

# Education Letter

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## From Pluralism to Cosmopolitanism

### MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Rosa Bruno-Jofré, *editor*

**E**ducation, it has been said again and again, has a concern with the good life, notions of justice, relationships between self and others, and between humans and the natural world; it should be desirable and transformative. Educational theories of necessity became, in the latter part of the twentieth century, sensitive to claims of social and political movements and started to engage with notions of diversity, and de-centered power. Authors began to generate less stable concepts of culture, and introduce more open understandings of identity and difference. In practice, these developments were often trumped by strong headed anti-democratic educational reforms based on neoliberal ideologies, particularly in the mid-1980s and 1990s.

In Canada and in other countries, the acknowledgement of diversity led to a multicultural/intercultural curriculum, and pedagogical proposals that recognized diversity as a key element of Canadian identity. Politically, it has been argued that multicultural policies did not address the cultural aspirations of Aboriginal peoples and the Québécois, and this was clear in the educational political scene as well. Advocates of critical pedagogy challenged notions of diversity and pluralism, and questioned what they characterized as the liberal and culturalist tone of multicultural education. These advocates felt more

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**Together, we were unstoppable**  
by Ana Jofré

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comfortable with anti-racist education with its oppositional discourse, and a concern with the ubiquity of power. For many critical educational theorists, neither the liberal vision of a multicultural society and a multicultural education, nor communitarian visions of education were able to move forward with their arguments in light of the many sides of contemporary globalization or—as some argue—post-globalization. While large categories were reduced to fragments, there has still been a preoccupation with the human condition, a shared humanity, justice and the relationship with the non-human world. We have witnessed a search for new imaginative critical ways of dealing with certainties while engaging cultural diversity and the individual's rooted obligations (such as family and members of the community).

Cosmopolitanism in its variants erupted in the educational scene inspiring critiques as well as renewed heuristic tools to explore avenues to deal with the inherent diversity of people's experiences. It roughly goes from Martha Nussbaum's universal cosmopolitanism (by and large not embraced as a philosophy of education) to notions of rooted cosmopolitanism (the individual and her community) or to hybrid approaches (see, for example, Nussbaum, 1996; Appiah, 2006; Hansen, 2009; and Snauwaert, 2009). Critical theory and/or poststructuralist theories inform a great deal of cosmopolitan writing (see James Scott Johnston in this issue). Overall, the various cosmopolitan visions engage in one way or another with notions of a shared human dignity and interconnectedness, justice and democracy, human rights, living everyday life justly in the midst of difference, and alternative diversified educational practices. Authors like T. Popkewitz critique notions of cosmopolitanism from a post-modernist perspective for not pressing old certainties enough and attempt to test its limits, although Popkewitz does not argue against cosmopolitanism (Popkewitz, 2008). In the end, as David Hansen puts it, we have not come to grips with the educational significance of cosmopolitanism (Hansen, 2009).

In spite of a long historical and philosophically varied journey, the underlying ideas being discussed are not as novel as one might think. Ivan Illich used the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan when discussing the meaning of one of the Ten Commandments: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Cayley, 2005). As Charles Taylor wrote, we moderns tend to construe the response to the question "Who is your neighbor," given through the parable, as a moral rule that should move us to help anyone without discrimination. In that sense, Taylor wrote, "this story can be seen as one of original building blocks out of which our modern universalist moral consciousness has been

built”(Taylor, 2007). But as Taylor pointed out, in Illich’s view the story did not intend to give us a set of universal rules, but to generate an opening to another way of being, which involves a new motivation and a new kind of community. The parable represents a free act of ‘I’ freeing that person from the bounds of the ‘we’ by acting outside the parameters of the sense of the sacred and the walls erected around culture”(Taylor, 2007).

This issue of the *Queen’s Education Letter* connects the reader to major issues being debated today on cosmopolitanism, democracy, cosmopolitanism and the neoliberal constraints, diversity, justice, and our very “limited range of diversity” as Christopher Beeman puts it, which may leave questionable room to other ways of being. The voice from the teacher calls for a grounded notion of diversity.

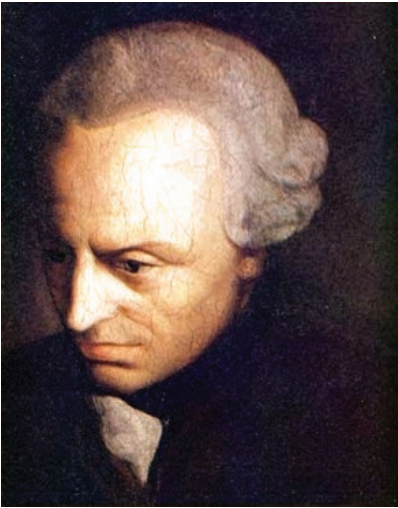


***Together, we were unstoppable*** by Ana Jofré

*... in Illich’s view the story did not intend to give us a set of universal rules, but to generate an opening to another way of being, which involves a new motivation and a new kind of community.*

# Discovering Cosmopolitanism as a Philosophy of Education for our Era

DAVID T. HANSEN, *Teachers College, Columbia University*



Portrait of Immanuel Kant



Portrait of Michael de Montaigne

Cosmopolitanism derives from the ancient Greek term *kosmopolites*, or “citizen of the world.” The idea has been taken up by a wide array of scholars and activists in recent years as a response to the cultural, economic and political dislocations associated with globalization. People perceive in the long history of the concept a source of universal claims for justice and equity, on the one hand, and for more peaceful, harmonious interaction, on the other hand (see, for example, Appiah, 2006; Beck, 2006; Benhabib, 2006; Brock & Brighouse, 2005; McDonough & Feinberg, 2003; Nussbaum, 1997; and Tan, 2004).

