

BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education

Volume 15, Supplement 1, 2023



Pink Ferns, Manitoba



BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education

Volume 15, Supplement 1, 2023

Online access: www.brandonu.ca/master-education/journal and www.irbu.arcabc.ca
Refereed articles are also indexed on the ERIC database: www.eric.ed.gov.com

The *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education* is devoted to rural, northern, and Indigenous education. This supplement features seven articles selected from 2009 to 2012, before ERIC started indexing our journal in 2013.

Editor

Dr. Marion Terry
Professor, Faculty of Education, Brandon University

Cover Photograph

Brent Mabon
Ninette, Manitoba

Table of Contents

Refereed Articles	page
An Analysis of Multicultural Education in Canada Nadia Binda-Moir	2
Cultural Disconnect Causes Early Withdrawal for Aboriginal Students in Manitoba Kimberly Merasty	7
Effects of Childhood Emotional Abuse Barbara Murphy	11
Student/Teacher Interaction Behaviours Miranda Weenusk	15
Supporting Beginning Teachers Through Mentoring Karla Turton	23
Opinion Papers	
The Need for Change in Aboriginal Education Angela Voutier	28
Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow? Marian Gladstone	30

REFEREED ARTICLES

An Analysis of Multicultural Education in Canada

Nadia Binda-Moir

Abstract

As the population of Canada grows in diversity, the need for multicultural education increases. However, most Canadian schools do not adequately incorporate multicultural practices into their daily operations. Attempts have been made to increase the diversity of teaching in many schools; however, these attempts have been relatively unsuccessful due to a plethora of issues that plague the development of multicultural education. Teacher preparation programs, curriculum development, and student learning environments are a few areas that must be completely overhauled in order to implement multicultural education in Canadian classrooms.

Canada is known as a cultural mosaic because it celebrates the diversity of its citizens. As a result of the influx of new Canadians, today's classrooms include many students who have different backgrounds. Despite the growing number of culturally diverse students, the Canadian curriculum still represents a predominantly Eurocentric point of view (Jay, 2003). Efforts such as the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives have been made to incorporate culturally sensitive teachings into the curriculum. However, most Canadian schools do not recognize the diverse nature of their students. The following three areas are critical to understanding the dynamics of multicultural education in Canada today: (1) the importance of multicultural education, (2) current issues in multicultural education, and (3) requirements for providing multicultural education.

The Importance of Multicultural Education

Because Canada is a multicultural society, logic dictates that it must have multicultural schools. Multicultural education is important because it addresses controversial issues such as discrimination, racism, colonialism, and imperialism (McDonough, 2008). Education has been used to teach about these issues in a democratic fashion. When it is properly implemented in schools, multicultural education can reduce racism, prejudice, and the discrimination of oppressed groups (Jay, 2003). Multicultural education also helps to build personal dignity while promoting the democratic ideals of society (Campbell, 2003). Furthermore, it can be used as a tool to ensure equal access to school and equal opportunities in school.

Current Issues in Multicultural Education

Multicultural education has been in the foreground for nearly thirty years (Manitoba Education, n.d.); however, its practice and theory are still worlds apart. This disparity could be due to the lack of consensus over how multicultural education should be addressed in Canada (Chan, 2006). Multicultural education can be taught as a distinct subject or incorporated into individual classes. Teaching multicultural education as a discrete subject requires specific teacher training, similarly to other subjects such as mathematics and science. Because educators are unsure about how to present multicultural education, it has not had a noteworthy impact on today's youth (Jay, 2003). Peck et al.(2008) noted that junior high students in New Brunswick had very little understanding of the concept of ethnic diversity, and they did not think that ethnic diversity existed in Canada. Therefore, the ideals of a multicultural Canada may not be taught or adequately represented in Canadian schools. Three main concerns impede the

practice of multicultural education in Canada: teachers, curricular problems, and power struggles.

The main concern regarding teachers is that they lack the training and experience required to teach diverse students (Chan, 2006). The gap between the cultural backgrounds of students and teachers is widening. Educators are left to teach about cultures with which they are unfamiliar (Jeevanantham, 2001), such as when a non-Aboriginal teacher is expected to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into social studies lessons. Most teachers do not have the knowledge that is required to incorporate cultural teachings into their regular lessons. Not only is multicultural education taught from the teacher's perspective, and not from the perspective of the person of that culture (Oberg et al., 2007), but teachers could be transmitting false knowledge to their students. Another factor is that not all people of the same ethnicity have the same culture. Because ethnic and racial groups can be just as diverse within groups as between groups (Louie, 2006), grouping all ethnic and racial groups into one category could lead to further stereotyping and the possible transmission of prejudicial attitudes to students. Implementing multicultural education preparation programs and ensuring that teachers have experience in diverse settings would give educators the necessary tools to teach culturally diverse students.

Another concern that plagues the progress of multicultural education is that school curricula may not adequately address the topic of multiculturalism. Most Canadian curricula do not sufficiently acknowledge the wisdom that diverse students bring to the classroom (Ross & Chan, 2008). Similarly, points of view from women and visible minorities tend to be marginalized or omitted in most school subjects (Agada, 1998). When diversity is addressed in the curriculum, it is usually presented in an "us-versus-them" fashion (Joseph, 1994). In most cases, the contrast is drawn between a dominant European culture and a minority non-European culture (Wilhelm, 1998), as seen in many of the history text books used in high schools. As a result of this comparison, unintentionally racist opinions may be passed on to the students – the types of opinions that multicultural education is trying to eliminate. Severe curriculum reform must occur if Canada's multicultural citizens are to be represented positively in the curricula.

The third concern that hinders multicultural education is that it challenges the power inherent in Canadian mainstream culture. Opponents of multicultural education claim that its introduction into school systems could lead to the breakdown of the common national culture (Skerrett, 2008), whose teachings would be lost to the non-dominant cultures of Canada. Some authors have gone so far as to say that multicultural education is a disruptive threat to Canada's national unity (Wilhelm, 1998). Advocates of multicultural education claim the opposite; they say that this so-called shared national heritage propagates racist, sexist, and prejudicial attitudes, by favouring the beliefs of the dominant class and marginalizing the contributions of minorities (Agada, 1998). Students are taught the values and beliefs of the ruling class, through a hidden curriculum (Jay, 2003) that functions to keep the marginalized cultures suppressed. Langhout and Mitchell (2008) noted that low income students, and ethnic and racial minorities, are more likely to disengage because of the hidden curriculum. Empowering minorities by implementing multicultural curricula would therefore not be in the best interest of the dominant class. A multicultural curriculum that takes into account the needs of all students, regardless of their level of power, must be implemented in all schools.

Requirements for Providing Multicultural Education

Every school, teacher, and student is unique; therefore, there is no single way to implement multicultural curricula. However, a few vital areas can be addressed in order to put multicultural education into practice. These areas are teacher training programs, acknowledging teachers' life experiences, teacher empowerment, developing the learning environment, and recognizing students' experiences.

The key to providing proper multicultural education lies in strengthening the educators who teach in multicultural schools. Sogunro (2001) claimed that “today’s monocultural and monolingual teacher is becoming less competent in a culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse classroom setting” (pp. 19-20). This incompetence hinders effective teaching in a diverse school setting. Educators need to be taught the correct skills, knowledge, and attitudes if they are to teach in multicultural classrooms. For example, teacher preparation programs should address topics such as inequality and racial difficulties (Skerrett, 2008), as well as teach skills for integrating students from various cultures into the classroom. An essential part of a multicultural teacher preparation program is the completion of practicums in multicultural schools, because theoretical instruction alone cannot prepare a potential teacher for the realities of diverse classrooms. The combination of teacher training programs and practicums would give educators the skills and experience needed to teach in multicultural schools.

Because the face of multiculturalism is always changing, training in the form of professional development (PD) opportunities should be available on a regular basis (Chapman, 2008). PD sessions should enable teachers to uncover their own beliefs relating to multiculturalism, acquire knowledge about the diverse groups that they encounter in school, understand how current practices can perpetuate stereotypes, and acquire the skills needed to implement equality into their teaching practices (Banks et al., 2001). Information regarding social class, religion, and gender should also be discussed in PD sessions, because these variables influence the cultural behaviour of students. It is the duty of the administrative staff to ensure that PD sessions are attended by all teachers and that new teachers have adequate multicultural training.

