Education Letter

In this issue…

This Is Not a Prickly Pear by Dr. Stephen Elliott

Current Issues in Education: An inquisitive engagement

WORDS FROM THE EDITOR, Rosa Bruno-Jofré

The articles in this issue are an invitation to think of the peripatetic journey of education in the current globalizing world from contesting standpoints.[1] I hope some lines will generate a sense of wonder. Rarely do educators think of curriculum in the way William Pinar does, by rescuing the concept of the subject in a new light and even discussing how "subjectivity becomes bleached from schooling, itself deformed as test preparation," or how technology simplifies conversation and splinters the subject in the midst of a "postmodern often online condition." His opening article, "Curriculum: A Complicated Conversation Over Time," shakes the reader.

It can be argued that the technocratic ideal is prevailing over other ideals. One of the most poignant issues that philosophers of education like Nel Noddings have pointed out is the neglect of educational aims, the ideals guiding us in the construction of goals and objectives in the enactment of our pedagogical approaches. Educational aims are rooted in a conception of what is desirable and worthwhile in education, what is a good education—both normative questions. But Gert Biesta, in his powerful and crystal-clear article, "Good Education: What it is and Why We Need It," calls our attention to a problematic shift. We talk now of *effective* education, not necessarily *good,* without a concept of good education or an education for what and for whom. Biesta takes us further, as he points out "the new language of learning" in education that focuses on process and misses questions of content, relationship, and purpose. This "new language" makes irrelevant a

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1 Title of the Introduction to a special issue of *Pensamiento Educativo*, Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, guest-edited by Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Daniel Tröhler (forthcoming, April 2014).

call to develop an ethically defensible vision of education, in which the intellectual, the emotional (forming subjectivities), and the existential in its social and historical context converge. I made this call many times to incoming teacher candidates during my long deanship.

All these are important philosophical issues if we are committed to generating the conditions for a pedagogy of wonder and imagination, one that could nourish the cultivation of creativity. In his contribution, "The Dearth of Creativity in Music Education," Ben Bolden advocates the engagement of students in improvisation and composition as means to enable young musicians to explore music creatively, moving to the notion of composer-performers, who in their journey compose themselves.

The foregoing ideas are not unrelated to the perennially recreated and reconstructed notions of citizenship, civic education, and political education, which have been at the core of the modern school and the building of the educational state. As argued by Daniel Tröhler in his article, "Citizenship and Education in a Plural World," in the process of nation building, *citizen* becomes a legal and educational concept, and this is where language and nation become intertwined in the curriculum.

Beyond the current enactment of a "new language of learning" and its historical and conceptual implications — skillfully analyzed by Gert Biesta — learning is a central concept in education. Nicholas Burbules, who contributed here "Ubiquitous Learning: New Contexts, New Processes," has done extensive work on *ubiquitous learning* and the multidimensional implications of changes in not just where and when we learn, but how and why we learn. This is a new scenario that is now part of the educator's reality, one that I think is opening ways to a theory of education critical yet integrative of new ways of thinking about learning.[2]

It is interesting to note, as Jon Igelmo relates in this article, "The Relevance of History to Study Current Discourses on Technology and Education in the Technological Context of the 21st Century," that there has been an ahistorical approach to issues related to technology in education, while there has been continuity in the use of linguistic conventions. The same questions are posed over time without placing them in a historical continuum and without considering previous answers. The latter suggests that there is not contextual analysis of the social imaginaries in which emerging technologies are situated, making the understanding of a new configuration of the learner somewhat fragmented.

Perhaps one of the most painful issues in Canadian history has been the "education" of Aboriginal Peoples. It is an issue that moves to the forefront the ethical dimension of education and its potential destructive and immoral force. In light of the Aboriginal Peoples' struggles and the consequent *Interim Report* of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there are serious efforts to deal with the obstacles that Aboriginal students

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2 Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Jon Igelmo are in the process of developing a critical integrative proposal.

encounter in the system. Lindsay Morcom, in "Aboriginal Teacher Education: The Circle Continues," talks of the relevance of culture-based classrooms and the consequences for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students of a classroom devoid of Aboriginal content. As she writes, Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge have a place of honour in every classroom, a most desirable situation that it is still in the process of becoming.

This issue closes with an article by George Sefa Dei entitled "Global Anti-Racist Education." Anti-racist education should be a foundational issue in faculties of education and, in my view, is not addressed enough. As Sefa Dei wrote, race is about identity and identity formation, and brings the "global" into the discussion with all of its complexity and often the blindness to white power. White power and related privilege need to be grasped within complex configurations of domination and power and consequent cultural arrogance.

I hope this issue of the Queen's *Education Letter* will raise new questions and make us—educators—even less complacent.

This Is Not a Prickly Pear by Dr. Stephen Elliott

Curriculum: A complicated conversation over time

WILLIAM F. PINAR, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

Curriculum is a complicated conversation. While not necessarily its outcome, *understanding* is the *raison d'être* of the curriculum. Understanding is directed to the present — including our fantasies of the future — as it is informed by the past. The temporal character of understanding has meant that at different times and places we have conceived of communication — the medium of complicated conversation — as only cognitive and at other times as more emotional, but it is inevitably historical. Understanding is, of course, both cognitive and emotional, if in varying degrees according to subject matter, again understood as a double entendre: the school subjects and the persons who study them.

The idea that there is a person who can learn from experience — that is, undergo educational experience — is summarized in the concept of the *subject*. Often associated with the Enlightenment in Europe — the marker for modernity, that substitution of science for religion as the governing mythology of life — the *subject*, as we have designated the

The frontispiece of the 1772 Encyclopédie, drawn by Charles-Nicolas Cochin and engraved by Bonaventure-Louis Prévost. Truth, top center, is surrounded by light and unveiled by the figures to the right, Philosophy and Reason.

person, emphasizing one's capacity for agency, can learn to exercise reason.

Through reason one might ascertain his or her self-interest and distinguish it from the public interest, although on occasion these have been seen to be closely related, on occasion even conflated. Adjudicating the tensions between the private and public spheres, and those tensions within one's own psychic life, were appreciated as prerequisite for the subject to achieve emancipation—freedom—from servitude in its several forms, ranging from social conformity to physical enslavement. That latter practice was dependent upon the denial of subjectivity to those who were enslaved. These were bodies monetized, sometimes sexualized, but always commodified.