However, cosmopolitanism has another historical trajectory which, in my view, has a more tangible resonance for today’s educators. Here the point of departure is not from a global reformist standpoint, but rather from everyday experience with encountering difference in the school and on the street (cf. Cheah & Robbins, 1998; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). If Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) represents cosmopolitanism’s universal impulse, Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) instantiates its lived, embodied aspect.

Kant advanced a powerful universal ethic (1990, 1993) that continues to inspire thought, including by way of argument with him (cf. Derrida, 2001). He articulated a robust proposal for peace that anticipated both the ill-fated League of Nations and the more successful United Nations (Kant, 1963). Montaigne (1991) studied everyday life, especially his own life, and in seeking to characterize it he found himself, quite unintentionally, inventing the genre of writing we call the essay—just as he realized, belatedly, that he had “accidentally” become a philosopher. He painted a portrait of not just profound tolerance of cultural and individual difference—as significant as that accomplishment is—but of what it means to truly learn from people who subscribe to different values, beliefs, ideals, and practices.

Montaigne drew heavily on what is called philosophy as the art of living (Hadot, 1995; Nehamas, 1998; Sellars, 2003). If philosophy as theory asks What is justice? (think again of Kant), philosophy as the art of living asks How can I live justly in the here and now with my family, friends, and associates, and in the midst of so many different people and communities all around me? Montaigne urged his readers to seek out people from other walks of life because it is only through knowing them—as part of studying what he called “this great world of ours”—that we can come to know ourselves. Time and again he demonstrated, in his microanalysis of human life, that the differences within any given culture can be as great (or greater) as the differences between any two cultures—just as the differences within a given human being, he showed, can be as diverse as the differences between any two persons.



My research over the years on cosmopolitanism began, in important ways, with Montaigne. The inquiry led back to ancient sources ranging from Plato and Socrates to Confucius, through Hellenistic and Roman Stoics, and to ecumenical thinkers and artists of the Renaissance. It led forward to other expositors of cosmopolitan artfulness in human affairs including Ralph Waldo Emerson, W.E.B Du Bois, Jane Addams, José Enrique Rodó, Rabindranath Tagore, and Virginia Woolf. Along the way I came upon Ibn Battuta (1304–c. 1368 CE) and Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406 CE), the former one of the world’s great all-time travelers, the latter a proto-social scientist who wrote important works on culture, history, economics, and geography, while also becoming intimately familiar with the poly-vocal culture of the Mediterranean basin. Like Montaigne, both figures evinced great fascination for cultural difference and equal fascination for the remarkable fact that human beings can communicate successfully despite—or because of—these differences.

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**Up in the Sky** by Chelo Sebastian

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Inspired by their works, and seeking a deeper understanding of an embodied cosmopolitanism, I found myself immersed in the amazing explosion of fictitious travel-cum-cultural commentaries that riveted readers in the 1700s, a genre triggered by Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, published in 1721. The book features two Persian travelers in Paris who pen reports back home of the bizarre yet also at times, to them, inspiring customs they witness—and all the while they also remark both pro and con on their own Persian values, beliefs, and practices. Studying this literature opened a door, in turn, to an unfathomable gallery of contemporary novels, short stories, poetry, and film from around the world that illuminates what cosmopolitan-mindedness looks like on the ground, as well as how its intolerant antitheses appear as well (see, for example, recent works such as Teju Cole's *Open City*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, and W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*).

I have also examined systematically the proliferating field-based research literature in our time that draws upon cosmopolitanism as an interpretive framework. This body of research examines cultural interaction in numerous urban and rural settings, within a context of existential and practical challenges generated by globalization. The research (for a meta-analysis, see Hansen, 2011) documents what the sources above show us—namely, that while the world has always been wracked by misunderstanding and violence, it has also always been alive with individuals and communities who respond creatively, in a cosmopolitan-minded spirit, to pressure on their sense of identity and purpose. A reader can discern in the field-based research how creativity in response to change materializes in diverse, unscripted forms from which other people—including from very different cultural origins and dispositions—can learn and benefit. Readers can also witness the fragility and vulnerability of a cosmopolitan orientation, in the face of recurrent intolerant and fundamentalist outlooks, and thus why the study of cosmopolitanism on the ground complements the global reformist work I touched on at the start.

For me, cosmopolitanism denotes not so much a notion of citizenship as one of inhabitation—of truly inhabiting or dwelling in the human as well as natural world (cf. Bruckner, 2000; Shayegan, 1992). The outlook contrasts with approaching both realms in a purely self-serving and use-it-up manner (including using up human beings as the world economy so often does). Cosmopolitanism accents at one and the same time the universal and the local, the general and the particular, the shared and the singular. It points to a dynamic, ever-evolving fusion of reflective openness to new people, ideas, and practices, with reflective loyalty to local commitments, values, and aspirations. It gives rise, as I have sought to show in my research (Hansen, 2011), to a promising philosophy of education for our time.



