ONTARIO: A HISTORIOGRAPHIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This historiography, which we will attempt to briefly review in the following article, reveals the desire of Franco-Ontarian historians to give a voice to a collective experience which is seldom addressed. We will also reflect on the social and cultural future of the French-speaking minority, by retracing the genesis of an evolution in a sector that, to this day, has had a crucial bearing on the well-being of its culture and its identity

Since the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s, the history of education in Ontario really started to grow with the creation of a new historiographic tradition. Early historiographic work considered schools as institutions dedicated to the reproduction of social rapports and have mainly studied the strategies used by the ruling classes in order to preserve the existing social order.¹ Later on, historians started studying people's responses² to the States' and the elite's education policies, as well as the socialisation process experienced by the people involved in Ontario's education system.³ Thus, from the 1980s, the historiography of education in Ontario went through a major transformation. It moved away from the study of history based on individual social actors, politics and institutions, towards more of a social-based approach to history by considering the interactions and rapports that different groups establish within the school system and which are defined by class, region, ethnicity and gender.

In contrast to Prairies historians who have written about the various academic pathways of different ethnocultural groups⁴, historiographical output in Ontario is essentially focused on the study of the public education system and sets the school experience as it is lived in public schools as an interpretative norm.⁵ Moreover, while this

historiographical approach has given great importance to the analysis of class and gender relationships, on the other hand, it has overlooked the role of cultural and religious minorities in the school system.⁶

Franco-Ontarian historiography, which was particularly prolific on issues relating to education, emerged at the same time the Canadian francophonie started gathering attention as an important topic for inquiry, which happened in the 1970s with that group's cultural awakening and political militancy.⁷ This historiography, which we will attempt to summarize in the following article, reflects the desire of Franco-Ontarian historians to speak of a collective experience which is seldom addressed and to simultaneously reflect on the social and cultural future of the French-speaking minority by retracing the genesis of an evolution in a critical sector, one of vital importance for the well-being of its culture and its identity.

ARTHUR GODBOUT, PIONEER OF THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN FRENCH-SPEAKING ONTARIO

The title of pioneer of the history of education in French-speaking Ontario goes to Arthur Godbout, author of one of the first reviews on the subject, *Nos écoles francophones*, written in the early 1970s.⁸ Godbout was a teacher at a teacher-training school and a school inspector for forty-three years, and through this genesis of the French presence since the 18th century, he described the numerous steps in the history of French schools in Ontario. He paints the picture of an evolution marked by conflicts linked to the struggle for survival of the French Canadian people while focusing on the political and educational actors, legislation, school structures and curriculums.⁹ Godbout has essentially based his research on references books on education, on historical sources and on his personal experience of the education system, as well as on his experience as a teacher and civil servant.

Whereas the author maintains that he was impartial and followed a classic historical methodology, *Nos écoles franco-ontariennes* is to some extent quite partisan. It is a tribute to past struggles and conveys a message of hope to future generations about the future of French-language

instruction in Ontario. In addition, Godbout warns his contemporaries to keep a focused eye on the progress made in education in the 1960s and 1970s given that this progress is still in a quite fragile state and encourages them to continue fighting for the full recognition of their rights to be schooled in their language. This is a struggle that, according to Godbout, is intrinsically tied to the well-being of the Franco-Ontarian community.¹⁰ Even though Godbout's work has a political, partisan and even moralising tinge, it is a well-documented book that provided the very first review of the institutional and pedagogical evolution of Franco-Ontarian schools.

EDUCATION CONFLICTS IN ONTARIO: A CLASH OF NATIONALISMS

In the 1970s and 1980s, a new generation of professional historians emerged which was deeply affected by, on the one hand, the political upheavals surrounding bilingualism and French-language education in Ontario, and on the other hand, the threat of the dissolution of French Canada and a feeling of disconnect with the French-Quebecois identity. These historians participated in the creation of the Franco-Ontarian identity by retracing the development of this community, whose origins they trace back to the presence of French colonies in Ontario in the 17th century, and which was defined, among other things, by their fight to gain the right to be schooled in French which occurred between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. This historiographical output, which cannot be dissociated from a context of political protests and activism, tints the authors' research premises and their interpretations, and thus appears to be partisan to a certain degree. It is above all a political take on the history of education that brings to the forefront French-Canadian institutions and elites which are set as the incarnation of a people's will to defend their language, culture and identity in a context of conflict in education.

However, the first historians to be interested in the political history of education in French-speaking Ontario were paradoxically Anglophones. In the 1960s and 1970s, the political history of Confederation caught the attention of Anglo-Canadian historians who wanted to trace Canada's nation-building process. Thus a group of historians from Ontario examined the Regulation 17 crisis as a way to study

the relationship between Canada's French and English groups at the turn of the 20th century and the consequences of ethnoreligious conflicts on the nation-building process. They were particularly interested by the sources of school and linguistic conflicts and by their political context. The issue of language of instruction – which they traced back to the second half of the 19th century – is associated with ideological struggles and ambitions that opposed politicians, the clergy and the local elites.¹¹

It is in the 1980s with the publication of Arthur Godbout's book that we can see a historiography written by a Francophone, which situates the education conflicts in Ontario within the nation-building process of French-Canada and the emergence of a Franco-Ontarian community (a community which, by extension, becomes referred to as French-Canada from the 1960s onward.) Thus, historians Gaétan Gervais and Robert Choquette approach the history of education from the angle of the French-Canadian nation-building process which was led by the French-Canadian elites and their institutions and which was based on their shared legacy of history, culture, language and faith. In this discourse, the parish and the school are considered as organisational foundations of the Franco-Ontarian society.¹²

The formation of this French-Canadian community in Ontario is closely tied to the education struggles that happened in the 20th century around the demand for French language schools. Robert Choquette conducted a meticulous research by examining diocesan archives, newspapers and the Association canadienne-française d'éducation de l'Ontario (ACFÉO). His main premise was that the education conflict in Ontario was the manifestation of the rivalry between two minority groups, the French-Canadians and the Irish, competing in order to take hold of the political power associated with the Catholic Church and thus securing their position within Ontario society. From this angle, the school became one of the main battle grounds where two irreconcilable national conceptions of Catholicism came into conflict.¹³

The work done by these researchers on Regulation 17 are descriptive and leave analysis aside to focus on the reconstruction of the conflict's steps through a perspective that at times becomes tendentious, Manichean even. Indeed, the Irish protagonists are represented by the

controversial figure of Mgr. Fallon, leader of a clergy that advocated assimilation, who confronts French-Canadian elites united around the ACFÉO in defending the educational rights of minorities. The authors of this historiographical approach come to the conclusion that Franco-Ontarians became stronger as a result of the Regulation 17 crisis because this crisis acted as a catalyst in the formation of the Franco-Ontarian identity.

Finally, through this historical narrative, elites and institutions are represented in a positive manner, which contrasts with the way the Anglo-Canadian historiography represents them. The tendency of the latter was, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, to describe the institutions set in place by the ruling classes as tools used for social control or structures set up to manage the masses. On the other hand, for the Franco-Ontarian authors, the elites play a crucial role in the creation of institutions that fosters social ties, strengthen social cohesion and develop a sense of community belonging that become permanent over time.¹⁴ Roger Guidon, who was rector at the University of Ottawa from 1964 to 1984, wrote a revealing book in this respect. Indeed, he had undertaken an extended study of the linguistic duality at the University of Ottawa and of the conflicts that have split francophone and Anglophone Catholics by looking at university management and the evolution of faculties and curricula.¹⁵

During the last decades, this political history of education went through major changes due to the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and because of Section 23 which guarantees French language instruction to French minorities in Canada. These studies, mainly authored by law experts that favour a history-based approach, highlight the new tools and means for action available to French minorities after the patriation of the Constitution in 1981 which enable them to bring their claims to the courts and gain autonomy and control over their educative institutions.¹⁶ For historian Michael D. Behiels, author of *La francophonie canadienne, Renouveau constitutionnel et gouvernance scolaire*, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has established a "constitutional democracy" that takes into account the rights of minority groups rather than giving all the power to provincial governments and which heralds a new era for the cultural rebirth of francophone and Acadian minorities.¹⁷

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY OR ALIGNING THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION WITH SOCIAL HISTORY

Towards the end of the 1980s, the history of education presented from a perspective of clash of nationalisms or of the emergence of national Churches gradually gave way to a historiographic production that was more influenced by the type of work done in social history. Researchers in this historiographical movement were influenced by an approach that attempts to study every element in a society in order to reconstruct the social rapports and interactions that are part of a “total social fact.” Historians adhering to this approach take on a perspective that examines the relationship between education and the socio-economic conditions and material resources of different francophone communities. Without completely denying the importance of political and cultural factors, these researchers claim that socioeconomic and material conditions in which social actors evolve define the rapports they have towards education and the creation of an education system.

Chad Gaffield's *Language, Schooling and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario* is probably the first work to turn away from the traditional method of approaching cultural and political history by linking cultural identity to the social conditions experienced by Francophones living in the Prescott-Russell counties in Eastern Ontario. By taking a sociocultural approach, he associates the origins of Franco-Ontarian identity not to the political circumstances surrounding the adoption of Regulation 17, but to social, economic and material conditions experienced by the French-Canadian population which have determined family strategies and group behaviour in relation to education, and ultimately, to the language of instruction.¹⁸

Those researchers stand apart from the previous school of thought because they take into consideration various literary resources; they do not limit their research only to institutional or governmental archives and the press. To a great extent, they draw on data from decennial censuses in order to reconstruct the social and economic context in which the education system has evolved and which has, according to them, determined that population's process of schooling. However, the sources used are not uniquely of a demographic or socioeconomic nature. These researchers also scrutinise more traditional archives, like the ones found in educational institutions,

religious congregations and Franco-Canadian community networks. They also draw on newspaper articles and oral accounts in order to reconstruct the social environment of that time.¹⁹

Another particularity of their work is that the authors are interested by the relationship between the “governing” and the “governed” within the school context. They posit that social actors have a degree of autonomy in relation to the State, to governmental and educational institutions and to the bureaucracy, and that they have some influence in the creation and transformation of the French-language Catholic education system, an influence which is based on their aspirations, interest and means. However, the authors point to the limits of that autonomy; French schools have to be managed in line with constraints imposed by the provincial government in relation to the language of instruction, personnel qualifications and high school requirements. And the Ontario government ultimately has the last word and a certain coercive power, given that schools are dependent upon provincial financing.²⁰

However, this historiographic approach tends to interpret educational phenomena as fundamentally determined by socioeconomic or demographic conditions and to minimise the impact of the nation-building aspirations of political and religious elites as the force that propelled the development of French language network of schools in Ontario. By doing so, their representation of the evolution of French language schools in Ontario is somewhat disconnected from its nation building project. They put emphasis on social actors and position schools as products of the social conditions in which they evolved.²¹ However, some authors reconcile both approaches – social history and national history. For example, in *Coloniser et enseigner*, Danielle Coulombe links the educative work done by nuns with the Hearst's bishop Mgr. Hallé's project of creating a human network that would link Abitibi to Manitoba by way of Northern Ontario through institutions that would become anchor points for French-Canadian settlers.

CONSIDERING THE OTHER SOLITUDE: THE POINT OF VIEW OF ANGLO-CATHOLICS

Separate schools in Ontario have been studied by many Anglophone authors. Like the conflicts between the Irish and the French-Canadians on the subject of language and schools, there is still to this day a gap in the historiographic traditions on Catholic schools in Ontario

that historians, both Francophone and Anglophone, rarely dare to bridge.²² The historiographic output produced by Anglo-Catholic historians is part of a political approach taken on by some representatives from the Catholic minority of English-speakers in order to reinstate that separate schools are rooted in Ontario's history and in order to support the legitimacy of some of their educational claims. Thus, three themes generally emerge: the financing of public separate schools, the recognition of Catholic high schools and their access to public funding, and the language of instruction. Their works often represent the creation and evolution of separate schools in Ontario from a conflictual approach, either from a religious (Catholic minority against Protestant majority) or a linguistic point of view (Francophone minority against Anglophone majority.)

The greatest contribution of the Anglo-Catholic historiography is to bring another side of the story to the table, one that puts into perspective the role of the clergy and of the Irish elite at the time of the Regulation 17 crisis. It sheds light on the origins of those debates, which were overlooked or left out by francophone historians, and which are essential to understand the linguistic rapports in Ontario's Catholic minority community at the turn of the 20th century, and they do so by paying special attention to the political, socio-religious and cultural contexts. The novelty with these historians' approach was that they did not limit the study of bilingual schools to the conflict surrounding language of instruction, but instead viewed it as part of the many transformations that Anglo-Catholicism was undergoing in Ontario, such as the social mobility of Anglo-Catholics, the rise of imperialistic sentiments amongst the Irish religious hierarchy, the issue of funding separate schools and Catholic high schools, assimilation policies imposed on European immigrants by the Catholic church, the social work done by the catholic clergy in urban areas, etc.²³

Similarly to the first francophone writings on Regulation 17 and the language of instruction, the work done by Anglo-Catholic historians was also biased to a certain degree. Indeed, Anglo-Catholic historians put little effort into contextualizing French Canadian opposition to Regulation 17 with the emergence of French-Canadian and Anglo-Canadian nationalisms. The opposition to Regulation 17 was attributed to the ambitions of the French-Canadian elites and their political militancy.²⁴ Hopefully, Franco-Ontarian and Anglo-Catholic schools

of thought will be willing to build more bridges in order to promote debates and dialogue so as to broaden our knowledge of the Regulation 17 conflict.

After this brief overview of the Franco-Ontarian historiography of education, it is time for an assessment. It is crucial not to forget that education issues were always central to the study of the Canadian francophonie, and this is also the case in French-speaking Ontario. Considering education issues is unavoidable because of the major role that the school plays in the creation and renewal of the social fabric and identity of the Franco-Ontarian community. However, to this day, historiography has represented the school as an institution enabling the "survival" of a community and political struggles as foundations of the Franco-Ontarian identity. Even though a new trend has been emerging over the past decades, the social conditions and processes leading up to the creation of the school system and to the schooling of Franco-Ontarians still need to be studied.

The importance given to political and cultural factors in the history of education in French-speaking Ontario can be explained by the climate of identity awakening that has risen out of the linguistic claims of the 1960s and 1970s and which has necessarily molded the form and content of the historical narrative through which debates, political struggles and ideologies, laws, institutions and school structures are analyzed. Thus the more superficial aspect of the Franco-Ontarian school system is relatively well-documented when it comes to its relationship the State and the social majority. Less well-documented are the conditions necessary in order to implement and develop a Francophone educational space, notably the role of public and private institutions in social production and reproduction. Furthermore, the local dynamics between the representatives of school boards and Franco-Ontarian communities are generally not addressed. Finally, schools as they are experienced by the Franco-Ontarian population and examined through themes such as school programs, textbooks, teacher's training and work conditions, and the socialisation of students, are areas that still require more research.

Immigration, which will come to play an important part in the definition – or redefinition – of the Franco-Ontarian identity and the transmission of the French language and culture in Ontario has seldom been given much attention by historians who prefer leaving this area to sociolinguists and education researchers.²⁵ This lack of

interest can be explained by primary sources that are often incomplete and the fact that history is mainly concerned with the past while immigration has only recently become a reality in Franco-Ontarian schools. However, sooner or later, historians will have to consider the Franco-Ontarian community's relationship to this "Other"; some pioneering work has recently been undertaken in this respect.²⁶ To that effect, studying the North-East of the province, a region that has an important minority of French-Canadians which coexist with numerous other ethnic groups and who are in contact through such institutions as Catholic schools, would prove to be a very rich area of inquiry.

The historiography of education in French Ontario, in spite of its weaknesses and deficiencies, is a testament to the fascinating trajectory of a minority group that was able to create a space for itself characterized by institutional diversity and various school options that are representative of its social and cultural dynamism. This historiography is an important resource for researchers in Ontario and the rest of Canada that needs to be more thoroughly examined in order for us to better understand how the ties between education, culture and society mold the collective experience of a minority group.

NOTES

- 1 J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp and Louis-Audet (ed.), *Canadian Education: A history*, Scarborough, 1970 and Robert M. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario, 1876-1976*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982, 293 p. This book is representative of this trend.
- 2 Michael Katz and Paul Mattingly (ed.), *Education and Social Change, Themes from Ontario Past*, New York, New York University Press, 1975, 324 p. Ian E. Davey, *Educational Reform and the Working Class: School Attendance in Hamilton, Ontario, 1851-1891*, doctoral dissertation (history), University of Toronto, 1975, 356 p. Harvey J. Graff, *Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century City*, doctoral dissertation (history), University of Toronto, 1975. Susan E. Houston, *The Impetus to Reform: Urban Crime, Poverty and Ignorance*, doctoral dissertation (history), University of Toronto, 1975, 466 p. Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, *Family Schools and Society in Nineteenth-Century Canada*, Toronto, Oxford University, 1975, 294 p. Robert D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar "From Voluntarism to State Schooling: the Creation of the Public School System in Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review*, 60(4) (1975): 442-465. Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters, Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1977, 192 p.; Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871*, London, The Althouse Press, 1988, 450 p. Neil MacDonald and Alf Chaiton, *Egerton Ryerson and His Times. Essays on the History of Education*, Toronto, Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1978, 319 p. Robert D. Gidney and Douglas Archie Lawr, "Egerton Ryerson and the Origins of the Ontario Secondary School," *Canadian Historical Review*, 60(4) (1979): 443-473.
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- 5 Gidney's book, *From Hope to Harris*, is an exception with its chapter on minority groups, which includes Franco-Ontarians. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*. . . : 142-164. Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice write a chapter on the schooling experience of the Catholic minority. Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*. . . , 418 p. See also Sara Z. Burke and Patrice Milewski, *Schooling in Transition: Readings in Canadian History of Education*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2012, 440 p. which has a few essays on minorities, some of which are on Franco-Ontarians.