Converting subjects to numbers has proved pivotal not only to the sophistication of science but also to its application to practical life through technology. Evidently we are so enthusiastic that we have applied quantification to almost all aspects of life, not only its practical aspects. In the West, during the last one hundred years, we have applied it to the education of the child. Increasingly, it seems, we understand education as a series of numerals, test scores on standardized examinations. In doing so, subjectivity becomes bleached from schooling, itself deformed as test preparation.

I am a subject, subject to my own life history, reconstructed according to my own fantasies and internalized demands, and called into question by History. My subjectivity—the personal possessive implies the subject's noncoincidence with itself—is imprinted by culture, nationality, and by academic study. There have been those who have been so mesmerized by such internal multiplicity and outer relationality that they have declared the concept of the subject dead, deconstructed into various apparently unrelated elements. Instead of a coherent person, today many celebrate prostheses, post-human forms of connectivity, relays of energy. In such a postmodern often online condition, the subject splinters, withdraws, becomes a series of images, texts without context, displaying what was once private on public websites. Such "information" can be collected and categorized by businesses that target customers, by governments tracking terrorists and citizens, now potentially fused concepts.

By determining its forms, technology simplifies conversation, reducing it to phonetic utterances and frequently phoned numbers. Deprived of complexity and subjective coherence complexity invites, subjects devolve into identities, multiple, sometimes collective often idiosyncratic, at times creatively incoherent. Subjection occurs now for the sake of connectivity, virtual immersion in an ever-lasting "now" detached from time. In our time, narcissism, exhibitionism, and presentism seem reciprocally related.

The obliteration of time in technology positions *History,* not mathematics or science, as central to the education of the public. Of course, mathematics and science are historical subjects as well, and these histories might be emphasized in the curriculum, in part as a corrective to misconceptions that these subjects are independent of time, place, and circumstance, including politics. History also discloses the shifting character of *culture,*

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a concept sometimes misconstrued as timeless, and in our day ordained as definitive, as "difference." History includes *sexuality,* which when contained within biology may be misconstrued as universal, leaving students with the misconception that sexual desires and practices are the same, even "natural." History makes clear that what we experience—including sexually—is in part a function of time and place, and that we are both different and similar to those who have preceded us and from those who will follow. The recognition and reconstruction of such difference enables understanding of our—it becomes then educational—experience.

When I teach I am communicating academic knowledge not necessarily facilitating "learning." My professionalism as an educator laboring in the public interest requires not only disciplinary expertise but also the commitment to communicate that understanding in variable and always-changing social settings, in time. In teaching, then, we are not implementing objectives or preparing students for tests but testifying to the human capacity to understand the historical world and its personification in our subjectivity. Attuning us to the task is the canonical curriculum question: *what knowledge is of most worth?*

That ongoing question is ethical and political, sometimes spiritual. Like the human subject, the school subjects do not coincide with themselves. Both academic and human subjects listen to and reply to the world from within it. No fantasy of totality, the world is not reducible to material conditions, as these are also psychic, and always historical. The facts we teach are often *allegorical,* simultaneously particular and mythic, embedded in an ongoing classroom conversation with specific students, not a

generalized — graded — "learner." Students are persons-in-the-making, subjects underway, not outcomes to be accomplished.
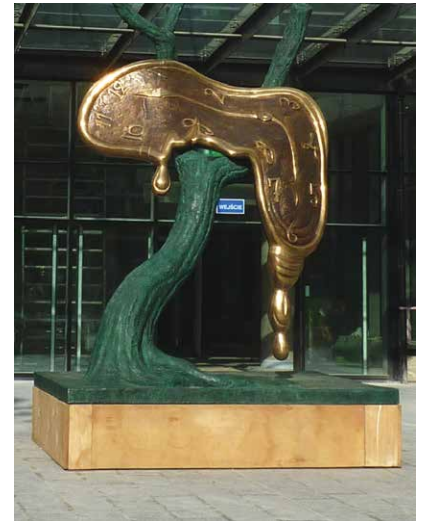
The curriculum is no Ponzi scheme wherein present investments presumably pay off later, but, rather, educational experience embodied in children whose futures are finally unknowable, open possibilities entrapped in finite conditions. In the school curriculum novelty and unpredictability can be occasions for intellectual adventure, not only distractions from time-on-task. Simultaneously concrete and the abstract, self-reflexive and addressed to the world, intensely transitory while echoing the immemorial, the curriculum is, then, allegorical, a *complicated conversation* across time in which we can, through study, learn to participate.

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Profile of Time by Salvador Dali. This sculpture is outside the Palm House in the Rose Garden at Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, London, UK. © Stephen Dawson / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY-SA-2.0

Profile of Time by Salvador Dali, inspired by his 1931 painting "The Persistence of Memory." This sculpture is near the main entrance to Sky Tower in Wrocław, Poland. It has been and continues to be displayed in public spaces in Europe and Asia, such as is in Paris, Melbourne, London, Shanghai, Singapore.

Good education: What it is and why we need it

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At one level it seems quite uncontroversial to make a case for (the need for) good education. But on closer inspection we might see that the idea of good education has in recent times actually been replaced by a number of other concepts and conceptions. One is the idea of effective education. Another is the idea that rather than speaking about education we should speak about learning and reorient our educational efforts towards the support of students' learning. If the first challenges the idea of 'good' in good education, the second challenges the idea of 'education.' Why do I consider these developments as problematic?

To begin with the question of effectiveness: while at first sight it may be difficult to be against education that is effective, effective education is not necessarily or automatically good. After all, 'effectiveness' is a process value—it says something about the ability of particular processes to bring about particular ends or results—but says nothing about the desirability of the ends in themselves. The crude way to put it is to say that there is effective and ineffective torturing, but that making torturing more effective doesn't make it any more justifiable. Hence the question is not whether education should be effective or not. The meaningful question is what education should be effective *for*—and in addition we should be aware of the fact that what is effective for some is not automatically effective for others. Hence the need to ask 'effective for what?' and 'effective for whom?' (Bogotch, Mirón & Biesta 2007).

It is here that we can make the connection with the recent tendency to say everything there is to say about education in terms of learning. In earlier work (Biesta 2010) I have documented the rise of a 'new language of learning' in education—something that can be seen in such shifts as referring to pupils or students as 'learners,' to redefine teaching as 'the facilitation of learning' or the 'delivery of learning experiences,' to think of schools as 'learning environments,' or to redefine the field of adult education into that of 'lifelong learning.' I have referred to these developments as the 'learnification' of educational discourse and practice (see Biesta 2010, chapter 1), deliberately opting for an ugly term to highlight that there is something problematic going on. What is the problem?