Teachers’ life experiences influence their educational practices (Chan, 2006). Teachers who have had positive experiences with multiculturalism are more likely to employ multicultural education in their own classes (McNeal, 2005). These positive experiences could stem from the teacher training programs, time spent in diverse settings, or experiences that were similar to those of the students. Recognizing one’s own past experiences with multiculturalism and multicultural education may help an educator to understand how multicultural education could be used positively in the classroom.

Teachers need to feel confident and empowered when implementing multicultural education. Teachers need to recognize and assess the disparity between the ideological goals of society and the realities of society (Campbell, 2003), in order to modify the curriculum to suit the needs of their diverse students (Sogunro, 2001). They must actively think about how they want to implement multicultural education, what lessons and assignments will be included, and what sorts of interactions will occur in the class (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). Ongoing support from other teachers and the administrative team can empower a teacher to make these essential changes (Chapman, 2008).

Creating a positive learning environment can aid in the implementation of multicultural education. A positive environment starts with a strong administrative team, which acts as an advisory council for cultural issues that may arise within the school (Sogunro, 2001). The administrative team’s stance on multicultural education affects how multicultural education will be implemented in a teacher’s classroom. The school must invite the difficult conversations about the goals and purposes of multicultural education (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008). A supportive and knowledgeable administrative team enables teachers to provide an environment that is conducive to learning.

Multicultural schools need to take extra care in providing equal learning experiences to all students. Teachers should focus on their students’ personal experiences (Ross & Chan, 2008), because drawing on students’ life experiences can lead to many teaching moments while increasing the personal relationship between teachers and students. Teachers should expose students to as many different cultures as are present in the classroom. Drawing on students’ cultures can create bonds and build compassion between students, as well as foster positive attitudes about other cultures. These personal connections foster both teacher and student

engagement. Students who are engaged in their learning are more likely to achieve in their studies (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008).

Conclusion

The topic of multicultural education has been in the forefront of educational theory for nearly thirty years. Although strides have been made towards the development and implementation of multicultural curricula, teaching practices have not kept up with the theory of multicultural education. Serious issues of power struggles, poor teacher preparation, and inadequate curricula hinder its success. Establishing new and improved teacher preparation programs can promote multicultural education, as can professional development sessions based on new cultural developments. Ultimately, the success of multicultural education relies on the students themselves. If students are provided with a safe environment that fosters positive learning experiences, multicultural education will succeed.

References

- Agada, J. (1998). Multicultural education and the emerging paradigm: An essay in cultural epistemology. *The Urban Review*, 30(1), 77-95.
- Banks, J. A., Cookson, P., Gay, G., Hawley, W. D., Irvine, J. J., Nieto, S., et al. (2001). Diversity within unity: Essential principles for teaching and learning in a multicultural society. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(3), 196-203.
- Campbell, D. E. (2003). *Choosing democracy: A practical guide to multicultural education* (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Chan, E. (2006). Teacher experiences of culture in the curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 38(2), 161-176.
- Chapman, T. K. (2008). Desegregation and multicultural education: Teachers embracing and manipulating reforms. *Urban Review*, 40, 42-63.
- Gollnick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C. (1998). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society* (5th ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Jay, M. (2003). Critical race theory, multicultural education, and the hidden curriculum of hegemony. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 5(4), 3-9.
- Jeevanantham, L. S. (2001). A new focus for multicultural education. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 3(2), 8-12.
- Joseph, S. (1994). Multiculturalism: Cautions from cross-cultural experiences. *Multicultural Education*, 1(5), 19-22.
- Langhout, R. D., & Mitchell, C. A. (2008). Engaging contexts: Drawing the link between student and teacher experiences of the hidden curriculum. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 18, 593-614.
- Louie, B. Y. (2006). Guiding principles for teaching multicultural literature. *Reading Teacher*, 59(5), 438-448.
- Manitoba Education. (n.d.). *Multicultural education: A policy for the 1990's*. Retrieved May 24, 2010, from <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/multic/index.html#introduction>
- McDonough, T. (2008). The course of culture in multiculturalism. *Educational Theory*, 58(3), 321-342.
- McNeal, K. (2005). The influence of a multicultural teacher education program on teachers' multicultural practices. *Intercultural Education*, 16(4), 405-419.
- Oberg, A., Blades, D., & Thom, J. S. (2007). Untying a dreamcatcher: Coming to understand possibilities for teaching students of aboriginal inheritance. *Educational Studies*, 42(2), 111-139.

- Peck, C. L., Sears, A., & Donaldson, S. (2008). Unreached and unreasonable: Curriculum standards and children's understanding of ethnic diversity in Canada. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 38(1), 63-92.
- Ross, V., & Chan, E. (2008). Multicultural education: Raj's story using a curricular conceptual lens of the particular. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(7), 1705-1716.
- Skerrett, A. (2008). Going the race way: Biographical influences on multicultural and antiracist English curriculum practices. *Teacher and Teacher Education*, 24(7), 1813-1826.
- Sogunro, O. A. (2001). Toward multiculturalism: Implications of multicultural education for schools. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 3(3), 19-33.
- Wilhelm, R. W. (1998). Issues in multicultural education. *The Curriculum Journal*, 9(2), 227-246.

Cultural Disconnect Causes Early Withdrawal for Aboriginal Students in Manitoba

Kimberly Merasty

Abstract

Although more effort is being placed on retaining Aboriginal youth in the public education system, failure to respect cultural differences continues to dominate the typical high school classroom. A recognition of this cultural disconnect is needed in order to see any change in withdrawal rates of Manitoba's Aboriginal students. The author discusses current models of practice, assessment, cultural differences, and holistic beliefs in an attempt to discover a way to incorporate two different educational beliefs that will keep all students in school.

The ongoing efforts to increase the graduation rate of Aboriginals in Manitoba have not been effective. As of 2006, "33.7% of 15-29 year olds had not completed high school" and "12.4% had not completed grade 9" (Owens, 2006, p. 1). The cause of this problem has not been sufficiently addressed, perhaps because there has been "little recognition given in education to cultural difference from the mainstream" (Dunn, 2001, p. 678). The cultural differences between the Aboriginal view of education and the Eurocentric model used by public school can be seen in the areas of learning style, literacy, engagement, assessment, and best practices in the classroom.

The worldview held by most Aboriginal cultures is one that addresses all things on earth, from the trees and animals to the soil and rocks, as being intricately and cyclically connected. This worldview would suggest that "indigenous pedagogy recognizes the child as a physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual being, one who learns best in a circular, holistic, child centered environment" (Ledoux, 2006, p. 270). This is also a strong belief of early childhood education. Although the goal of all education systems, whether government or Aboriginal, is "to prepare children for their lives as positive, participating and, contributing members of society" (Ledoux, 2006, p. 271), it is apparent that this viewpoint changes at the upper levels of a Eurocentric education model. There is recognition in the education system that all people have an individual learning style and that an Aboriginal learning style encompasses a holistic belief. However, the standardized approach to curriculum and school environment creates a school culture that is in opposition to what an Aboriginal approach to teaching and learning would look like. The Manitoba classroom contrasts "traditional Native teaching and learning patterns" (Ryan, 1996, p. 119). Aboriginal teaching practices encourage "contextual learning in real-life context" (Ledoux, 2006, p. 273). Contextual learning blends seamlessly with a holistic view of teaching and learning; however, neither concept is easily mixed with the design of the public school system.

A holistic learning model is characterized by "the principle of interconnectedness and wholeness; seeing the whole student mind, body, emotions, and spirit" (Holistic Curriculum, 2008, para.1), which is reflective of the Aboriginal worldview. A holistic learner will more likely take in the whole concept and sort out the intricacies of it later. These learners will read a whole novel for example, and then go back chapter by chapter to dissect the story. Learning strategies exemplary of a holistic classroom include student-centered activities such as fish bowling, interest inventories, and personal goal statements. The processes by which these activities are undertaken give students the opportunity to have input into the path of a lesson, thereby enhancing individual learning styles and student engagement. Offering students the chance to have input into their own learning is always a positive factor when creating a classroom wherein students feel that they are respected and welcomed no matter what their culture.

