

## EDITORIAL

Love and method have for long been thought of as the essence of self-conscious pedagogy. What is more natural than to assert that the responsibility of teacher for child should be founded in feeling? Or more sensible than to pursue the path of science in search of refined and sensitive techniques? Or more judicious than to blend humanity and professional skills? Elaborated in great detail, calling on many proofs, these questions and their answers form the heart of the enormous literature of schooling. Nor do teachers, so often called on to justify what they do, fail in their articulate confessions to take refuge in the accustomed ideological harbours.

There is nothing in all this for anyone to reproach himself with. The hypertrophy of formal education in the twentieth century, with its attendant massing of problems, has soaked up the intellectual energy of generations of educators, turning them to the strenuous task of propping up a system always in danger of tottering, leading them to herculean feats of justification and self-justification. With so many trees, who is to be blamed for not seeing the wood?

The wood is there nevertheless. To say that to be taught one must be teachable is to state a truism, but one of which educators have taken remarkably little heed. Thus that the structure of learning is hierarchical (the simplest practical formulation of this truism) is a generalization paid only lip-service to in school practice; that a mass of evidence has accumulated that tends to demonstrate that in-school variables — that is, love and method — contribute far less to pupil achievement than out-of-school variables is constantly overlooked; that the programmes of compensatory education so far devised have produced consistently disappointing results is attributed to unfortunate but so far unidentifiable errors in design; and that the 'individual differences' of which teachers are so frequently enjoined to take account may be less a challenge to their skill than a limitation on its exercise is treated as a possibility too disquieting for serious consideration.

No doubt education also deserves a mythology. And the faith in the power of teaching which permeates the educational system might well be left unshaken were it not for the nature of some contemporary attempts to ensure that it is justified. To be really effective, the pedagogical missionaries say, teaching must reach 'the whole child' (not of course in itself a new idea, but certainly more capable of achievement under modern conditions). What more obvious then than to bring more of his life under the aegis of the school, and, under the guise

of greater informality, more personal discussion, much more provision for individual counselling, and the introduction into the curriculum of matters related to his day-to-day existence, to work for his fuller institutionalization? An institutionalized child should certainly be a teachable child.

The reformers who press along this road should know that the records of human beings in institutions do not favour their success, and that the capacity to resist social pressures of the institutional sort seems to be as inbred in man as the capacity to resist instruction (although of course some are more vulnerable than others, and the possibility of the invention of more powerful techniques cannot be ruled out). What is more important is that the very attempt betrays a lack of respect for individuality. The best indication of this respect is the willingness to let other persons go their own way, even when they resist efforts apparently directed to their betterment, and seem to act against their own interests. Thus some, and perhaps a good many, of the frustrations of teaching, may well have to be viewed stoically, as a necessary consequence of the individuality of children, rather than seen as special excuses for the application of further moral, psychological, and pedagogical pressure. And that will mean that educators will have to give themselves to a topic that deserves extended attention, namely: what can the schools reasonably hope to teach?

John Macdonald  
Dean, Faculty of Education  
The University of Calgary.