Editorial Comments

“Taking Stock”

As the *Journal of Teaching and Learning* enters its third year of publication, it might be useful to take stock of what has been achieved so far and what we hope to accomplish in a market which my predecessor, Benedicta Egbo, described in her introduction to the first issue as perhaps “saturated.” Depending on how widely one defines the field, there are a dozen or so Canadian journals dedicated to disseminating current thinking and research in education. Given the complexity of the field in terms of curriculum, levels, theoretical frameworks and socio-cultural or political contexts, one might argue that it is under-served. Apart from underscoring the problematic nature of trying to define education as a single discipline in the first place, recognizing this diversity of interests also poses a dilemma for those seeking to offer a forum for the dissemination of educational ideas. Without a specific focus on, say, special education or the teaching of a particular subject, an educational journal may well finish up looking like a random collection of unrelated articles between the same two covers.

Since its first issue, the *JTL* has presented research and informed discussion on a wide range of topics, including intercultural awareness, portfolio teaching, school-community relationships, rural schools, “pre-school” math, computer technology, online and offline learning, and the conversations that occur between student teachers and their practicum supervisors. Other aspects of teacher education have included reflection and change, and an intriguing discussion of the value of chaos theory and R.G. Collingwood’s epistemology for countering positivism in the knowledge age! What then do such diverse topics have in common? Very little and almost everything. As it turns out, teacher education has generated a significant number of our articles. Yet the findings have invariably had broader implications, whether for educational philosophy, administration or praxis in any setting in which teaching and learning occur. This is of course the common thread that informs the efforts of all who are engaged in educational thinking and research. The beliefs which drive them are, first, that individuals have a primordial need to learn and, secondly, that such a need also implies a need to be taught, at least part of the time, by external agencies, in the same way that, while we all have a need for food, foraging alone will not likely fill our appetites in any lasting or satisfactory way. Our standing call for quality submissions in “any” area of “education” needs no further justification than our common belief in the symbiotic unity of teaching and learning.

Who then are the authors and the readers for this kind of journal? Our contributors and our consumers are potentially the same. As a peer-reviewed journal, we offer opportunities for newly appointed faculty to begin their publication record. We also attract submissions from those in mid or later career. Doctoral or graduate students often have something that warrants bringing to a wider audience. Nor should we discount the informed expertise of elementary

and secondary educators such as classroom practitioners or administrators who are able to place day to day issues and practices within larger frameworks of reflection and inquiry. Assuming that those actively engaged in expanding the knowledge and understanding of “teaching and learning” in all its diversity will have an equally strong curiosity about the work of others who share their engagement, a journal such as this must find ways of reaching a potentially large community of educators in which research and reading go hand in hand. It is my hope as editor to expand our outreach to contributors and subscribers alike.

This issue continues the theme of teacher education with Sal Badali’s exploration of satisfactions and frustrations among a relatively unknown group of higher educators, those who teach in education faculties. In matters of role, status and job expectations teacher educators occupy a somewhat ambivalent space between the school and the university in which competing and even contradictory demands can lead to considerable stress along with the unique fulfilment that comes from mentoring future colleagues. This article highlights a number of concerns in need of attention by policy makers in government and university administration, such as workload, faculty support and the ever present bugbear of having to meet tenure and promotion criteria which may not be the most appropriate measure of performance for this particular professional discipline. Steven Katz and Leanne Foster then proceed from a deconstructivist position to highlight a perennial dilemma for teachers, that of “locating the child in the curriculum.” The challenge of teaching for both the individual child’s needs and the “standards” articulated by authority has only grown as governments seek ways of applying the mantra of accountability. The impact the latter may have produced on teachers’ conceptualization of the child in terms of “traits” is particularly revealing in this study, as is the call to restore an element of “intentionality” in order to again view children as individuals faced with the task of meeting externally imposed goals. A somewhat similar imperative underlies Gladys Sterenberg’s article on “getting the correct answer” which views the experience of “correctness” in the math class from a phenomenological perspective and questions whether it is necessarily right to be correct.

This issue must not go to press without paying tribute to Dr. John Ogbu, a member of our Editorial Board who passed away in August. As professor of anthropology at the University of California, Berkely, he was, as noted in the obituary posted on the UCB website, “a path-breaking scholar in the fields of minority education and identity.” Among his major accomplishments was his work with Black American students which led to his recognition of them as a particularly challenged “involuntary minority” required to reconcile white societal norms of education with those defining their own cultural identity. The *JTL* joins with his colleagues and many others in the field in honouring John’s memory.

Norman Diffey
Editor