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- ⁷ See Jean Lapointe and Joseph Yvon Thériault, "La sociologie et les francophonies minoritaires au Canada," in Joseph Yvon Thériault (ed.), *Francophones minoritaires au Canada – l'état des lieux*, Moncton, Les Éditions de l'Acadie, 1999: 193-208.
- ⁸ Arthur Godbout, *Nos écoles franco-ontariennes, Histoire des écoles de langue française dans l'Ontario, des origines du système scolaire (1841) jusqu'à nos jours*, Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1980, 141 p. See also Arthur, Godbout, *L'origine des écoles françaises dans l'Ontario*, Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1972, 183 p. and Arthur Godbout, *Historique de l'enseignement français dans l'Ontario 1676-1976*, Ottawa, Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, 1979, 102 p. See also the work of historian Lucien Brault: Lucien Brault, *Histoire des comtés unis de Prescott et de Russell*, 1965, 377 p. and Lucien Brault, *Bref exposé de l'enseignement bilingue au XX^e siècle dans l'Ontario et les autres provinces*, Kingston, 1966, 36 p. The essay "L'éducation en Ontario français," published in *Francophonies minoritaires au Canada: l'état des lieux*, is one of the very few reviews on this topic, with the exception of the one by Godbout. See Louis-Gabriel Bordeleau, Roger Bernard and Benoît Cazabon, "L'éducation en Ontario français," in Joseph-Yvon Thériault (ed.), *Francophonies minoritaires au Canada: l'état des lieux*, Moncton, Éditions d'Acadie, 1999: 435-473.
- ⁹ Godbout, *Nos écoles franco-ontariennes...* 11-25.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 107-122.
- ¹¹ Margaret Prang "Clerics, Politicians, and the Bilingual Schools Issue in Ontario, 1910-1917," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 41, Issue 4 (December 1960): 281-307. Marilyn Barber, "Ontario Bilingual Schools Issue: Sources of Conflict," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 47, Issue 3 (September 1966): 227-248. Peter Oliver "The Ontario Bilingual Schools Crisis, 1919-29," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes*, 7(1) (February 1972): 22-45.
- ¹² Gaétan Gervais, "L'enseignement supérieur en Ontario français (1848-1965)," *Revue du Nouvel-Ontario*, n° 7 (1985): 11-52; Gaétan Gervais, "Aux origines de l'identité franco-ontarienne," *Cahiers Charlevoix, Études franco-ontariennes*, n° 1, Sudbury, Société Charlevoix et Prise de parole, 1995: 125-168; and Gaétan Gervais, "Le règlement XVII (1912-1927)," *Revue du Nouvel Ontario*, n° 18 (1996): 123-192. See also Gaétan Gervais, "L'Ontario français, 1821-1910," in Cornelius J. Jaenen (ed.), *Les Franco-Ontariens*, Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1993: 49-126; Gaétan Gervais, "L'histoire de l'Ontario français, 1610-1997," in Joseph-Yvon Thériault (ed.), *Francophonies minoritaires au Canada: l'état des lieux*, Moncton, Éditions d'Acadie, 1995: 145-161 and Gaétan Gervais, "Le règlement XVII (1912-1927)," *Revue du Nouvel Ontario*, n° 18 (1996): 123-192. For the founding narrative of Franco-Ontarians, see Robert Choquette, *L'Ontario français, historique*, Montreal, Éditions Études Vivantes, 1980. 272 p. and Michel Bock, Gaétan Gervais et Suzanne Arseneault (ed.), *L'Ontario français: des Pays-d'en-Haut à nos jours*, Centre franco-ontarien des ressources pédagogiques, 2004, 271 p.
- ¹³ Robert Choquette, *Langue et Religion: histoire des conflits anglo-français en Ontario*, Ottawa, Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1977, 268 p.; Robert Choquette, *L'Église catholique dans l'Ontario français du dix-neuvième siècle*, Ottawa, Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1984, 365 p. et Robert Choquette, *La foi gardienne de la langue en Ontario: 1900-1950*, Montréal, Bellarmin, 1987, 282 p.
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- ¹⁹ On this subject, see Françoise Noel's book, which attempts to reconstruct the daily lives of the North Bay region "habitants" based on newspaper articles and oral accounts. Françoise Noel, *Family and Community Life in Northeastern Ontario, The Interwar Years*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009, 340 p.
- ²⁰ Danielle Coulombe, *Coloniser et enseigner, Le rôle du clergé et la contribution des Sœurs de Notre-Dame du Perpétuel Secours à Hearst 1917-1942*, Éditions du Nordir, Ottawa, 1988, 249 p. See also Stéphane Lang, *La communauté franco-ontarienne et l'enseignement secondaire (1910-1968)*, University of Ottawa, doctoral dissertation (history), 2003: 302.
- ²¹ One school of thought has recently called for – not only in the field of history, but in all the other disciplines in the social sciences – the return to an interpretative approach that positions notions of memory and history more centrally, given that these notions have created sense for French-Canadians and that they are still necessary today in order to legitimize the political project of the Canadian francophonie. See Michel Bock "Se souvenir et oublier: la mémoire du Canada français, hier et aujourd'hui," *L'espace francophone en milieu minoritaire au Canada. Nouveaux enjeux, nouvelles mobilisations*, Joseph-Yvon Thériault, Gilbert, Anne and Linda Cardinal (ed.) Montreal, Fides, 2008: 161-204 and Meunier, Martin and Joseph Yvon Thériault. "Que reste-t-il de l'intention vitale du Canada français?" *L'espace francophone en milieu minoritaire au Canada. Nouveaux enjeux, nouvelles mobilisations*. Thériault, Joseph Yvon, Gilbert, Anne and Linda Cardinal (ed.) Montreal, Fides, 2008: 205-240.
- ²² See Franklin Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Upper Canada*, Toronto, J. M. Dent & Sons [Canada] Ltd., 1954, 331 p.; Franklin Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario*, Toronto, Thomas Nelson & Sons [Canada] Ltd., 1964, 514 p. and Franklin Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario: From the Hope Commission to the Promise of Completion (1945-1985)*, Toronto, Catholic Education Foundation of Ontario, 1986, 514 p. See also Walker's ideas on the issues and sources of the history of Catholic schools in Ontario, in Franklin Walker, "The History of Ontario Separate Schools: Sources and Problems," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Historical Studies*, Vol. 55 (1988): 7-20. See also Robert M. Stamp, *The Historical Background of Separate Schools in Ontario*, Toronto, Ontario Ministry of Education, 1985, 35 p. Mark G. McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, Irish and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999, 432 p. Michael Power, *A Promise Fulfilled, Highlights in the Political History of Catholic Separate Schools in Ontario*, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, 2002, 525 p. Robert T. Dixon has in a way become Walker's successor as "official historian" of Ontario's Catholic schools by writing his dissertation on the subject and by publishing many articles and essays on the subject. Robert T. Dixon, *The Ontario Separate School System and Section 93 of the British North America Act*, doctoral dissertation (education) University of Toronto, 1976, 854 p. Robert T. Dixon, *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario* (1964-2001), Vol. 4, Toronto, The Catholic Education Foundation of Ontario, 2003, 543 p. Robert T. Dixon, "William Davis and the Road to Completion in Ontario's Catholic High Schools, 1971-1985," *Catholic Church Historical Association (CCHA)*, Vol. 69 (2003): 7-33. Robert T. Dixon, *We Remember, We Believe, A History of Toronto's Catholic Separate School Boards, 1841 to 1997*, Toronto, Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2007, 481 p.
- ²³ See Power, *A Promise Fulfilled...: 347-473* and Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario: From the Hope Commission...: 437-477*.
- ²⁴ See Power, *A Promise Fulfilled...: 203-247* and Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario...: 228-231*. McGowan also addresses the issue of bilingual schools which he considers through a broader framework and includes the differences between the Irish and French-Canadian clergy on episcopal nominations and the assimilation of Catholic immigrants. McGowan, *Waning of the Green...: 235-249*.
- ²⁵ See Monica Heller, *Crossroads: Language, Education and Ethnicity in French Ontario*, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 1994, 252 p. and Monica Heller, *Paths to Post-Nationalism. A Critical Ethnography of Language and Identity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, 240 p. Diane Gérin-Lajoie, "La problématique identitaire et l'école de langue française en Ontario" *Francophonies d'Amérique*, n°18 (2004): 177-179. Monica Heller and Normand Labrie (ed.), *Discours et identités, La francité canadienne entre modernité et mondialisation*, Fernelmont (Belgique), Éditions modulaires européennes, 2003, 448 p. Normand Labrie and Gilles Forlot (ed.), *L'enjeu de la langue en Ontario français*, Sudbury, Prise de parole, Collection Ancrages, 1999, 269 p. Normand Labrie and Sylvie A. Lamoureux (ed.), *L'éducation de langue française en Ontario, enjeux et processus sociaux*, Sudbury, Prise de parole, 2003, 247 p. Normand Labrie "Language Policy in Ontario: From the Recognition of Linguistic Rights to the Free-Market Policy," *Canadian Language Policies in Comparative Perspective*, in Michael Morris (ed.) Montreal/Kingston, McGill Queen's University Press, 2010: 333-343.
- ²⁶ See the pioneering work done by Marcel Martel and Michael Begley. Marcel Martel, "Le dialogue avec l'Autre: les dirigeants franco-ontariens et la question de l'immigration, 1927-1968," *Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, Nouvelle série, 6 (1995): 273-287. Michael Begley, *Immigration et éducation: histoire du Regroupement ethnoculturel des parents francophones de l'Ontario*, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, 2012, 352 p.

“THEY CAN’T TAKE OUR ANCESTORS OUT OF US”: A BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF CANADA’S RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM, INCARCERATION, INSTITUTIONALIZED POLICIES AND LEGISLATIONS AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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ABSTRACT This paper provides a brief history of the residential school system in Canada. One of Canada’s key attempts to assimilate Indigenous peoples was through the use of "education" by the government and churches. For over 150 years thousands of Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes, families and communities. This paper also focuses on the impact which these colonial schools and government policies had on Indigenous children, their families and communities. Many students who survived the schools have described a state of being incarcerated in them. This work demonstrates the fact that, despite the government’s systematic and deliberate attempts to suppress Indigenous peoples and their cultures, its policies and actions have largely failed. Indigenous peoples continue to speak their own narratives, speak their own truths and revitalize and build on their knowledges and ancestral systems from their diverse perspectives.

INTRODUCTION

Any examination of Indigenous Education in Canada must begin with the understanding that Indigenous peoples had, and still have, their own knowledge systems and philosophies of educating/teaching their children, as well as highly

complex, efficient and well-developed systems to help their children and society to function effectively. Before the arrival of Europeans, Aboriginal groups in North America were largely independent and self-governing. They determined their own philosophies and approaches to cultural, economic, religious, familial and educational endeavours (Bombay, Matheson and Anisman, 2009: 7).

These Indigenous knowledge systems were disrupted over 150 years ago, though, beginning in the mid-19th century, when First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were removed from their families and forced to attend Canada's residential schools. The residential school system is widely-recognized as having included industrial schools, boarding schools, and homes for students, including hostels and billets. However, it also included convents, day schools, mission schools, sanitoriums and settlement camps (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2010). The report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People of 1996 states that, of all the steps taken to achieve the assimilation of Indigenous peoples, none was more obviously a creature of Canada's paternalism toward Aboriginal people than its stern education program.

This paper provides a critical examination of the history of residential schools in Canada. It examines Canadian federal government policies against Indigenous peoples, the experiences of the children who were forced to attend these colonial schools, and the overall impact of the schools on their families and communities.

As an Indigenous person from the Caribbean, I have learned of many students' experiences in Canadian residential schools. This understanding came from my own family members who are Mushkegowuk and Anishinabe peoples, and who are survivors of the schools. Many people who did not attend these schools, including my own children and other family members, experience lingering intergenerational trauma. The Legacy of Hope Foundation (2003) defines intergenerational trauma or multigenerational trauma as the unresolved effect of trauma in a generation. Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman (2009: 14) further assert that it is difficult to disassociate the impact of traumatic experiences of one generation from the effects of adverse events which are encountered in subsequent generations.

A character on a recent television show noted that "Memories have a long life. My people, they never forget." This resonated with me and reinforced the notion of

ancestral memory. I recall reading narratives of people who were enslaved and taken to Indigenous Taino territory in the Caribbean. I became absorbed in their stories and was so affected that, long after reading them, I could see people bound on the ship, their voices crying out in pain and resistance. I could not understand what was happening until I connected with an Elder and realized that I was experiencing ancestral or blood memory. I saw and heard the voices of the ancestors. My young son said, in response to the same television show, "Mom, people do remember."

A survivor of a Quebec residential school stated, "The time has come for words that are necessary and just" (Grey and Gros-Lous Monier, 2010: 5). It is in this spirit that I write this article. I present words and ideas that are necessary and just in the hope that they might lead to actions that are necessary and just.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL HISTORY/POLICIES OF ASSIMILATION

The residential schools extend as far back as the 1600s, to the early days of Christian missionary work in North America. Some mission schools were set up during the mid-17th century, shortly after Europeans came in contact with Indigenous peoples (Kanai Board of Education: 2006). These mission schools aimed to assimilate Indigenous people by using Christianity to "civilize" the "savages."

The Bagot Commission report of 1842-1844 was one of the earliest official documents to recommend education as a means of ridding the Canadian colonies, soon to be the Dominion of Canada, of Indigenous peoples. It proposed that agriculture-based boarding schools which were placed far from parental influence would be the most effective means of achieving this. The children would need to learn English, manual labour and Christian values (RCAP: 1996; Aboriginal Healing Foundation: 2002). Indian Affairs Superintendent T. G. Anderson elaborated on these ideas in 1846 when he told the General Council of Chiefs and *Principle Men* in Orillia, Ontario, that "your children shall be sent to Schools, where they will forget their Indian habits and be instructed in all the necessary arts of civilized life, and become one with your white brethren" (Baldwin, 1846: 7). In 1847, Egerton Ryerson, the influential Chief Superintendent of Education in Upper Canada reinforced this when he, called for Indigenous children to be sent far away from their homes and free of parental influence.

During the new Canadian nation’s first few decades, when the government should have been addressing its constitutional responsibility to Indigenous peoples and the lands *assigned* to them by the *Constitution Act, 1867*, it adopted a policy of assimilation. It supported residential schools which cut First Nations’ children’s ties to home and family, and placed them in the context of decades of aggressive assimilation practices of the government and various churches (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996). In 1876 the government implemented the Eurocentric and colonialist *Indian Act*, which was imposed on Indigenous peoples and banned Indigenous spiritual and cultural practices.

In 1879, the lawyer, journalist and aspiring politician Nicholas Flood Davin was sent by the then Canadian Prime Minister John A. Macdonald to examine the school system for Indigenous people in the United States. Davin liked the system of industrial schools that existed there and reported “If anything is to be done with the Indian, we must get them while they are young.” Davin argued that only in Indigenous children could hope for the future reside, for only children could undergo “the transformation from the natural condition to that of civilization” (RCAP, 1996).

Canada’s colonial residential school system began *officially* in 1892, and many government officials and church leaders argued that assimilation of Indigenous peoples needed to start with the children. For example, in 1912 the Archbishop of St. Boniface asserted that Aboriginal people needed to be “caught young to be saved from what is on the whole the degenerating influence of their home environment” (RCAP 1996). The racist treatment of Aboriginal people through Canadian social policy had been framed from within pervasive colonial and assimilationist policies where it had been designed to achieve what Duncan Campbell Scott, the bureaucrat in charge of Canada’s *Indian* policy, described as “the elimination of the Indian question.” The forcible removal of Indigenous children from their homes was part of the government’s plan and, in 1920, Scott revised the *Indian Act* to make attendance at residential school mandatory for all children up to 15 years of age (RCAP, 1996; Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003). Thus, it was through Aboriginal children that the Canadian government tried to achieve its objectives (Bennett *et al.*, 2005: 9).

EXPERIENCES

Indigenous parents were forced to accept their children’s removal from the home under threat of legal action (Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series by Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory Kipling, 2003: 33). They were devastated by the separation from their children, and their pain was amplified when they learned that their children were likely to be abused by school officials. Friends told me that, as children, they were removed from their homes without explanation, siblings were separated, they were bewildered and confused, and their parents were devastated at the loss of their children. In many cases, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police assisted in the removal of Indigenous children from their homes. They encircled reserves to stop runaways, and then went door-to-door, taking school-age children over the protests of parents and the children themselves (Bennett *et al.*, 2005).

When school attendance became mandatory some families withdrew into their traditional territories to keep their children away from the churches and schools. I heard many stories about parents who, knowing that government officials were coming, hid their children to protect them. It then became punishable by law not only for the children to be out of school, but also for parents to withhold children from attending these schools. Furthermore, under the *Indian Act*, Indigenous peoples could not hire lawyers to help contest government actions, so reinforcing Canada’s paternalistic policies and the systemic marginalization of Indigenous peoples.

Deep-rooted power dynamics were embedded in the residential school system. For instance, parents could be arrested for not sending their children to these schools, and Indian agents often withheld food from, and asserted power and control over, Indigenous peoples. Once children entered these schools, siblings were separated. Their hair was cut, and many were punished for speaking their ancestral language. The schools were poorly built and the children’s living conditions were poor. Many described the environment as being overcrowded, with much physical, sexual and psychological violence and abuse and death (Aboriginal Healing Foundation: 2001; Bennett *et al.*, 2005: 44; RCAP, 1996). They were starved as part of an ill-conceived experiment, their health care was neglected, and they were subjected to such indignities as a home-made electric chair as entertainment for staff (Mosby, 2013; Fontaine, Dan and Farber, 2013;

Carpenter 2013; Sproule-Jones, 1995:199; Miller, 1996). It is estimated that thousands of children died in these schools, and the death rate in some schools was as high as 64% (see RCAP: 1996, Milloy: 1999). Indigenous languages came under attack, and English and French were imposed on Indigenous children. Parents had no control over the choice to send their children to the residential schools or over what their children learned there, and the critical skills needed for parenting were not handed down to the children. These measures, together, had devastating effects on Indigenous families, culture and society (Battiste, 2000; Bennett *et al.*, 2005). The residential school system was one of the most damaging colonial policies in the lives of Indigenous peoples.

Thus, the residential school system was a well-orchestrated and deliberate scheme by the government and churches to assimilate Indigenous peoples. John Milloy at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations Child Funding said that, “the residential school system was not only about separating children from parents, it was about cutting the artery of culture that flowed between children parents and community.”

Many Indigenous people have stated that they wanted schooling that provided skills to their children and was free of abuse, just as the non-Aboriginal children received. Indigenous people reinforced this point in the comment that “They wanted a system based upon consent, not coercion and they did not request cultural assimilation, nor did they request for their children physical and sexual abuse, deprivation, and humiliation” (Kanai Board of Education *et al.* 2006).

The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba noted that some communities had all of their children forcibly removed. They characterized the residential school system as a “conscious, deliberate and often brutal attempt to force Aboriginal people to assimilate.” They added that currently, “for the first time in over 100 years, many families are experiencing a generation of children who live with their parents until their teens” (Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2002: 2).

This history has had a devastating impact on the children, their parents’ families and communities. It has been particularly tragic when the Indigenous epistemologies of children are taken into account.

LEGACY/IMPACT OF THE SCHOOLS

Some people consider that residential schools are in the past, but this is a misconception (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002). While the schools may be physically closed, the legacy lingers. Moreover, many current-day institutions such as the justice system, child welfare and the education systems are structured in a way that continue to undermine and systematically deny Indigenous peoples their inherent rights as First Peoples. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2002: 2) reminds us that, residential school systems did not operate in isolation. Rather, they “constituted one piece of a larger policy puzzle.” The Healing Foundation asserts further that “where the residential school system left off in the effort to solve the ‘Indian Problem,’ the Indian Act and the Child Welfare, Reservation, and Justice systems took over.” It is these larger relationships, and the forced assimilationist policy that informs them, which account for much of the varied conditions of Aboriginal peoples life.

The challenges which the residential school policies of extermination have imposed on Indigenous peoples are very complex. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Magdalena Smolewski (2004) point out how the residential schools introduced certain features to Indigenous communities, and those features have been passed on from generation to generation. These are spoken of collectively as the intergenerational legacy of the residential school system, and they are the consequences of the policy of forced assimilation. According to the RCAP (1996), “the very language in which the vision of residential schools systems was couched revealed what would have to be the essentially violent nature of the school system in its assault on child and culture.” The basic premise of resocialization, of the great transformation from “savage” to “civilized,” was violent. Milloy (2013) reinforced the point that there was savagery and violence in the very idea of residential school itself. Many people had their identity impacted, their parenting and cultures destroyed, and experienced trauma. Yet, the residential school is just one aspect of the government’s assimilationist policy against Indigenous people. According to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2006: 11), it was a deliberate systemic effort to remove generations of Aboriginal children one by one from their family, community, language, culture and Aboriginal way of living and being in the world.