**The Wanderer Above a Sea of Clouds**  
by Casper David Friedrich

# Cosmopolitanism and Teacher Education: Comparing Theories

JAMES SCOTT JOHNSTON, *Faculty of Education, Queen's University*

Cosmopolitanism is a notion of international right that has its theoretical antecedents in the political reactions to the religious wars of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The idea of a 'loose federation' of states was given its fullest understanding by Immanuel Kant in the 1790's. Since then, it has become the dominant (though not uncontested) understanding of international law, particularly as manifest in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two Covenants, and other, numerous Declarations. Human rights education invokes or incorporates this understanding in both teaching regarding human rights and educational policy and practice. But this understanding is by no means the only understanding, nor is it dominant. In fact, the idea of a loose federation of states that codifies and enacts human rights legislation is critiqued for favouring powerful (and Northern Anglo-American and European) nations over others; and for its supposed reliance on the Western, liberal-political and moral traditions. This state of affairs is said to deny or denigrate other presumably legitimate ways of coming together; ways that protect or maintain the cultural and political lifeworld of these nations.

The dispute over theory has important consequences for teacher education programs. For example, programs and the faculty therein can choose to teach what is the dominant understanding of human rights and human rights legislation—the rationale behind the UDHR, the Covenants, and the various Declarations. This would be to emphasize the self-understandings of the UN and its associated legislation as arising from liberal political theory and its institutions; its gradual coming-to-be during the late Enlightenment; the attraction to a federation of nations after the First World War; early incarnations of what would become a viable international organization (such as the League of Nations); and the ultimate triumph of the UN in the aftermath of the Second World War. This would also be to emphasize the central notions of human dignity, autonomy, and moral personality— notions at the heart of the late Enlightenment understanding of morals and political theory (especially Kant).

But many programs are providing a non-dominant understanding of international relations. This is a Cosmopolitanism that does not reach back to the late Enlightenment and the history of the self-understandings of the UN. Instead, it emphasizes social justice, either in conjunction with, or in contrast to, human rights; and it draws its theoretical strength from critical theory and/or poststructuralism. In the critical-theoretic understanding of social justice, the supposed liberal preoccupation with individual autonomy is downplayed or disregarded. What takes its place is a socially-oriented, even communal understanding of individual-in-context that looks back to GWF Hegel and his critique of Kant's notion of the autonomous moral agent. In the poststructuralist understanding of social justice, there is a metaphysics of differences that is transposed

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**Sammankomsten (The Meeting)** by Ester Almqvist, which was chosen by the UN as a motif for a stamp commemorating the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



**The portrait of GWF Hegel.** Steel engraving by Lazarus Sichling after a lithograph by Julius L. Sebbers.

*What is otherwise emphasized is place, location, culture, community, and autonomy-in-context, and in the case of critical theory, resistance to the dominant and largely corporation-driven ideologies of late Capitalism.*

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to individual, communal, and political contexts, resulting in a suspicion of unities, centralities, and regularities. This endless 'de-centering' calls into question the aims, purposes, and legalities of attempts to manifest international laws and institutions.

In these alternative Cosmopolitanisms, what is criticized, then, are the supposed bare, formal, and individualistic autonomy of the late Enlightenment and its subsequent role in the tradition leading to our present international organizations. What is otherwise emphasized is place, location, culture, community, and autonomy-in-context, and in the case of critical theory, resistance to the dominant and largely corporation-driven ideologies of late Capitalism. Exactly how these alternative Cosmopolitanisms are to replace or otherwise reconstruct the dominant is unclear. But one way that has been emphasized is through adding a 'critical' dimension to existing human rights instruction for the benefit of teacher candidates in teacher education programs. Another way is through immersion in alternative theorizing—critical and poststructuralist. This has the advantage of inculcating a healthy skepticism regarding the dominant; a skepticism that can presumably be passed along to public and private school students.

Now, it is not my intention to cast aspersions on either the dominant or alternative understandings of Cosmopolitanism, here. Rather, I would like to mention two consequences of choosing one or another of these for teacher education programs. In choosing either the critical-theoretic or poststructuralist understandings, we stand fully committed to the irreducible relationship between the individual and her context—community, society, and culture—supposedly missing from the overly-individualistic notion of autonomy privileged in late Enlightenment understandings and the UDHR's emphasis on the irreducibility of human dignity and moral personality. In the case of poststructuralist understanding, we have at hand a metaphysical view that does not essentialize the center, unity, or regularities; rather, it essentializes the different, the unstable, the other. This is said to benefit minorities of various persuasions. Which way we go depends on what we privilege; and what we privilege depends on our core beliefs about the relationship between self and others.



# The Challenges of Democratic Education and Cosmopolitanism in Neo-liberal Times

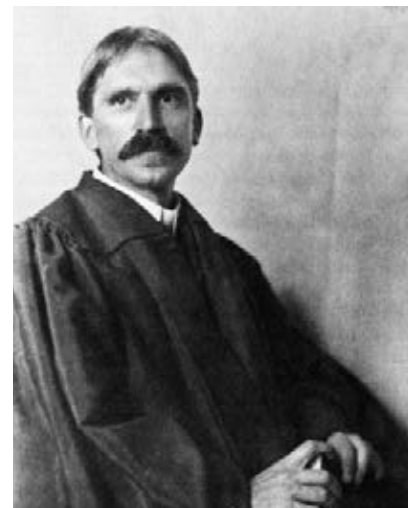
JOHN P. PORTELLI, *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto*

Simply stated, democratic education is an education that takes democracy and its associated values seriously both in theory and in practice. However, both education and democracy are much contested concepts. In fact, there are differing and conflicting conceptions and practices of both (Portelli & Solomon, 2001, Price, 2007, and Carr, 2011). This paper will argue that for cosmopolitanism in education to have a real impact, it needs to rest on a robust notion of democracy. It will also identify some of the major challenges faced in our neoliberal times by democratic education.