Perhaps the shortest way to put it is to say that the point of education is not that students learn, but that they learn *something,* that they learn this *from someone* and that they learn it *for particular reasons.* Education, to put it differently, always raises questions of *content, relationships and purpose.* It is here that the language of learning is significantly different from the language of education, first of all because 'learning' denotes a process, whereas education is always interested (and should always be interested) in the content of that process and in its purpose, and secondly because learning is an individualistic and individualizing term—you can, after all, only learn for yourself—whereas education is always a question of relationship between teachers and students (Biesta 2012). In addition

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Woodcut from the title page of Wenceslaus Brack **Vocabularius rerum,** 1487.

we should realize that 'learning' actually refers to very different processes, something we can see when we compare, say, learning to ride a bike, learning that $E=mc^2$, or learning to be patient. So to say that the point of education is that students learn, or to think of teaching as supporting students' learning, is actually devoid of meaning — which, in practice means that the question of what the content and purpose of the learning is that does go on in schools, is probably being decided upon by other forces.

The Thinker at the Gates of Hell by Rodin. There are castings of this sculpture around the world at universities as well as museums.

To talk about 'good education' is therefore important in order to challenge empty notions of 'effectiveness' and 'learning.' It is also to highlight that the question of good education is ultimately a normative question, not a technical one; it requires engagement with values through professional and democratic deliberation. What is the first focus of such deliberation? I would suggest that the key question is the question what education is *for*, that is, what kind of purpose(s) we seek to achieve through education, for and with our students. Here I have found it helpful to highlight that in education the question of purpose poses itself as a multi-dimensional question. What I have in mind here stems from the observation that all education potentially impacts on (at least) three domains: [1]

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qualification (the domain of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that qualify students to do certain things); [2] socialization (the way in which education connects us with traditions and ways of doing and being); and [3] subjectification (the way in which education affects, positively or negatively, our personhood or subjectivity). If it is the case that education has a potential 'effect' in each of these domains then it is crucial that educators take responsibility for what it is they seek to achieve in each of these domains—and this is precisely what it means to reflect on the question what education is *for*. The three domains do pull us in slightly different directions, which indicates that there is no happy compromise possible but that we always also need to engage with the question what a good and meaningful balance between the three domains is, and what justifiable 'tradeoffs' between the three domains are. To engage explicitly with the question what education should be *for* is, in my view, the only way in which we can give educational depth and meaning to otherwise vacuous attempts to make education more effective or just conceive of it in terms of the promotion of learning.

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The dearth of creativity in music education

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Creativity is a hot topic in education these days, largely due to increasing recognition that creativity is economically valuable.
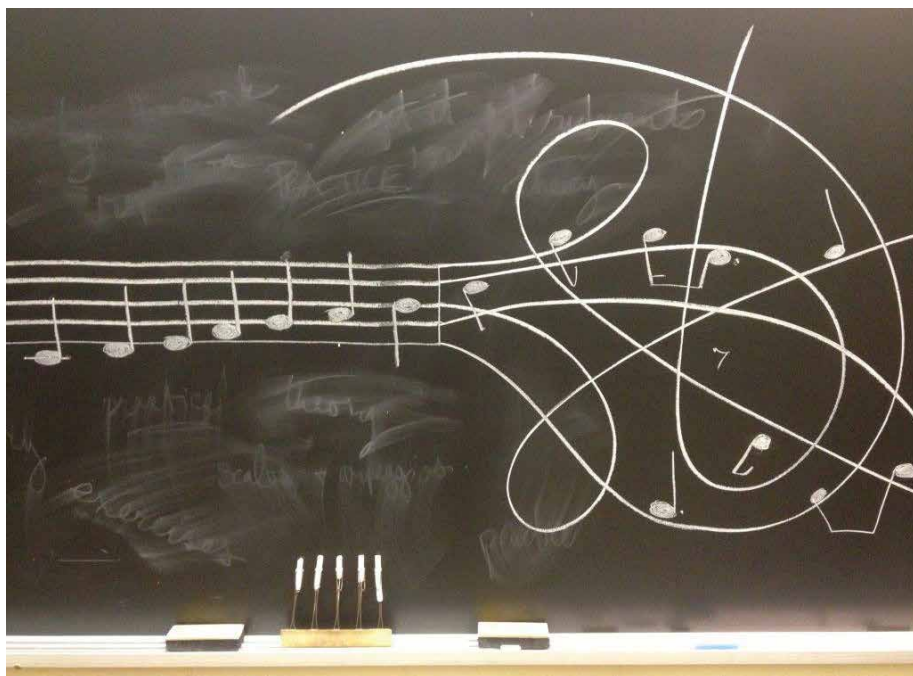
In 2011, a report by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities recognized the significance of creative work in fuelling the U.S. economy: "Building capacity to create and innovate in our students is central to guaranteeing the nation's competitiveness" (p. viii).

Music education has a strong tradition of outspoken advocacy. It is not surprising, then, to find advocates loudly proclaiming that music education nurtures creativity and guarantees the skills to thrive as a member of the creative class (Florida, 2002) so essential to the 21st century workforce.

Unfortunately, there is a serious flaw in this advocacy plan; the vast majority of formal music education experiences are not creative at all. While music education certainly has the *potential* to foster creativity, the claim that music education is inherently creative is false.

In schools across North America the predominant means of engaging young people with music is large ensemble performance preparation. Young musicians sit or stand in rows and do what the composer (via the score) and the director (via gestures and instructions) tell them to do. In studios and conservatories music learning is more likely to occur in one-to-one lessons, but the general idea is the same: young musicians prepare

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Dearth of Creativity by Vernon

Music education lingers on the edge of a significant rupture in practice and pedagogy, a turn from a closed form concept of musical performance and score interpretation…to a reconfigured practice of composing, where writing, playing, and sharing exist within and across open discursive fields.

for performance by doing what the score in front of them and the teacher beside them tell them to do.

My intention is not to denigrate these modes of music engagement. On the contrary, I believe they are immensely valuable for all kinds of reasons. I have regularly and consistently sung in choirs since I was eight years old, and will continue to do so as long as I draw breath. I sing in choirs because it makes my life infinitely richer. Large ensemble music making is magnificent for building community, connecting people to each other and to the aesthetic realm, and enabling individuals to be part of something bigger than themselves. Studio music lessons are brilliant for enabling tangible achievement, developing self-regulation and discipline, and the personalized nurturing of musical skill development. But when musicians learn to play pieces for conservatory exams and concert halls, or learn to perform in orchestras, choirs, bands, and other large ensembles, they are rarely learning how to be creative.