Some members of Indigenous communities still relive the memories of children being taken from their parents. Many friends share with me how they bare suspicions and anxiety even in contemporary contexts. Child welfare services still take children from their parents, families and communities today. For example, a friend of mine told me that his nine-year-old got into a fight at school with another child, and instead of calling the parents, the school called child welfare. It is well known among Indigenous peoples that there are more Indigenous children in care throughout Canada today than the numbers who were in residential schools (see Blackstock, 2007). Bennett *et al.* (2005) note that “the First Nations political mandate has been to reclaim full jurisdiction over matters relating to our children and families, and this remains the goal of First Nations in Canada today.” This is demonstrated in the many examples led and organized by Indigenous people to have control over the rights of their children. That includes setting up their own child welfare system, gaining control of their children’s educational life and schooling, as well as the various community programs and schools that focus on Indigenous cultures and languages.

According to the RCAP (1996), there are many reasons why assimilation policies have failed to eliminate the “Indian problem.” However, the strength, commitment and courage of generations of Indigenous peoples in Canada played a key role in preventing all Aboriginal peoples from being totally assimilated and disappearing into the dominant Canadian society. As a friend poignantly stated, “They can’t take our ancestors out of us.” During the Walk for Reconciliation on September 22, 2013, in British Columbia, civil rights activist Bernice King reminded everyone, “This is no time for apathy or complacency.” She added that “we are tied in an inescapable network of mutuality, caught in a single garment of destiny and what affects one person here in Canada – no matter their background – directly affects all indirectly” (Canadian Press, 2013). In the words of one survivor who attended residential school in Quebec, “I was never ashamed of being an Aboriginal person even if the residential school almost succeeded. My ancestors gave me strength and patience. We must ensure that the things that happened are remembered. I wonder if Canadians really want to hear the truth. There are still those who deny the history of the residential schools” (Grey and Gros-Lous Monier, 2010: 6).

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HOW DO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN FRANCOPHONE MINORITY SETTINGS PERCEIVE THE FACTORS SHAPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND IMMIGRANT FAMILIES?

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ABSTRACT The relationship between schools and immigrant families follows a dynamic where expectations, needs, identities, values and ideas about belonging intersect and create intercultural contract. Many factors can shape this contact, such as the power dynamic between schools and the family, the ethnic origin, the level of education of the parents, the socioeconomic level of the family, cultural differences and the requirements associated with the adaptation process. Tensions can emerge because of different notions regarding education and because of feelings of distrust or the fear of being judged. In this article, we are sharing our research results on what factors, according to school principals, shape the relationship they build with immigrant families.

CONTEXT AND ISSUES

Similarly to other minority French-speaking communities in Canada, New Brunswick's community has become a choice destination for many new francophone immigrants. This community attracts families who want their children to attend schools located far from big urban centers, international students that later choose to become permanent citizens and refugees. These immigrants compensate for the demographic decline caused by an aging population and by youths moving out West in search for work. Indeed, the benefits of francophone immigration on the well-being of the minority francophone community of New Brunswick has been well-documented by many researchers (Akbari, 2007; Belkhodja, 2008; CIC and FCFAC,

2008; Gallant, 2004; Kasparian, 2008). However, the rapport the francophone minority community in New Brunswick has towards immigration is characterised by two elements: first, there is an instrumental aspect to this rapport as immigration is considered a social necessity, and second, the retention rates of newcomers that opt for New Brunswick's francophone community as their first choice of destination is relatively low. From this perspective, the boundaries that francophones from minority communities set towards immigration are indicative of the lukewarm, paradoxical even, relationship they have towards immigration: immigrants are seen as a necessity given that they increase the French-speaking community's demographic weight, yet they are at the same time somewhat rejected on the base of identity issues (Fermer, 2010; Gallant, 2004). However, this tendency to want to protect Acadian culture and language by closing it off has been replaced by a new openness to cultural diversity, a viable strategy according to Belkhodja (2008) because of Canada's recognition of linguistic duality. According to the same author, even though immigration is still limited, "it is causing profound and long-lasting changes on its host communities" (Belkhodja, 2008:4).

Indeed, one of the most impacted-on institutions of host communities is the school. Schools are the place where the immigrant child builds her first friendships with children from the host society and where her process of acculturation begins. It is there that she becomes aware of her identity and of her cultural difference, and it is also there where she develops her personality and self-confidence. It is through their child's academic and social experiences that immigrant parents learn about the host society's values and it is in respect to those new learnt values that they position themselves. However, it is also in school that closer and more intense intercultural ties between members of the host society and newcomers are forged. Thus, many researchers have studied the issue of immigrant integration in New Brunswick's Acadian schools since the early 2000s. These studies have shown that immigrant integration in French schools in minority settings run into obstacles of a different order than the ones occurring in majority settings; some of these obstacles are the lack of proper support structures, difficulties in learning French (Bouchamma, 2009), difficulties in math and language and social integration problems (Benimmas,

2010; Gallant, 2004). To that effect, a commission on French schools has already recommended that resources should be set up to "better welcome immigrant children" (Leblanc, 2008:71). For their part, Porter and Aucoin (2012, 35), who have studied immigrant integration in schools in New Brunswick, assert that French schools in the south of the province where the biggest urban centers are situated (Greater Moncton, Saint-John and Fredericton) have considerable difficulties when it comes to providing services to young refugees that have greatly fallen behind in their schooling and to young allophones needing to learn French.

In those cases, the relationship between immigrant families and schools represents a great opportunity to improve the academic success of its immigrant pupils. Education should be set in relation to the experience and specific needs of these youths and facilitate their acquisition of the new social codes required in order to integrate the host society (Benoît, Rousseau, Ngirumpatse and Lacroix, 2008). Given how this relationship impacts the socialisation process and education of immigrant youths, numerous researchers have started examining it (Vatz Laaroussi, Kanouté and Rachédi, 2008). These researchers have noted some factors that interfere on the relationship between schools and immigrant families such as socioeconomic status, expectations towards the way children are schooled, education level, language skills, ethnic origin, adaptation process, etc. The research which follows aims to explore and document the different factors impacting the relationship between schools and immigrant parents in a francophone minority setting in New Brunswick and does so by considering the perceptions of school principals about this relationship. To be more precise, our objective is to analyse the perceptions that school principals in New Brunswick's francophone minority community have of the factors that shape the relationship between schools and immigrant parents. This will also enable us to take a closer look at the school/immigrant family relationship. This study is the first to tackle this subject in New Brunswick's minority setting, a province where immigrant retention has become a major demographic, economic and sociocultural issue. Thus the objective of the following research is to analyse the factors impacting upon the relationship between schools and immigrant families and this from the vantage point of New Brunswick's school principals.

RESEARCH METHOD

To achieve our objective, we have elected to use a qualitative research method. Data was gathered through recorded semi-structured interviews (Savoie-Zajc, 2009). Six interviews were done with six school principals from the south and the north-west of the province; our participants administer schools that welcome an increasing number of immigrant students. Our data was first analysed by theme and then followed by an interpretative analysis (Paillé and Muchielli, 2008).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to our participants, the relationship between immigrant families and schools appears to be shaped by many factors such as a discrepancy in expectations, ethnic origin, parents' level of education, the socioeconomic level of the family, cultural differences and requirements of the adaptation process.

DISCREPANCIES IN EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

The discrepancy between the schools' expectations and the ones of immigrant family impacts the collaborative process between those two social entities. Indeed, according to school principals, immigrant parents should act just as the other parents do. *"According to me, they should do just as the others do"* (P3). They consider that parents should be present, participate, be involved and help out. However, according to school principals, parents should not make decisions that are to be made by the school, especially given that the latter has a mandate. *"Obviously we do not want parents to always be at school making calls for us since we have a job to do, we have a mandate"* (P5). Above all, school principals expect to be informed when a problem occurs so as to be able to make a decision in a timely manner. *"They should call us as fast as possible or reach us one way or another because if we know what is going on and that we can respond promptly, then it's easier"* (P1). As for the parents, their expectations do not seem to correspond exactly with the school's desires, which makes it hard for them to understand what is expected of them by the school: *"There's a parent that came here and thought that we'd find her a job, she didn't really get the collaboration part between parents and*

us, that is not collaboration" (P3). According to school principals, the way the immigrant parents perceive the schools does not enable them to engage in a collaborative process with the school. According to the principals, the school should take care of everything and parents should not intervene in the school's role of training and educating children: *"You are there, you take care of our kid and you should not come to the school and collaborate"* (P3). In some cases, schools had to intervene because of how some parents were disciplining their children, especially when those methods were not in accordance with Canadian laws: *"...We have some families that come from different countries and in some of those, they discipline children by hitting them. [...] Thus, we had situations where we had to sit down with parents and explain to them what is allowed and what is not..."* (P4). Moreover, school principals recognize that they did not take the time to explain their expectations to immigrant parents: *"I've never spoken of that because it didn't cross my mind, and I'm not going to do it with the other parents either"* (D1). It seems that the schools expect the immigrant parents to understand the school's expectations even though they are never clearly explained to them.

ETHNIC ORIGIN AND DIFFERENCE

Ethnic origin has a similar impact on the collaborative process between schools and immigrant families. According to school principals, the region and culture of origin shape positively or negatively this partnership: *"...it depends where they are from"* (P4). Not understanding the cultural realities of the host society makes some parents regard the school with some distrust. *"That difference, I think it exists. I think they view schools differently. They view the school and the community differently. That's obvious. Me, if I was to go to Africa, I'm not sure I'd know what kind of role I could play. I'd get there and I think I'd overwhelm them"* (P3). It becomes clear in the statements made by this participant that not understanding the sociocultural realities of either side impedes the good partnership between schools and immigrant families. A poor comprehension of certain cultural aspects and lifestyles, as straightforward as they might seem, can have a crucial impact on the new student. The following testimony speaks of this reality:

"...she was wearing winter padded overalls. She didn't speak French or English, she was very shy [...] We wanted her to take off her pants and she didn't want to. She didn't understand us. And the teacher mimicked that if you take your overalls off, you will be less hot. She goes on doing this (makes a "no" sign with her head) until we finally realize that she wasn't wearing a thing under her overalls." (P6)

PARENT EDUCATION LEVEL

According to school principals, the level of education of parents has also a great impact on the collaborative process between schools and families. Parents that are less educated will often visit the school and inquire about their child's progress. However, as their children progresses through the grades, they become less involved with the school, even though they still remain involved in their children's schooling. *"The more educated they are, the lesser is their involvement in the school. When I say 'involvement,' it is not right, I think that they are involved in their child's education, but are less directly involved with the school"* (P3). The level of education also impacts the collaborative process between schools and families because, according to school principals, the parents which are busiest with their work do not usually have time to get involved with the school, especially when their child is in a lower grade. *"They are less available"* (P3). A lesser level of education tends to negatively impact the collaborative process between schools and immigrant families because, according to school principals, less educated parents tend to misunderstand to a greater degree their role and the school's role. On top of this, the language barrier adds to this miscomprehension.

THE FAMILY'S SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL

The socioeconomic level is an important factor that may shape the collaborative process between schools and immigrant families. According to the school principals that we interviewed, the families that willingly chose to immigrate to Canada are better prepared: *"some are much more present in the schools, but those parents, they are the ones that came here ready, that made the choice to immigrate to Canada, that came here financially better equipped"* (P1). What can

be understood in this statement is that immigrants that willingly chose to immigrate to Canada in order to build their professional and economic lives here are the ones that have less difficulties dealing with the school. Professional security allows families to concentrate on their children's education and to be responsibly involved in the school: *"When the parent immigrates and already has a job at the University of Moncton [...] I have this impression that the parents that come here better prepared are the ones that are more present in the school"* (D1). On the other hand, disadvantaged families, particularly refugee families that had to leave their country because of some political conflict have more difficulties dealing with the school because they are less well prepared and are faced with problems more pressing than overlooking their children's schooling: *"There are some people coming here that, judging by their financial resources, come from countries that have been torn by war or something like that"* (P1). Thus, the socioeconomic level of parents is a significant factor impacting the collaborative process between schools and immigrant families; parents that are financially stable have a better relationship with the schools.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ADAPTATION PROCESS

Cultural differences constitute another factor that may impact the partnership between schools and immigrant families. Indeed, the fact that the immigrant parents belong to a culture different from the host society can prove to be challenging. Distrust, doubts and the fear of shocking others are other factors that negatively impact the bond between those two social entities. Incompatible customs and values are a significant barrier to the type of partnership hoped for by schools. *"When differences exist, they really are based on different family customs and values. Often they represent a barrier"* (P4).

Besides the linguistic barrier, refugee families deal with the stress brought on by a difficult migration process and the challenge of adapting to a new society. The behaviours of some are a testimony of the erroneous perceptions they have of the role of schools and their own role in the schooling of their children. Often, those perceptions are based on some practices held in their country of origin.

“...there are families that come here, but they are so intimidated or insecure when faced with new challenges [...] it is stressful, coming to school. So we have also to be sensitive to that. And there are other families that bring their children to us and tell us ‘you deal with them’ (laughs), we trust you and we have to go take care of all the rest. You know, many of those families are in survival mode. Especially when they come from refugee camps, we cannot imagine everything they have been through and everything that they need to rebuild as families. So, often those families will drop off their children on us. Very often, we have a hard time communicating with them. They are hard to reach. It is hard to make them come here” (P6).

Sometimes, tensions can emerge because of different social notions when it comes to education and because of feelings of distrust or the fear of being judged. According to school principals, in order to remedy those difficulties, teachers in charge of student integration and multicultural organisations have an important role to play. A teacher responsible of facilitating the integration process of immigrant students is an intermediary between teachers, immigrant families and school principals. She is responsible of facilitating the integration process of immigrant or refugee students and therefore is responsible of diffusing the tensions that could emerge between schools and families by explaining social notions to each party.

CONCLUSION

The factors impacting the relationship between schools and immigrant families are telling of the intercultural contact that happens in Acadian schools and of the challenges and changes that are brought on them with increased ethnocultural diversity. The miscomprehension of the role of schools is often associated with parental levels of education. However, migration and the difficult process of rebuilding one’s family can impact the families’ socioeconomic level even if the parents are very educated. Furthermore, school principals are faced with a wide variety of new cultural notions that they have to learn: *“We are more careful, but we also have a lot of things to learn. And it’s a lot. We have to learn about the Chinese culture, we have to learn about the African culture. So it’s a lot of things and sometimes we don’t get everything” (P6).* This testimony highlights the great task schools principals have to accomplish in order to help students from different backgrounds to better integrate their new environment. Indeed, school principals have to explicitly explain to parents how schools work, they have to come to understand different types of cultural contexts and migration paths, they have to make sense of different social conceptions about schooling and to maintain a good communication level with parents, and they have to achieve all this while promoting francophone culture and helping Acadian youth in building their identities.

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The Association for Canadian Studies (ACS) in collaboration with the University of Prince Edward Island and PEI Social Studies Teachers' Association will be holding a national conference on the teaching and communicating the history of Canada entitled **(Re)making Confederation: (Re)Imagining Canada**. The event will be held November 21-22 2014 at the Delta Prince Edward & PEI Convention Center, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

The conference will look at the most effective methods to engage students and teach Canadian history and social studies as well as to address current issues in communicating history and look at the relevance of history in our daily lives. We expect over 350 delegates to attend. The conference will feature over 40 plenary, panel, workshop and other special sessions and will include a number of sessions conducted in French (with simultaneous translation). Many of Canada's leading academics, teachers and authors as well as researchers and representatives from museums, archives, government, non-governmental organizations, history organizations, publishers, and media will attend as presenters, delegates and exhibitors.

The conference will be pertinent to all those interested in issues revolving around the teaching and communicating Canadian history and social studies. Professors, students, teachers, researchers, civil servants, decision makers and members of non-profit and history related organizations will benefit from the conference sessions, as well as the opportunity to meet and hear experts from across Canada.

A block of hotel guestrooms is being held for conference delegates at the Delta Prince Edward Hotel (18 Queen Street, Charlottetown, PEI, C1A 8B9, www.deltahotels.com/Hotels-Prince-edward) Rates range from \$145.00 to 185.00 per night. To book a room call reservations at 1 866 894-1203 or pri.reservations@deltahotels.com and mention block code AC1155 or Association for Canadian Studies when booking.

To register on line visit www.acs-aec.ca. Additional conference information to be updated and posted at www.acs-aec.ca on a regular basis. A limited number of travel grants are available for out of province teachers.

For information regarding conference sponsorship, advertising or being an exhibitor at the conference, as well as for any additional questions, please contact James Ondrick at the Association for Canadian Studies: E-mail: james.ondrick@acs-aec.ca, Tel: 514 925-3097.

SHAPING MINDS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE: TWO CENTURIES OF PRESCHOOL IN CANADA

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood education (ECE) encompasses a range of programs and services for young children. This brief account of its 200-year history in Canada focuses on the motivations to provide services for children prior to compulsory school-starting age with attention to institutional models rather than family-based training and socialization. In the nineteenth century ECE promoters were mainly members of the social and political elite who spoke or wrote about the benefits of institutional ECE, or led, organized, or raised funds for actual services. Promoters changed over time to include missionaries, teachers, psychologists, social workers, parents, and politicians. While the earliest promoters were mainly interested in children's moral and intellectual development, the young age of scholars meant that education often needed to be combined with at least some elements of care. For this reason, the history's broader reach includes child care in a review of the main systems of early childhood education over the past 200 years: infant schools, kindergartens, and nursery schools.

SMALL BEGINNINGS

A small set of core ideas has directed developments in ECE over the past two centuries. The ideas have endured across time, and to the extent they have been exported or borrowed, they have reflected transnational ideas and movements. One is that even very young children are capable of learning; a second is that that early experience has a significant influence on later development. ECE promoters advocated “bending the twig early” and in a particular direction. While it seems likely that many parents also believed this, nineteenth century ECE promoters did not consider poor parents to be the best “first teachers.” This was a motivation for ECE promoters in Montreal to form the Montreal Infant School Society, an organization that aimed to provide schooling for poor children.¹ As explained in the society's first report in 1830, “That the human mind is capable of receiving instruction, and of forming associations of ideas, at a very early period of its existence, must be evident to all who have paid attention to the first development of the mental powers.”² The report went on to describe the corollary idea:

Since then, the human mind so early becomes the active recipient of impressions, it becomes an important matter to provide early means of preventing vice from

*introducing itself, and whilst the mind is yet in the beginning of its intellectual career, to lay the foundation of those principles, upon which the superstructure of truth, rectitude and piety may be raised in all their intrinsic worth and beauty.*³

The school was located on St. Dominique Street in a house shared with the School of Industry. For a time it offered residential care for a small number of destitute children, thus blurring its role as an educational service. ECE promoters in the 1820s were motivated to provide practical relief to children—food, clothing, and shelter—together with a desire to prevent future problems through the instruction of children.

The only preschool model in Europe and North America in the 1820s was the infant school, which was inspired by a system for educating young children devised by Robert Owen for the children of his factory workers in Scotland in 1816. Owen's infant school combined a child care service with an early learning program for children from about 18 months to five years of age. Owen set out general principles for teaching very young children in groups: the importance of play and kindly treatment grounded in an idea of development and learning that stressed the malleability of children and the key role the senses played in acquiring knowledge about the world. Learning was planned to be informal via play and thus pleasurable for children and embedded in social relationships.⁴ The English educator and ECE promoter Samuel Wilderspin built on these ideas in the 1820s, promulgating through his many books a system of instruction which alternated simultaneous instruction in the gallery and small group lessons led by slightly older scholars, with regulated play out-of-doors.⁵

Infant schools were expressly planned as a means of crime prevention. In the words of Wilderspin, "Should any person still ask what can be the utility of taking children out of the streets so very young, I would answer, that it is likely to prove one of the greatest preventatives of crime that has been thought of for the last century."⁶ Claims like this proved irresistible to ECE promoters in the colonies. Wilderspin's books found their way to Canada, along with some teachers trained in his system who were recruited by infant school societies in colonial cities including in Halifax, Quebec City, and Toronto in addition to Montreal.

