

EDITORIAL

MANAGING DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

Gitlin and Thompson's ideas on "foregrounding politics in action research" is an excellent introduction to this issue. Although they are not dealing specifically with action research as it relates to cultural and ethnic diversity in education, they have highlighted the role that politics plays, one way or another, in deciding the direction that research will take. Their summary of political, political humanist, and humanist approaches to action research is a good foundation for comprehending the significance of the other articles in this issue, all of which focus on educational issues that have their origin in cultural and ethnic diversity, not only in Canada and the United States, but in other parts of the world as well. Gitlin and Thompson sharpen our sensitivity to how we conduct research in that area.

For most of us, it will be difficult to read Profs. Jing Lin and Chen Qinghai's paper that pictures the degree of academic pressure felt by Chinese students – in fact, many Southeast Asian students – without having some sympathy for educators, parents, and children alike as they participate in an educational milieu that seems to over emphasize top performance to the point that the real objective for education has become obscured. The brief quotes and excerpts from letters and diaries of Chinese students provide a rich background for Westerners to "feel" the unusual pressure experienced by these young students. This article gives a clear warning as to what can happen when political and economic values become unbalanced with the social and emotional needs of children.

In the United States, McDowell and Eskedal point out, there are specific ethnic minorities whose needs may have been neglected within the schools, particularly within the domain of career counselling. Their analysis of the particular needs and perceptions of Blacks, Latinos, and

Asian Americans is a good starting point for those teachers and guidance counsellors who may find themselves working with these populations. Certainly, their ideas are applicable to similar situations within Canada, particularly in the urban areas which have a large multicultural population.

At first, the idea of "African-centred" schools may seem like an action that is regressive – considering the monumental efforts within the United States for the desegregation of schools so that Blacks would no longer "enjoy" separate but equal status in the schools. However, Professor Dei presents a solid argument for an *experimental effort* at setting up and developing a school that speaks to and promotes the goals and aspirations of the Black/African Canadian population of Ontario and, by extension, to other cities in Canada with large Black populations. Perhaps the most interesting and debatable section of this paper deals with the epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of such an effort.

The First Nations of Canada have made an attempt in some areas, particularly in Manitoba, to experiment with local management of their schools – local control (LC) as it is called – and to elicit tribal and community support for such an effort. Prof. Binda examines this procedure, as it was implemented in some First Nations schools of Manitoba, and gives his assessment of the results.

Diversity in education may, as we move into the 2000s, become the norm. Are the schools of Canada ready?

W.M.T.