Doing what someone tells you to do is not creative. Replicating something that someone else created is not creative. While creativity is a notoriously slippery construct, there is general consensus amongst creativity scholars that a truly 'creative' product must be novel, or original. The creative work required to bring such a product into existence involves imagining and generating ideas; seeking and forging connections; synthesizing; finding and solving problems; experimenting and exploring; taking risks; analyzing context; being subversive; taking time away; editing and refining; and so on. In order for music education to legitimately claim to nurture creativity, there needs to be a shift. Music-learning activities must be re-structured to provide genuine opportunities for learners to engage in truly creative work of this nature.

In a music education context creative work can happen most robustly when students compose and improvise, activities in which they have the opportunity to meaningfully engage in the full gamut of creative work. When composing and improvising students can imagine and generate musical ideas; seek and forge connections between them; synthesize and represent personal musical experiences and understandings; identify and solve musical problems; experiment and explore with sounds and structures; take musical risks; subvert with the musical materials they employ and choices they make; use time away to incubate musical ideas; and analyze the context in which the music will be presented in order to inform the editing and refining of their new musical products. With composing and improvising, creativity is ubiquitous.

The shift to music curricula that provide legitimately creative experiences is not only important because it satisfies the whim of a society that seeks training for creative workers. This shift is also important—I would say crucial—for music education to stay relevant to those who matter most: the students.

Music educator John Richmond points out that the longer U.S. students are enrolled in school, the less likely they are to take music. (The situation in Canada is no different.) Richmond explains: "The excellent curriculum we provide in orchestras, bands, and choral

music is compelling to some, but not most, of America's young people" (2013, p. 302). Increasingly, students are seeking and *finding* the music learning experiences they crave beyond the realm of formal music education.

Young people today have unprecedented choice and access in terms of the kinds of music they engage with and when and how they do so. Empowered by technological innovation they can choose their own musical adventures from a massive range of possibilities. As a result, they *expect* to be able to enjoy music experiences that are

personally meaningful—that appeal to them as unique individuals. School music has some catching up to do. As Michele Kaschub and Janice Smith (2013) see it, "emerging individualized musical independence heralds the need for equally distinctive and personalized educational opportunities" (p. 4). Music educators need to offer students music experiences that honour and invite their individuality. For Kaschub and Smith, this means composing—an experience that enables students to "seek, find and develop their unique artistic voices by using sound expressively to construct highly personal and meaningful understandings of themselves and the world around them" (2013, p. 13).

Positioning creative work such as composing at the heart of music education curricula does far more than develop skills for 21st century workers; it firmly places students at the centre of their own learning. It allows them to hear and share *their own* voices above the noisy tumult of the education environment. Such a shift transforms music education; it opens it up.

Composing is re-positioned "at the center of all activities" (Allsup, 2013, p.67) In such an environment learners not only compose music; they compose selves.

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Music education lingers on the edge of a significant rupture in practice and pedagogy, a turn from a closed form concept of musical performance and score interpretation... to a reconfigured practice of composing, where writing, playing, and sharing exist within and across open discursive fields. (Allsup, 2013, p. 57)

Randall Allsup envisions a bold new future for music education. Drawing from the work of poststructural theorist Roland Barthes (1977), Allsup suggests that the centrality and sanctity of closed forms or 'works' such as a Beethoven symphony must give way to open 'Texts' such as the offerings of open-source artist Kutiman, who lifts and splices YouTube video content into mashed-up musical collages. Allsup suggests a number of related conceptual shifts — music learning environments that move from tradition as master to tradition as guest; from expert-driven curricula to curiosity-driven curricula; from music learner as performer to music learner as composer-performer. Composing is re-positioned "at the center of all activities" (Allsup, 2013, p. 67). In such an environment learners not only compose music; they compose selves.

Over the past 100 years human engagement with music has changed dramatically. Formal music education has not. It is time for a shift. Music education in the 21st century must enable young musicians to choose their own musical adventures, sing their own songs, and hear their own voices.

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Dr. Benjamin Bolden & his Music Curriculum class presenting an informal concert featuring singing, wind ensemble, and Taiko drumming at Queen's Faculty of Education

Citizenship and education in a plural world[1]

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Notions such as citizenship education, civic education, or political education are an integral part of educational life at school, and as a rule they refer to classroom and out-of-school practices that are understood as educational practices *sui generis.* However, the current understanding of these practices disguises the fact that ideas of citizenship education were not thought of as educational activities *sui generis* in the beginning of modern schooling.

A closer look at nineteenth century foundational documents and developments in various European countries and in the United States reveals that the modern school and its curriculum aimed at educating the future citizen.

Notions such as citizenship education, civic education, or political education are an integral part of educational life at school

Luxembourg by J. M. W. Turner.

As it is said in an official Memorial of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in 1828, the school was the "cradle of the citizen" ("*berceau du citoyen*") (as cited in Witry, 1900, p. 34).

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1 These considerations follow a research project (Educating the future citizens: Curriculum and the formation of multilingual societies in Luxembourg and Switzerland) funded by the Swiss and the Luxembourgian National Science Foundations. It started in 2013 and will be finished in 2016.

A Victorian Classroom (Fort Henry Historical Museum, Kingston)

The overall curriculum was not constructed with the idea that each individual subject within the curriculum intended to create students' commitment to patriotism or to a political ideal, for example, democracy. Instead, it is permeated by a meritocratic system of social stratification since meritocracy is based on the idea of assigning future social roles according to the individual preferences and performance level.

Citizenship education (in this broad sense) as a major objective of modern schooling was developed in the course of a process often described as nation-building. Viewed in this way, citizenship is to be understood, in principle, as a legal category that was shaped by the constitutions, defining the territorial sovereignty and virtually transforming inhabitants to citizens—or to foreigners. But precisely because the transformation of inhabitants to citizens is only a virtual act (by an elite, anyway), it was the role of the schools and foremost the curriculum to implement the idea behind the vision of the constitutional nation-state and its ideal citizens, forming together what Benedict Anderson (1991) called the "imagined community." On these grounds the citizen is both a legal and an educational concept against the background of collective cultural visions about the good society and the ideal future citizen as the bearer of the modern nation-state.

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In many countries, the idea and ideal of the nation was traced back to a 'natural' commonality of all those people speaking the same natural language. Especially the two dominant nation-states of nineteenth century continental Europe, France and Germany, identified their national characters (and superiorities) with their respective natural languages.[2] Italy is no exception, but a bit delayed (and there has been less research on Italy than of France or Germany). Italy became united as a constitutional monarchy with Rome as its capital between 1861 and 1870. Immediately, great efforts were made to standardize the wide variety of dialects to one language.