The infant system was believed to be effective for teaching children from all backgrounds. Indeed, members

of the social elite were keen to have infant schools for their own children, as in Montreal where the schools for the poor "raised a strong desire to furnish the children of persons in the upper ranks the advantages of which paupers were in the possession."⁷ And the system was also considered to be effective for teaching English-language learners. There were short-lived experiments with infant schools for Aboriginal children at Methodist missions in the Bay of Quinte area in Upper Canada at Grape Island, Rice Lake, and Credit River, where the aim was literacy education as a means of evangelism. African American free woman Betsey Stockton, who had taught in an infant school for African American Children in Philadelphia, established the infant system in the Methodist schools in 1829.⁸ Journalist and politician William Lyon Mackenzie visited the school at Credit River in 1830. The teacher was away on the day of the visit and the school was closed. However, Mackenzie's observations of a standard infant school set-up are worth including in full.

The school-room is a large and commodious apartment, with tiers of raised benches in the rear; on one division of which sit the girls, and the boys on the other. There are also desks and slates for ciphering, and copy-books and copperplate lines for those who write. The Bibles and Testaments are chiefly those of the London Society for promoting Christian Knowledge; [...] Among the school-furniture, are a handsome map of the world; the Arithmeticon; attractive alphabets on pasteboard; regular figures illustrative of geometry, some of them cut out of wood, and some of them made of pasteboard; the picture of Elijah fed by ravens; figures of birds, fishes, and quadrupeds, on pasteboard, coloured, accompanied by the history of each animal; the figure of a clock, in pasteboard, by which to explain the principles of the time-piece.

Mackenzie ended his description by noting: "the walls of the school are adorned with good moral maxims; and I perceived that one of the rules was rather novel, though doubtless in place here.—it was, 'No blankets to be worn in school.'"⁹ This rule was of course specific to the situation of Aboriginal children in the missionary infant school and the aim for their assimilation. The more common texts displayed on walls as recommended in a contemporary instructor's manual were excerpts from scripture such as "Fear God" and "Thou shalt not steal."¹⁰

The most basic form of early schooling was simply removing children from negative influence, a version of Rousseau's idea of negative education aimed at "shielding the heart from vice, and the mind from error."¹¹ As British social reformer and M.P. Henry Brougham explained in 1819 at the time of the start-up of infant schools, for poor children it was "nearly sufficient to set them good examples, and keep idleness and vice out of sight."¹² It is clear, however, that as nineteenth century systems of childhood education developed, curriculum became increasingly elaborate and tied to specialized teaching apparatus as in the infant school and in Froebel's kindergarten and the nursery school, which are described in the next section.

COMPETING APPROACHES

Friedrich Froebel opened his first kindergarten school in Bad Blankenburg, Germany in 1839. In Froebel's system of ECE, children's self-activity and use of materials under the direction of specially trained teachers facilitated their natural development. This contrasted with the methods and philosophy of the infant system with its focus on learning through emulation and observation. The infant system had passed from fashion by the time kindergartens were introduced into the United States in the 1850s by German immigrants as private educational programs for their own children or children of the elite.¹³ Kindergartens were few in number until ECE promoters recognized their value for assimilating the large numbers of young immigrant children arriving in American, and later, Canadian cities in the 1880s and 1890s. In Canada, the kindergarten system's development was centred in Toronto owing to the efforts of chief inspector of schools James Hughes. Hughes recruited a teacher to come to Toronto, the American Ada Marean, who had trained with German kindergartener Maria Kraus in New York City. Marean operated a private kindergarten in Toronto starting in 1877¹⁴ and taught in the first public school kindergarten in Toronto in 1883. Kindergarten proved popular with parents and the number of kindergarten classes in public schools grew rapidly, reaching 51 by 1900.¹⁵ ECE promoters in Toronto argued that kindergarten would rescue children from the dangers of the street, echoing the rationale for infant schools from 50 years earlier: chief inspector Hughes's wrote in his 1885 report that the kindergarten's greatest good was for "the little ones whose mothers are occupied away from home in earning money, and who necessarily have to neglect their children."¹⁶

Kindergarten classes in public schools were opened in the same period in cities and towns throughout Ontario and in a limited way in other provinces. Kindergartens were also established in boomtowns in western Canada in the early years of the twentieth century: in 1900, the same year it was incorporated as a town, Yorkton opened a kindergarten in its newly built school; there was a similar pattern in Wetaskiwin, which had a new school in 1905, was incorporated as a city in 1906, and opened a kindergarten class in 1907.

The kindergarten system, like that of infant school, was believed to be effective for teaching all children. In jurisdictions where there were no public kindergartens, private fee-charging programs were occasionally established for children from wealthy families, and in a few cities charity programs were available for the poor. An example of the latter was in Winnipeg where the organizers of the Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association formed a program to bend children's faculties "in the right direction" and in pleasant manner, that is to say, through play-based activities.

*The work of this Association is based upon the principles laid down by the founder of the system, Fredrick Froebel. Wherever such free kindergartens exist, little children are kept off the streets, and in the pleasantest manner possible their faculties are bent in the right direction; the first principles of correct living, such as good manners, habits of cleanliness, and industry, are unconsciously learned.*¹⁷

A handful of kindergarten classes for young Aboriginal children were also briefly introduced in schools on-reserve and in Indian Industrial Schools in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories in the 1890s, where the focus in the kindergarten class was on manual education, English language learning, and school readiness with the overall aim to re-socialize the children according to Euro-Canadian values.¹⁸

Expansion of kindergarten in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century stalled between the wars. Few major cities outside Ontario had kindergartens in public schools in the 1950s, and Canada-wide only 2.4% of preschool-aged children attended a public school kindergarten.¹⁹ Developments in the curriculum and

pedagogy of kindergartens also stalled: as described by historian Barbara Beatty, its introduction into public schools meant that kindergartens became “more like the school systems into which they had been incorporated.”²⁰

New ideas in ECE evolved more easily outside the public school context: alternative approaches included Maria Montessori’s system, the British nursery school, and the American university-based nursery education methods which had as their Canadian exemplar the work of William Blatz and his colleagues Dorothy Millichamp and Margaret Fletcher at the St. George’s School for Child Study at the University of Toronto.²¹ Beginning in the 1930s, St. George’s graduates established nursery schools in church basements, community centres, and private homes in communities across Canada. Educational programs were offered in some child care centres with the introduction of a nursery school class for children aged two to 4. The influence of nursery education on child care increased in World War II when the Federal Government established wartime nurseries for the children of mothers engaged in official war work, and training of the staff was directed by Dorothy Millichamp from the Institute of Child Study.²² However, while innovation was easier outside the public school, preschool education also engaged with prolonged and not always productive experiments with ideas such as the approaches of Montessori and Blatz due to the “insulation and isolation of preschools from the norms of elementary and secondary education.”²³

ECE was revitalized in the 1960s when preschool was again touted as a strategy for reducing poverty. Project Head Start was created in the United States in 1965 for young children considered to be “culturally disadvantaged” because they were poor and African American. Canadian initiatives were started on the model of Head Start: half-day programs focusing on school readiness, increasing children’s IQ, and imparting middle class values. Preparatory preschool programs for Aboriginal children included a small number of “reserve nursery schools” as recommended in the Hawthorne report for the Indian Affairs Branch in 1967.²⁴ The longer-term influence of the 1960s preschool movement can be seen in the start of the community-based and federally funded Aboriginal Head Start program in 1995 for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children living in urban and northern communities, which was extended to Inuit children and children on-reserve in 1999.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

The infant school approach to ECE has largely been forgotten, nursery education methods have been integrated into child care programs, and kindergarten is part of the public school system in all provinces and territories. The core ideas identified at the start of this essay—young children’s ability to learn and the lasting impact of early learning—continue to direct developments in ECE in the twenty-first century. There is currently general agreement that early learning programs are not only good for all children, but also important for families, communities, and the larger society. Moreover, there is intense political attention worldwide on the potential for early education as an early years investment, based on notions of social melioration that is not unlike the ideas of earlier times.²⁵ In the United States, President Obama’s recent *Preschool for All* initiative highlighted savings from preschool including “improved educational outcomes, increased labour productivity, and a reduction in crime.”²⁶ Canadian physician and researcher Fraser Mustard took a somewhat different tack, warning in his 2006 report for the Washington-based Brookings Institution that failing to invest will have consequences for social cohesion. Mustard wrote, “Unless we find strategies to improve early childhood development in all societies, many societies risk slipping into chaos.”²⁷ Yet Canada’s own investment in ECE has been weak despite efforts in some provinces to make school-based ECE more widely effective through full-day kindergarten.²⁸ Canada fares poorly by international standards, tied for last place with Ireland on UNICEF’s Innocenti Research Centre benchmarks for ECEC provision in affluent countries in 2008.²⁹ A greater investment in early learning would show a strong commitment to children’s and society’s well-being.

NOTES

- ¹ Bruce Curtis, *Ruling by Schooling in Quebec: Conquest to Liberal Governmentality – a Historical Sociology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).
- ² Montreal Infant School Society, *First Report of the Montreal Infant School Society for 1830* (Montreal: Workman and Bowman, 1831), 3.
- ³ *Ibid.*: 3.
- ⁴ Helen May, Baljit Kaur, and Larry Prochner, *Empire, Education, and Indigenous Childhoods: Nineteenth Century Missionary Infant Schools in Three British Colonies* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming.)
- ⁵ Wilderspin's guide was in its fourth edition at the time the Montreal school was started in 1829. Samuel Wilderspin, *Infant Education; or, Practical Remarks on the Importance of Educating the Infant Poor*, 4th ed. (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1829).
- ⁶ Samuel Wilderspin, *The Importance of Educating the Infant Poor* (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1824), 15.
- ⁷ *Canadian Courant*, 5 October 1833, quoted in Curtis, *Ruling by Schooling Quebec*, 181.
- ⁸ May, Kaur, and Prochner, *Empire, Education, and Indigenous Childhoods*.
- ⁹ William Lyon MacKenzie, *Sketches of Canada and the United States* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1833), 132-3.
- ¹⁰ William Wilson, *The System of Infants' Schools*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed for George Wilson, 1826), 121.
- ¹¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau's Émile or Treatise on Education*, abridged, translated and annotated William H. Payne (New York: D. Appleton, 1918), 59.
- ¹² Henry Brougham, "Establishment at Hofwyl," *Edinburgh Review* 32 (1819), 506.
- ¹³ Caroline Winterer, "Avoiding a 'Hothouse System of Education': Nineteenth-Century Early Childhood Education from the Infant Schools to the Kindergartens," *History of Education Quarterly* 32, n° 3 (1992): 289-314.
- ¹⁴ "Kindergarten School," *The Globe* (Toronto), September 8, 1877, 7; "Miss Ada Mareau's Kindergarten," *The Globe* (Toronto), August 31, 1878, 02.
- ¹⁵ Kari Dehli, "They Rule by Sympathy: The Feminization of Pedagogy," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie* 19, n° 2 (1994): 203.
- ¹⁶ Toronto Board of Education, *Inspector's Report* 1885, 15.
- ¹⁷ Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association, 1897), 3. Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association Records, Social Planning Council Fond, Box P663, File 8, Archives of Manitoba.
- ¹⁸ Larry Prochner, *A History of Early Childhood Education in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009).
- ¹⁹ From a survey by Church using statistics from 1947 and 1948: E.J.M. Church, "An Evaluation of Preschool Institutions in Canada," *Canadian Education* 5, n° 3 (1950): 20.
- ²⁰ Barbara Beatty, *Preschool Education in America: The Culture of Young Children from the Colonial Era to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 101.
- ²¹ The Institute of Child Study was known as St. George's Nursery School from its founding in 1925 until 1938 when it became the first institute at the University of Toronto.
- ²² Larry Prochner, "Share their care Mrs. Warworker": Wartime day nurseries in Ontario and Quebec, 1942-1945," *Canadian Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education* 5(1) (1996): 115-126.
- ²³ Barbara Beatty, "Transitory Connections: The Reception and Rejection of Jean Piaget's Psychology in the Nursery School Movement in the 1920s and 1930s," *History of Education Quarterly* 49 (2009), 444.
- ²⁴ Harry B. Hawthorn, *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Education Needs and Policies*, part 2 (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, 1967).
- ²⁵ James J. Heckman, "Policies to Foster Human Capital," *Research in Economics* 54 n° 1 (2000): 3-56. Canadian ECE/ECD promoters have been at the forefront of this movement. See Margaret Norrie McCain and J. Fraser Mustard, *Early Years Study: Final Report* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, 1999); Margaret Norrie McCain and J. Fraser Mustard, *Early years Study 2: Putting Science into Action* (Toronto, ON: Council for Early Childhood Development, 2007); J. Fraser Mustard and Margaret Norrie McCain, *The Early Years Study Three Years Later: From Early Childhood Development to Human Development—Enabling Communities* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, 2002).
- ²⁶ "Fact Sheet President Obama's Plan for Early Education for all American" (Washington, DC: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, February 13, 2013), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/13/fact-sheet-president-obama-s-plan-early-education-all-americans> (accessed December 1, 2013).
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- ²⁹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "The Child Care Transition, Innocenti Report Card 8, 2008" (Florence, Italy: Innocenti Research Centre, 2008).

CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON THE PAST: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The six historical thinking concepts are a valuable framework for engaging students in doing history, and clear definitions of the concepts can guide instruction in powerful ways that will help students think historically. But the historical thinking framework can only provide a progression for increasing sophistication in historical thinking if we have a sense of what students' thinking at various age and grade levels looks like. For elementary school students, the path to understanding historical perspectives seems to begin with a sense of personal connection to the experiences of people in the past. Their care about and for the people of the past is an important motivation for historical inquiry and for persistence in engaging in sophisticated historical thinking.

History and Social Studies programs in schools across Canada have been transformed in recent years. While provincial and territorial school curricula still require that students graduate high school with an understanding of key events, people and issues in Canadian history, the programs also expect students to be able to think historically, to analyze, assess and construct historical accounts. This means that teachers spend less time transmitting historical information and more time cultivating students' ways of thinking in the discipline

Many of the new programs draw on a model of historical thinking developed by Dr. Peter Seixas and The Historical Thinking Project.¹ The model identifies six concepts that shape the questions historians ask and the methods they use to gather, analyze and assess evidence in order to answer those questions in the accounts they create. These historical thinking concepts are: historical significance; evidence; continuity and change; cause and consequence; historical perspectives; and, the ethical dimension. Seixas and Morton assert that "this framework allows for progression: students can use the concepts to move from depending on easily available, commonsense notions of the past to using the culture's most powerful intellectual tools for understanding history."² The Historical Thinking model is based on research begun in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s and taken up by history education scholars in the United States, Australia and Canada in the years since. Dozens of studies have examined students'

understandings of historical significance, assessed the extent to which children can analyze primary source evidence and how they understand the nature of historical change. Most researchers conclude that even elementary school children can demonstrate relatively sophisticated historical reasoning, particularly when supported by appropriate teaching.³

One element of historical thinking of particular interest to researchers and to teachers is historical perspective, largely because of the challenges that this poses for many children. Seixas and Morton explain that “taking an historical perspective means attempting to see through the eyes of people who lived in times and circumstances sometimes far removed from our present-day lives... In short, what was it like to be them?”⁴ Not surprisingly, this is very difficult for elementary school children who tend to imagine themselves having to endure the difficulties of explorers or early settlers, and who therefore, judge the past as a place best avoided. Students’ tendencies to project their own values and attitudes on the past – demonstrating presentism – are sometimes exacerbated by well-intentioned history textbooks that try to encourage a sense of connection with the people of the past and instead undermine a sense of historical perspective. For example, one history text includes the following passage about early European settlement in Canada:

*Can you imagine what it would be like to leave your home and travel across the ocean to a new land? Imagine that you had to spend weeks at sea, crowded onto a cold, damp ship. Imagine being hungry and sick throughout the journey. Then you finally reach land, only to find out that you have to travel for many more months on foot through the wilderness. Many thoughts go through your mind. Where will you sleep? What will you eat? How will you survive? Finally, you reach your destination and find – nothing! No towns, no farms, no homes – only forests and fields and streams. Now, after an exhausting journey, you have to clear the land to build your new home. How would you feel?*⁵

A teacher encouraging students’ understanding of historical perspective would not ask them how *they* would feel but would challenge them to seek evidence of what the *settlers* might have felt and thought. Moreover, the teacher would also challenge the students to consider

whether, in fact, the land was “empty” because there were no towns or farms. Students’ natural tendency to project their own beliefs and values onto the past is contrary to taking an historical perspective and one example of the reason historical thinking is so challenging for children. As British researcher Peter Lee explains, “ideas that work well in the everyday world are not always applicable to the study of history.”⁶ Indeed historical thinking – including taking historical perspectives – is, as Sam Wineburg famously said, “an unnatural act.”⁷

In order to clarify and better express the complexity of this important historical thinking concept, Seixas and Morton identify five “guideposts” that characterize a sophisticated understanding of historical perspectives.⁸ First, students with a powerful understanding of historical perspective recognize the differences between contemporary worldviews and those of people in the past. Second, though we can always acknowledge some human experiences as common throughout time, sophisticated historical thinkers are cautious about assuming that people in the past experienced those events – parenting or schooling for example – in the same ways as we do. Third, taking an historical perspective means considering the social, political, economic, and intellectual context of people’s ideas, beliefs and values. Moreover, it acknowledges that our own worldviews are a product of our own historical context. Fourth, conclusions about historical perspectives are grounded in evidence and also accept the limitations of the evidence that may be available to us. And finally, historical perspectives are always diverse perspectives: there were, for example, many “British” perspectives on the fur trade. Students who demonstrate sophisticated understandings can explore and articulate a variety of perspectives on historical events.

Recognizing and taking historical perspectives then is a challenging, cognitive task. Despite the requirements of our school curricula, is it reasonable to expect elementary school children to do this? My own research with elementary school children and the work of British and American researchers suggests there are both possibilities and challenges in moving children out of their naïve, presentist assumptions about the past and toward more sophisticated understandings of historical perspectives. Though children typically understand that people in the past thought and lived differently than they do, Barton argues “they can be highly judgmental of historical actions (or representations) that violate current sensibilities.”⁹ In my research with forty fourth-graders,¹⁰ the students were

most judgmental when they were asked to respond to a photograph of a classroom in their community taken one hundred years ago. While their comments about other photographs of streets and houses were just observations about the differences between then and now, they insisted that the classroom of a hundred years ago was crowded and that the students “don’t have as good clothes.” This, despite the fact that the photograph showed a classroom that was relatively spacious and twenty-seven well-dressed children. The students had difficulty imagining what the children in the 1912 classroom did for fun, guessing “they probably played baseball with a stick and a rock.” While they thought that school today was more intellectually challenging because “our place is more advanced,” many students commented on the strict discipline of the earlier classroom and the chores the children would have been expected to do. The students seemed to make negative judgments about schooling and the lives of children in the past because this was a context in which they could easily imagine and uncomfortably themselves.

