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## Teacher Education Within the Context of *Education Permanente*

*The following excerpts from a speech delivered to the Faculty of Education at McGill University, 18th October 1977, will be of interest to readers teaching in the Province of Québec, as it was delivered by the gentleman in the Government of Québec who is in the best position to influence teacher education in the Province.*

. . . When I try to think of a tradition of *education permanente* I can hardly find better examples than those of Socrates and *The Republic of Plato* . . . The task of learning was carried out throughout life. For Socrates it was carried out in the active milieu in the city. The city itself was his classroom so to speak. He was concerned with the total man and his aim was to make each citizen self-taught. This concept is the foundation of *education permanente* in Quebec today. So although it may be an old idea, it is nonetheless necessary to give it life again. And we see how new the concept is when we think of how far we are from realizing it.

. . . *Education permanente* includes both the initial basic education of teachers and the continuing education of teachers. It must address itself to the total person; it considers teachers in training as the agents of their own education; it refers to the educating potential of the whole of society.

. . . I've often wondered if teacher training programs actually do very much to create or improve teachers. Very often, as I see it, the programs help someone to find out why he or she is a good teacher or why he or she is not. But I don't know if there is much evidence that such programs will make him or her a better teacher. Taking all this into account, it follows that every teacher training program should build on those characteristics that are essential to the good teacher but are acquired long before the start of formal training. When we look at what is really required of a teacher we can't overlook his whole personality or, as we sometimes say in French, his *manière d'être*. His "way of being" is just as important as what he knows.

. . . And, while we're on the subject, I might also add that another problem we will have to face is to effect a much better relationship between the initial basic training program and continuing teacher education. I think that a lot has been done in this area but we still have a lot of work to do for various reasons. One is that the continuing education of teachers has not been completely systematised and therefore, when we speak of modifying or changing the basic program to take into account the continuing education of teachers, we don't really know just what we should take into account. Of course if we had more definite policies on teachers' continuing education, then it would be easier to make specific proposals when we draft a new basic teacher education program. But we do know that the day of teachers going through their basic training for initial certification, and never again undergoing further training, is past.

. . . By looking at teacher training as a coherent entity which includes both basic and lifelong training, we will place new emphasis on learning and on developing skills and attitudes which, I feel, will probably be very different from our present ones. This interaction between the two phases of professional training — initial and continuing — is something that is emphasized in the idea of *education permanente*. And the whole concept of continuing education must itself be reviewed because it was initially regarded simply as necessary upgrading. For instance, if you look back at the Parent Commission you see that one of its main concerns was that teachers, both grade school teachers and high school, did not have enough formal education; that is, they didn't have enough years of schooling as such. Thus, continuing education was meant to fill a need that existed at a specific time and that was all. We often look at continuing education as a tool to use when a problem comes up; a new method or program for teachers to learn, or to help the teacher to adapt to new methods or programs which will enable them to be recycled as the birthrate and number of jobs for teachers go down. This is certainly a function that continuing education should fill, but more and more the basic idea goes beyond special crash programs, and we'll require a policy that will enable all teachers to educate themselves throughout their careers.

. . . It seems to me that we should see the teaching profession more and more in terms of what is called today a 'helping profession'. In other fields such as social work and clinical psychology there is much concern about the personality of the person who tries to help somebody, to ensure that no harm is done. I think that we have not been concerned about this enough in the teaching profession.

. . . I don't know if you are familiar with what St. Augustin says about teaching in his *De magistro*. He says that we can teach about two types of realities: material realities and spiritual realities. In terms of material realities, how does a teacher teach something to a child? Well, he doesn't teach material reality to the child. So it is the realities themselves that teach the child. The teacher can draw attention to this or that reality, but he doesn't teach realities. So much for the material

realities; now for the spiritual realities. We would think that the teacher has a more important role here, but St. Augustin said that when you teach an idea, either the student understands or he doesn't understand the idea. If he doesn't understand then you have taught him nothing. If he does understand, have you as the teacher taught him anything? St. Augustin answered, if the child does understand, either he agrees with you or he disagrees with you. If he disagrees with you, you haven't taught him anything either, and if he agrees with you it's because he already knows and he gives his assent; it's not because you have taught him anything. So, the good teacher doesn't teach anything in this way. This emphasizes the fact that each learner is the agent of his own education.

. . . Salaries are now based on the idea that any education that a teacher acquires beyond his basic training is done on his own time. In other words, he works overtime while taking additional credits but we don't pay his overtime when he does it. Instead we pay him when he has completed a year of schooling and then we pay him for the rest of his life for the overtime he has worked. This is the logic behind the system. But already we are moving towards a system where continuing education will not be acquired on overtime but on company time, so to speak. What happens then? We pay for the continuing education, since it will be taken on school time, and then we pay for the rest of the teacher's life?

What is required is professional help throughout the teacher's career, but this professional help then may well be a sort of pedagogical service within the schools or the school boards or through a university program. Where will we draw the line between the university program and this professional counselling that the teacher needs. [For example, is the establishment of teachers' centres part of] the role of the university or should it be the function of the school system itself, of the Department of Education, or the teacher's professional organizations? How will we distinguish these things?

The idea of *education permanente* is inspiring; I hope it will keep inspiring us for a while, and I think we're moving along that line, but at the same time it does raise important questions.