Identifying the national unity with the common language, the family was placed the nucleus of the 'natural' nation-state by extending the family's gendered structure (mother, father) to the pair "mother-tongue" and "fatherland." The biological character of the nation-state ("body of the state", "natural language") simplified the politicization of its unity and eased, in turn, the concerns of those involved in schooling, who pursued greater social acceptance and the advancement of educational sciences.

How strongly and in what ways this equation between nation and language affected the curriculum and the formation of the future citizens is one of the important historical-empirical questions placed at the intersection between nation-building, citizenship education and education policy/curriculum development that still deserves to be answered. The question is different in countries that were and are multilingual, for they were not able to proclaim a 'natural' commonality of those people speaking the same natural language. The construction of the nation had to be, in these particular countries, different, and thus the construction of the future citizens as well. It seems to be not only of historical but of general interest to examine the arrays of curricular strategies of citizenship education in multilingual countries, not least because contemporary societies can less and less claim to be unilingual anymore. In Europe we find Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, and, to a lesser degree (less than 10% speak Swedish), Finland; in North-America we find, of course, Canada. Studies engaging themselves in citizenship formation and similarities and differences between unilingual and multilingual countries can be helpful for current curriculum policies in most present-day modern societies, which by and large are multilingual. This does not mean that findings would necessarily offer proposals for contemporary educational policy, but they could at least help policy makers avoid rather unadvisable strategies such as to rely on the glorification of one's own history to unify inhabitants and to transform them into patriotic citizens.[3]

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Studies engaging themselves in citizenship formation and similarities and differences between unilingual and multilingual countries can be helpful for current curriculum policies in most present-day modern societies
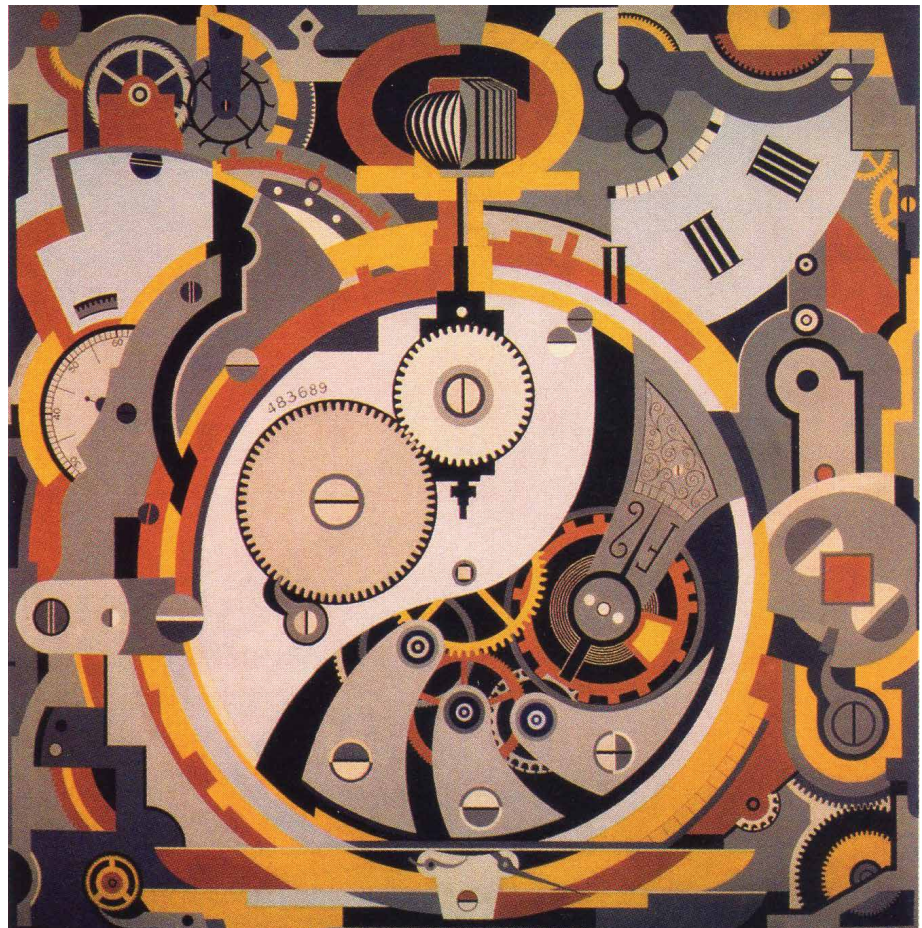
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2 For France see Weber 1976.
3 For Luxembourg, for example: Péporté, Kmec, Majerus, & Margue, 2010; for Switzerland; Capitani, & Germann, 1987.

Ubiquitous learning: New contexts, new processes

NICHOLAS C. BURBULES, College of Education, University of Illinois

This idea of ubiquitous learning means that learning becomes an anywhere, anytime proposition, and that as a result the processes of learning are more thoroughly integrated into the flow of everyday activities and relationships.

More and more people are recognizing that mobile handheld devices and pervasive wireless connectivity bring structured learning opportunities to more people, in more contexts, often at little or no cost. This idea of *ubiquitous learning* means that learning becomes an anywhere, anytime proposition, and that as a result the processes of learning are more thoroughly integrated into the flow of everyday activities and relationships.

There are many aspects of this transformation. Increased demand for online and blended courses (including "MOOCs"), social networks that are dedicated to sharing

Watch by Gerald Murphy

information and skills within virtual online communities, and myriad web-based resources that allow direct access to information, videos, and expert advice on nearly every topic imaginable, all put structured learning opportunities directly into the hands of learners.

In this short article, I want to explore some of the implications of these changes for thinking about learning in new ways. *Where* and *when* learning happens has consequences for the *how* and *why* of learning.

First, we need to abandon the traditional distinction of formal and informal learning. This distinction is normally taken to reflect two aspects of difference: (1) two contexts of learning, one institutional, the other situated in ordinary circumstances, such as the home; and (2) two processes of learning, one structured and intentional, the other more causal and serendipitous. Both of these aspects, I believe, need to be rethought in ubiquitous learning. On the one hand, pervasive access means that people can interact with formal, institutional learning resources wherever they happen to be (for example, in the workplace). On the other hand, the nature of many online learning resources is to provide structure even to spontaneous, quotidian learning needs (for example, by linking a resource on one topic to related information that allows further learning to occur; or by annotating raw information with access to commentary and explanation that can scaffold learning).