A holistic approach to teaching, incorporated within existing teaching practices, may be the best way to encourage Aboriginal students to continue forward in the public school setting.

However, what must first be addressed are the current literacy problems of Aboriginal students. In 2003, the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) discovered that “about 60% of the urban Aboriginal population in Manitoba and Saskatchewan scored below Level 3 on the prose scale” (Statistics Canada, 2005, para. 32). Language is considered to be a “constantly metamorphosing intersection between linguistic elements, identity, culture, history, reality, information, and communication” (Kouritzin, 2006, p. 6). It therefore must be addressed how Aboriginal students are learning language. Many Aboriginal youth are coming from homes with a first language that is not the dominant language of the majority (English or French). However, when they enter public school there is an unspoken expectation that the dominant majority language in the home was French or English, not Cree, Ojibway or Saukteaux. These students then become victims of first language loss. The loss of a mother tongue can have detrimental effects on the desire to engage in public school, as “school practices encouraged minority language speaking children to develop shame, while school work and school friends become linguistic cultural invaders” (Kouritzin, 2006, pp. 21-22). If consideration is not given to the language spoken in the home, then public schools run the risk of “leaving children unaware, or ambivalent, unable to incorporate their ethnic or linguistic identities” (Kouritzin, 2006, p. 22) and creating more culturally disrespectful classrooms.

There is a need to be culturally aware while teaching students of a minority language and culture; however, “pumping up” basic skills in Aboriginal literacy programs is not likely to improve literacy levels or participation in schools because this treats the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of the disease” (Dunn, 2001, p. 679). Improving Aboriginal literacy rates does not simply mean including Aboriginal literature in a high school English class, either. What needs to be remembered is that “all cultural groups can establish adequate procedures for the development of language and cognition in their young children” (Dunn, 2001, p. 679). It is prudent for Manitoba schools and educators to recognize literacy levels in both on-reserve and off-reserve homes, in order to develop best literacy practices within the community.

By addressing literacy levels and holistic learning styles, Manitoba educators may finally be able to engage the Aboriginal student, but engagements is more than simply recognizing what is not working. In order to create an environment that makes the Aboriginal student feel at home, educators must understand that student engagement is “commitment to and investment in learning, identification with and belonging at school, and in terms of participation in the school environment and initiation of an activity to accomplish an outcome” (Kortering & Christenson, 2009, p. 7). The most significant part of this definition for the Aboriginal student in Manitoba would be identifying with and having a sense of belonging in school. It is difficult to ask members of an involuntary minority group to feel as though they belong when the environment has no reflection on their heritage or culture. Therefore, it would be best to go directly to the source and ask the students what can be done. For many students, Aboriginal or not, the most important factor in their success at school is the relationship that they have with their teachers. Upon looking into any school classroom, it is recognizable that a “teacher’s instructional strategies are a manifestation of the school’s culture” (Patterson et al., 2007-2008, p. 8). If the school culture is one that does not value the student- teacher relationship by encouraging “caring teachers [who] hold students to high standards, provide them with assistance and support, and refuse to give up on them” (Patterson et al., 2007-2008, p. 8), then students who learn best from that environment will disengage.

Of careful consideration when trying to engage and retain Aboriginal learners is a teacher’s assessment style. In 2006, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) published a document regarding the new focus of assessment within Manitoba schools. This document incorporated principles of holistic teaching and learning, while trying to maintain opportunities for standardized assessment. The document outlines three focuses of assessment: assessment for, assessment as, and assessment of learning. Assessment for learning has one main characteristic: descriptive feedback. It asks teachers to “use assessment as an investigative tool to find out ... what confusions, preconceptions or gaps” (MECY, 2006, p. 29) exist for students

early on in the learning of new outcomes. In assessment for learning, students are given several chances to assess themselves, re-evaluate goals, and process the content that they are learning. This style of assessment blends with holistic learning, as it can aid the student and teacher in developing different lesson activities, such as hands-on learning. Assessment as learning is the concept whereby “assessment is a process of metacognition for students” (MECY, 2006, p. 41). At this stage of the assessment model, students are given chances to reflect on their own learning and make adjustments to improve their understanding. In essence, this is the practice stage of learning. The final stage of the new assessment model is assessment of learning, which is the more standardized approach to assessment. It uses formalized testing to “confirm what students know” (MECY, 2006, p. 55). This assessment model encourages student involvement in their own learning, and “when students are encouraged to talk about their learning and to self-assess in relation to criteria, models, or exemplars, they are giving themselves descriptive feedback that helps them learn more” (Davies et al., 2008, p. 22). Having such involvement with the formal parts of education can help keep all students engaged.

Recognizing that Aboriginal students may see more success in secondary school when their cultural differences are addressed does not mean that the school system has to change completely. Many of the ideas incorporated within the Aboriginal worldview will benefit all students in the Manitoba education system. The best practices are performed at the classroom level, involving teacher, student, and community. Teaching strategies that work well for Aboriginal students include modelling and thinking out loud, storytelling, scaffolding instruction, experiential learning, and cooperative learning. Many of these strategies are already a part of common teacher practice. To improve literacy and graduation levels among Aboriginal students, all stakeholders in the education system must realize that Aboriginal “students do not reject the idea of getting good grades; what they reject are ‘white’ attitudes and behaviours conducive to getting those grades” (Catlin, 2008, p. 6). Adjusting the current attitudes and behaviours does not mean overhauling the system. A program that could have merit in improving the literacy levels is the Cognitive Strategy Instruction in Writing developed by Carole Englert (2009). Instilled within the literacy initiative are many holistic teaching styles. The CSIW curriculum uses instructional dialogue with teacher and student, modelling to guided and joint practice, and group situations for question and practice. The CSIW “was designed to scaffold performance” (Englert, 2009, p. 106), in order to ensure student success.

Finally, positive working relationship between the family and the school must display a visible amount of trust for the student to feel safe and comfortable in the public school environment. It is no secret that the legacy of residential schools still hangs over the ability to form this trust. Schools must “reach out” to parents through a variety of methods to bring all parties closer together. Parents are an invaluable resource: “when parents are involved in talking about learning with their children, children achieve more” (Davies et al., 2008, p. 27). It is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to initiate contact by phone or face to face, and to have an open door policy. Schools that have seen success have created a “family centered approach wherein parents and community members are respected, supported, and treated as equals” (Ledoux, 2006, p. 274). An effective tool is to bring elders into the classroom to share stories of history and mythology. This sharing can be done in a history class or an English class, and provides opportunity for varied instruction.

Cultural disconnectedness challenges both the public school system and the Aboriginal students who withdraw from school. It can be overcome through an understanding of the Aboriginal worldview, holistic teaching practices and learning styles, a change in literacy levels both on and off reserve, improvements in student engagement, and alterations in assessment techniques and best practices in the classroom. Many of these changes are beginning to occur within the Eurocentric model of our school system. Respecting Aboriginal culture is the key to improving the high school graduation rates of the largest minority in the province of Manitoba.