Yet the Grade Four students also demonstrated an understanding of historical context and occasionally made comments that seemed to reflect an awareness that they too are the product of a particular historical worldview. For example, after Cory had placed five photographs of a street in her community in chronological order, she said that she would most like to visit the 1909 street and ride in the wagons saying, “It wouldn’t be really cool for them if you were from that time but for us it would be really cool.” Brady chose the 1920s photograph explaining, “there’d be enough modern good stuff like medical care, but enough old stuff that it would be cool to see.” Many students commented on the difficulties they had had trying to write with ink pens on a field trip to local historic site, but when Bailey said she would like to ask one of the children in the classroom photograph what it’s like to write with ink pens, Evan reminded her that “they’d be used to it.” Most impressively, when asked to consider the thoughts or perspectives of people in historical photographs, one quarter of the students drew on their knowledge of the historical context or asked questions to try and determine the context so they could articulate the perspectives more accurately. For example, four boys knew that the photograph of the classroom, taken in 1912, was “around World War One time.” Another six students discussed and also asked questions about the technology of the time, trying to determine if the students would have listened to the radio or watched silent movies like the ones they

had seen at the local museum. These Grade Four students, whose formal study of local and Canadian history had just begun, were already appreciating the importance of historical context when considering historical perspective.

During the year, the Grade Four students studied local First Nations peoples, the fur trade and completed integrated Language Arts-Social Studies units on the Great Depression and World War Two. In follow-up interviews at the end of the year, the students acknowledged that historical actors had diverse perspectives on events in the past. Cory and Jane, for example, explained the conflicts between the Cree and Peigan, and acknowledged that First Nations peoples’ views of the Hudson Bay Company and American fur traders were affected by how fairly they were treated in the trade. All the students were able to articulate how people in urban and rural communities and people of different classes were affected differently by the Great Depression. Like the Grade Four and Five students in American studies, these students were able to distinguish a range of historical perspectives on the events of the past because this had been a focus of the teachers’ instructional activities.¹¹

Though these Grade Four students were able to *recognize* and explain historical perspectives, when asked to *take* historical perspectives, or write from the perspective of an historical actor, they tended to default to their own feelings. The students completed a novel study of *Storm Child*, the story of a young Metis girl who struggles with her mixed-race identity.¹² At the end of the novel, Isobel (Storm Child) is struggling to decide if she should attend school in Red River. The students were asked to take on the perspective of a character in the novel to advise Isobel whether or not she should go. Nine students said that Isobel’s Peigan mother would want her to go to school and offered an explanation like Jamie’s: “Because most moms want thier kids to get an edgication” [sic]. Students who wrote letters from the perspective of Isobel projected their own emotions into situations in the novel, perhaps making connections to their own experiences. Mariah wrote as Isobel to the Scottish father who abandons his family at the beginning of the novel: “Father will I ever see you again? Or will this be the end? Is there something more important than your family?” Given the emotional struggle at the centre of the novel’s plot it is perhaps not surprising that students were engaged by these universal themes and essentially ignored the evidence and historical context they had studied.

Some history education researchers see students' emotional responses to historical fiction and to nonfiction historical accounts as undermining their ability to understand historical perspectives. In the United Kingdom, when researchers first began studying children's historical thinking, they examined their capacity for historical empathy, a goal of history teaching in the curriculum in the 1980s and understood as "the ability to enter into some informed appreciation of the predicaments or points of view of other people in the past."¹³ Critics of history instruction that stressed thinking skills targeted historical empathy as a problematic concept, confusing it with its everyday meaning of vicariously experiencing another's thoughts or sharing a feeling. They argued that history teachers were encouraging children to imagine themselves in the past through questionable activities such as role playing, rather than engaging in a critical understanding of past ways of living.¹⁴ Researchers like Peter Lee continue to characterize historical empathy as a purely cognitive act stressing that it "is not a special faculty for getting into other people's minds, but an understanding we achieve if we entertain ideas very different from our own... This is not a matter of having an emotional bond."¹⁵ But American researchers Barton and Levstik argue that historical empathy may involve students' emotions as well as their understandings, and is an appropriate goal for history instruction in schools. They stress that historical empathy involves perspective recognition, but also involves caring: caring about people of the past; caring that events happened; caring for people in history; and, caring to act on what they have learned about the past. In their view, "although we can attempt to study history without caring, we are unsure why anyone would want to."¹⁶

The Grade Four students in my study seemed to need to make a personal connection with events and people of the past in order to think about change and continuity and about historical perspectives. When they were exploring historical photographs, they commented on objects in the photographs, saying "My grandma has one like that," and "My poppa has a hotrod just like that. It's really, really old-fashioned. You should hear the horn!" Since we were looking at photographs of streets in their town, they examined each photograph carefully asking about the exact locations pictured and listing the buildings and businesses they knew were in those locations now. For all the students, the photographs triggered stories about personal experiences they had had on field trips or family

trips to historic sites. These stories were important first steps into questions they would explore regarding change and continuity in their community and the historical perspectives of those who lived through those changes. My findings confirmed Dulberg's conclusion that, "Bringing history alive is more than a matter of teaching rich content alone; students' imaginations must be ignited through some form of appeal to the personal."¹⁷

For many elementary school students the most powerful connections into historical inquiry come through their family histories. The Grade Four students in my study completed interviews with elders in their families very early in the school year and made reference to those interviews throughout the year as they studied a range of historical events and issues. Some students were so enthusiastic about the project, that they interviewed more than one relative. When they examined the photograph of a 1912 classroom, they told me the stories their grandparents (and in some cases great-grandparents) had told them about their schooling. This perhaps accounts for their negative comments about schools in the past since their elders tended to stress the hardships of their childhoods. When I asked the students why we learn about the past, many made reference to the importance of family history. Wyatt, for example, explained, "So we can tell our kids, so we can pass on those stories."

The students demonstrated their care for and about the people the past in a variety of ways. After their study of the Great Depression, Michael and Nick told me, "it was interesting to see how people lived with not much money... how they survived." Erica explained her reaction to their novel study of *Number the Stars*, a story set in occupied Denmark during World War Two: "I think it's interesting 'cause it's just really sad what they were doing." Some students began to appreciate that their study of history helped them better understand their own time and place. Daniel, for example, said studying history was important, "so we know the place we live in." Cory's excitement and sense of connection came through as she explained the significance of First Nations' history: "They hunted off *this* land. If you find stuff in the ground, like if you're digging in the dirt, and you like find an arrowhead or something, then you they were in *this* spot." Caring about the people of the past and caring that certain events happened triggered important insights for these students about history and about the nature of their own place and time.

The six historical thinking concepts are a valuable framework for engaging students in doing history, and clear definitions of the concepts can guide instruction in powerful ways that will help students think historically. The teachers I worked with, for example, taught the concept of historical perspective very explicitly, beginning with examples of visual perspective and then moving students through examples of perspective in a range of familiar situations: playground disagreements, in picture books with multiple narratives. They modeled the guideposts of powerful understandings of historical perspectives for the students and often asked questions that encouraged students to consider the context of historical actors' perspectives and articulate multiple perspectives on past events. By the time they were addressing historical perspectives in their inquiries into the fur trade or the Great Depression, the students could recognize and explain historical perspectives in relatively nuanced ways, reflecting some of the guideposts Seixas and Morton identify.

But the historical thinking framework can only provide a progression for increasing sophistication in historical thinking if we have a sense of what students' thinking at various age and grade levels looks like. Researchers VanSledright, Kelly and Meuwissen stress, "Understanding what novices are doing when researchers give them opportunities to think historically is crucially important to the process of being able to map starting points of academic development in the history domain."¹⁸ For elementary school students, the path to understanding historical perspectives seems to begin with a sense of personal connection to the experiences of people in the past. Their care about and for the people of the past is an important motivation for historical inquiry and for persistence in engaging in sophisticated historical thinking.

NOTES

- ¹ See The Historical Thinking Project at <http://historicalthinking.ca/>.
- ² Peter Seixas and Tom Morton, *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013): 3.
- ³ For thorough reviews of this research see Keith C. Barton, "Research on Students' Ideas About History" in *Handbook of Research in Social Studies Education*, eds. Linda S. Levstik and Cynthia A. Tyson (New York: Routledge, 2008): 239-258; and Amy J. von Heyking, "Historical Thinking in Elementary Education: A Review of Research," in *New Possibilities for the Past: Shaping History Education in Canada*, ed. Penney Clark (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011): 175-194.
- ⁴ Seixas and Morton, *The Big Six*: 138.
- ⁵ Tom Smith, *Settling Canada* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2005): 2.
- ⁶ Peter J. Lee, "Putting Principles Into Practice: Understanding History," in *How Students Learn: History in the Classroom*, eds. M. Suzanne Donovan and John D. Bransford (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2005): 31.
- ⁷ Samuel S. Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).
- ⁸ Seixas and Morton, *The Big Six*: 148.
- ⁹ Barton, "Research on Students' Ideas About History": 244.
- ¹⁰ The students' comments quoted here are verbatim quotes from interviews or their writing assignments, but all the students' names are pseudonyms. Other information about this study can be found in von Heyking, "Historical Thinking in Elementary Education," and in "Historical Understanding in the Elementary Years," paper presented to the annual meeting of the Association of Canadian Studies, Vancouver, BC, October 2006.
- ¹¹ See Keith C. Barton, "History is More Than Story: Expanding the Boundaries of Elementary Learning," paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies, Nashville, TN, November 1993; Keith C. Barton, "Did the Devil Just Run Out of Juice? Historical Perspective-Taking Among Elementary Students," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, New York, NY, April 1996; Jill Jensen, "Developing Historical Empathy Through Debate: An Action Research Study," *Social Studies Research and Practice* 3(1) (2008): 55-66.
- ¹² Brenda Bellingham, *Storm Child* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1985).
- ¹³ Department for Education and Skills, *History in the Primary and Secondary Years: An HMI View* (London: HMSO, 1985): 3, quoted in Richard Harris and Lorraine Foreman-Peck, "'Stepping Into Other People's Shoes': Teaching and Assessing Empathy in the Secondary History Curriculum," *International Journal of History Learning, Teaching and Research* 4(2) (1997): 4.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 1.
- ¹⁵ Lee, "Putting Principles Into Practice": 47.
- ¹⁶ Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004): 242.
- ¹⁷ Nancy Dulberg, "Engaging in History: Empathy and Perspective-taking in Children's Historical Thinking," paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April 2002. See also Barton and Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good*: 231.
- ¹⁸ Bruce VanSledright, Timothy Kelly and Kevin Meuwissen, "Oh, the Trouble We've Seen: Researching Historical Thinking and Understanding," in *Research Methods in Social Studies Education*, ed. Keith C. Barton (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2006): 212.

ARE CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES SUSTAINABLE IN THE YEARS AHEAD?

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ABSTRACT

Canadian higher education has expanded tremendously in the context of shifting and unpredictable economic winds, which have affected institutional resources, relations with governments, and internal management strategies. The key challenge currently facing Canada's publicly-funded post-secondary institutions is to meet enrolment and programming pressures with inadequate resources. They are called upon as well to demonstrate their relevance, operate more efficiently, teach more effectively, and improve their rankings at home and abroad.

Higher education began in Canada well before the country itself was founded. By the time of Confederation in 1867, there were 17 degree granting institutions, four of which were non-denominational (Dalhousie, McGill, New Brunswick and the University of Toronto), and 13 of which were controlled and regulated by Protestant or Catholic church authorities. The institutions were small, averaging 100 students, who were drawn from a select constituency – males whose fathers were professionals, businessmen or prosperous farmers, though only a minority of even their children attended. Those who did, typically, aspired to become clergymen, lawyers, grammar school teachers, or doctors.

Over the course of the next century, higher education, like Canada itself, changed in dramatic ways. By 1971, there were 50 degree granting institutions which enrolled 316,000 full-time students, some 38% of whom were female. Most universities now drew the bulk of their funding from government, and were themselves governed by lay, not religious, bodies. Attending university had become a normal part of the life cycle experience of middle-class youth, whose numbers had grown significantly during the post-World War II population and economic boom. With its wide array of foundational and professional academic programs, the university facilitated social mobility, helped raise the country's standard of living, spawned new research in the arts and sciences, and played a prominent role in the nation's cultural life.¹

It hadn't all been smooth sailing over the course of the century. Universities almost never seemed to have sufficient funding, and were damaged, though not devastated, by the Depression of the 1930s. They were affected as well by the pressures of the two

world wars – summoned by the state to produce “relevant” war-related work, while witnessing declining enrolments and student casualties overseas. Even in relatively good economic times – the mid- to late-1960s – universities were the target of withering criticism by many of their own students for being paternalistic, academically staid, insufficiently accessible to the poor, and too driven by the forces of the marketplace.²

From the 1970s to the present Canadian higher education has expanded tremendously in the context of shifting and unpredictable economic winds, which have affected institutional resources, relations with governments, and internal management strategies.

In 2010, close to 1.2 million students were enrolled full-time in university degree programs, of whom 755,000 were undergraduate and 143,400 were graduate students. Part-time students added another 275,800 enrolments nation-wide. Women now constituted the majority of full-time students – 56% – though they remained under-represented in engineering, mathematics, science, architecture and doctoral studies.³ While Canadian participation rates in higher education have remained among the highest in the world, not all groups are equally represented. The 2006 census showed that 7.7% of Aboriginals had university degrees compared with 23.4% of non-Aboriginals, and that from 2001 to 2006, the rate of participation for non-Aboriginals had grown more quickly. (Comparable statistics for 2011 are not available because the new “voluntary” National Household Survey employed a different survey methodology than that used in the traditional census.) As has been the case historically, middle and upper class students are more likely to attend university than those from lower socio-economic classes, although new research has found that parents’ educational attainment, not just family income, is an important predictor of student educational achievement.⁴

In an era of greater globalization, marked, particularly, by the rise of the South Asian and Chinese economies, Canadian higher education has become somewhat more internationalized. The number of international students more than tripled between 1995 and 2010. In the latter year, international students constituted 8% of the full-time undergraduate, 18% of the master’s, and 23% of the doctoral student populations.⁵ Typically, international students paid far higher fees than domestic students, and were valued increasingly by Canadian universities for their revenue producing potential.

Economic volatility – even in the two decades before the massive fiscal “meltdown” of 2008 – has imposed severe financial pressure on Canadian universities. Constrained by accelerating deficits and a diminishing tolerance for tax increases, government funding has not kept pace with the growing demand for university education. Between 1979 and 2009, the proportion of university operating revenues supported by public funds declined from 84% to 58%, while tuition-based revenues rose from 12% to 35%. In 1990-91, students paid an average annual tuition of \$1,464 compared to \$6,348 in 2012-13. Campaigns by student organizations have drawn increasing attention to the issue of student debt, although there is much disagreement over actual debt levels. Student groups (and the media) claim that the average debt at graduation is some \$27,000, while federal government statistics show that graduating students borrowing from the Canada Student Loans Plan in 2010-11 owed an average of \$16,634.⁶

Whatever the actual figure, the burden of debt should be viewed in the context of labour market opportunities. Students are more inclined to incur debt if they are optimistic about their post-university employment prospects. Overall, they have fared relatively well, even in turbulent economic times. From 1990-2010, university graduates filled some 4.4 million jobs, double the number 20 years earlier. By contrast, the number of jobs filled by those with a high school diploma (or less) fell by 1.2 million. As the Association of Universities and Colleges (AUCC) found, university graduates were especially dominant in the fields of business and finance; art, culture and recreation; health; engineering and applied sciences; social and legal professions; teaching; and increasingly, management occupations.⁷

Notwithstanding this positive picture, stories of underemployed graduates – “baristas with B.A.s” – regularly make the headlines. University spokespersons invariably dispute this narrative, stressing the proven long-term value of a university education. But many degree holders have been affected by some disconcerting changes in the economy. As a recent study of employment conditions in the Greater Toronto Area revealed, university graduates have not been sheltered from the spread of “precarious employment” – part-time work with low wages and no benefits.⁸ Universities and colleges themselves are part of this phenomenon, depending more and more on the employment of “sessional” or “casual” faculty to teach large numbers of undergraduate courses. These instructors normally lack tenure, or any

equivalent form of job security, and are paid at levels far below those of full-time faculty, nor are they integrated into the university's research culture. An Ontario survey found that between 2005 and 2007, the hiring of part-time faculty (which includes graduate students) significantly "outstripped" that of full-time faculty, and part-timers accounted for more than 50% of total undergraduate teaching in some universities.⁹

Research income has become one of the key "metrics" by which a university's reputation and status are forged and sustained. Owing largely to its perceived role in the burgeoning "knowledge economy," the Canadian university sector received an exceptional infusion of federal funding in the late 1990s. The Liberal government established the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Canada Research Chairs Program, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which spawned several billion dollars worth of university-based inquiry, most notably in the fields of science, technology, health, and industrial innovation.¹⁰ Since 2006, the Conservative government under Stephen Harper has retained these initiatives, and, in 2010 augmented them with the introduction of the Canada Excellence in Chairs Program. Nineteen prestigious research appointments, virtually all in the fields of science and technology (and, controversially, all held by males), were allocated to 13 universities. While largely lauded for this investment in science, the Harper government has, paradoxically unsettled the Canadian academic community with its withdrawal of support for a number of other scientific and environmental programs, and for, allegedly, "silencing" government employed researchers.¹¹ In order to enhance their influence and resources, a self-declared "elite" group of Canadian universities – now called the U-15 – continues to lobby for the lion's share of the country's research funding, a campaign that has proven divisive within the university community.¹²

Since 1977, support for research in the arts has been provided through the federally-funded Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), but proportionately at a lower level than that directed to the fields of science, technology, and health. To enhance its profile and influence, SSHRC undertook a "transformation" exercise in 2004, designed to convert itself from a "Granting Council to a Knowledge Council," and to highlight the social and economic contributions of both foundational (curiosity-based) and applied scholarly

research. Academics working in the humanities and social sciences in Canada and elsewhere worry about the erosion of liberal education in favour of commercially-driven, market-oriented academic programs in both research and teaching that seem to threaten the traditional mission of university education, fears reinforced by the universities' pervasive "branding" exercises and fundraising campaigns.¹³ Private donations from alumni and corporate philanthropists have supported a significant number of building programs, academic initiatives, and research projects in recent years, although controversy has arisen in a number of widely profiled cases around the terms and conditions of the donations. Donors who insist on direct involvement in the administration of funds, or who seek to impose constraints on researchers receiving them, are, potentially, at odds with the scholarly protocols of academic freedom. The task of negotiating and managing the relations that universities have with external "partners" has grown in importance in recent years.¹⁴

Provincial governments are, without question, the universities' most important "partners." Notwithstanding the institutions' growing dependence on tuition fees and private donations, Canada's post-secondary systems remain reliant primarily on provincial government funding. Constitutionally responsible for the oversight of education (the federal government's role has largely been limited to the areas of research, student assistance, and Aboriginal schooling), the provinces regulate the operation and funding of universities and colleges. Unlike other state-supported institutions, universities have enjoyed and fought to sustain a significant degree of autonomy from their government benefactors, a condition considered essential for the endurance of free intellectual inquiry. While still largely uninvolved in the day-to-day life of universities, governments are more engaged indirectly in shaping the institutions' policies and directions. Determined to produce visibly tangible outcomes for their "investment" in higher education, and challenged by onerous fiscal pressures, provincial governments now employ a variety of regulatory instruments which, increasingly, drive post-secondary educational agendas. Accountability protocols, quality assurance requirements, performance indicators, college-university collaboration arrangements, employment-oriented program initiatives, and other targeted-funding envelopes have diminished the independence of universities. Severe funding cuts, such as those recently experienced in the province of Alberta, have further eroded the institutions' self-sufficiency and

independence.¹⁵ Markedly higher tuition fees are unlikely to provide the required resources; as the widespread student protests in Quebec in 2012 portended, such policies would be difficult to implement. To manage their resources in volatile economic times, universities are undertaking “prioritization” strategies, which is likely to lead to the closing of “under-performing” academic programs.¹⁶

History demonstrates that the demand for higher education endures in both prosperous and anemic economic times. Highly educated students in all fields thrive in periods of economic growth and seek to enhance their educational credentials under more competitive market conditions. The key challenge currently facing Canada’s publicly-funded post-secondary institutions is to meet enrolment and programming pressures with inadequate resources. They are called upon as well to demonstrate their relevance, operate more efficiently, teach more effectively, and improve their rankings at home and abroad. They are required, in short, to do more with less, a daunting task that may well be unsustainable in the years ahead.

