

EDITORIAL

THE CURRICULUM AND THE STUDENT

Through the years we have published some very informative papers about the development of education in the province of Quebec, and the authors of those papers have identified the various forces that shaped the school systems and their curricula, including the role of language and religion in Quebec education. In this issue, Prof. Turcotte presents an informative description of the work of a group of Quebec educators in the Catholic francophone sector during the period of 1920 to 1960 and their efforts to amalgamate the humanities and sciences in the school curricula, thus bettering the chances for all children to enter university once they left high school. Perhaps what is most interesting in this paper is the careful and detailed discussion of the controversy that arose following the efforts of teaching congregations who attempted to bring curriculum reform. This paper is particularly noteworthy because it makes available to anglophones a great deal of material on a phase of Quebec education that has been published only in French up to now.

The second paper in this issue examines the nature of the resilient at-risk student in the inner-city school. Any of us who have taught elementary or secondary school have long noted that some children, even though all factors weighed equally predict they should not succeed, do perform well in school and are quite successful in resisting the effects of negative features of their environment. Prof. Johnson has performed a study with a group of principals and teachers in inner-city schools to try to make some sense of how at-risk students overcome so many disadvantages. She has been able to identify a number of compensatory factors.

Perhaps all of us can understand the feelings of beginning teachers who are in the process of coming to terms with a sense of selfhood and

authenticity. It is not easy in this age of sophisticated technology, when we are bombarded with an unending stream of competing ideologies, facts, paradigms, methods, and theories, to overcome the feeling that we are “losing ourselves.” Or that we may be speaking with voices that stem from the vicarious realities that we experience on television and the internet, and not from the core of our own identity. Prof. Piper looks at some of the postmodern theorists to give us some insight as to how all of us – not simply beginning teachers – can deal with our problems of identity.

The last paper in this issue, co-authored by Professors Portelli and Vibert, is an exceptionally challenging piece of writing. As they say, “dare we criticize common educational standards,” particularly so when everybody has a personal definition of standards. The word “standards”, unless clearly defined, has little more clarity than other vacuous words like “stuff”, “nice”, and “pretty”. But the authors go beyond the problem of identifying the term and speculate about the difficulties educators may find in ever determining a universal set of standards that would act as a template in evaluating educational programs.

These papers, though not linked in any common theme, provide a broad perspective of informative reading.

W.M.T.