References

- Holistic curriculum, (2008). *HolisticLearning*. Retrieved August 22, 2010, from [//astralsite.com/1110/HolisticLearning.html](http://astralsite.com/1110/HolisticLearning.html)
- Carter, E. W., Lane, K., Pierson, M. R., & Stang, K. K. (2008). Promoting self-determination for transition-age youth: Views of high school general and special educators. *Exceptional Children*, 75(1), 55-70.
- Catlin, S. (2008). One good book away from becoming a reader: First Nations literature in a northern classroom. *Language and Literacy*, 10(1), 1-18.
- Davies, A., Herbst, S., & Parrott Reynolds, B. (2008). *Leading the way to making classroom assessment work*. Connections.
- Dunn, M. (2001). Aboriginal literacy: Reading the tracks. *The Reading Teacher*, 54(7), 678-687.
- Englert, C. S. (2009). Connecting the dots in a research program to develop, implement, and evaluate strategic literacy interventions for struggling readers and writers. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 24(2), 104-120.
- Kortering, L. J., & Christenson, S. (2009). Engaging students in school and learning: The real deal for school completion. *Exceptionality*, 17(1), 5-15.
- Kouritzin, S. (2006). Songs from taboo tongues: Experiencing first language loss. *Language and Literacy*, 8(1), 1-27.
- Ledoux, J. (2006). Integrating Aboriginal perspectives into curricula: A literature review. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 26(2), 265-288.
- Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. (2006). *Rethinking classroom assessment with purpose in mind: Assessment for learning, Assessment as learning, Assessment of learning*.
- Owens, D. (2006). Aboriginal education in Manitoba. *Frontier backgrounder: Brief analysis*. Frontier Centre for Public Policy. Retrieved August 18, 2010, from www.fcpp.org
- Patterson, J. A., Hale, D., & Stressman, M. (2007-2008). Cultural contradictions and school leaving: A case study of an urban high school. *High School Journal*, 91(2), 1-15.
- Ryan, J. (1996). Restructuring First Nations education: Trust, respect, and governance. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Summer, 115-133.
- Statistics Canada. (2005, November 9). International adult literacy and skills survey. *The Daily*. Retrieved August 24, 2010, from www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/051109/dq051109a-eng.htm

Effects of Childhood Emotional Abuse

Barbara Murphy

Abstract

Emotional abuse can have an enormous impact on children. Its effects can be equivalent to, or exceed, those of other forms of abuse. In today's classrooms, educators can expect to encounter numerous children who are exposed to this form of violence in their lives. It is essential that those who work with child are aware of the signs and symptoms of this excessive mistreatment. Through education and guidance, teachers and other educational staff can become proactive and empower their students who endure and suffer from emotional abuse.

Childhood emotional abuse is the harming of a child's sense of self. It can include intimidation, social seclusion, exploitation, or regularly making unfair demands; furthermore, it may include terrorization of the child(ren), or exposure to family violence (Department of Justice Canada, 2001). The impact of emotional abuse is both overlooked and understudied, because it is considered to be less noticeable or damaging than physical or sexual abuse; however, emotional maltreatment is as equally damaging as other forms of abuse (Berzenski & Yates, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Many children are exposed to this style of maltreatment on a regular basis in their homes or communities (Bourassa, 2007). It is imperative that those who work directly with children, especially teachers and other school staff, recognize the signs and understand the effects of emotional abuse so that help can be provided in a timely manner to prevent further negative consequences.

A common phrase relating to dealing with bullies is "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!" Unfortunately, in cases of emotional abuse, this statement is not supportive, and the words do hurt and may even cause long-lasting damage (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). As a polite society, we are taught to ignore the bullies around us in the hope that they will go away. Sometimes, the bullies do go away, but all too often they will stay and the abuse worsens (Lueders, 2002). What starts out as thoughtless words spoken in anger may escalate with more malicious intent. It is important to teach children that the "sticks and stones" phrase is wrong, that words can hurt, and that it is appropriate to defend oneself in abusive situations.

Sometimes, emotional abuse is overlooked because of what is seen as "normal" in a culture or society. There are "differences in parenting norms across cultures as well as individual differences in children's perceptions (e.g., what is considered 'yelling' in one family or by one child might not be perceived similarly in another family or by another child)" (Riggs & Kaminski, 2010, p. 75). Some cultures use emotional abuse as a disciplinary tool, and children may be taught that to be assertive or to question an authoritarian figure is impolite and unacceptable (Lewis, 2010). In many families, it is common thought that children should be seen and not heard. In these types of families, finding support to help the victim can be difficult and change may take time because it requires a change in habits and ways of thinking that have been considered to be traditional for many generations.

Emotional abuse does not leave bruises, marks, or physical pain like other forms of abuse. The victims can feel like they have been beaten, yet they have never been physically touched by the abuser. The scars left by emotional abuse, though hidden, are still very much present. The effects can be long term and are often the core of all other forms of abuse (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). The consequences are "tangible, quantifiable [and a] risk to healthy development" (Berzenski & Yates, 2010). When a child is physically or sexually abused, the bruises and pain may heal, but it is the negative emotions associated with these forms of violence that can cause enduring emotional damage.

Experiencing emotional abuse can have damaging and lasting consequences on children's images of themselves and can lead to interpersonal problems in the future (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). These problems can include anxiety, depression, dissociation, and relationship difficulties (McPherson, 2002). Classic signs of anxiety include worry, fear of certain situations, and feelings of panic, sadness, or hopelessness. Depression is generally characterized by a loss of interest in socializing, withdrawal from friends, frequent crying, lack of enthusiasm, and thoughts of suicide or death. Temporary amnesia about certain situations, or periods of time is a classic sign of dissociation. Relationship difficulties can arise from emotional abuse, such as difficulty relating to others and social phobias. Common symptoms can include constantly being self-conscious or worried about what others are thinking about them. It is important for people working with children to be able to recognize these signs of abuse and follow proper procedures in order to reduce the long-lasting negative effects.

Children learn from those around them, and tend to imitate what they see. In cases of abuse, this theory is accurate (Milletich et al., 2010). If children live in an abusive environment, they will "come to believe that violence is acceptable for resolving conflicts and are, consequently, likely to use violence in dealing with the people around them" (Bourassa, 2007, p. 697). Aggression will be seen by these children as acceptable behaviour in future relationships due to what they have witnessed and believed to be normal in their environment growing up (Milletich et al., 2010). Counselling and educating children, and modelling appropriate emotional behaviour, are a few techniques that can be used to stop this cycle of abuse.

Emotional regulation is important for healthy relationships (Berzenski & Yates, 2010). Being able to understand the difference between helpful emotions and harmful emotions, and to enhance or reduce these emotions as needed, are important life skills. Childhood emotional abuse may cause "interference with the ability to develop adaptive coping styles, particularly with respect to emotionally charged situations or contexts" (Berzenski & Yates, 2010, p. 182). When involved in social, and often intimate, relationships, a teen who has suffered childhood emotional abuse may have difficulty reacting to these new emotionally challenging situations in an acceptable manner. Difficulty with emotional regulation can lead to issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, smoking, or inappropriate sexual behaviour. For these reasons, it is important for those who work with children to be aware of signs of emotional abuse, so they can teach the skills needed for the victims to develop healthy emotional regulation.

Early childhood emotional abuse may well perpetuate future violent situations (Berzenski & Yates, 2010). It predicates "relationship violence victimization, and perpetration, above and beyond the contributions of childhood physical abuse, sexual abuse, and domestic violence exposure" (Berzenski & Yates, 2010, p. 193). Dating aggression or victimization, and intimate partner violence, are examples of possible negative outcomes that can develop due to childhood emotional abuse. Because of these findings, those who work with children need to be educated on the signs and symptoms of emotional abuse to better diagnose, identify, and effectively deal with victims in a timely manner, so as to prevent future violent situations.

Children develop a sense of "self" through early attachment relationships (Riggs, 2010, p. 9). Unfortunately, the abuse children experience often originates from these same pinnacle relationships with their parents, siblings, friends, and teachers. The effects can vary, depending on "the frequency with which it is delivered" (Zurbriggen et al., 2010, p. 219). The closer relationship the perpetrator has with the victim, the greater the opportunity for repeated exposure, thus the greater the chance that the emotional abuse will bring about long-term effects.

Unlike the other forms, emotional abuse has a considerably significant effect when it originates from someone who has an emotional closeness to the victim (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Children generally want to please those who are in their lives, so when their actions or feelings are met with negativity, such as anger, or sarcasm, they are left feeling shocked, stunned, and emotionally beaten. Without an emotional connection, they may simply be words, but with an emotional bond, those words transform into feelings such as disappointment,

frustration, or unhappiness. If a complete stranger were the perpetrator, the abuse would have less emotional impact, because the victims would know that they would be unlikely to see that person again; therefore there would be little need to please a stranger. However, if the same insults were to come from someone close to the victim, such as a parent or a teacher, the impact could be significant.

In cases of domestic violence, children may be exposed both directly in the event, as witnesses, by hearing or intervening in the violence, or indirectly by experiencing the after effects (Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.). Nationally, between 1994 and 1999, "approximately half a million Canadian children saw or heard violence directed toward a parent" (Bunge & Locke, 2000, "Spousal Violence," para. 8). Exposure to domestic violence "contributed significantly to explaining violence perpetration" (Berzenski & Yates, 2010, p. 190) in late adolescence. Whether the children have been exposed directly or indirectly, domestic violence is likely to have some negative effects on their lives.