NOTES

1 For a rich overview of the history of higher education, see A.B. McKillop, *Matters of Mind: The University in Ontario, 1791-1951* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

2 See Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément and Greg Kealey, eds., *Debating Dissent: Canada in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

3 The Expert Panel on Women in University Research, *Strengthening Canada’s Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension* (Ottawa: The Council of Canadian Academies, 2012).

4 Ross Finnie, Stephen Childs and Richard Mueller, “Family Environment, Family Habits, and Children’s Cultural Experiences: Is There a Link to Participation in Post-Secondary Education?” in Ross Finnie et al., eds., *Pursuing Higher Education in Canada: Economic, Social and Policy Dimensions* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 243-267.

5 AUCC, *Trends in Higher Education, Vol. 1 Enrolments* (Ottawa: AUCC, 2011): 15.

6 Mary Teresa Bitti, “Student Debt Bankrupting a Generation,” *National Post*, June 10, 2011; “Employment and Social Development Canada,” *Canada Student Loans Program: Statistical Review, 2010-2011* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2012), http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs/student/reports/statistics/cslp_2011.shtml.

7 AUCC, *Trends in Higher Education, Vol. 1 Enrolments*: 32-33.

8 Wayne Lewchuck et al., *It’s More than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-being* (Toronto: United Way, 2013).

9 Ian Clark, Greg Moran, Michael L. Skolnik and David Trick, *Academic Transformation: The Forces Reshaping Higher Education in Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), 102-103. Not all Ontario universities participated in the survey.

10 Paul Axelrod, Roopa Desai Trilokekar, Theresa Shanahan, Richard Wellen, “People, Processes, and Policy-Making in Canadian Post-secondary Education, 1990-2000,” *Higher Education Policy* 24(2) (June 2011): 143-166.

11 Chris Turner, *The War on Science: Muzzled Scientists and Willful Blindness in Stephen Harper’s Canada* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2013).

12 Peggy Berkowitz, “U-15 Begins to Formalize Its Organization,” *University Affairs*, May 30, 2012; Deborah C. Poff, “What’s Wrong with the U15?” *Brandon Sun*, July 6, 2013.

13 Paul Axelrod, *Values in Conflict: Universities, the Marketplace, and the Trials of Liberal Education* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002).

14 Theresa Tedesco, “The Uneasy Ties between Canada’s Universities and Wealthy Business Magnates,” *Financial Post*, March 9, 2012.

15 Sheila Pratt, “The University of Alberta Plans to Cut Another \$56 Million from Its Budget,” *Edmonton Journal*, August 23, 2013.

16 See for example, “University of Guelph Releases ‘Prioritization’ Results to Staff, Students,” *Guelph Mercury*, Oct. 3, 2013.

NEW FRANCE THROUGH THE LEARNING LENS

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ABSTRACT

The concept of the “learning society” can be used fruitfully as a lens to conduct a reconnaissance of societies in the past. Two moments in early Canadian history are selected to illustrate how we as humans are fated to learn to make a living, live in communities and make sense of the particular world we inhabit—often in the midst of turbulent change.

CUNNING PEDAGOGICS: THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE JESUIT MISSIONARIES AND THE AMERINDIANS OF 17TH-CENTURY NEW FRANCE

France only began to take a serious interest in a permanent settlement in Canada in the late 16th and the early to middle 17th centuries. Imperialism now depended on discovery, conquest, and settlement. Unless one settled land and defended it with armaments and skillful management of indigenous populations, papal or royal proclamations meant little. In 1603, Henry IV, the Huguenot turned Catholic, appointed Pierre Gue de Mons, a prominent merchant, to procure settlers for New France. He ordered Samuel de Champlain to increase these numbers. This was to be accomplished through evangelization and assimilation of native peoples into French culture. Thus, France’s fur trade interests could be protected, and the census would be able to report more French habitants than English residents. These purposes were encased within the dream of fulfilling the dictates of the papal encyclicals to bring the knowledge of God, the Catholic Church, and religion to the native peoples.

One way of telling the story of the unfolding the Canadian learning society is to begin with the tribal wilderness learning systems of indigenous peoples. Here, one would do one’s best to construct the nature of the indigenous learning systems as they adapted to changing circumstances over time and then responded to the invasion of germs and foreigners. Essentially, the pedagogical encounter between the Jesuits and the Amerindians of Canada highlights the way one society’s learning

system can disrupt, often in radical ways, that of the other. Traditional Amerindian world orientations had to cope with changes to their way of symbolically ordering the world and learning systems during many centuries. But Amerindian modes of subsistence and production came under relentless assault. It began inconspicuously in the late 15th century and continued inexorably into the 16th and through to the 18th century as the fur trade penetrated the St. Lawrence Valley and onward to the west. Between 1632 and 1670, approximately 100 Jesuit missionaries went to New France, made possible by the French occupation of the St. Lawrence Valley in 1632. The pioneering, cunning, resourceful Jesuits got to know their learners, tried to displace indigenous adult educational leaders (they were the new shaman) and gradually produce Euro-Catholic subjectivities in their learners. Their pedagogical techniques were imaginative and surprisingly modern—all of this used to undermine the indigenous belief and action system and replace it with Euro-Catholic subjectivities.

We can identify the different dimensions of the tribal wilderness learning. This learning system experienced severe strain as new problems and ideas were fed into it from external sources. The shaman—perhaps the most significant adult educator in Amerindian tribal society—had the role of maintaining the balance and order of the society. In unusual times of trouble or foreboding, the shaman was called upon to restore order and good times. He could teach his people what the new signs and dreams meant and allay collective anxiety. But the shaman, as guardian of the traditional lifeworld (its sources of meaning, social stability, and personal coherence), was in a precarious situation. If his techniques failed, he could be easily discredited and the traditional lifeworld as a legitimate fund of meaning would be undermined.

“Tension points” were introduced into the differing learning systems (European and Indian) that disabled dialogue or mutual understanding. For example, the Amerindians had considerable trouble comprehending some of the basic Christian dogmas: sin, guilt, and hell. The Hurons could not grasp the idea of primordial fault. Although the Jesuits were not in New France to foster inter-religious or spiritual dialogue (to use contemporary language), they occupied common ground with Amerindian belief in the supernatural realm. Both believed in evil spirits. Both accepted the dualism of the body and soul. But the Jesuits could neither accept nor

possibly even grasp, the idea that a soul could leave the living body or that a shaman could kill, or injure, a faraway enemy. The Amerindians and the Europeans also had different conceptions of the self; the former being more porous than the emergent buffered self of early moderns. In fact, doubt about the existence of God does not even become a viable option for people in the U.S. and Canada until the late 19th century.

The Jesuits were in New France to convert the Indians to Roman Catholic Christianity. They were highly intelligent and pedagogically innovative educators who used a wide array of techniques and even tricks to undermine the indigenous lifeworld. The Christian colonizers of the 17th century used popular theatrics, visualizations, and intense campfire debates to convince their foes to embrace their imaginary Christ. They used every opportunity to discredit the shaman; in fact, one might argue that they sought to substitute themselves as Christian shamans. The Jesuits believed that their Indian pupils learned best at moments of heightened emotion and melodrama. Believing that perspective transformation required shock treatment, Jesuit educators painted frightening verbal portraits of hell, the fiery underworld. Indian catechumens were encouraged to use the see-hear-taste-touch mode of pedagogy to instruct their novice Christians. They also used pictures to instruct their adult pupils when they first landed in Acadia in 1611. Gradually, after some failures, they learned how to meet the visual preferences of their learners. Jesus had to be beardless and colourful (the Hurons’ favourite was a picture of the child Jesus clutching the knees of the Virgin, regally crowned and holding a scepter in her right hand and the earth in her left.) The Indians preferred illuminated paintings to highlight the sacred mysteries. This is brilliant pedagogy. One can surmise that the Franco-Jesuits had more than a few surprises to their received wisdom.

The Jesuit encounter with the Amerindians of the St. Lawrence Valley in 17th-century New France provides us with insights into the inner learning processes of the colonial imagination. This brilliant marshaling of pedagogical energy was ultimately, however, in the service of a worldview that divided humankind into (Christian) friends and (Satanic) enemies. The Jesuits had nothing important to learn and everything important to teach. The political context of pedagogical instruction in the early Jesuit era and our own are neglected at our peril. Their gutsy and dogged determination was captured powerfully in the

dark Canadian film, *Black Robe*. For their part, First Nations peoples had to re-orient their own religious understandings as this new vision intruded and forced its way inside their symbolic ordering of the world. And they had to do so in a damaged world, which rendered them vulnerable and open to consider a new orientation to a world that was changing before their very eyes. In one sense, the Jesuits as ambassadors of a Christian Europe in its civilizing mode, sets the stage for the long contestation between the Canadian state, government authorities and missionaries to transform them into liberal and Christian subjects.

“A COUNTRY AT THE END OF THE WORLD”: LIVING AND LEARNING IN NEW FRANCE, 1608-1760

What might it have been to live and learn in New France between the early 17th and late 18th centuries? It is not easy to shed our cultural clothing of the late 20th century (or put down our cell phones for a minute or two), and travel through time to the beginnings of settlement in New France. Try to imagine the ghastly eight- or ten-week creaking and groaning journey across the Atlantic. What could possibly have occupied the minds and imaginations of many of these illiterate (or scarcely literate) men and women who were coming to this “country at the edge of the world”? Hope and fear probably ran together like ink in water in their hearts. Perhaps deep faith in their Catholic God and protective amulets somehow sustained them. We may never know.

It is an exacting task to understand how men and women in New France learned to make a living, live their lives, and express themselves. It is an exacting task, first, because most of the learning processes and pedagogical procedures were either non-formal or woven into life activities, and second, because we don't always have the records necessary to help us understand the instructional processes underpinning the work of constructing a new world society in the image of the old. Thus, one must imagine one's way into another world and extrapolate key ideas from historians who are neither focusing on nor having an interest in how people actually acquire the knowledge and skills to sustain themselves in their worlds, with the host of “learning challenges” that erupt in their presence as their worlds unfold, oftentimes with acute disruptions. In contemporary society, we need only think of the fortunes of the ill-fated people who have had to flee for their lives and live precariously as refugees.

The elites who governed New France recreated feudal conditions in the New World to ensure the flow of goods into the imperial centre. New France was organized as a colonial outpost to ensure the continuing flow of the “brown gold” of the fur trade (in swing for a hundred years prior to settlement.) By 1590, the fur trade had gained such momentum that the French Crown wanted to secure its control against its chief competitor, the English. The story of Samuel Champlain occupies considerable attention in the first decades of 17th-century New France. In fact, Quebec recently celebrated the 400th anniversary of his founding of Quebec City in 1608. The conflict between the French and their First Nations allies, and that of the English and theirs, is intricate and well documented. From our vantage point, the alliance between the French and First Nations, each forced into the other's arms, created our first fraught example of cross-cultural learning in Canadian history. Yet the intercultural exchange, if one may grant it this label, was asymmetrical, framed within the French project of imperial domination. Here, we might be reminded that Jacques Cartier took Indians hostage and transported them to France as curiosities. Historians of adult education, like their counterparts working on different themes, have to work creatively with concepts such as power and hegemony. They must show how the learning process is distorted by those holding power over others and are trying to impose a particular form of rule. This latter assumption is integral to the new critical history.

What did those in the fur trade needed to know, be and do to perform their work? Some scholars have suggested that the Indians lost their moral footing as the imperial centre pressured them (and perhaps they pressured themselves, hungry for commodities) to capture more and more beaver. The *coureurs des bois* were drawn into their form of work because they couldn't sustain their families by working the land. Their work was dangerous and highly organized, demanding tough, strong bodies and disciplined minds. The work appears to have been a kin-related affair. Theirs was a pedagogy of daring and danger, learned experientially in the face of death, a world far removed from the relative safety and moral surveillance of the Catholic “garrison culture” emerging reluctantly in the Canadian wilderness.

The habitant was created by and for the feudal seigneurial system; immigrants were transformed into habitants. The famous strip farms of Quebec, now a part

of our Canadian imagination, were imposed upon the geography and landscape of New France. Those who ended up clearing and gaining a living from these lands had some leeway, but were essentially bound to a legal system that extracted surplus from their labour (this is called the *corvée*.) But the shift to agriculture away from the centrality of the fur trade—called for because of the early problems of getting settlers—only occurred in the latter 17th century. By mid-18th century, with the Indian wars ended, agriculture was the main pursuit of almost all of the inhabitants of the area. A European rural society had emerged on this corner of the New World, and it was one whose life was centred on the self-sufficient peasant household.

We can postulate that the habitant family household was the pre-eminent learning site for men and women and their children (with the Roman Catholic Church watching warily over it.) The habitants were hardly ignorant. To manage their farms, woven tightly into their lifeworld, they had to have a wide range of knowledge and skills at their disposal. Attuned to the rhythms of the seasons, the habitants had to know how to plow with a team of animals (much-loved horses, or oxen or a mixed team) They used the heavy wheeled plow; they made the beam, axle, and handle from wood, fitting them with two wheels, a chain, an iron coulter, and a small iron plowshare. In May, after plowing, they sowed grain and see, covered by the passing of a harrow, a crude device made with wooden pegs mounted in a simple frame. Women had the responsibility for the tilling and planting of the kitchen garden. With the arrival for summer, the habitants erected fences around freshly planted grain fields. They whitewashed the house and got on with other chores, like digging ditches. If they didn't learn how to sharpen their scythes, the tons of hay would lie uncut. The time of the grain harvest in the early fall was busy and bustling. After the harvest, internal fences had to be removed to allow animals to roam over the entire farm. They were hardly ignorant and backward, resistant to change and superstitious. This derogatory labeling was read back into their experience by elites who were embracing the scientific forms of agriculture in the age of improvement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

We moderns are products of the Enlightenment Era who fiercely believe that we have rights as individuals, and rights to question wrongful authority. We might, then, ask the question of just how much autonomy the peasants actually had in 18th-century New France. Resistance to authority was mainly episodic: gusts but no revolutionary

storms. Even the habitants' religious expression was not entirely autonomous. They were under surveillance and had to steal their own time. A magical sacred canopy enveloped them, giving cosmological meaning to the unpredictability of their lives, even though there is evidence of disrespectful attitudes to the church amongst habitants. Human beings long for transcendence and cannot live on the horizontal plane alone.

The history of New France contains an unusual and remarkable number of women. Jeanne Mance, for example, is named as co-founder of Montreal in 1642. The redoubtable duo, Marie de l'Incarnation and Marguerite Bourgeoys established Canada's first reasonably accessible education system. These amazing women were working in an environment scarcely hospitable to women. But the nuns came and established hospitals and other institutions. No matter what their status, high or low, the situation of women in the colony was insecure. The famed *les filles du rois* are an amazing story in themselves. Between 1663 and 1673, 770 women, average age of 24, left farms and orphanages to sail for an unknown country. It is hard to imagine the learning and spiritual challenges they faced. If the men they met and married in the new country turned out to be brutes, that was bad enough; they also faced disease, childbirth, backbreaking work, and war. But learn they did, and the life of Louise, born around 1645, provides a window on to the life of the peasant woman, one of the legendary *filles du roi*.

She had been placed in a poorhouse in France, where she learned the basics of religion, housekeeping, and knitting. That was her lifeworld curriculum. At age 13, she was sent out to do domestic service. She returned to the Hospital at age 24, and a government agent arrived with an offer to pay her fare for New France. She arrived in Quebec City, where she stayed at a boarding house supervised by the sisters. There she met numerous suitors that came calling. She chose one, and after travelling to Trois-Rivieres she and her husband built a small cabin near the riverbank. Louise used her dowry to purchase a cow and some chickens. From her neighbours, Louise learned how to turn suet into candles and bake bread in an outdoor oven. After the arrival of the first baby, her work grew more arduous. Like so many other pioneering women, she had to haul water, beat the wash, stoke the fires, turn the roast deer, mend clothes, tend to the cow, and care for the baby. After Louise lost her husband, she was entitled to run the family farm. The daunting work of

managing the lifeworld inscribed itself on the bodies of these habitants, *filles du roi*. They wore out in the service of peopling the land of New France to establish France’s imperial dominance in this land. The household space, the grounding of the lifeworld, needs to be taken seriously as a crucial learning site.

The craftsmen and their associations: how did they learn their work as shoemakers and stonemasons and carpenters and coopers? One cannot understand the social organization of crafts learning apart from understanding how the apprenticeship system in New France worked. Many fathers passed their craft skills on to their sons. It was not easy for any craftsperson to move out of his (or her) class location. The craft guilds were important learning sites for workers to learn about the wider meanings of their work and how it related to other sectors of life in New France (and beyond, too.) Their “collective voice” was restricted; the first strike in the colony is dated at 1741). Clearly, the instincts of the colonial administration were repressive and colonial workers were less likely than Europeans to act collectively. Each of the crafts had their own patron saints and rituals. They were often rowdy affairs, prompting the priests to move in as their guides.

The idea of the public sphere has gained considerable prominence in contemporary philosophy and political and social science. The public sphere emerges gradually in European historical development as a conversational space between the state and the economy. Using this concept as lens, we can scan the social and political landscape of New France for evidence of spaces where people could reason together about the basic rules governing the spheres of labour and commodity exchange as well as forms of governance (and, one might add, their general conditions of well-being.) The historical evidence suggests that the New France ruling elites did not tolerate an “open space” between state and the people. New France in the 17th and 18th centuries was constituted as an aristocratic, patriarchal, agricultural, and Roman Catholic community.

Unauthorized assemblies and public protest were perceived as serious offences. Nonetheless, one detects the presence of occasional consultative assemblies. But Frontenac ended any form of popular representation as early as 1677. All of the institutions and legal formulations of New France were harnessed toward the end of creating a submissive, hard-working, dutiful, pious subject. Ritual and law, and not doctrine, bound the people together into an exclusive community.

But this authoritarian control over the people’s minds didn’t last for too long. Dictatorial systems are leaky, though they can survive for a time on terror and coercion. The liberal and radical currents of Enlightenment thought made their way into a post-conquest Quebec. The printers and newspapermen introduced perhaps the first “critical spirit” into an intellectually conservative culture. They challenged court decisions, railed against the abuses of the clergy, attacked the backwardness of the colleges, and advocated for a legislative assembly. This small, courageous “republic of letters” had a difficult time establishing a beachhead. One could say that the backrooms of their print shops were the first critical learning sites in Quebec history. The now forgotten and silent names of two of those radical printers, Fleury Mesplat (who founded the *Quebec Gazette* in 1764) and the gallant Valentin Jautard, who edited *The Gazette of Montreal* in 1778, should be retrieved from history’s dustbins.