Democracy is both a moral and political ideal. And as such we know that it will never be fully achieved or finished. This is the very nature of ideals. As an ideal we believe that it is indeed worthwhile to struggle to achieve democracy and the beliefs, conditions, and practices that go with it. As a moral and political ideal, democracy substantively deals with how we as human beings ought to relate with each other. As John Dewey (1938) has argued, democracy proposes a way of life that is the most humane. It is crucial here to note that when we talk about democratic education we are not referring to an education that follows so-called democratic governance. The focus is on the democratic *way of life* that needs to be enacted in educational institutions. A school principal recently chided me that democracy and education have nothing to do with each other in his school as, he rightfully claimed, he cannot convene the entire staff and students to vote on every decision he has to make. Unfortunately this naïve conception of democracy, which though is very common in popular discourse, is not what is meant by democracy as a way of life.

But what is involved in the democratic way of life? The literature on democracy has identified this way of life by using differing terms: liberal democracy, marketized democracy, minimalist democracy, participatory democracy, deliberative democracy, cosmopolitan democracy, critical democracy, and strong democracy (Portelli, 2001; Held, 2006). Each of these terms captures a different way of life associated with democracy. It would go beyond the scope of this short essay to go into the details of the differences between these different conceptions of democracy (that entail different practices). However, in general, adherents of democracy would concede that democracy, however it is conceived, is constantly being reconstructed (Dewey, 1916) or rewritten (Ermarth, 2007) or rethought (Kothari, 2007) or rediscovered (McDonnell, Timpane & Benjamin, 2000). But the crucial question is whether or not democracy is anything we wish it to be. While definitely allowing for the re-imagining of democracy as social conditions change, I contend that such re-imagining does not imply that there are no core qualities associated with democracy that we cannot give up without exhibiting undemocratic

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John Dewey at the University of Chicago in 1902.

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Teacher candidates at the Queen's University Faculty of Education

values or actions. There is a democratic soul so to speak. For example, how can one claim to be democratic while abandoning human rights, or promoting racism (individual or systemic, consciously or unconsciously), or promoting the abuse of human beings? Surely one of the central litmus tests of democracy is how we deal with differences. Democracy is not a way of life or a moral and political ideal that promotes standardization or one size fits all, or that promotes fear and shuts off the inquiry into differing albeit conflicting views. The authoritarian crushes disagreements and differences; the soft liberal puts disagreements aside as he or she believes they are all fine as long as they do not interfere with the rights of the individual; the genuine democrat acknowledges the differences, does not shy away from disagreements, and rather than crushing or hiding disagreements and differences, he or she meaningfully engages with disagreements and differences. The crucible that democracy accepts, of its very nature, is to deal with substantive differences in a humane manner. And this is exactly the connection with cosmopolitanism since it "calls for citizens who can respond in ways consistent with the inherent dignity of human beings" (Snauwaert, 2002, 11) while exposing citizens to 'the diverse perspectives of others' (Snauwaert, 2009, 101) through which one's own views are challenged.

But are the procedures of dialogue, open inquiry, and tolerant and critical demeanors sufficient for the survival of the democratic way of life? Overall, pragmatists believe in the faith of the scientific method or procedures in dealing with substantive differences. Others, including critical democrats (e.g. Freire, 1998), argue that the democratic way of life demands more than procedures that are deemed to be neutral and objective. A robust democratic way of life has to go beyond procedural matters and deal with substantive issues.

Unfortunately the neoliberal culture that has dominated the 'western world' (and is now being forced on 'other' worlds) has militated against the growth of a robust democratic culture. As the 19th century liberal individualism and negative freedom shifted to the excessive individualism and the so-called free market, excessive competition, presumed neutrality and objectivity, narrow utility and accountability have dominated our way of life. The way of life that has emerged from Neoliberalism is not consistent with the soul of democracy, for it has put aside the power of the humanities (Nussbaum, 2011) and thoughtful social sciences; it has promoted standardization and privileged rugged empirical evidence to the exclusion of the domains of the moral, critical, spiritual, artistic, and philosophical. Within such a context, enacting democratic education has become an onerous task—especially if, as it should be, it is based on equity rather than simply equality of opportunity, diversity rather than standardization, agonism (adversaries) rather than antagonism (enemies), substantive and controversial issues rather than cold procedures and facts, taking a fair stand rather than pretending to be neutral and reproducing current injustices, and finally embracing social activism rather simply deliberation and discussion.

A democratic education that honours robust democracy has to consciously and, at times, subversively challenge the neoliberal practices in educational institutions (including universities) (Portelli, 2010). We have the moral responsibility to question the myth that the 'achievement gap' can be reduced by simply improving test scores of tests that purport to be neutral and objective while at the same time reproducing the neoliberal way of life without ever offering a reasonable justification for it. Of course we have to take numeracy and literacy seriously, but numeracy and literacy are not monolithic entities. There are in fact different forms of numeracy and literacy, and they all deserve to be taught and respected. To paraphrase Freire, reading the word is just as important as reading the world. And the reading of both has to include for example, oral traditions, the poetic, the dialogic, the narrative, and not just the documentary. Democracy calls for a curriculum that takes life seriously in its entirety, and not just on aspects that continue to privilege certain groups of the citizenry (Portelli & Vibert, 201). A true polis is not one based on partial aspects of it; it has to include the cosmos in its fullest sense! And as such, it recognizes the importance of the particular and the universal, the tensions between them, and the need for an ethics of hospitality (Carlson, 2003).