Statistics relating to emotional abuse are difficult to find, as many cases go unreported (Department of Justice Canada, 2001). However, it has been reported that 44% of children in the United States will be victims of abuse; with 12% of those being emotionally abused (Iannelli, 2010, para. 3). In a Canadian study, "emotional maltreatment was the primary category of substantiated maltreatment in 14% of [abuse] cases" (Trocme et al., 2003, "Categories of Maltreatment," para. 1). Perhaps with better education, more cases will be reported and the victims will have the chance to receive the help that they need.

In an average school classroom, there will be from two to six children who have been exposed to violence in their homes (Bourassa, 2007, p. 691). For this reason, it is important for teachers and other educational staff to recognize the signs and symptoms of emotional abuse. By providing school staff with "information on screening for abuse, approaches to use with teens, ... how to recognize warning signs, develop nonjudgmental listening skills, know when to report to authorities, develop safety plan with the child, etc." (Bourassa, 2007, p. 699), they will become positive champions for the victimized child. With emotional abuse being insidious in the lives of too many children, teachers have become the front-line advocates for their students. Despite being a polite and empathetic society, childhood emotional abuse continues to escalate. As educators, we must take every opportunity to arm ourselves with knowledge and resources to educate and empower all of our students.

References

- Berzenski, S. R., & Yates, T. M. (2010). A developmental process analysis of the contribution of childhood emotional abuse to relationship violence. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 19, 180-203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926770903539474>
- Bourassa, C. (2007). Co-occurrence of interparental violence and child physical abuse and it's [sic] effect on the adolescents' behavior. *Journal of Family Violence*, 22, 691-701. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-007-9117-8>
- Bunge, V. P., & Locke, D. (Eds.). (2000). *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile*. Statistics Canada. Retrieved August 20, 2010, from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-224-x/85-224-x2000000-eng.pdf>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (n.d.). Children's exposure to domestic violence. *e not alone*. Retrieved August 20, 2010, from <http://www.enotalone.com/article/9996.html>
- Department of Justice Canada, Family Violence Initiative. (2001). *Child abuse: A fact sheet from the department of justice Canada*. Retrieved August 19, 2010, from <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/fv-vf/facts-info/child-enf.pdf>
- Iannelli, V. (2010, April 21). Child abuse statistics. *About.com:pediatrics*. Retrieved August 17, 2010, from http://pediatrics.about.com/od/childabuse/a/05_abuse_stats.htm
- Lewis, E. (2010, January 14). Cultures and abuse part three: Emotional abuse. *Examine.com*. Retrieved August 23, 2010, from www.examiner.com/third-culture-kids-in-national/cultures-

- and-abuse-part-three-emotional-abuse
- Lueders, B. J. (2002). Physical and verbal abuse. *Troubledwith*. Retrieved August 23, 2010, from <http://www.troubledwith.com/AbuseandAddiction/A000000755.cfm?topic=abuse%20and%20addiction%3A%20physical%20and%20verbal%20abuse>
- McPherson, T. (2002, March). Cries for help: A literature review of the psychological effects of child maltreatment. *The International Child and Youth Care Network* 38. Retrieved August 23, 2010, from <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0302-mcpherson.html>
- Milletich, R. J., Kelley, M. L., Doane, A. N., & Pearson, M. R. (2010). Exposure to interparental violence and childhood physical and emotional abuse as related to physical aggression in undergraduate dating relationships. *Journal of Family Violence*, 25, 627-637. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-010-9319-3>
- Riggs, S. A. (2010). Childhood emotional abuse and the attachment system across the life cycle. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 19(1), 5-51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926770903475968>
- Riggs, S. A., & Kaminski, P. (2010). Childhood emotional abuse, adult attachment, and depression as predictors of relational adjustment and psychological aggression. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 19(1), 75-104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926770903475976>
- Trocme, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Daciuk, J., Felstiner, C., et al. (2003). *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada. Retrieved August 23, 2010, from http://www.canadiancrc.com/PDFs/Canadian_Incidence_Study_Child_Abuse_2003e.pdf
- Zurbriggen, E. L., Gobin, R. L., & Freyd, J. J. (2010). Childhood emotional abuse predicts late adolescent sexual aggression perpetration and victimization. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 19, 204-223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926770903539631>

Student/Teacher Interaction Behaviours

Miranda Weenusk

Abstract

How teachers interact with students can have damaging effects on students' self-esteem, which is quite often the antecedent to students' disruptive behaviours in the classroom. The purpose of this article is to encourage teachers to take the initiative step toward improving their classroom climate by identifying their response styles and types of classrooms. The types of misbehaviour of students and teachers are identified. Specific classroom management strategies and leading authors in behavioural theories are closely examined. The premise is that teachers need to monitor their behaviours when interacting with students during instructional activities, and students need to be taught how to behave.

For teachers and school administrators, the most problematic issue in schools today is the increasing levels of school violence. However, school violence has already begun to make its way into elementary schools, and the increasing number of incident reports for students' misbehaviours in the classroom has been the main topic for discussion between teachers and parents as well as school administrators. To remedy this problem of students' misbehaviours in the classroom, school administrators need to support teachers by giving them more opportunities to attend professional development workshops in classroom management strategies.

The Myth of the Good Teacher

Teachers with problem behaviour students tend to be manipulated into feeling guilty whenever they seek assistance from school administrators and parents. The general belief is that teachers should have all the necessary skills to handle problem behaviour students, when in reality they are well-trained to teach only certain school subjects. This belief has often misguided parents into thinking that teachers are accountable for their children's problem behaviours in school. It is not uncommon for school administrators and principals to share this belief, but they too have their own interpretations of teachers' roles and responsibilities in the classroom. Their expectations of teachers are reflected in Canter and Canter's (1976) "Myth of the Good Teacher" (as cited in Cangelosi, 2004). Cangelosi (2004) described the "Myth of the Good Teacher" as follows:

"A good teacher should be able to handle all behavior problems on her own, and within the confines of the classroom." This means if you are competent, you should never need to go to your principal or the child's parents for assistance. (p. 300)

This myth often prevents novice and experienced teachers from seeking assistance from parents, principals, and school administrators. Without adequate assistance and support from parents, principals, and school administrators, eventually teachers burn out and leave the teaching profession because of having to deal with disruptive students on their own too many times.

Types of Classrooms and Teachers' Response Styles

To help teachers regain control of their classrooms, Hardin (2008) recommended that teachers identify which of Coloroso's (2005) Three Types of Classrooms they might have: the jellyfish classroom, the brick-wall classroom, and the backbone classroom. The jellyfish

classroom is without adequate structure. Teachers' expectations and punishments are inconsistent. The rules are often vague and leave students guessing what is expected of them. In the brick-wall classroom, teachers and students are ruled by dictatorship. The rules and punishments are unyielding. Students are manipulated and controlled by physical threats, humiliation, and bribes. Basically, students are told what to think and the teacher has all the power and control. The backbone classroom offers consistency and flexibility in discipline. Students are listened to and given second chances whenever mistakes are made. Students are taught how to problem-solve and to think before they react. After the teachers identify the type of classroom they have and decide which type they wish to have, the next step is to shift their attention to how they respond to students with disruptive behaviours in the classroom.

When teachers interact with students, Hardin (2008) advised using Canter and Canter's (1976) Teachers' Response Styles when setting the tone of the classroom. The three basic response styles of teachers are nonassertive, hostile, and assertive. Nonassertive teachers fail to make their needs and wants known; they allow students to take advantage of them. These teachers often threaten students, but students know there will be no follow-through so aggressive students tend to take over the class. These teachers become easily frustrated and secretly have inner hostility toward disruptive students. Hostile teachers respond in a negative, condescending, sarcastic, or hostile way that violates the students' rights, and disregards the feelings and needs of their students. They usually make unprofessional comments in front of the disruptive student, the student's peers, and other teachers. Punishments are often severe and physical. Assertive teachers clearly and firmly express their needs and the expectations of students. In other words, they say what they mean and mean what they say. Therefore, students know their limits in the classroom.

