

Editorial

Students as People

In putting together this issue of the **Journal** and after reviewing numerous manuscripts on an extensive range of topics, I was reflecting on the current state of formal education and the many approaches taken by educators to improve and modify their teaching. Consequently, I am led to wonder if there is really anything remotely profound I can say about the field; and, even if it were profound, would it remain so very long, considering the fluidity of educational change provoked by social and economic influences.

Looking back over my career in the field of education, which spans more than three and a half decades of teaching individuals at all levels from elementary school through doctoral level graduate students and retired adults, I begin to reminisce about some of the admonitions directed to me by well-meaning professors and supervisors in my first courses in Education. "Teach the whole child," "Teach children, not subjects," and "Build on the student's needs," - all statements that seemed trite and contrived at the time - were spoken in such a way as to sound profound. Nevertheless these hackneyed phrases were a rich source of humour and joke-making for me and my fellow students. And yet as I consider the different populations of students and the special educational needs of diverse ethnic, cultural, handicapped, and special interest groups, I am no longer sure that those "old admonitions" were so much trite as that they were so self-evident that their profundity was obscured.

In this issue, Jack Cram vividly, and with ruthless honesty and clarity, outlines for us the special goals in educating the circumpolar peoples of the Canadian nation, and then constructs a narrative that illustrates the interweaving of daily life and education that embraces "the whole child".

Judith P. Slaughter and Jim Desson appeal to those often-overlooked human touches in education - those identified as ethical, moral, spiritual, and plain human kindness. We **do** "teach children, not subjects", and it is an obligation of the teacher to respond to students in such a way that those dimensions of human nature are acknowledged while in the act of presenting a subject for learning. This year (1985) has been designated as the **International Year of Youth**. Perhaps this recognition of youth sharpens our awareness that children have feelings, emotions, concerns, and aspirations, and thus, we are obliged to improve the manner in which we communicate with students while relating the factual material of a subject.

Laurence Stott summarizes, to some extent, in his essay on moral education, the underlying embodiment of the educational effort. Some things, especially in moral and religious education, extend beyond rational explanations. There is still mystery; some things perhaps cannot be explained. Is it necessary to explain certain ideals and values? Let students "stretch their minds" by contemplating the mystery of some questions, such as the one posed by Stott, why is there something rather than nothing?

According to Len Zarry, kindergarten children may be fascinated with computers, but he draws our attention to his findings that kindergarten children are persons who need the human touch - the readiness of others to respond to the specific needs of the child. It is necessary to build on these needs in order to educate the child properly.

Professors McBurney and O'Reilly open up a new perspective on education in the rural areas of Quebec that, in some respects, reinforces Cram's proposal that students in unique, isolated areas have special needs that are often best remedied by working with them in their native milieu.

There is, then, simple truth in the clichés of those early education professors who exhorted us to teach the "whole child", to "teach children, not subjects", and to build on "the basic needs of the child".

All of these apply to the adult learner equally well.

W.M.T.