**Dialogue** by Claude Gigon. Twice a year, during the Spring and Fall Equinox, the shadow of the southern stele is in alignment with the shadow of the northern stele.



**Universal Man** by Gerald Gladstone outside the Yorkdale Shopping Centre in Toronto

# A Diverser Diversity

CHRISTOPHER BEEMAN, *Faculty of Education, Queen's University*

**A**t the ironic heart of any shift in paradigms is resistance to movement. The adoption of a new paradigm is more akin to a kind of unconscious birthing, with all the labour and reluctance to transform state this may entail. It is a transformation that permits the regrouping and reconceptualizing of information which, understood in one way before, becomes the substance of new understanding. Such is the force of established theories surrounding a new idea, that except if it be truly novel, reliable and workable, it will not survive.

The reason for the *prima facie* rejection of a good explanatory theory—one which gives a better understanding or is more fruitfully generative of other ideas and theories, as Phillip Kitcher (1982) would have it—is not the strength of the challenge it presents, but the intransigence of habit on the part of its perceivers. A really new way of seeing things threatens an established perspective. Try explaining the idea of a round world to those whose daily experience is surrounded by flat vistas.

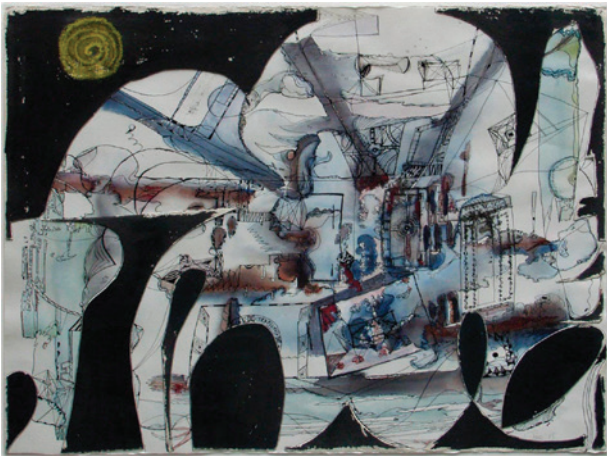
Our current ideas on diversity are inevitably constrained by our own capacity to comprehend difference. What is considered diverse is only as diverse as the imagination of the culture that contains it. And, increasingly, the culture that contains it is living a narrower range of being human, when viewed from the perspective of the natural world.

Taking Canada as an example, while the country is more culturally varied than ever, this cultural variation occurs within an ever more-restricted understanding of the actually *enacted* range of the possibilities of being human. That is to say, the concept of diversity now occurs within the confines of a culture whose extremely recent ideal is the individuated movable citizen-producer and consumer, *homo mobilis*, disconnected from any particular place, yet transferable between locations, utterly dependent on the existence of the wider culture in its role as specialist, and incapable of directly providing his or her own living needs. As long as *that* ideal is preserved, take a heaping helping of diversity! Be as different as you want! Other versions of humanhood,

imagined and enacted in infinite ways and numbers since the dawn of human time, at first seem, to our dazzled eyes, as more spectral by comparison. Eventually they cannot even be noticed by us.

It is as though, in examining diversity, we have chosen to look through a microscope; what we see within its viewfinder is detailed and varying, but what is outside the microscope is ignored or even, in our enthusiasm to observe the tiny differences between the beings that our microscope enables us to see, forgotten. So, allow me to propose a shift in how we view diversity, and I hope you will permit yourself to consider its merit.

In my research with Indigenous elders over the past decade, I have witnessed, on many occasions, elders saying things that I just didn't understand. My initial inclination was to consider these statements as reflective of a different culture, and so to think of the actual words of the elders as intentionally metaphorical. For example, one elder talked of the natural world speaking to him. How could the world really speak to a person, except, of



**A Point of View** by Chelo Sebastian





**Elder Bernard Nelson**  
Credit: Queen's University

course, in the metaphorical way it does in our culture? I now believe that I was mistaken in thinking I was being given metaphors.

I interpreted what I didn't understand as cultural difference and I saw the elder's attempt to convey this difference as necessarily requiring metaphor. Thus, I succeeded in reducing novel ideas to known ones by absorbing them in a familiar framework—quite inaccurately. The familiar framework I refer to is not one of cultural practices or beliefs, nor of orientations, nor of ethnicity, nor of preferences or ideas, nor of any other factor considered to be reflective of diversity in this culture's current take on the subject. The framework I refer to is composed of broad, unconsciously-held views of what it is to be a person in the world, and these are supported by unquestioningly-enacted practices that establish us accordingly. It is the framework of personhood held by us and forcefully exported everywhere through the project of global capitalism and ecological dualism that might as well be called "Hey everyone! Imitate us! We are so great!" (spoken loudly). With this export comes gratis the parentheses on culture that emphasize what difference exists while ignoring what can no longer be recognized.

People may come from different places, but this project of ontological—that is to say *state-of-being*—colonization, enacted and exported by the West, has been so successful that

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almost all subscribe. Any Mudjahedin, any businesswoman of Peking, any South Pacific Islander, most Aboriginal people, and, I would suppose, practically all those who are admitted as immigrants to Canada, could understand each other through its language of exchange. But a very few of the elders I spoke with see other possibilities of being human, and cannot be forced into the pitifully limited range of diversity imagined by us.