Behavioural Classroom Management Strategies

Marshall's (2001) Raise Responsibility System promotes responsibility in students. For this system to take effect, Charels (2008) advised teachers to do the following: "(1) Teach students about the four levels of social development and relate the levels to behavior and learning, (2) *check for understanding* of the four levels when students behave inappropriately, and (3) *provide guided choices* for acceptable behavior when disruptions continue" (p. 149). Rather than teachers, students suggest ways to conduct themselves more responsibly.

The fundamental ideas of Marshall's (2001) Hierarchy of Social Development are that "(1) students will cooperate willingly in the educational program if they see a clear reason for doing so and find the experiences enjoyable, and (2) good discipline occurs as students are influenced to conduct themselves more responsibly" (Charles, 2008, p. 73). The four levels of the Hierarchy of Social Development are Level A (Anarchy), Level B (Bossing/Bullying/ Bothering), Level C (Cooperation/Conformity), and Level D (Democracy and taking the initiative to do the right thing). Students who function at Level A are at the lowest level and they hardly accomplish anything worthwhile. At Level B, these students like to boss, bully and/or bother other students without any regard for their safety and well-being. The only time that these students are willing to comply with teachers' requests and/or instructional tasks is when authority is used. In Level C, students are willing to cooperate with teachers and others. They conform to the expectations set by the teacher and their motivation comes from the teacher and peer pressure. Most teachers would like to see their students function at Level D. In this level, students do not need to be told or reminded what to do. They have the desire to do the right thing and they take responsibility for their actions whenever they have done something wrong. They live up to their expectations and achieve the goals that they set for themselves. Before implementing the Hierarchy of Social Development into the classroom and using it on students, teachers should first observe their students then identify the level each student is at. From then on, teachers can determine which students need the behavioural intervention the most.

The first part of Marshall's (1998) instructional model of the Social Development Program is to teach the vocabulary and concepts to students, and the second part consists of checking for understanding. At this stage, when a disruption occurs in the classroom, the teacher simply moves into a guidance mode and asks the student to identify the level of the behaviour. The main purpose of checking for understanding is to have the disruptive student acknowledge the level of social development, rather than punishing the student being asked. At this point, the teacher's only interest is helping the student to develop self-control and social responsibility in the classroom. It is very important that questioning students about their behaviours is not done in a coercive and negative way. However, if a student continues with the disruptive behaviour after acknowledging disrupting the lesson, then the teacher moves on to guided choices. At this stage, authority is used, but without being confrontational and without punishment. Students are not asked questions about their behaviour by the teacher. Instead, on a sheet of paper, the teacher gives the student predetermined choices that are listed as questions. This way, the person who asks the questions controls the situation and the student makes the final decision whether to complete the form. Three questions are asked: (1) What did I do? (2) What can I do to prevent it from happening again? and (3) What will I do? When the form is handed over to the student, one of the following questions is asked, depending on the current situation: (1) Would you rather complete the activity in your seat or in the rear of the room? (2) Would you rather complete the activity by yourself or would you prefer to have someone help you? (3) Would you rather complete the activity in the classroom or in the office? Again, the student is given the choice and responsibility for his or her actions.

Marshall (2006) advised teachers to modify his Raise Responsibility System when working with adolescent students who are disaffected with school (as cited in Charles, 2008). Disaffected teenage students have concluded that school has nothing to offer them. Quite often, these students have little interest in completing assignments, especially when it comes to complying with teachers' instructions, requests, and/or commands. They will attend school only when threatened by their parent(s). When speaking to disaffected students in the classroom, teachers should avoid doing the "seven deadly habits": "criticism, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, or rewarding/bribing to control" (Charles, 2008, p. 85). Marshall thus cautioned teachers that they, too, should keep their behaviours in check. Most importantly, those teachers should remain calm and unaffected, such as when students start cursing in the classroom, especially when foul language is directed toward the teacher or other students.

Ford's Responsible Thinking Process (2006) was adapted from Powers' Perceptual Control Theory, which theorizes that our behaviour is controlled by our perceptions of the environment and we act accordingly in order to get what we want (Charles, 2008). In the Responsible Thinking Process, teachers teach students to acquire the necessary (cognitive) skills to get what they want in life without violating the rights of others. We determine our understanding of the world through the three highest levels of perceptions: the systems concepts level, the principles level, and the program level. At the systems concepts level, our beliefs and values help us to determine what we want to be as a person and how we should treat others. At the same time, we make an effort to achieve the goals that we set out for ourselves. At the principles level, we determine how we want to live by setting our priorities and guidelines in accordance with our beliefs and values. At the program level, in order to have structure and order in our lives, we develop a plan that assists us to live a harmonious and satisfactory life. Our behaviours are therefore not entirely influenced by the environment, but rather how our perceptions interpret the environment predetermines our behaviours.

Many of the behaviours that teachers find disrupting can be controlled by simply controlling the teachers' own responses (Thomas et al., 1968). Gable et al. (1983) compared teacher approval and disapproval statements across classrooms of different exceptionalities and found that approval statements (praise) occurred at a rate of only 16 per minute (as cited in Shores et al., 1993). Strain et al. (1983) found that 82% of the students who had low social development ratings never received positive social behaviour from the teacher, even when they complied with

the teacher's request (as cited in Shores et al., 1993). Shores et al. (1993) emphasized that teacher praise is an essential component of positive interactions between teachers and students.

Teacher/student proximity is an effective classroom management strategy that ensures minimal classroom disruptions because it increases teacher interactions with students (Gunter et al., 1994). Gunter et al. (1995) found that "elementary students spend 70% of their time assigned to independent seat work and 91.7% of the time, paraprofessionals remained seated in their assigned work areas while monitoring (targeted) students" (pp. 12-13). For effective proximity control while monitoring independent seat work, teachers should stand within three feet of the student and they should briefly interact with every student while circulating the classroom. Students' disruptive behaviours can also be greatly reduced if students' desks are appropriately distanced from one another. To implement these simple strategies, teachers need to develop ways to monitor their own movement patterns in the classroom.

Types of Teachers' and Students' Misbehaviours

Charles (2008) identified five types of teacher misbehaviour that teachers need to avoid whenever they discipline and interact with students: "inducing fearfulness, denigrating students, being demanding and abrasive, presenting poor models of behavior, and not making classes interesting and worthwhile" (p. 28). The ten most likely causes for teachers to misbehave in the classroom while interacting with students are the following:

Poor habits, unfamiliarity with better techniques, presenting poor models of behavior, showing little interest in or appreciation for students, succumbing to personal frustration, succumbing to provocation, providing ineffective guidance and feedback, using ineffective personal communication, failure to plan proactively, and using coercion, threat, and punishment. (Charles, 2008, pp. 25-28)

It is very important for teachers to know what the real reason behind their anger is and to think of positive ways to improve their behaviour without having the students feel the heat of their anger.

Charles (2008) also listed thirteen types of students' misbehaviours that commonly occur in the classroom and on school grounds: "inattention, apathy, needless talk, moving about in the room, annoying others, disruption, lying, stealing, cheating, sexual harassment, aggression and fighting, malicious mischief, and defiance of authority" (pp. 19-20). Identifying the reasons behind students' disruptive behaviours not only nurtures a safe learning environment for students, but also helps to repair deteriorating student-teacher relationships. The ten antecedents of students' misbehaviours are attributed to the following: "unmet needs, thwarted desires, expediency, urge to transgress, temptation, inappropriate habits, poor behavior choices, avoidance, egocentric personality, and neurological-based behavior" (Charles, pp. 21-23).

Hardin (2008) identified four main goals of students' misbehaviour in the classroom: (1) to seek attention, (2) to gain power, (3) to seek revenge for some perceived injustice, and (4) to avoid failure. However, Cipani (1995) argued that students' disruptive behaviour in the classroom is intended not only to seek teachers' attention, but also to escape or avoid an instructional task or assignment. Escape behaviour functions to terminate an existing event, and avoidance behaviour occurs in anticipation of an aversive event. These kinds of behaviours are negatively reinforced when teachers continuously give students aversive instructional tasks and assignments.

