

Dale E. Shuttleworth
*Schooling For Life: Community Education
 and Social Enterprise*

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“What is innovation?” Dale Shuttleworth posed that question in a keynote address delivered in 2001 to an international conference on managing education for lifelong learning. He went on to note that “a sense of conflict seems to exist between the languages of top-down educational reformers, who promote an industrial age scientific managerial style, as opposed to that of bottom-up renewers” (322). He placed himself in the second camp. His focus question begs a second one: can we institutionalize change? Shuttleworth confronts that issue throughout this memoir of his four decades spent in or near public education in Ontario that is part personal recollection, part analytical reflection, and part idealistic advocacy. He seeks both to make sense of his own quixotic voyage of discovery as a teacher, administrator and charitable foundation director and to kindle a renewed interest in community-based schools, alternative education models, and social entrepreneurship. In some ways, the book can be characterized as a utopian morality tale: there was a golden age of community-based education and social enterprise in the Sixties and Seventies, followed by two decades of reaction and conflict, and then the closing of Camelot with the election of Mike Harris and his band of neo-conservatives in 1995. Clearly, Shuttleworth yearns for a return to the lost Age of Innocence. *Schooling For Life* is in that sense an intellectual “cri de coeur,” calling upon a new generation of educators and community activists to raise up the torch once again.

The author’s career as an educator began in the early 1960s with a stint as a classroom teacher in suburban Windsor, Ontario. After obtaining a university degree in applied sociology, he moved to the Toronto area where he served as a school-community worker in North York, a continuing education administrator in Toronto, and a school superintendent in the Borough of York. After formal retirement in 1994, he

remained active in community education as executive director of a non-governmental foundation. The goal of his book, the author informs us, is “not a theoretical analysis but rather a historical overview of the events over four decades” in which he has been directly involved. Moreover, he will not simply chronicle events, but also reflect on his own “personal experiences as a social entrepreneur in a quest to introduce the processes of community education, community development, and community economic development — basic elements of social enterprise — to change the traditional nature of public schooling” (8).

Shuttleworth’s vision of community education, influenced by the theories of John Dewey and Edward Olsen, assumes a broad role for each neighbourhood school. The possibilities range from “community-focused curriculum, to the school as a multiservice centre for human development, to the school as a focal point for social and economic renewal” (325). It is an ambitious egalitarian agenda, advocating innovative partnerships among the school, its surrounding community, other social agencies and sympathetic philanthropic organizations to build a better, more socially just world. Much to Shuttleworth’s chagrin (understandable) and surprise (less so), not everyone he encountered on his forty-year mission was in agreement with his goals and means. In the Preface, he quotes approvingly from Edmund Burke: “Those who would carry on the great public schemes must be proof against the most fatiguing delays, the most mortifying disappointments, the most shocking insults, and, worst of all, the presumptuous judgments of all the ignorant upon their designs” (ix). And yet, the author recognizes the inherent contradiction in his self-proclaimed role as an agent of change employed by a public school board. Early in the book he quotes John Dewey on the two conflicting aims of modern education: “the first would be to preserve the status quo; the second to act as a preparatory system for social change” (6). Moreover, Shuttleworth’s *modus operandi* explicitly targeted demonstration projects as the preferred method of kick-starting innovative change. Such programs, he acknowledges, were often resented by other administrators for “creating expectations of new services and identifying gaps in existing service patterns” (132) without providing resources to permanently fund the exploratory initiatives.

This is a good book, but one with limitations. For starters, it is unabashedly Toronto-centric. Beyond that, long and tedious passages from all-but-forgotten reports are too often quoted verbatim, when an executive summary would suffice. More substantively, Shuttleworth betrays a lifelong naiveté about the role of politics in education. “Politicization” in his usage is a pejorative term, and yet his model for change has “politics” running all through it. Those who opposed his numerous reform projects are invariably dismissed as self-interested, and yet he fails to see his own self-interest. Well-paid, in a series of high-status jobs, with some power and much influence, he was able to travel the world, hobnob with famous people, speak and publish in prestigious venues, and receive international accolades for his work. Clearly, the author relished being a “middle management activist” (343), particularly when he enjoyed the support of a senior administrator prepared to fend off the attacks of jealous or obstreperous colleagues. It must also be stated that the book is not up-to-date about Ontario educational policies since the early Harris years. For

instance, the author has little to say about either parents' councils or the imposition of mandatory community service prior to graduation, two programs from the 1990s that directly touch upon his interests. And finally, his "blueprint for renewal" is disappointing. Essentially, it is encapsulated in this nostalgic chapter title: "What Is Old Can Be New Again" (313).

Still, we are fortunate to have an insider's account of how, back in the day, dedicated social reformers could dream dreams of a better, more just world, and then manipulate a system of overlapping government and private grants to take small steps in that direction. Shuttleworth was, and is, a true believer in community education as a means to social justice. Some might consider the book as his epitaph. Doubtless he would prefer that it serve as a prologue for future citizen activists and "bottom-up renewers" of education.