Were we to try to imagine people as these elders do, a substantial shift in the paradigm of humanhood would occur. Modern Western culture is not willing to do this. So, we are forced into the kind of dilemma that perplexes, disturbs, and may lead to paradigmatic shift. For example, according to our culture, if we take the words of the elders I spoke with literally, either the elders must be crazy (they are not) or they must not be people (they are). If neither of these claims are true, they would have to be a different kind of person that would put our own notion of what it is to be a person to a terrible test. The global modern West's concept of personhood would be shown to be very limited indeed. The real trouble is, the ideas of these elders cannot be heard by a culture that cannot conceive of them. And it is the culture that cannot conceive of them that frames them for viewing by others.

The shift for which I am proposing to make room is one of an altered position of humans with respect to the more-than-human world. It is one that has been reported to me by many Indigenous elders. It is not a cultural practice, and to describe it as such—because it frames all being and is enacted rather than conceived—is to limit it again. Rather, it is a reorientation of being from one of dominance and will-directedness, to one of listening and attunement. And, because it is a state of being, and not anything else of the many ways we have attempted to define diversity hitherto, what is proposed is an ontological shift; a reorientation of personhood from the human to the more-than-human world.

If we are able to open to the possibility of this much wider diversity, perhaps most current considerations of diversity would be seen to be a sophisticated form of sameness—one that limits discussion to only that which could be readily accommodated in current educational practice.



*Morning on the Gatineau River* by Heather Holmes

# Diversity with Dignity

ROSALIE GRIFFITH, *Queen's Education Alumna & Teacher*

**A**s a classroom teacher in arguably the most diverse community in the country, I have learned that our understanding of diversity is inextricably linked to our effectiveness in the classroom. For the past fifteen years, I have worked and reflected on the impact of various “diversities” on student learning. The ubiquitous nature of diversity means that it is ever-present in our teaching and learning environment. Therefore, it is vital that we enter our classrooms aware of its presence and ready for its impact on our learning community. It is my hope to share some thoughts and questions for reflection, that have come about through my practice, so that classroom diversity can broaden our thinking as educators and we can maintain the dignity of each and every learner.

Often when we hear the word “diversity,” we immediately think of racial or cultural diversity. As this type of diversity is the most visible, this is understandable. Similarly, religious diversity may be the next to come to mind. Again this is a diversity that may be observable and overt. However, diversity is not always obvious. Sometimes the diversity in our classrooms is quietly inconspicuous. All types of diversity are indeed important for us to consider as they can indeed have a profound impact on our classroom, our teaching and the interactions with our students, their families, and student interactions with each other.

How do you ensure that you are creating a safe classroom environment—through your words and actions—for the student who has a faith that prohibits participation with anything involving magic, for the Metis student who has not yet self-identified, for the student who has a parent that is incarcerated, for the student with an unidentified learning disability, for the student who has fifty-five brothers and sisters because her father has eight wives? A teacher would likely be *unaware* of these realities. What are the jokes that have been made in your classroom? What have you said in class that may have been offensive or which (unknowingly) irreparably changed that student’s relationship with you? Your students may never tell you, and they may never choose to disclose, but what you said or did affected them, and affected how they see you now. While these examples may seem far-fetched, they are not. I have experienced each one of them.

If you excitedly bring *Harry Potter* in as the class novel, you may have a student who silently feels excluded and uncomfortable, until either the student or the parent comes in to request an alternative novel. Will this lead to thinly veiled annoyance at having to provide a substitute novel and alternate assignments? Will you be dismissive of your student’s beliefs or concerns? This is an opportunity to show your student dignity and respect. What comments were made or *not* made in class as you studied the European arrival to North America? Did your comments bolster or detract from the self worth of your Metis student? What will be shared about that class with family members at home? What comments have you made about criminals and those in jail? Have you implemented Differentiated Instruction and activities to meet various learning styles so that *all* students can demonstrate their learning and feel success? What comment or joke did you make about the polygamous relationship you heard about in the media?

What did your students hear and observe in their teacher? More importantly, how do your students feel about you and about themselves in your classroom? Do you help your students, *all* of your students, to feel safe and dignified? Do they feel capable and

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**Canadian School Train** [ca. 1950]  
Credit: Library and Archives Canada

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valued? Have you created an equitable space for teaching and learning? Students can only learn to their optimal potential in an environment where they feel respected and whole as individuals.

A casual survey would show that the demographic makeup of teacher candidates across the province has not altered widely from what it was twenty years ago. Most teacher candidates are still female and most teacher candidates still come from middle-income families. This is simply the reality. However, anyone who has spent time in classrooms over the past twenty years would readily agree that the makeup of our student demographic has changed drastically over the past twenty years, particularly in large urban centres like Toronto. Keeping this in mind, the diversity of our classroom, even ethnoculturally, can pose a genuine challenge to teacher candidates who have simply had little to no experience with students and children of particular backgrounds.

This provides a critical opportunity for faculties of education to influence, not just the teaching and learning in classrooms, but the development of individuals in the teaching profession who will greatly impact our society in the future. If we extrapolate that a classroom teacher has potentially thirty years in the classroom and can reach thousands of children over the course of his or her career, we quickly recognize the *magnitude* of the impact of the thousands of teacher candidates that enter the profession in Ontario each year.

Our new teachers will shape our province by shaping its citizens. Our future society will be a reflection of their work and example. Faculties of education have a significant role in shaping that society. Through our pre-service programs we can contribute to the development of professionals and educators that recognize, appreciate and utilize the strengths that diversity brings to our communities.