Positive and Negative Reinforcement

Despite the evidence that positive reinforcement techniques can change students' challenging behaviours, many teachers continue to use punishment instead, because it is still widely accepted in school discipline and teachers find it easier to administer than positive reinforcement. Of the various strategies in behaviour modification, positive reinforcement in the form of teacher praise is the most effective strategy in modifying students' behaviours.

Negative reinforcement is the contingent removal of an aversive stimulus, which results in increased behaviour production to escape or avoid the aversive stimulus (Cipani, 1995). Students' off-task behaviours were most likely reinforced by escape or avoidance of teacher instruction.

Once the teacher determines that negative reinforcement is indeed a key factor in maintaining the student's disruptive behaviour in the classroom, Cipani (1995) recommended that teachers try altering their instructional approaches during instructional activities and instead implement positive reinforcement strategies to modify students' behaviours. "Axelrod (1996) believed that techniques based on positive reinforcement lack popular and professional acceptability because they are time-intensive, offer little compensation for educators, contradict popular views of developmental psychology, threaten special interest groups, are socially unacceptable, and demean humans" (Maag, 2001, p. 174).

Generally, educators agree that there is no single cause for students' problem behaviours. Gable et al. (1998) found that even when students' behaviour topography (what the behaviour looks like or sounds like) is similar, the causes of the behaviours can be very different. Sanson et al. (1993) found that early behaviour patterns during infancy and preschool years can explain behaviour problems in school-age children (as cited in Stormont, 2002). In Sanson et al.'s longitudinal study,

Children who were rated as having externalizing problems when they were 7 years old were rated by their mothers as having more difficult temperaments as early as when they were infants. . . . Thus, for preschool children with difficult behavior, certain temperamental characteristics in infancy, such as colic and excessive crying, may be important to consider. (Stormont, 2002, pp. 127-128)

It is unreasonable to expect parents and teachers to know all of the risk factors of externalizing behaviour problems in children, but it is not unreasonable to expect parents and teachers to closely work together to find possible risk factors for individual children.

To assist in the prevention and intervention of problem behaviours in schools, Hester (2002) recommended that teachers implement the following strategies: (1) Redefine the culture of the school. (2) Increase predictability in daily routines. (3) Give clear instructions, consistent, and follow through. (4) Teach students appropriate replacement behaviours that serve the same function as the misbehaviour; and (5) Affirm positive behaviour.

Once children with conduct problems enter school, whether preschool or grade school, negative school and social experiences further increase their adjustment difficulties (Webster-Stratton, 1993). Aggressive children with noncompliant disruptive behaviour also develop poor relations with teachers, and they typically receive less support and nurturing in school.

Behavioural Assessments and Intervention Plans

A functional behavioural assessment is an effective tool to use when identifying the cause or causes of students' problem behaviours, but behavioural intervention plans are also effective in terms of preventing students from interfering with academic instruction (Gable et al., 1998). Discipline referral forms are also handy when used in conjunction with functional behavioural assessments and behavioural intervention plans. In schools, all of these three forms help

teachers and school administrators deal with students who have problem behaviours. Tobin et al. (2000) found that certain patterns in individual students' discipline referrals predicted school failure in high school, delinquency, referral for special education and placement in alternative settings, and future incidents of violence at school. Discipline referrals forms not only predict possible school and student failures, but they can also provide a clear picture of the most troublesome grades and months of the school year. Thus, the next school year, school administrators and teachers will be more informed and prepared to deal with problematic grades and disruptive students.

When dealing with off-task students daily, Cangelosi (2004) recommended that teachers use the Teaching Cycles Model, which assists teachers in redirecting students' off-task behaviours into on-task behaviours. The six stages of the Teaching Cycles Model are (1) identifying the students' needs, (2) determining the learning objective, (3) planning a learning activity, (4) preparing for the learning activity, (5) conducting the learning activity, and (6) evaluating how well the learning objective was achieved. These stages look simple, but they take more time to implement and prepare when dealing with more complicated student problem behaviours in the classroom.

When dealing with students who have disruptive behaviours, Charles (2008) recommended that teachers ask these students the following six questions from Ford's Responsible Thinking Process: (1) What are you doing? (2) What are the rules? (3) What happens when you break the rules? (4) Is this what you want to happen? (5) Where do you want to be? or What do you want to do now? And (6) What will happen if you disrupt again? These questions teach students how to look within themselves and decide how they want to be in the classroom. In order to achieve the desired outcome, it is important that teachers not ask these questions in an angry tone. Students who are approached in anger become angry themselves, especially once they feel threatened.

Teachers' behavioural expectations of students determine the climate in the classroom. Classroom rules are "general behavioral standards or expectations that are to be followed in the classroom. They constitute a code of conduct intended to regulate individual behavior in an attempt to avoid disruptive behavior" (Burden, 1995, p. 93). Students should also have input in establishing appropriate rules in the classroom, but the rules that they establish must be fair, realistic, and reasonable. When selecting rules, teachers need to consider their teaching styles, the age and maturity of their students, and the type of classroom climate they would like to have – and to make sure that the rules are in conjunction with the school rules and expectations.

However, Rhode et al. (1992) disagreed with Burden's (2000) recommendation that students be allowed to select their own rules in the classroom. Students tend to make up too many nonspecific rules, and some students feel that they do not have to follow rules that have been created by other students. Therefore, Rhode et al. argued that the teacher should establish appropriate classroom rules that apply to all students without exceptions – even for special needs students. It is also very important for students to understand the rules and the consequences for obeying and breaking the classroom rules. Otherwise, the rules were made in vain and are worthless in maintaining students' disruptive behaviours in the classroom.

Student-Teacher Interaction Behaviours

Jack et al. (1996) defined interaction as a social exchange between a target subject and another person (adult or peer), and interaction sequence as the sequential scoring of events from one stop code to the next stop code. In their research study of classroom interactions, Jack et al. (1996) organized their sequences of interactions into four types:

Positive interactions were sequences in which the teacher and/or student emitted a positive social behavior (e.g., praise statements) and no negative behaviors. Negative interactions were interaction sequences in which the teacher and/or student emitted a

negative behavior (e.g., disruptions, protests, aggression, or negative verbalization) without a positive behavior being recorded before the stop code. Mixed interactions were interaction sequences in which sequences in which both positive and negative behaviors were emitted by the teacher and/or student. Neutral interactions sequences were defined as those interactions in which no positive or negative behaviors were emitted. (pp. 68-70)

The results of their research study indicated that most of the interactions across the 20 classrooms were negative. Students and teachers were engaged in negative interactions over 20% of the observed time and less than 5% of the time, students and teachers were engaged in positive interactions, which is very low. However, there were no significant statistical differences between the high group and low group on the rate or duration of negative, neutral, or mixed interactions.

Gunter et al. (1995) reported,

Negative interactions—i.e., interactions involving disruptive, aggressive, negative verbal/gestural, or negative consequences but no positive behaviors – between teachers and students occurred 22% of the time spent in the classroom. In contrast, positive interactions—i.e., interactions involving praise or positive consequences and no negative behaviors—occurred only 3% of the time. When the sequence of negative interactions was broken down, negative interactions were typically started by the students engaging in a disruptive act, which was followed by the teacher telling the students to do an academic task or “talking” to the students. Negative interactions often ended in students engaging in additional disruptive behaviors. (pp. 13-14).

Surprisingly, the actual percentages of negative and positive interactions between teachers and students are quite alarming, but this evidence proves that teachers need more training in classroom management, especially positive reinforcement strategies.

Conclusion

Student-teacher interaction behaviours are in a desperate need of a repair and makeover. Our children's education and safety in school is being comprised when teachers do not upgrade their teaching and responsive styles, and especially when school administrators do not provide teachers with the necessary training in classroom management strategies. As a society, we are all educators and it is our responsibility to ensure that every child receives quality education, without fear and punishment.

