

# Strengthening a Policy

Really educating people is a fascinating pursuit. Why then is education such a dull subject? The very word sends numbs of apathy along the spine. Has this **Journal** adopted "**MJE**" on its new cover as its shorter title merely to lighten the dull thud that goes with "Journal of Education" (not to mention "McGill")? Yes, it has.

But we stand by the term "education" nevertheless and are here to do battle with its connotations. Academics and professionals - as is their way - have made of it a noun, a reification, an inert phenomenon amenable to being shunted passively along the alleys of the mind - like any heap of processed matter on its way to further predictable stampings, distillings, cuttings, and labellings in the course of its mass manufacture. But the "educating" we spoke of first above is verbal, alive, and active, endlessly evolving the most intricate and subtle and unexpected antics, and continually leading people to surprise each other.

So why do academics and professionals (who are people after all) invariably turn the thing they once loved to linguistic stone? Because, basically, stones are easier to arrange and build with than piglets or goldfish or ferns are, or any other alive thing. Moreover, that is the way that everyone else in the think business is accustomed to talking and thinking, in nouns; and they get on with each other by doing that and so earn respect and shorter hours and higher pay. Within the worlds of think and talk, then, the inhabitants are pretty handy with nouns; most of them will readily acknowledge, with a condescending smile, that nouns are simply symbols for the reality (we note that here they use another noun). The admission often seems to them unimportant, as if being constantly treated like a stone made no real difference to a pig.

Of course, though, it does make a (vital) difference. The MJE has changed its looks a little, with the idea that people who read it may not henceforth be quite so deafened by dull thuds of association before they begin, and so that the language within may be expected to be more about people than about pebbles or stone pigs. We have learned in our age how significant appearances are to us, weak-minded as we seem, and that it matters that talk about educating should *seem* to be alive as well as actually be vital in the sense acceptable to scholars.

These changes then make visible a significant strengthening of policy that the Journal has been recently enforcing. Writers for the MJE are asked to note that in articles within these covers we expect more everyday clarity than is customary within the walls of university or school, ministry or board; and that we ask them to talk in the language of life to the rest of us about educating. It is a challenge we feel the best of academics and professionals will be glad to take up, for to talk lucidly about their subject is a privilege reserved to the really expert, and is something that most of them aspire to.

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