In more practical terms, we can prepare the “white middle class female teacher” to effectively engage students outside of her racial and cultural experience. We can teach her to reflect on what she “sees” when she looks at a group of young faces unlike her own, and critically question the origins of her perspective. We *must* address these issues because this scenario is re-created over and over again each year in classrooms across the province. It is especially critical now. Due to the tight job market, teacher candidates are taking positions outside of their comfort area and which they sometimes see as “less than ideal” in order to work in the teaching profession. This issue is even more pervasive as it affects *every* school in every community. We need new teachers to re-evaluate their views (and biases) about students who are labeled “Applied” or supported through “Special Education.” We want to ensure that new teachers see past the labels to the capable students in need of teachers who will maintain and support high expectations.

To meet the challenge of teaching in *unfamiliar* territory, candidates need to develop—both practically and attitudinally. The practical learning is the easier part to embrace. Teacher candidates and new teachers need to practically learn—from the community, from the parents, from the community leaders, from effective experienced teachers, and most importantly from their students. While this developmental need may



***Shedding Light in Butiama*** by Courtney Cluff. Taken during her alternative practicum in Tanzania for her Queen's BEd.

be readily accepted by candidates, its success is dependent on a type of development that may require greater effort to change—the attitudinal aspect of the learning. Teacher candidates often come in as very successful students. They have been academically successful or returned to the academic world with a wealth of experience—either professionally (for example, in business or technological trades) or personally (sometimes after raising children of their own).

Teacher candidates are often eager to complement their knowledge base with the pedagogical and curricular knowledge that they need to become effective teachers, but they do not always enter teacher education programs expecting or desiring any change in *how* they see the world. They come in with the biases and prejudices of their class and personal backgrounds. This is simply a fact. They may not yet understand the need and imperative for social justice and equity. They may not have come into the pre-service program prepared to work on deconstructing their own class or personal biases.

Congruently, teacher education programs must be prepared and equipped to take candidates through this process. Teacher candidates must learn how to select texts (“texts” here are broadly defined) and resources that *validate* their students. Equally important, candidates need to learn how to critique dominant texts and how to teach their students to do the same. They also need to learn a range of teaching strategies that will allow them to recognize, appreciate and meet the needs of all learning styles in their future classrooms.

Deep critical reflection and examination of our individual beliefs is sometimes uncomfortable. This discomfort may lead to resistance. For the sake of our students, this challenge must be overcome. Future teachers must re-evaluate how they see all children. Teacher candidates cannot become the new teachers, sent out to influence the thousands of students in their future professional careers, unless they are critical about what they thought they knew and open to re-learning and creating new knowledge. If pre-service programs fail to support and ensure that teacher candidates do this, we will continue to see segments of our population—such as our Aboriginal, Black, male students—woefully underperforming. As a profession, we will not be successful if our teachers are not effective for *all* of the students in their future classrooms.

We have an important work. We have a vital work. We have a life-saving work. But we have a work that can and must be done. The future of our children, of our province and of our society as a whole depends on our determination and success in meeting this challenge. Our success will ensure not only the dignity of every student in our care but it will also ensure the enduring dignity of this noblest of professions.



*Life in the Stacks of the Queen's Education Library* by Hung Mai

# Two Accounts of International Experience

TOM CLIFFORD, *Retired Principal, Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board*

The concept began to form a few years before the January 1998 amalgamation of Ontario school boards. The Director of Education of the local Catholic School Board (Dr. Gregory Cosgrove) was a member of a Team Canada group that toured parts of Asia. During discussions with others (mainly educators from BC) he realized that there were several public school boards in Canada that had developed international education programmes. A short while later Dr. Cosgrove and the Chair of the School Board (Tom Foley) went to Hong Kong, Seoul and Taipei to further investigate the possibility of beginning such a programme in our Board. The decision was to move ahead with the plan.

I was seconded from my position as Principal of Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School to assist with the preparations for the upcoming amalgamation with our western co-terminus Catholic school board. One of my portfolios was Global Education, as it was explained to me to better prepare our graduates for their place in the world, we were going to expose them to students from other countries and cultures. We hoped this would expand their focus beyond local, provincial, and national interests while at the same time possibly provide them with potential educational and career opportunities.

The International Education Programme we developed was a home stay model. It was our hope that by placing the students in a “typical” local home setting that their understanding of Canadian culture would be enhanced and that their English language development would be enhanced. We advertised for home stays through the area Catholic churches. At a public meeting for those showing interest we explained our expectations and answered any questions. Each home stay was to receive \$700/month directly from the family of the student. It would be our task to match the student to the home as best we could. We would try to limit the number to one student in each home but where there was space and interest we reserved the right to add a second student. In such a case the student would speak a different language and be from a different country. Each home stay was subject to a visit prior to acceptance and then submitted the results of a police check. International students were to be treated as you would treat your own child while they were with you.

The student would be placed in appropriate classes by a specially trained guidance counselor and regular reports would be sent to parents or their representative. If deemed necessary their timetable would include English as a Second Language classes. Generally speaking the students would stay in our school until graduation and the students would be guided through the post secondary application process in a fashion similar to our own students. The guiding principle was that the international student was a full student of the school and as far as the law would permit they were to be granted full rights and privileges. As a result they were encouraged join teams, clubs, and all activities. We began our programme with a guideline of having students from as many countries as possible and with a total number not to exceed 2% of our regular secondary school enrollment. We set these guidelines to promote the learning of English and out of a concern for our ability



Photo of the memorial sculpture made from girders in Seyðisfjörður, Iceland, by Sandra McCance



to control the quality of our home stay programme as our programme grew. After a few years we realized that we had been modest in our judgment and were able to raise the limit to 3%.