A second shift, I believe, is that ubiquitous learning allows for a more social mode of learning even when the individual learner is alone. One of the striking things about many online learning resources is how they are thoroughly integrated with social media and social networks organized with and around that information (I call these "self-educating communities"). There are countless examples of these social forms, from the Comments posted after online articles; to cross-linked blogs, Facebook pages, Wikipedia, and other social media devoted to nearly every learning subject imaginable; to commercial sites that include detailed consumer reviews and tell you, "If you liked this, you might like that" (based on the preferences and patterns of other customers). The sociality of online information and learning resources is so pervasive that it is more useful to think of individual facts or chunks of information not as discrete pieces, but as nodes situated within social webs of meaning and purpose. (Of course, for advocates of strong social constructivism, this is what they always were, anyway).

A third shift is from "curriculum-based" to "problem-based" learning, which comprises a rethinking of content, process, and motivations for learning. Learning in situated, ubiquitous contexts is more likely to be driven by immediate, practical questions and purposes. And this is related to a fourth shift, between what I call the "learn it now, use it later" model of much traditional learning, to what could be called "just in time" learning: accessing information, knowledge and skills for specific needs in specific contexts of use where those resources are immediately relevant and useful. I do not imagine that an entire curriculum can be presented this way: but certainly some things will be learned better

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A fourth shift … "just in time" learning.

and retained more effectively when they are learned in contexts of use — uses that are of intrinsic importance to the learner in a place, time, and circumstance that matters to them.

A fifth shift, which in one sense comprises all the others, is a shift from a teacher-oriented frame of reference, about what the educator wants the student to learn, to a learner-oriented frame of reference that focuses more on the needs, interests, and motivations of the student. One of the most striking aspects of putting online learning opportunities into the hands of learners is that they have far greater autonomy and choice about pursuing lines of inquiry that are interesting and important to them. It is far more productive, I would argue, to recognize and embrace this circumstance, *using* it to advance the teacher's agenda and priorities, than to set these two purposes against each other.

Finally, let me clarify two points. One is that in challenging certain dichotomies and points of emphasis, I do not want to create new dichotomies. By talking about a shift of emphasis, I do not mean that the first element in each of these pairs is elided or rendered "obsolete"; rather, we need to see these pairings in dynamic interaction with each other. Developing learning opportunities within institutional contexts with an active eye toward how they migrate into other contexts, *and vice versa,* is the challenge for educators in a time of ubiquitous learning. (Alert readers will recognize that this is not fundamentally different from John Dewey's *School and Society,* published a hundred years ago.)

The other point follows from this: the role of the teacher is still crucially important: in helping learners organize and integrate their learning in meaningful ways; in helping learners to sequence learning opportunities; in helping to inspire, motivate, and model learning as an active endeavor; and in providing supplementary assistance and support for learners who are struggling. These activities don't become any less important in contexts of ubiquitous learning; they simply can no longer be seen in isolation from all these other influences.

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The relevance of history to study current discourses on technology and education in the technological context of the 21st century.

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During the last decade, scholars working on education and technology have concluded that human beings are tackling a new technological scenario, entering into a new pedagogical paradigm shift, or even going through an epistemological break. There has been a tendency to stress what is considered new in technological education without taking into account elements marking continuities with the past or the social imaginaries in which the new was inserted.[1] In 2010, Hicks and Graber wrote that "web 2.0 can lead

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1 During the last year, the author has discussed the idea expressed in this paragraph with Rosa Bruno-Jofré.

to a powerful paradigm shift (…) Web 2.0 technologies and tools have to be viewed more as strategies that embody certain philosophical and theoretical ideas about how people interact and learn" (p. 630).

The configuration of the learner within the technological milieu of the 21st century has been a subject of study in neuroscience, special education, quantitative and qualitative psychology, curriculum design, and educational technology. Meanwhile, the issue did not capture the attention of historians of education. Stephen Petrina (2002) has argued that "the issue of technology in education has been confined to a small dimension in space and time, and accompanying discourse has been conventionally, if not conveniently, kept ahistorical" (p. 77). However, the conclusions about the configuration of the learner are frequently presented in historical terms.

It seems that when we are conducting research on education and technology, we are not willing to assume the long-term historical approach (*longue durée*). In the article "Understanding the Past—Illuminating the Future," Nick Rushby and Jan Seabrook (2008) claimed: "Many—perhaps the majority—of current learning technologists fail to take advantage of the lessons of earlier projects. They do not link what went before with what is now. This may be because of the excitement of working with leading-edge technology so that there is no time to lose. Perhaps it is because they are unused to the effects of disruptive technologies. It may also be because the research and development is driven, not by learning technologists, but by information technologists who are unaware of what has gone before" (p. 198). The question then is: how could we move away from this ahistorical approach when dealing with the configuration of the learner in the current technological milieu?

Probably, the key step would be to point out that there is no better way to understand the present and the future than studying the past. Education cannot be an exception. If we aim at understanding the emerging configuration of the learner, it is not enough to apply tests, survey people, and design curricula adapted to the new needs of the students. Bearing this in mind, placing education and technology within a social imaginary would be very useful. The concept of social imaginary was described by Charles Taylor (2004) as the way "people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and his fellows, and the deeper normative notions and images that underline these expectations" (p. 23).

Thus, scholars preoccupied with the development of radical education alternatives argue that educational institutions are not in tune or are out of phase with the current technological scenario. This argument is not new. It was put forward, for example, in the late 1950s when the technological discourse entered education, and in the 1970s when technology was an important component in the critique of institutionalized education. There is an interesting continuity of the linguistic conventions that are part of the social imaginaries within which the educational discourses evolve. Some examples are: the assumption that technology improves the learning process, the vision of technology as

It seems that when we are conducting research on education and technology, we are not willing to assume the long-term historical approach (longue durée).

a tool with the capacity to organize education (in a broad sense) and institutionalized learning, and technology as a tool to develop popular education programs and promote social change. On the other hand, the discontinuity becomes manifest when analyzing the meanings within the social imaginaries and the internationalities coordinating those meanings.

Placing current discourses on technology and education in a historical continuum would enrich our understanding of present conditions framing the issues today, and help us identify potential limitations. Moreover, I claim that developing historical approaches to the relationship between technology and education will enhance the comprehension of the process of configuring the learner in the technological context of the 21st century.

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"Continuum" a sculpture by Charles O. Perry, on the south steps of the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum in Washington, DC.

