

Editorial

Teaching and modelling for the youth of the 1990s

As Mr. Pierluigi Vagliani says in the opening paper in this issue, “. . . young people will be the conscience of the planet and their values must reflect respect for nature and for future generations.” His words remind educators that we are educating not only for today but for the world’s future as well, not exactly in terms of an “inoculation of information” for future use but as models of life and as guides to sources of information.

With that in mind, this issue has been put together with the idea of covering a broad spectrum of ideas that relate to the present generation, and ones that ultimately will affect future generations or have already shaped and molded several generations.

Professor Sultana discusses critical education in such a way that he sensitizes us to how selective much of the school curriculum is in terms of not only what is taught but what is “left out” in many school subjects. Are we teaching and modelling critical thinking? In a similar way, Professor Lemerise proposes the idea that there are different levels of competence in the use of the computer in learning, and that it is not necessary to be an expert in order to be useful and productive. In fact, it may be wise to emphasize to students that they can find the use of the computer more realistic when its use is connected with natural life situations.

Among the challenges that “youth in the 1990s” face, we cannot take the position of the ostrich with its head in the sand when it comes to educating young people about some basic facts of life. Dr. Conant Sloane and her associates at Dartmouth College have made some “eye-opening” discoveries about the reasons students do or do not engage in the use of contraceptives. Some myths about this aspect of students’ life are shattered by their findings.

Two companion articles by Professors Magnuson and Burgess are rich in historical material relative to the different traditions affecting Canadian and American education, and the historical and constitutional issues involved

in the tradition of denominational (confessional) and linguistic schools in Quebec. Any student of comparative education will find these articles deal with subjects unique to Quebec and somewhat different from the rest of North America. Though they focus particularly on Canada and Quebec, there is no doubt about how informative they will be to an international readership.

The only-child has been the subject of many studies both in the distant past and at present, but Professor Lam's research has led to some critical findings of past research and he challenges those who propose future research on this topic. It appears, according to Lam, that many variables affecting the personality of the only-child have been overlooked, minimized, or just plainly ignored.

Cooperative learning, says Professor Court, has its roots in philosophy. Perhaps this is the reason that many cultures (and one-room school teachers!) have found this popular approach to learning useful and appealing, and that it has potential for educators teaching in the multicultural classroom, the integrated class, adult education programs, and many other areas.

Two reports from the field top off this issue. The first report is an account of the personal experiences of six instructors who have been teaching reading and writing to several groups of aboriginal peoples. What is clearly demonstrated is that the "instructors" became considerably "instructed" in the process of teaching. The second report on *Small British Schools* is an intriguing observation by Professor Edmonds on how small British schools, threatened by closure, have become envigorated to the point that interested parents have strengthened themselves through united community action for the purpose of saving these schools.

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Accompanying this regular issue of the *Journal*, readers will discover a supplemental volume, *Aspects of Education*, edited by Margaret Gillett and Ann Beer. This volume, published in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the McGill Faculty of Education, contains a wealth of information dealing with the history and development of the Faculty and its programs. The papers, authored by past and present faculty and staff members, will not only stimulate many memories for those acquainted with the Faculty, but they may also be useful to educators in other faculties of education across Canada, the United States, and other parts of the world. In the future, the book will be a standard source for those who do research on teacher education in Quebec, especially at McGill. No doubt educators elsewhere will identify with some of McGill's victories as well as its struggles and disappointments in the past quarter century.

Should we say more? No. *Aspects of Education* speaks for itself.

W.M.T.