The students were recruited mainly through educational fairs and from educational agents in their home country. This process generally involved trips to visit our agents and direct presentation at educational fairs. Some arrived after a year in Canada and wishing a change. These students were most often from a dormitory model of living. Most agents charge a fee for their part in the recruiting process. This was a first year only fee and covered all aspects from their end, including translating results to the parents where necessary over the length of the students stay. Over the first few years we developed a close working relationship with several top agencies in each country. This assisted us with the growth of the programme. Students came from many countries but primarily from Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico, Brazil, and mainland China. The students from mainland China were not directly connected to my part of the programme but came from a contract developed by the Director.

In our initial year we had 7 students. I believe our second and third year numbers were 47 and slightly over 100. At its highest point we had a little under 300 students. We began our programme at Regiopolis-Notre Dame (Kingston) and with the amalgamation of the two school boards the programme quickly spread to all 5 regular secondary schools.

Although we were primarily a secondary school home stay programme. We did have at one point 7 grade 7/8 students. These students were primarily a younger sibling of an existing student.

Since there were no government grants to cover the educational costs, a tuition fee had to be set that would both cover the cost of the student's education and pay for the programme. Analyzing the costs of the education and using the tuition charged by existing programmes as a guide we set a competitive tuition and began. A local insurance firm was selected to provide the necessary health coverage. The first year the student dealt directly with the agent. In the second year and beyond the costs were included in the tuition. This proved to be a much better way.

I would be remiss if I did not point out that in the development and execution of this venture I was most ably assisted by secretarial, teaching, and home stay staff. The directing of this programme was one of my several portfolios. During the third year of the programme the amalgamation of the two school boards took place as planned. I retired at this time. I was asked to continue to act as the co-coordinator of the programme to avoid having to use an active member of the professional staff. I continued to do this for the next several years in an increasingly limited role. At the end I was mainly handling recruiting duties. The time I spent being associated with international education had a profound impact on my personal and professional life. I feel personally blessed by this opportunity.

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## Resources

### Resources for intermediate/senior students:

*6 Billion Others*. DVD. Good Planet Productions, 2008. Distributed in Canada by CineFete.

*Global Issues Series*. 4 DVDs. Films Media Group. Distributed in Canada by McIntyre Media. <http://www.mcintyre.ca/titles/393814DV>

*Visitors from the Four Directions: Indigenous Peoples in a Globalized World*. DVD. Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2005.

### Resources for primary/junior students:

The *Citizen Kid* series of 10 books from Kids Can Press, for grades 3 to 6, including:

Milway, Katie Smith. *The Good Garden*. 2010. <http://www.kidscanpress.com/US/The-Good-Garden-P3194.aspx>

Milway, Katie Smith. *One Hen*. 2008. <http://www.kidscanpress.com/US/One-Hen-P3022.aspx>

Smith, David J. *If the World Were a Village*. 2011. <http://www.kidscanpress.com/us/If-the-World-Were-a-Village-P2506.aspx>

Strauss, Rochelle. *One Well*. 2007. <http://www.kidscanpress.com/US/One-Well-P3000.aspx>

### Resources for Teachers:

*Multicultural Education & Culturally Responsive Teaching* (U.S) <http://www.ithaca.edu/wise/multicultural/>

*Strong Nations*. <http://www.strongnations.com/>

*Education Letter. Special issue on Aboriginal Education*. <http://educ.queensu.ca/community/educationletter/2010Summer.pdf>

## Queen's Education Letter

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**MO DANIELS**, *Retired Principal, Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board*

**T**he Team Canada trade mission mentioned above led directly to an agreement between Canadian and Chinese partners. Through this agreement, an Ontario Secondary School curriculum would be offered to Chinese students at a school in China. This process was designed to lead to an Ontario Graduation Diploma and be more accessible and more affordable for students. Consequently, Boren Sino Canadian School, a residential school, was established featuring an Ontario curriculum taught by Ontario qualified teachers. As a recently retired Principal, I agreed to develop and operate this school under the jurisdiction of our local School Board.

The school opened with 14 senior and 20 junior students. Our Canadian staff consisted of 3 teachers and we were assisted by 4 Chinese teachers. It was a modest beginning indeed but the school has expanded into a thriving school community which now operates through the Education Department of British Columbia.

Each school day started with exercise at 7 am, followed by a normal school day, finished by an evening study hall. This included weekends. As a staff, we had one Saturday each month free to explore Chinese shopping and culture. Sounds demanding and it was.

However, as teachers we were able to develop an "immersion atmosphere" with continuous academic feedback and correction. We were able to really know our students and to enjoy close relations—ones that continue even today. We placed a focus on sharing Canadian customs and activities and, in return, we learned to understand and appreciate Chinese history and culture.

It would be impossible to itemize the many benefits provided by this cross-cultural experience. Perhaps, one example, just to illustrate: we were able to send 20 senior Canadian students to this school for a full semester and they were able to do so seamlessly with respect to course planning.

This was a wonderful experience for all. The world is a tad smaller and more friendly. **The experience of a life time!**



Photo of the glacial lagoon at Jökulsárlón, Iceland, by Sandra McCance