

Theodore Michael Christou, ed.

The Curriculum History of Canadian Teacher Education

New York and London: Routledge, 2018. 280 pp.

Compulsory, publicly funded schooling gradually became a taken-for-granted feature within Canadian provinces after Ontario took the legislative lead in 1871. However, a systematic examination of the education of teachers who staffed and continue to staff these schools is long overdue. This collection of essays takes up how teacher education evolved in each of the provinces and territories of Canada and provides a most welcomed overview of the professional education of those whose daily lessons shaped the lives of our ancestors and exert an enduring influence on our children. Published as part of the Routledge Research in International and Comparative Education Series, the book “seeks to set a benchmark for contemporary and future conversations about the purposes, means, and ends of teacher education in this country [Canada]” (1). Its stated focus is the curriculum history of teacher education, described as the formal or official curriculum (what was taught), instruction (how the curriculum was taught), and theory (why it was taught the way it was). Attention is paid to how a particular curriculum was constituted, its social and political context, and its effects. While the actual unfolding of this focus is uneven across the subsequent chapters, overall the text is informative, thought-provoking, and fodder for rich conversation among the audiences to whom it was directed—curriculum scholars, teacher educators and candidates, foundations scholars, and the general public.

A project of such ambitious scope requires a strong contextual framework. Helen Raptis’s introductory sketch of “the Canadian landscape” (7) of teacher education, and the concluding chapter by Christopher Deluca and Michael Pitblado, offer a bookend synthesis of continuities and change within teacher education from its early forms in the nascent nation state to contemporary developments. Drawing on the work of Ronald Manzer, Raptis compellingly argues that four aspects of liberal thought—political, economic, ethical, and technological—form the “ideological scaffolding” (18) that shapes both the nation and its schools. As they envision the future, Deluca and Pitblado call for teacher education research that takes up four themes emerging from the past framed as “the balance of regionalism and cosmopolitanism, content versus competencies, citizenship education, and the age of accountability” (269). While readers might desire a more thorough investigation of how liberalism operates in these themes, the questions asked here and the material presented throughout the text are definitely starting points for conversation.

The authors seem to have been given considerable latitude in interpreting their task. Those writing from provincial and territorial contexts all offer the trajectory of teacher education as it evolved in their region. The focus on curriculum varies considerably, however, with some chapters addressing mainly the subjects that were taught and how these changed over time, others emphasizing the ideological underpinnings and tensions within curriculum and pedagogy, and still others concentrating on the local governance and administrative factors shaping what was imagined as

necessary knowledge and how it should be delivered. The varied angles the authors take reveal different sides of the story so that each chapter offers something local and particular to its region.

The chapter on the reclamation of Indigenous teacher education identifies five stages in Indigenous education culminating in “authentically Indigenous education that is under Indigenous control” (24). While the chapters on Yukon and the other territories necessarily focus on Indigenous education, several chapters miss the opportunity to go beyond documentation of skeletal milestones in its development to enter into dialogue with the histories of Indigenous education and its intersections with colonialism. Consideration of the contributions of teacher education to Canada’s on-going colonial project and the reproduction of White supremacy is understated in the text as a whole. One especially notable exception is the chapter on Ontario where the authors ask:

How might we continue to call upon Ontario teacher education, now and in the future, to critically question the settler colonizing systems we have inherited, listen and learn from differing Indigenous perspectives, and make significant contributions towards reconciling not only our historical accounts of Ontario teacher education but also in terms of re-envisioning, enacting, and respecting our constitutional relations as Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens? (139)

Taking up such work is critical in teacher education research and pedagogy across the country, especially in light of the ways that teachers reproduce social and economic inequalities through their everyday practices. Steeped in the ideology of liberalism and the premise of the unique individual fostered in and through teacher education curriculum, teacher candidates often fail to recognize structural inequities and their own complicity in oppressive systems.

By and large this text achieves its goal of providing a point of departure for probing discussions. As readers reflect on these histories in relation to their own experience of schooling or teaching, resonances and further questions will surely be kindled. In addition to the directions delineated for teacher preparation in the concluding chapter, the question of how teacher education programs should address the extremely pressing issue of the sustainability of the earth for all forms of life is vital. Teacher education discourse in general is almost silent on this subject despite several important but uncoordinated initiatives. As well, it would be productive to consider changes and continuities in teacher educator and teacher resistance over time, especially its positive manifestations in opposition to technical-rational approaches to curriculum and bureaucratic constraints on professionalism.

Readers will wish more care had been taken to avoid copyediting and factual errors. For example, while Alberta was the first province to bring elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs under a university faculty of education at the University of Alberta in 1945, the repeated claim that this provincial university had the first faculty of education in Canada is misleading. Several provinces had university

programs for secondary teacher preparation prior to 1945, although teacher preparation in state-run normal schools or teachers' colleges did persist alongside these university programs for years. Eventually all teacher education came under university auspices. The prominent proponent of the Enterprise approach to education was Donald Dickie, not Donald. Nevertheless, the editor and multiple authors of this text should be commended for their important documentation of the history of teacher education across the nation and for their invitation to join the conversation.

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Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness: Political Exile and Re-education in Mao's China

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During the famine that followed China's Great Leap Forward, hunger hit exiled intellectuals especially hard as they languished in re-education camps in remote corners of the country. In one such place, an imprisoned scholar encouraged his fellow inmates: "You must live. The higher-ups can't let us starve to death. If all of the country's scholars were to starve, the country itself would starve." Later he pleaded, "You definitely need to live, so the higher-ups can see the result of sending us here for Re-ed."¹ This particular quotation is fictional, spoken by a character in Yan Lianke's novel, *The Four Books*, but the words convey a tragic truth about the way China's flesh-and-blood scholars experienced their re-education. As Wang Ning's exceptional new monograph reveals, after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) banished intellectuals, many of them remained loyal to the government, optimistic about their future, and genuinely committed to re-educating themselves, even as their daily experience was marked by prolonged hunger, cruel treatment, and little appreciation, from higher-ups, for the inmates' efforts to reform. Wang's exploration of political exiles in Mao's China incorporates his exhaustive research into a truly beautiful narrative, full of individual voices, that is every bit as raw and moving as Yan's novel. The careful but deeply thoughtful readings of sources—recollections from captives, cadres, and guards, supplemented by official documents—makes *Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness* indispensable reading for anyone who wants to understand the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Wang highlights the divergent experiences of Mao-era exiles through the case of intellectuals who were banished from Beijing to the Beidahuang borderlands. While he provides a solid overview of the categories of inmates, his central interest is the most famous among them: the so-called rightists. As he notes, the 1957 Anti-Rightist

1 Yan Lianke, *The Four Books*, trans. Carlos Rojas (New York: Grove Press, 2010), 237–8.