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THE PEDAGOGY OF PEACE: EDUCATION AND THE EXIGENCIES OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT

The history of education in Canada is a story of the Canadian people struggling to understand what schools should be and how they might be in the best of all possible worlds. The theme of progressive education has been the protagonist of this broader story over the past century. The rhetoric of progressive education reveals aspects of our human existence within a modern age and, simultaneously, it articulates our existential concern with the transformational forces of modernity. This article will principally look at two reverberations of progressivist rhetoric from the past century. The first dominated the years between World War I and World War II, whereas the second dominates today and is known as *21st century learning*.

INTRODUCTION

In their monumental publication *How Schools Worked: Public Education in English Canada, 1900-1940*, R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar (2012) describe the landscape of public education in the country over the first forty years of the twentieth century. With some notable exceptions (i.e. French Canada, First Nations), limitations enforced by the limitations of evidence and the methods pursued in the study, they succeed in offering a map of public schools' functioning and operations. One further limitation is noted on the first page of their introduction; the authors make plain their view that there is:

A persistent bias that bestows undue attention on the emergence of a reform agenda variously known as "the new education" or "progressive education." While it is not possible to write about the period without taking some account of the abundant rhetoric this movement generated, we have given it short shrift in the pages that follow. This book is not about schools as they should be or might be in the best of all possible worlds. It is about schools and systems at work.¹

I argue that the history of education in Canada is – particularly from the period following the First World War – a story of the Canadian people struggling to understand what schools should be and how they might be in the best of all possible worlds. I thus reveal my own bias towards educational rhetoric and policy as historical sources of value, if only because they constitute evidence of an idealization of schools and an obstinate projection upon public schools of all that we hope the world might be and ought to become.

As a consequence, I am gripped by the theme of progressive education, which has been the protagonist of this broader story over the past century. The rhetoric of progressive education reveals aspects of our human existence within a modern age and, simultaneously, it articulates our existential concern with the transformational forces of modernity. Progressive education has been a tour de force, which continues to shape the ways that we think about and discursively frame public education. We live in a world of ideas, and we should never disregard the power of ideas to change the world.

Here, I will principally look at two reverberations of progressivist rhetoric from the past century. The first dominated the years between World War I and World War II, whereas the second dominates today. We know the latter by its moniker, or slogan, *21st century learning*. In both cases, I treat samples of rhetoric from the province of Ontario as indicative examples. Both progressive education – a term used here to denote the interwar incarnation of progressivist pedagogy – and 21st century learning can be thought of as: a) responses to modernity; b) intimate aspects of modernity or (as I am inclined to believe); c) both of the above. As a response to modernity, these movements represent manifest our existential angst about the accelerated rate of change affecting the social landscape of life. As an aspect of modernity, they are part and parcel of this accelerated rate of change, reverberations of the social, economic, and political impulses, which drive towards innovation and novelty.

DISCUSSION

The history of education in Canada requires a thorough encyclopaedia to be properly discussed. This is mere preamble. My focus is on progressive education, which was, I argue, the most important force in Canadian educational reform during the twentieth century. It

has had staying power. Today, we hear a great deal in education about so-called 21st Century Learning. If we listen carefully to this rhetoric, we will recognize that it is a clear reverberation of progressive education and sentiments that are nearly a century old.

Progressivist educational ideology as articulated historically and contemporaneously concentrates on three aims, each of which is symptomatic of a general unrest provoked by the radically transformative effects of modernity. For the past century, progressivists have implored educationists to: a) focus on the individual learner's aptitudes and interests rather than upon a rigid curriculum developed in a bygone age; b) engage the learner actively in the construction of knowledge, a process prohibited by the memorization and examination of content; and, c) commit to relating school life to the modern world and its concerns, not to the affairs of a world of the past.²

This is half the story. A tenuous embracement of both/and logic is most suitable with respect to progressive education. It is also controversial. In 2011, I gave a talk at the University of British Columbia as part of a speaker series on curriculum hosted by Dr. William Pinar. I argued that progressive education was a popular, existential response to modernity. Dr. Peter Grimmett challenged this position, positing that progressive education was a simulacrum of modernity. An email exchange followed, and I concluded that we were both correct.

Whilst progressive education can be defined by the three broad themes that it encompasses, noted above, it can also be defined by its function and purpose. *Functionally*, progressive education serves as the pedagogical response to an existential realization: the world we inhabit today is qualitatively different from the one that we inhabited as children. *Purposively*, it serves as the means by which we might align schools more meaningfully with the qualitatively inimitable world of the present. It is, further, an *instrument* of change within a rapidly changing world. Progressivist pedagogical philosophy, in other words, is philosophically grounded in anxiety regarding the relationship of schools to social reality; operationalized, however, it is the catalyst for greater dissonance in that relationship.

Ronald Wright's 2004 Massey Lecture, *A Short History of Progress* develops a two-pronged argument. The first is relatively uncontroversial: the social world that we

inhabit is changing. The second is bolder, but also more exciting: the social world that we inhabit is changing at an increasingly accelerated rate, which renders the taken-for-granted world unrecognizable to us with alarming quickness. From the Palaeolithic era to the end of the last ice age, a span consuming 99.5% of human existence, tools and cultural ideals replicated themselves, evolving at a staggeringly slow pace. “Nowadays,” Wright argues, “we have reached such a pass that the skills and mores we learn in childhood are out-dated by the time we’re thirty, and few people past fifty can keep up with their culture – whether in idiom, attitudes, taste, or technology – even if they try.”³

The century to come is qualitatively and quantitatively inimitable to the previous one. Schools need to be re-conceptualized. We must prepare our youth for the world of the future by engaging them actively with technologies available to us in the present. The world that they will inhabit is not the world of the past that we inhabited.

The first progressivist wave freely flowed throughout the interwar period, intensifying in the years following the Depression. Half a decade after Alberta introduced of a revised *Programme of Studies* for public schools in 1936, every province in Canada had transformed its formal curriculum, infrastructure, and examination structures. A new and progressive age was on the horizon, and it demanded that school life adjust to meet the needs of a contemporary world. This world was altered by the transformative effects of modern warfare, as experienced in the trenches of Europe, as well as by immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. The second wave of progressive education followed the first by approximately thirty-five years; an indicative example is Ontario’s *Living and Learning* document, which was submitted to the public in 1968. More commonly referred to as the Hall-Dennis Report, a name associated with the two chairs of the committee that drafted the document, *Living and Learning* offered a wide set of recommendations, which challenged educationists to focus on the individual learner’s inclination towards self-discovery and exploration, to limit competition, to re-vision classroom spaces, and to abolish corporal punishment. The third wave of progressivist thinking, which is branded 21st Century Learning, is a tidal force in education today. Whilst mediated within a discourse that concentrates upon the transformative influence of technology on our existence, the rhetoric of 21st Century learning is thoroughly progressivist in its philosophical orientation towards the place of schools in society.

Throughout the history of Canadian public education, progressivists have largely defined the pedagogical aims that they espouse in opposition to tradition; tradition, in this sense, bears a definitively negative connotation. According to progressivist sensibilities, noted above, extant school structures were derived in, and are associated with, a bygone and obsolete social context. The schools of today should help students understand and live in a modern world rather in a world that has passed. This argument is as persistent as it is problematic. Eighty-five years ago, John Dewey (1938) articulated a challenge to progressivist educators that still resonates; he felt that the dichotomy of “traditional” and “progressive” schools is problematic.⁴ This sort of dichotomous thinking, despite Dewey’s warning, has characterized educational rhetoric for the better part of a hundred years.⁵

Dewey felt that the dichotomy of “traditional” and “progressive” schools is problematic:

*The general philosophy of the new education may be sound, and yet the difference in abstract principles will not decide the way in which the moral and intellectual preference involved shall be worked out in practice. There is always the danger in a new movement that in rejecting the aims and methods of that which it would supplant, it may develop its principles negatively rather than positively and constructively.*⁶

Progressive educators who had proceeded according to this principle of continuity had neglected questions central to the pedagogical project. Dewey challenged progressivists to be more critical of their own pedagogical principles and claims.

In 1928, an editorial in the *Canadian School Board Journal*, an Ontario journal published monthly by the Ontario Ratepayers Association, found it necessary to comment on that refrain, which was already widespread as a subject of discussion in the periodicals and at educational conferences.⁷ In response to the needs of a modern world, the article noted, educational aims were shifting: “A perusal of the printed volume of Proceedings from year to year would show the bearing the discussions, resolutions and addresses of the various sections have had in adapting the educational system of the province to meet modern needs.”⁸ Indeed, that same year at the Ontario Educational Association Conference, *The*

Canadian School Journal reported labour leader Thomas Moore's pronouncement that "educational systems must necessarily undergo changes to enable the youth to meet the demands of modern complex civilization."⁹ Duncan McArthur, Ontario's Deputy Minister of Education (1934-1937) and Minister of Education (1937-1942), who was at the helm when the province introduced its first thoroughly progressivist curriculum of studies for the public schools, incessantly argued that the best way to prepare students for the world of the future was to give them opportunities to face the world of the present intelligently. In so doing, they would cultivate habits of mind that would serve them well throughout their lives, whatever uncertainties they might face:

*The school of tomorrow must, above all things, turn out citizens who are capable of facing their very different problems intelligently, courageously and with sympathy for all living beings. In this connection I make a plea for freedom of discussion, even of the most controversial issues in the classroom. The teacher must not be a propagandist but be encouraged to develop in the minds of his pupils the importance of ascertaining all the facts in a given situation, of accepting differences of opinion with tolerance and of making a decision, not on the grounds of personal prejudice but on the basis of the total community good. Education at its best in the intellectual sphere is the doing away with prejudices.*¹⁰

The schools of tomorrow were the subject of Ontario's progressivist rhetoric in the 1930s, and they remain the preoccupation of 21st Century progressivist rhetoric espoused today within the province.

This line of reasoning demands a disposition towards both/and, rather than towards either/or. The call for 21st century learning, as well as the concomitant argument that we commit to greater integration of technology, reveals both anxiety about the future and a keen ability to exploit that anxiety. In 2013, the following plea was made in support of educational reform:

Canadian education systems rank among the best in the world, resulting in a highly-skilled

*labour force and competitive industries. However, the challenges associated with the twenty-first century have placed new demands on Canada and, by extension, Canadian education systems. In particular, these systems are now tasked with educating a generation that faces an unprecedented pace of social, economic, and technological change.*¹¹

The language is inescapably progressivist in the same sense as its historical antecedent was.

Groups like the Ontario Public School Boards Association have issued loud critiques of Ontario's public schools.¹² The most recent accuses Ontario of lagging behind with respect to the inclusion of educational technologies; as a result, it argues, the government risks losing the public trust whilst simultaneously compromising the competitiveness of its students in an increasingly progressive world. This plea uses a classic propaganda technique, fear mongering, to depict a future in which Ontario's future is bleak and the province is out of pace.

*It is tempting to turn this on its head and speculate about what will happen if we do not embrace change. A graphic illustration of this would be the North American automotive sector which in 2008 has revealed itself to be a dinosaur that has ignored its environment and failed, not only to anticipate what its customers would want, but even to respond to them when they made their wants known through their defection to small, environment-friendly automobiles made in Asia and Europe.*¹³

Today's progressivist rhetoricians, who wage war against the same straw man of tradition, use the tactic ruthlessly. Note the arguments proffered by the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA), which seeks to rally Ontarians behind the banner of 21st Century Learning:

This paper is a call for the Government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education to lead the way in establishing a vision for Learning and Teaching in a Digital Age. Student and teacher

use of technology in their everyday lives and the possibilities this creates for expanding the integration of 21st century skills into our learning and our instructional practices is at a tipping point. Many other jurisdictions have moved vigorously ahead to define a vision to guide education well into the 21st century and we urge Ontario, which is a leader in student achievement and in education in so many spheres, to take up this challenge. This call is not inspired by considerations of funding but by a conviction that it is critical to define how we will move to keep pace with rapidly evolving technology to ensure our students are globally competitive. This is a matter of public confidence in our education system. Students, teachers, parents, school boards – all our education stakeholders – are ready to embrace this vision.¹⁴

This is a dawn of a new age, and public education must be progressivist or become extinct. One bit of irony seemingly unnoticed by 21st Century learning advocates, which is symptomatic of the ahistorical and unreflective character of this movement, is the fact that schools have changed dramatically in the past century. This change is in no small part due to the potency of progressive education as a rhetorical tool for reshaping the linguistic, intellectual, and political contours of public education.

While 21st Century learning advocates may be right in proclaiming the necessity of integrating technologies within the classroom more consistently (despite the overtly tautological aspects of this argument), a small bit of investigative journalism would reveal that the standard bearers of this army of rhetoricians are actual technology corporations, which have everything to gain should the war be won. Case in point is a group called *Canadians for 21st Century Learning and Innovation*, or *C21*.¹⁵ Ten of the twelve founding members of *C21* are corporations.¹⁶ Their vision for innovation in teaching practice reads as follows:

Teachers adopt modern instructional practices, including the teaching of 21st Century competencies, integrating technology with pedagogy, harnessing the power of social media for learning and offer learners interconnected learning

experiences, choices, and opportunities. Faculties of Education in Canada adopt 21st Century learning based pre-service teaching standards and integrate ICT into their own pedagogies and classrooms. Provinces adopt 21st Century teaching standards for in-service teachers and provide the tools, resources and training required for teachers to be innovative, teach 21st Century competencies, integrate technology with pedagogy and better engage their learners.¹⁷

It is not surprising that technology companies see greater integration of technologies as innovative, or, progressive. It may be, even for the more sanguine of us, startling to see these companies so interwoven with Ontario's public school associations. These technologies are framed as necessary media in an educational life. Society evolves quickly and inexorably, and technology stands as the most apparent metaphor for that evolution.

CONCLUSIONS

Interwar progressivist rhetoric and contemporary 21st Century Learning rhetoric hinge their arguments on some unrest concerning the future. Economies falter, wars loom and, if we are to take any stock in the dramatic and sharp popularity of films and television series featuring an apocalyptic future populated by zombies who overtake the earth, tomorrow will not look like today. Our forebears had witnessed trench warfare, mustard gas, machine guns, and untold atrocities within a world radically transformed by technology, urbanization, immigration, and industrialization. We have today definitive evidence that the earth's temperatures are increasing, that polar ice caps are melting, that we are polluting our fresh water sources, and that as a human species we are detrimental as a whole to the ecosystems that we occupy.

We can be forgiven for any unrest and anxiety that we exhibit. We cannot be blamed for turning to education – the projection of ourselves into the future and the attempt to manipulate or control what is to come – as a means of salvation. The world is inexorably and unceasingly changing; schools are our principle means of making sense of: a) making sense of this change; and b) serving as agents of change.

Within a popular epistemological framework informed by Charles Darwin's evolutionary model, we know that we must adapt to the world as readily as it, randomly and efficiently, renovates and revises itself. Educationists are thus thrust within a continuum that stretches from the traditionalist to the progressivist. The first position argues that we must stand strong and lean upon those institutions, stories, beliefs, and customs that have allowed us to survive and thrive throughout our existence. The latter position says that we must flee the past, let it be overrun and disassembled, because it is both moribund and obsolete.

NOTES

- ¹ R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar, *How Schools Worked: Public Education in English Canada, 1900-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012): XVII.
- ² Theodore Michael Christou, *Progressive Education: Revisioning and Reframing Ontario's Public Schools, 1919-1942* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2012).
- ³ Roland Wright, *A Short Story of Progress* (Toronto, ON: House of Anansi Press, 2004): 14.
- ⁴ John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1938): 20.
- ⁵ La mesure dans laquelle les écoles sont "progressives" ou "traditionnelles" a été l'objet d'un long débat qui n'a pas été résolu. Voir Hilda Neatby, *So Little for the Mind* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1953); et Paul Axelrod (2005), "Beyond the Progressive Education Debate: A Profile of Toronto Schooling in the 1950s," *Historical Studies in Education* 17(2): 227-41.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*: 20.
- ⁷ "The Challenge of Childhood," *Canadian School Board Journal* (June 1928): 2.

- ⁸ *Ibid.*: 2.
- ⁹ "The Aims of Education," *Canadian School Board Journal* (June 1928): 4. The speaker cited was President of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. The article summarized events occurring at the 1928 Convention. Moore also, the article related, spoke of the League of Nations and introduced its publication, *A New World*. His speech is notable because of the expression he gave to the changes modernity wrought on Ontario, but also because he saw these changes as ongoing: "No one can possibly forecast what the educational needs of the next decade will be because of the rapid development in industry, agriculture, and science."
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 140.
- ¹¹ Action Canada, "Future Tense: Adapting Canadian Education Systems for the 21st Century," February 2013, http://www.actioncanada.ca/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/TF2-Report_Future-Tense_EN.pdf: 3.
- ¹² Ontario Public School Boards Association, "A vision for learning and teaching in a digital age," http://www.opsba.org/files/OPSBA_AVisionForLearning.pdf: 1.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*: 16.
- ¹⁴ Ontario Public School Boards Association, "A vision for learning and teaching in a digital age," http://www.opsba.org/files/OPSBA_AVisionForLearning.pdf, 1.
- ¹⁵ The Ontario Public School Boards Association is a founding member of C21.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 41. These corporations include: a) one that arranges for educational excursions internationally, but also online language learning, Education First; b) five publishers, Scholastic Education, Pearson, Oxford, McGraw-Hill/Ryerson, and Nelson; and c) four from the technology industry, Dell, Microsoft, SMART Technologies and IBM. The two outliers, which are educational associations, are the Canadian Education Association and the Canadian School Boards Association.
- ¹⁷ Canadians for 21st Century Learning and Innovation, *Shifting Minds: A Vision and Framework for 21st Century Learning in Canada*, 2012, <http://www.c21canada.org>: 17-18.

IN SEARCH OF THE THINKING CLASSROOM

GARFIELD GINI-NEWMAN is a widely sought after speaker who blends humour with a deep understanding of effective curriculum design centred around the infusion of critical thinking for all. As Senior Lecturer at OISE/University of Toronto and a senior national consultant with The Critical Thinking Consortium, Garfield has worked with thousands of teachers across grades and subjects, helping them to frame learning around engaging and provocative activities and authentic assessments. Garfield's reputation as a dynamic and provocative speaker is widespread and requests for his services have taken him from Asia to the Middle East, Europe, the Caribbean and across North America. Garfield's interest in effective teaching and learning has led him to actively exploring the challenges and opportunities presented by teaching and learning in the digital age. Garfield has spoken across Canada and internationally on critical thinking, brain compatible classrooms, curriculum design and effective assessment practice, and nurturing 21st century skills in a digital world. In addition to his work at the University of Toronto and delivering workshops, Garfield has also authored several articles, chapters in books and seven textbooks and has taught in the faculties of education at York University and the University of British Columbia.

ABSTRACT

Canada's education system, like those the world over, is facing new challenges and new opportunities in an increasingly globalized world where a revolution in digital technology has already transformed many other areas of daily life. Changes in technology, the economy and the pace of change itself have opened up tremendous potential for learning while creating a greater urgency in the need to re-think education. Whether or not information technologies are seen as an integral part of the solution to our current crisis in education the call for reforming education around critical, creative and collaborative thinking is consistent and widespread.

As Canada's sesquicentennial and Quebec's Ministry of Education centenary approach it is timely to reflect on the educational journey that both lies behind us and ahead of us. Since the passing of the Common School Act in Upper Canada in 1816 Canadians have strove to build a publically funded education system open to all and designed to provide children with the knowledge and competences required to participate in society as contributing citizens. According to a range of metrics, Canada has successfully built a world-class education system open to all.