Aboriginal teacher education: The circle continues

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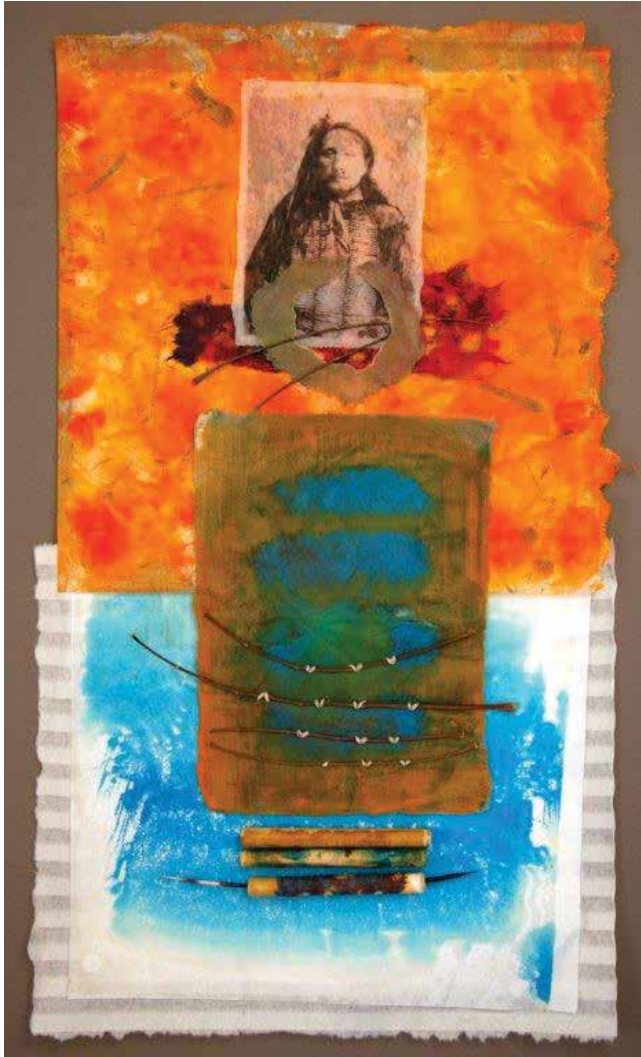
…many Aboriginal students continue to face hurdles before they can ever arrive at our program. In Canada today, the dropout rate for Aboriginal youth is a staggering 66%.

ATEP students are specifically prepared to offer the most effective programming to meet the needs of the various communities in which they find themselves.

Those of us in the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) are looking very much forward to celebrating with this year's graduates, continuing our support of our current teacher candidates, and welcoming next year's student intake. At the same time, we marvel at the heights that students from past years have gone on to achieve. Many of our alumni are associate teachers, principals, and administrators in the schools where our current teacher candidates now complete their practica. The learning continues to go full circle as new students who have been taught in primary and secondary school by ATEP graduates come into ATEP themselves. We are continually amazed at the things we can learn from the students who come through our doors and into our programs.

Sadly, however, many Aboriginal students continue to face hurdles before they can ever arrive at our program. In Canada today, the dropout rate for Aboriginal youth is a staggering 66% (Kanu, 2006). There are societal reasons for this, but the fact is that it is due in large part to the lack of relevance and respect that Aboriginal children encounter in school. Research has shown this, and it has also shown that it is possible to counter it; for example, Kanu (2006; 2007) demonstrated that by bringing in Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge consistently and respectfully, Aboriginal student success rates can increase significantly. Student success is even more likely in an Aboriginal culture-based education environment. Culture-based education, where the school environment is designed to reflect Aboriginal culture in every classroom, every day, allows Aboriginal students to build more effectively on the learning they have done at home and in their communities, understand and meet school expectations, and display their knowledge fully through appropriate assessments (Agbo 2001; Kanu 2006; Preston, Cottrell & Pelletier 2012; Ball, 2012; Singh & Reyhner 2013). It also increases self-esteem and cultural pride as students are able to see themselves and their community reflected in the classroom in a positive way. The epitome of culture-based education is Aboriginal language immersion, which is found in some of the most effective First Nations schools in the country (Battiste, 2013). ATEP students are specifically prepared to offer the most effective programming to meet the needs of the various communities in which they find themselves.

It is important to note, however, that not all Aboriginal children have the opportunity to be educated in culture-based classrooms, or even to have co-ethnic teachers at any point during their educations. So often, those of us in Aboriginal education are told by teachers that because they lack knowledge and training, they are reticent to bring Aboriginal content into their classrooms. However, doing nothing is in fact doing harm. When it comes to perspectives in school, 'the medium is the message'; when a classroom is devoid of Aboriginal content, it tells Aboriginal students that their culture's knowledge

Reflection by Dr. Stephen Elliott

and contribution to greater society are not important or worthy of acknowledgement. A lack of Aboriginal content in the classroom is also detrimental to non-Aboriginal students. It tells them that there is nothing to be learned from Aboriginal Nations and cultures, and it perpetuates historical and current myths of cultural superiority and of the origins of the country. This country was founded on Aboriginal land through partnerships, as well as through subjugation and colonization. Still today, partnerships continue to be built, and subjugation and colonization continue to do damage. Because of this, Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge have a place of honour in every classroom, not as a small part of a larger multicultural discussion, but as the underpinning of the history and current development of Canada. It is impossible to understand Canada as a country without understanding Aboriginal cultures and histories, and how these are interwoven into the larger Canadian fabric. Furthermore, with at least 15,000 years of culture,

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trade, governance, and intellectual tradition established on this land, there is nobody better placed to help Canadians deal with the challenges of a multicultural society and the stewardship of delicate natural resources. Aboriginal learning is both ancient and modern, and encompasses all subjects. As we move toward a program that will hopefully see mandatory training on Aboriginal education for all teacher candidates, I believe we will witness an improvement in education for all the schools where Queen's graduates go on to teach.

As a Métis woman, I am particularly proud of that aspect of my work here over the past year, as I have been given the chance to teach both for and about Aboriginal peoples. As Métis, we are "the middle ground between two camps, the compromise between differences and the dawn that separates night from day" (Filion et al. 2011, p. 123). Canada, like the Métis, was born of sharing and mixing between the first peoples and those who have come later. We all owe it to our ancestors and our descendants to honour that by creating educational opportunities that reflect the reality of our history and our future. This is not new to Canada, or even to the land on which we stand; Queen's University lies on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee, and this year we have seen the development of the Kahswentha Indigenous Knowledge Initiative, in which I have been honoured to participate. This initiative is named for the Kahswentha, or Two Row Wampum Belt. It is the basis of a covenant between the Haudenosaunee and

the newcomers, and it frames intercultural relationships in terms of peace, friendship, and mutual respect (Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte/Kenhteke Kanyen'kehà:ka, 2014).