Despite the relative success of Canadian schools, Canada's education system, like those the world over, is facing new challenges and new opportunities in an increasingly globalized world where a revolution in digital technology has already transformed many other areas of daily life. Changes in technology, the economy and the pace of change itself have opened up tremendous potential for learning while creating a greater urgency

in the need to re-think education. In his recent book, *Too Big To Know*, David Weinberger captures the paradoxical state of education when he remarked about society at large saying; “we are in a crisis of knowledge at the same time that we are in an epochal exaltation of knowledge. We fear for the institutions on which we have relied for trustworthy knowledge, but there’s also a joy we can feel pulsing through our culture. It comes from a different place. It comes from *the networking of knowledge*.”¹

The transformation in many parts of society brought about by technological innovations has lagged behind in education. Some see this as a missed opportunity, others a crisis facing education. In the late 1990’s Steve Jobs lamented the failure of technology to transform education, conceding “I used to think that technology could help education... But I’ve had to come to the inevitable conclusion that the problem is not one that technology can hope to solve. What’s wrong with education cannot be fixed with technology. No amount of technology will make a dent.”² More recently, Michael Fullan and Maria Longworthy opened a provocative article by stating, “The crisis — and there is no other word for it — in public schooling is a function of the interaction of an enormous push-pull dynamic. The push factor is that students find schooling increasingly boring as they proceed across the grades.”³

Whether or not information technologies are seen as an integral part of the solution to our current crisis in education the call for reforming education around critical, creative and collaborative thinking is consistent and widespread. And yet, is the call for critical thinking in education really new or as Andrew Rotherham and Daniel Willingham claim, “the skills students need in the 21st century are not new... What’s actually new is the extent to which changes in our economy and the world mean that our collective and individual success depends on having such skills.”⁴

ENDURING VISION FOR LEARNING PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Advocates for purposeful education, whose goal has long been to create critically thoughtful problems solvers and decision makers, stretch back many centuries. Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi argued teachers must develop rather than to try to implant knowledge in children. Pestalozzi observed, “Thinking leads man to knowledge. He may see and hear, and read and learn

whatever he pleases, and as much as he pleases; he will never know anything of it, except that which he has thought over, that which by thinking he has made the property of his own mind.”⁵

Canada’s own Chief Superintendent of Common Schools, Egerton Ryerson, wrote: “If the mind of the child when learning, remains merely passive, merely receiving knowledge as a vessel receives water which is poured into it, little good can be expected to accrue. It is as if food were introduced into the stomach which there is no room to digest or assimilate, and which will therefore be rejected from the system, or [sit] like a useless and oppressive load upon its energies.”⁶ David Boyle, a teacher at Middlebrook School in Elora during the 1860’s and later Canada’s leading archaeologist of the late 19th and early 20th century denounced “copying” as “the principal sin of the schoolroom” declaring it “a useless practice, because, like memory work, it did not teach pupils how to think” and to Boyle the primary purpose for teaching was to encourage “the growth and development of intellect.”⁷

In recent years the call for educational reform grounded in nurturing critical, creative and collaborative thinkers has come from many both within and outside of education. Don Tapscott, in *Grown Up Digital*, cautioned; “The ability to learn new things is more important than ever in a world where you have to process information at lightning speed. Students need to be able to think *creatively, critically, and collaboratively*.”⁸ When Fullan and Langworthy issued their call to the global educational community to take up the challenge of re-thinking education for the 21st century they too included critical, creative and collaborative thinking as core competences to underpin learning see (along with citizenship, character and communication).⁹

Interest in critical thinking has been elevated to even greater heights in many Canadian educational jurisdictions in recent years. One needs only glance at recent curriculum documents to see the elevated place of thinking in stated goals for student learning. For example, Ontario’s new Social Studies Curriculum (2013) includes a vision statement that includes the following: “As well as becoming critically thoughtful and informed citizens who value an inclusive society, students will have the skills they need to solve problems and communicate ideas and decisions about significant developments, events, and issues.”¹⁰ This greater urgency can, in part be explained by the arrival of the information age ushered in by the

internet. Today, students are increasingly able to access information anywhere, anytime. The increased ease and immediacy of access to information has reinforced the need for schools to focus on creating thinking spaces.

Over the past decade much of the hype around 21st century learning has shifted the focus from technology infusion to technology as an enabler for quality thinking. As the shift in focus of 21st century learning towards teaching for deep understanding and competence occurs many have begun to realize that the very goals that were sought by progressive educators for generations are once again central – only now more important than ever. Note the similarity between the educational visions extolled by Pestalozzi and Ryerson to a recent statement by the OECD: “Education today is much more about ways of thinking which involve creative and critical approaches to problem-solving and decision-making. It is also about ways of working, including communication and collaboration, as well as the tools they require, such as the capacity to recognize and exploit the potential of new technologies, or indeed, to avert their risks.”¹¹

Obviously, the idea that the goal of education should be to assist students in becoming critically thoughtful citizens is not new, but achieving the goal has proven elusive and has taken on greater urgency as the complexity of the world increases. University of Toronto political scientist, Thomas Homer Dixon argued in his book *The Ingenuity Gap*, that as the complexity of the world increases, so to does the need for greater ingenuity. He defines ingenuity as the application of skills and ideas to solve practical technical and social problems. Ingenuity, he contends, does not need to be solving problems through new or original ideas. The use of existing knowledge, skills or ideas in a new way to solve a problem is, by Homer Dixon’s reckoning, ingenious. If we accept the need for great ingenuity as suggested by Homer Dixon, then schools must do a better job as incubators of critically thoughtful minds.¹² Being able to identify, define, and solve important problems or issues which face humanity from a local to global level, will determine the extent to which our society will succeed in its response to the challenges faced now and those yet to come.

Arguably, making (informed) reasoned judgments in light of criteria has long been and is increasingly the most important work schools do with children. For schools to remain relevant in the 21st century and for societies to address the increasingly complex challenges they will face,

schools must figure out how to translate the longstanding call for thinking into actual classroom practice.

RECOGNIZING THE OBSTACLES

Generations of curriculum documents have echoed the calls of countless educational theorists to include critical thinking among several important goals of education. Despite the long-standing claims that critical thinking should be a central part of school culture, classroom implementation has far too often fell short of the rhetoric. As Roland Case (2008) noted: “The idea of critical thinking is not new. For decades – no, for centuries — it has been recognized as an important educational goal by practitioners and theorists alike. Curriculum documents and learning resources in all subjects at every level of school recommend that students be taught to think critically. Despite this long-standing (and, at least, formal) commitment, the extent and manner of teaching for critical thinking is disheartening. Many studies document the enormous preoccupation with transmission of information and rote application of ‘skills,’ and how little of class time is devoted to thinking. It is a rather depressing irony: critical thinking is much valued and yet inadequately addressed.”¹³ Matthew Lipman noted that traditionally in virtually all cultures, students are sent to school to learn basic skills and content, but are seldom encouraged to think.¹⁴ Four persistent problems outlined above may help to explain why, despite a long history as a purported central goal of education, progress in establishing classrooms with thinking at the core have been disappointingly scarce.

Several factors have inhibited success in the pursuit of the thinking classroom. Four of these factors that commonly inhibit the nurturing of quality thinking in classrooms include:

LACK OF CLARITY

- Too often critical thinking is equated with “criticism” and is perceived to be an attack of ideas. Properly understood, critical thinking is synonymous with criterial thinking. When we help students to understand that critical thinking is making reasoned judgments in light of clear criteria we can begin to explicitly teach the intellectual tools required for deep thinking.¹⁵

PERSISTENCE OF BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

- For sixty years Bloom's Taxonomy, posited as a typology of assessment outcomes, has been used as a pedagogical framework that makes the acquisition of knowledge a pre-requisite for thinking and separates recall and comprehension of knowledge from thinking. This has led to more transmission of information to students with fewer filters as thinking is too often reserved for the end or pinnacle of learning rather than being a routine aspect of learning.
- A second consequence of the persistence of Bloom's taxonomy is the perception of critical thinking as "high order thinking" and thereby beyond the reach of some students (primary students; students with learning disabilities) often leading to invitations to think and solve meaningful problems being reserved for the more academic students leaving the students already most disengaged in schools with worksheets to complete.

STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT OF CONTENT RECALL

- The call for more focus on nurturing critical thinking has come at a time of greater accountability in education. Unfortunately, the two are often incompatible as accountability has led to more standardized tests, and what is easiest to measure in standardized assessments is recall of information. Because what gets measured is what is valued, the result of an increase in standardized assessments has been greater focus on preparing students to be successful on recall tests rather than assessments that require critical, creative or collaborative thinking.

FAILURE TO BUILD CAPACITY FOR THINKING

- Many efforts have been made over the years to frame questions to invite deeper thinking about the curriculum. Too often, the richer questions are not accompanied with the teaching of the intellectual tools students need to develop their capacity to carry out the desired thinking. The consequence of asking more challenging, probing questions without the supports for students to do the thinking can be more frustrated students and a mere separation of those who can and those who struggle which in turn

leads to streaming of students around those who are perceived to be capable of thinking and those for whom we should lower expectations by focusing on "lower order questions."

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

Work going on in many jurisdictions across North America offers considerable hope that the current resurgence of interest in critical thinking may yield better results than in the past. The Critical Thinking Community, founded by Richard Paul has been working for the past 33 years to help post-secondary institutions throughout the United States find powerful ways to improve the teaching of critical thinking. (<http://www.criticalthinking.org>) Here in Canada, The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²) has worked for over 20 years with schools and school districts in almost every province and territory in Canada to help with the infusion of critical, creative and collaborative thinking from kindergarten to graduation. (www.tc2.ca) Currently TC² is working with more than 55 partners and many thousands of teachers every year to develop materials and help to "tweak and fortify" teaching so that critical thinking is the foundation for learning. The work being done to advance critical thinking in a sustained and comprehensive manner involves three key areas of focus: creating a climate for thinking, creating opportunities for thinking, and building the capacity for thinking and providing guidance for robust thinking.¹⁶

CREATING A CLIMATE FOR THINKING

Whether face-to-face or virtual, success at creating critical, creative and collaborative learners is largely dependent on creating the conditions for thoughtful communities to flourish. This entails establishing clear expectations that support thinking, establishing routines to nourish thinking and modeling the habits of a good thinking. Let's briefly explore each of these.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS FOR THINKING

If we expect thinking to be a routine part of learning, we must make it an expectation for all students. Here are a few messages we should clearly communicate to students if we hope to create thinking classrooms:¹⁷

- Students are expected to make up their own minds – not simply accept information as truth.

- All persons are to be treated respectfully by everyone even if their ideas seem wrong.
- Disagreements are not only allowed they are encouraged; but never as an attack on the person.

ESTABLISH ROUTINES THAT SUPPORT THINKING

In addition to making expectations for the learners clear, teachers can further support the building of a thinking classroom by ensuring routines are established that support thinking. Some of the routines to consider are:

- Involve students in scrutinizing accounts, textbooks, news articles, reports and other "reputable" sources of information for bias, stereotyping, over-generalizations, and inaccuracy.
- Invite students to explore and defend positions from particular points of view.
- Involve students regularly in identifying and defending criteria to use in assessing work and behaviours.

MODEL THE HABITS OF GOOD THINKERS

It is important for teachers to remember that they are an integral part of a community of thinkers and that their actions and behaviors provide important modeling for students. Consequently, careful consideration for our behaviours in the classroom are important in our efforts to create a thinking classroom. Some of the modeling we should consider include:

- Live with ambiguity – be satisfied with tentative conclusions until a full review of the evidence is complete. Don't always have the answer.
- Sincerely attempt to base all comments and decisions on careful and fair-minded consideration of all sides.
- Regularly acknowledge the existence of different positions and perspectives on an issue.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THINKING

When planning curriculum it is common for teachers and curriculum writers to organize around either topics or themes, neither of which effectively serve as an invitation to engage in critical thinking. Consequently,

the presence of critical thinking is at best sporadic and when used intentionally is most often found at the end of chapter or units in textbooks or towards the end of a unit of study. When Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins proposed their *Understanding By Design* model for curriculum planning they recognized the importance of moving beyond topics, themes and issues as curriculum organizers. Understanding By Design, or UbD as it is often referred to, encouraged curriculum planning around a set of essential questions that would lead students to the uncoverage of the "Big Ideas" identified as important in the subject area.¹⁸ UbD was an important first step in moving learning from the transmission of discrete facts to a more active process of learning.

Understanding the nature and purpose of the questions and tasks we use in the pursuit of learning is essential if we hope to nurture students' thinking. In fact, it is equally important that students understand the nature and purpose of the questions/tasks assigned. In essence, we can cluster questions and tasks into three broad groups:

TYPE 1: LOCATING FACTS

- These questions require no decision. They focus on locating or retrieving information. While often necessary for assembling information or ideas needed for problem solving, in themselves, they do not engage critical thinking. Typically these types of questions/tasks have a single or limited number of correct answers.

Sample Questions:

How have past civilizations impacted the contemporary world?

What were the four main cause of World War One?

TYPE 2: DESCRIBE FEELINGS AND PREFERENCES

- Although these questions/tasks do involve making a decision, the decision is based on how one feels, preferences, or emotional reactions and consequently do not engage critical thinking. Unlike the Type One questions, these questions often have no wrong answers and a wide, if not unlimited, range of possible responses.

Sample Questions:

If you lived in New France, would you have preferred to have been a habitant, priest or nun?

What is your favourite time period to study in Canadian history?

TYPE 3: MAKING REASONED ASSESSMENTS

- If we wish to take critical thinking seriously, these types of questions/tasks need to drive the learning. The key attributes of Type Three questions/tasks, referred to as “critical challenges” are that reasoned assessment among options in light criteria and evidence.

Sample Questions:

Considering cause and effect relationships, what order should the main causes (Militarism, Alliances, Imperialism, and Nationalism) of World War One be listed?

Who was the most visionary leader, John A. Macdonald, Louis Riel or Wilfrid Laurier?

A critical challenge can best be defined as an invitation to offer a reasoned judgment to a question or offer a reasonable solution to a problem. While often subtle, what distinguishes a critical challenge from other forms of questions is its power to initiate and sustain thinking. When a question is framed so as to invite guessing, the sharing of an uninformed opinion, the retrieval of information or the mere rote application of a formula, there is little to engage the faculties of thought. By “problematizing” the curriculum, teachers can routinely frame learning around critical thinking opportunities that invite students to weigh evidence in light of criteria and to engage in careful and thoughtful deliberation, often with others. Properly understood, critical challenges are not an alternative to other approaches to learning. Rather the notion of a critical challenge helps to define/clarify the kind of powerful opportunities that any approach must propose if students are to be invited to engage in thoughtful examination of the curriculum.

BUILD CAPACITY FOR THINKING

While nurturing a community of thinkers helps to establish a climate for thinking and framing learning around critical challenges creates opportunities for critical thinking and creativity, they alone are insufficient in helping to cultivate quality thinking among students. If we hope to assist all students in learning to think and thinking to learn then we must pay close attention to the intellectual tools they require to engage in quality thinking.

Much of the frustration teachers experience when attempting to engage students in thinking critically stems from the fact that students often lack the required concepts, attitudes, knowledge, criteria or strategies – in short, they lack the tools needed to do a reasonably competent job. It is often assumed that mere repetition will improve students' reflective competence. No doubt some will improve by repeatedly trying to figure things out for themselves, but most will be more successful if they are taught the requisite tools for the task.

Although the specific tools depend on the nature of the challenge facing the thinker, promoting critical thinking is largely a matter of helping students master an ever broadening repertoire of five types of intellectual resources:¹⁹

- *Background knowledge:* knowledge of relevant information about a topic that is required for thoughtful reflection. Although it should be obvious that we cannot think critically about a topic if we know little or nothing about it, many accounts of critical thinking are based on a presumption that thinking skills or operations are independent of the content areas to which they are to be applied. Properly understood, relevant background knowledge is not separate from any skill, but part of what is required to be skilled. For this reason, individuals need to acquire information relevant to the range of topics that we want them to be able to think critically about. Presumably this range of topics is (or should be) found in the subject matter of the curriculum. This point speaks strongly for embedding the teaching of critical thinking with the teaching of curricular content.

- *Criteria for judgment:* knowledge of the appropriate criteria or grounds for judging the reasonableness or merits of the options presented by a thinking challenge. To think critically is essentially to engage in deliberations with the intention of making a reasoned judgment. And judgments inevitably are made on the basis of criteria. For this reason, an important category of tool is the range of context-sensitive criteria spanning the diverse intellectual tasks found in the curriculum, from what makes for a good argumentative essay, a sound interpretation of a primary or secondary source, an insightful analysis of a work of art or historical photograph, or effective lecture notes.
- *Critical thinking vocabulary:* knowledge of the concepts and distinctions that are needed to think about the challenge. Although other tools also refer to concepts, “critical thinking vocabulary” refers to concepts that expressly address distinctions foundational to thinking critically—for example, knowledge of the difference between “conclusion” and “premise,” “cause” and “correlation,” or “cause” and “effect.” Peter Seixas’ work in the area of historical thinking has helped focus history education in schools across Canada on six historical thinking concepts that underpin student understanding (historical significance, evidence, cause and consequence, continuity and change, historical perspective, and ethical judgment.)²⁰
- *Thinking strategies:* knowledge of procedures, heuristics, organizing devices, algorithms and models that may be useful when thinking through a challenge. Good critical thinkers draw upon a great variety of strategies to work their way through the challenges facing them. This category of tools is most closely aligned with what others call skills, although we believe they are more responsibly viewed as strategies. Thinking strategies may be very elaborate, such as following a comprehensive decision-making model, or they may be very focused, addressing a specific task, such as paraphrasing a statement to improve understanding. There are literally thousands of strategies that guide individuals in working through the challenges they encounter.
- *Habits of mind:* commitments to the range of values and principles of a careful and conscientious thinker. Although more commonly described as dispositions, we prefer the term “habits of mind” to refer to the intellectual ideals or virtues that orient and motivate thinkers in ways that are conducive to good thinking, such as being open-minded, fair-minded, tolerant of ambiguity, self-reflective and attentive to detail.

The five categories of intellectual tools cited above draw support from within the diverse body of literature on thinking. There are “schools” of thinking that focus on each of the five tools identified. The conceptual framework suggested in this chapter is intended as a more complete synthesis of the range of critical thinking building blocks than is otherwise found in any single account. This allows for a rich, curriculum embedded approach to nurturing critical thinking that spans grades and subject allowing for critical thinking to serve as a powerful methodology for learning rather than one of several competing goals for education.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Engaging learners in critical thinking is a complex and multifaceted endeavour that requires educators to embrace the nurturing of quality thinking as a foundational practice in their classrooms. Long seen as a central goal for schools, critical thinking as a methodology for learning has been disappointingly elusive in many schools. Recent work in many schools and schools districts, both within and beyond Canada, is showing promising results as schools are adopting a framework for sustained and deep work to embed critical thinking as a foundational practice in classrooms. The transformative impact on the lives of children we strive for is most likely to happen when thinking becomes a routine part of learning beginning in kindergarten and continuing throughout the grades and across subjects. As teachers find powerful ways to tweak their lessons and identify opportunities to fortify learning by explicitly and intentionally addressing the intellectual tools that best support student thinking and learning they are finding students more engaged in learning and the gaps in achievement narrowing.

NOTES

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- ³ Michael Fullan and Maria Langworthy. *Towards a New End: New Pedagogies for Deep Learning* (Seattle: Collaborative Impact, June, 2013): 1.
- ⁴ Andrew Rotherham and Daniel Willingham “21st Century Skills” Not New, But a Worthy Challenge, *American Educator*, (Spring 2010): 17.
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- ¹⁴ Matthew Lipman. *Thinking in Education*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 10.
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