The Two Row Wampum symbolizes two nations, in their separate vessels, moving together side by side on the river of life, but never interfering or impeding one another's travel. Canada has not always been successful in achieving that, and sadly, through the

The Two Row Wampum (Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte/Kenteke Kanyen'kehà:ka, 2014)

residential school system, education itself has been used as a tool for disrupting it. In response, as educators, we must honour the value of one another's knowledge, wisdom, and ways of teaching, learning and knowing to be the bridges between communities that will allow all of our students to thrive. In turn, our graduates will continue the circle by approaching their classrooms wiser, more accepting, and more able to encourage their students to seek out and grow in many kinds of knowledge.

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Global anti-racist education

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Through critical education we can understand what White power/ privilege is and how it masquerades as normal, universal, reasonable and natural to the extent that those punished by such power may even develop fantasies, desires and aspirations of Whiteness.

No matter how much we contest the race concept or even the idea of race, it has been about identity and identity formation, as well as a key principle of social organization and representation (Omi and Winant, 1993). So to educate about race and racism is a major responsibility for the contemporary educator and the learner. In the discussion I allude to a collective 'we' in arguing that we must all take education seriously. This is because education either does something *to you* or it does something *for you.* Education can be misdirected to constitute "mis-education." We can be mis-educated so as to deny our true sense of self and the collective and how we are implicated in systems of domination and oppression. We can also lose a deep sense of our shared humanity and the collective responsibility to create a better future for all. Fortunately, although education alone is not enough to address racisms and social oppressions, through education we can gain critical consciousness of ourselves and our place in communities. We can use knowledge and voices to challenge privilege and power and to subvert the status quo. Through critical education we can understand what White power/privilege is and how it masquerades as normal, universal, reasonable and natural to the extent that those punished by such power may even develop fantasies, desires and aspirations of Whiteness.

Anti-racism is also about how we come to appreciate, understand and respond to difference, diversity, representation, and identity. Education has a role to play in meeting

Slaves Waiting for Sale: Richmond, Virginia by Eyre Crowe

the challenges and possibilities of diversity and difference, and it must be able to engage race and social difference as significant aspect of the identities, representations and the lived experiences of learners. This is anti-racism education. In fact, a long time ago, (Dei, 1996) borrowing from the pioneering ideas of earlier anti-racist scholars in Britain and Canada (Barry Troyna, Enid Lee, Barbara Thomas, etc.), I defined anti-racism education as an action-oriented educational practice to address racism and the interstices of difference (gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, language, religion, etc.) in the educational system. Race powerfully implicates schooling and any education that sweeps race under the carpet is a mis-education of the learner. Centering questions of race and racism in schooling means bringing to the fore broader questions about colonialism, European imperialist expansion unto other lands and territories, as well as the discretionary use of White power and privilege through the sanctioning of institutions to make false claims of entitlement.

My main contention is that we need anti-racism education that moves beyond borders and boundaries to implicate "global" communities. There is a need for additional perspectives to inform critical dialogues on anti-racism education. For educators of today important first steps might include understanding the dictates of global anti-racist education and what strategies and efforts (pedagogically, instructionally and communicative-wise) can be put in place to ensure effective outcomes for all learners. There must be an understanding of global anti-racist education that moves beyond some merely intellectualizing radical transformative projects to concretely engage educational practice to help subvert colonial and racist relations and power hierarchies of schooling. Such education must subvert the assumed normalcy and our privileged "taken for granted assumptions." Bringing the "global" into such discussions is tricky because of the cultural, political and intellectual baggage often associated with the term. The global itself is a site of contention (see also Abdi, 2006; Abdi, Puplampu, & Dei, 2006; Peters, Britton, & Blee 2008; Golmohamad, 2008, Charania, 2011). It is a site where transnational identities are formed, in constant flux and contestations. It is a site where power (particularly White power) and privilege is often denied or taken for granted in the meta-narrative of the universal. This often sets the tone for all discussions of the global. The 'global' assumes Western Europe as the ascendancy point of human history.

The problematic hegemonic constructions of "global" and what one can interpret as the theoretical, philosophical and practical desires to collapse local, national, and international borders and boundaries, and to imagine and re-configure new futures raises some interesting questions of the global: where is the urgency to deal concretely with power, privilege and our relative complicities in existing colonial and oppressive relations and the persistent structural inequities that mark the 'global'? What power relationships have sought to organize the world in a search of harmony in the global public sphere? Why is it that global education, for the most part, has been pursued as a civilizing, colonial, imperial

For educators of today important first steps might include understanding the dictates of global anti-racist education and what strategies and efforts (pedagogically, instructionally and communicative-wise) can be put in place to ensure effective outcomes for all learners.

imposition on everyone, but especially those who do not hold power? (see also Charania, 2011, Dei 2013). Global anti-racist education should equip the contemporary learner with multiple lenses of critical inquiry of knowledge. Anti-racism education insists on race,

Education must be accessible to learners to allow for a critical consciousness among the social collective.

ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, [dis]ability, ethnicity, language, religion, and spirituality, as part of our identities in terms of who we are as persons. It is the interstices of such differences that make us whole as subjects and communities of people.

Education must be accessible to learners to allow for a critical consciousness among the social collective. We currently have situation of rising costs of college and university education, and students accruing huge debts upon completion of their academic programs,

etc. Racial minority and working class communities, in particular, have traditionally had less access to higher education globally. So the questions we should be asking are: how do we address the question of access to postsecondary education to ensure "excellence" is possible for all students? How do we measure and come to achieve such educational excellence by addressing broader questions of equity? That is, to find out how diverse our student body is, how are we making this excellence accessible to a wider section of our communities? Who is represented, how and what? Who is teaching in our schools, colleges, and universities and how is our curriculum diversified to ensure that we are telling multiple stories? How are we making knowledge and education relevant to the communities where we draw our students from? Are we reaching out enough to our communities? How are defining our mandate and the responsibilities that come with that?

Educational access does not necessarily translate to "equity of outcomes." Students must not only be able to access educational institutions but to receive an education that could assist them to actualize their lives in global contexts and feel empowered to define themselves in terms of who they are. All students should see themselves in the curriculum, which will be broadly defined to include textbooks teaching methods, as well as the entire cultural, environmental and the socio-organizational lives of schools. These are all part of the concerns and responsibilities facing anti-racist education in a global context. Learners must be taught to connect issues locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Racism has global dimensions. Racism is also connected to colonialism, colonial settler oppressions, and questions of indigeneity.

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