References

- Burden, P. R. (2000). *Powerful classroom management strategies: Motivating students to learn*. Corwin Press.
- Cangelosi, J. S. (2004). *Classroom management strategies: Gaining and maintaining students' cooperation* (5th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Charles, C. M. (2008). *Today's best classroom management strategies: Paths to positive discipline*. Pearson Education.
- Cipani, E. C. (1995). Beware of negative reinforcement. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 27(4), 36-42.
- Gable, R. A., Quinn, M. M., Rutherford, R. B., & Howell, K. (1998). Addressing problem behaviors in schools: Use of functional assessments and behavior intervention plans. *Preventing School Failure*, 42(3), 106-119.

- Gunter, P. L., Jack, S. L., DePaege, P., Reed, T. M., & Harrison, J. (1994). Effects of challenging behaviors of students with emotional and behavioral disorders on teacher instructional behavior. *Preventing School Failure*, 38(3), 35-39.
- Gunter, P. L., Stores, R. I., Jack, S. L., Rasmussen, S., & Flowers, J. (1995). On the move. Using teacher/student proximity to improve students' behavior. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 28(1), 12-14.
- Hardin, C. J. (2008). *Effective classroom management: Models and strategies for today's classrooms* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Hester, P. (2002). What teachers can do to prevent behavior problems in schools. *Preventing School Failure*, 47(1), 33-38.
- Jack, S. L., Shores, R. E., Denny, R. K., Gunter, P. L., DeBriere T., & DePaepe, P. (1996). An analysis of the relationship of teachers' reported use of classroom management strategies on types of classroom interactions. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 6(1), 67-87.
- Maag, J. W. (2001). Rewarded by punishment: Reflections on the disuse of positive reinforcement in schools. *Exceptional Children*, 67(2), 173-186.
- Marshall, M. (1998). Fostering social responsibility and handling disruptive classroom behavior. *NASSP Bulletin*, 82(596), 31-39.
- Rhode, G., Jenson, W. R., & Reavis, H. K. (1992). *The tough kid book: Practical classroom management strategies* (pp. 3-26). Sopris West.
- Shores, R. E., Gunter, P. L., & Jack, S. L. (1993). Classroom management strategies: Are they setting events for coercion? *Behavioral Disorders*, 18(2), 92-102.
- Stormont, M. (2002). Externalizing behavior problems in young children: Contributing factors and early intervention. *Psychology in the Schools*, 32(2), 127-138.
- Thomas, D. R., Becker, W. C., & Armstrong, M. (1968). Production and elimination of disruptive classroom behavior by systematically varying teacher's behavior. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1(1), 35-45.
- Tobin, T., Sugai, G., & Colvin, G. (2000). Using discipline referrals to make decisions. *NASSP Bulletin*, 84(598), 106-117.
- Webster-Stratton, C. (1993). Strategies for helping early school-aged children with oppositional defiant and conduct disorders: The importance of home-school partnerships. *School Psychology Review*, 22(3), 437-457.

Supporting Beginning Teachers Through Mentoring

Karla Turton

Abstract

It is often assumed that beginning teachers possess the skills, strategies and practices necessary for effective instructional practice and classroom management. The reality is that beginning teachers struggle to overcome the many challenges and obstacles faced in the first years of teaching. Without adequate supports, beginning teachers may crumble under the pressure, assume basic survival skills, or simply quit in the face of dismay and disillusionment. A quality induction program that offers mentoring support is an ideal way to retain teachers and build capacity. A mentoring relationship, consisting of joint inquiry and reflective dialogue, should increase teacher effectiveness and professional growth.

The term “natural born teacher” is often used to describe those who seemingly have an innate ability to convey a message while reaching out to engage their audience. They possess empathy, patience, and a large repertoire of behaviour management skills and strategies (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Flores & Day, 2006; Lipton & Wellman, 2003). Although these natural born teachers appear completely at ease in their role, knowing how to teach is a demanding and complex task that requires intellect, skill, and commitment, and takes years to develop (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). Once they leave the university campus, the beginning teachers in many schools are on their own, left to “sink or swim.” Unlike professions and trades that have internship or apprenticeship programs, most school divisions lack formal programs that continue training and provide support. Teachers face many challenges in their first year of teaching, and mentoring is an ideal form of support that can be provided through beginning teacher induction programs.

The Reality of Teaching

Upon receiving confirmation of their first teaching assignment, beginning teachers eagerly anticipate the arrival of September and the chorus of young voices ready to begin another year of school. Planning begins immediately: resources are bought, materials are ordered, and curriculums are read. An excitement and confidence is experienced – “This is what I’ve worked for; this is the dream.” September finally arrives, and the idealism felt during the summer is replaced by cold reality. Nothing is as imagined: the classroom is ill-equipped, the students are not on grade level, and there are two special needs students with educational assistants who require accommodating. Excitement and confidence are quickly replaced by panic and desperation, as the beginning teacher asks, “What have I gotten myself into?”

The challenges encountered in the first year of teaching are varied and numerable, and the amount of work is grossly underestimated (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). The demands and complexity of teaching are unexpected with the pressures of daily planning, trying to juggle multiple responsibilities, and meeting the expectations of students, parents, and administrators (Helsing, 2007). Paddling furiously to keep one’s head above water is an analogy common to first-year teachers. Compounding these struggles are feelings of isolation, shock, and disappointment that expectations do not match reality (Flores & Day, 2006). The first year can be exhausting at the least and traumatic at the most.

Preparation at university for a career as a teacher is often viewed by teachers and administrators as inadequate (Flores & Day, 2006). Knowledge of educational theory and subject content are superseded by the heavy workload and other pressures faced in the first year of teaching. Student-teaching experiences, comprised of six to eight-week terms in classrooms of veteran teachers who have already established procedures and routines, cannot

prepare beginning teachers for the realities of their own classrooms. University programs and student-teaching experiences rarely include the culture and climate or the collective and individual needs of the school in which one is hired. Real teaching, in the classroom context, is the only viable preparation for the journey from beginning to expert teacher (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005).

Challenges and Responsibilities of Beginning Teachers

Beginning teachers have the same tasks and responsibilities as experienced teachers (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Lipton & Wellman, 2003). In fact, it is a common practice in many schools for the beginning teacher to have the most undesirable of teaching assignments, including large student numbers accompanied by the demands of many learning, behavioural, and/or emotional needs. Experienced teachers feel that they have “paid their dues,” preferring teaching assignments that are deserving of their talents and status. Such challenges result in a pervasive feeling of failure and burn-out (Fantilli & McDougall), as beginning teachers question their effectiveness and try to be all things to all students: educator, mentor, guide, and friend (Helsing, 2007). Afraid of failure and desperate to please, the beginning teacher takes it all on, surviving through a system of trial and error. Regardless of a teacher’s years of experience, the responsibilities of the classroom and the expectations of other teachers, students, parents, and administrators are the same.

Beginning teachers take ownership for problems encountered in the classroom and assume responsibility for them (Bullough et al., 2008). Common concerns of first-year teachers include behaviour management, student needs, time and workload management, and conflict with parents and other adults (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). During the first year, content knowledge and pedagogy can take a back seat to the daily running of the classroom. It is enough just to get through each day, and when planning does not extend beyond tomorrow, yearly goals seem impossible. Such experiences are more common than imagined and can have a catastrophic effect on the self-esteem and confidence of the beginning teacher. In a school culture in which collegiality is undervalued, the beginning teacher shoulders the entire load, and looks inward not for self-reflection but for blame.

Unique Needs of the Beginning Teacher

Realizing the numerable obstacles and challenges they face, beginning teachers welcome and seek out support. Many form close, supportive relationships not with their colleagues but with the people seen most, usually the custodian and the secretary (Doerger, 2003). Spending evenings in the classroom preparing unit plans and materials, it becomes routine to share with the custodian one’s stories and struggles of the day. Additionally, the principal conduit of information in a school is usually the secretary, who is relied upon for supplies and knowledge of school procedures and protocol. The secretary is available, has his/her fingers on the pulse of the school, and usually has a sympathetic ear. The custodian and secretary may provide the necessary emotional support that the beginning teacher craves at this time. Although critical for surviving the year, emotional support is not enough, and may inadvertently encourage complacency when it is the only support provided (Lipton & Wellman, 2003).

It is important to realize that beginning teachers are still learning to teach and have emotional, instructional, and professional needs different from their more experienced colleagues (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). In response to the growing awareness of these needs, induction programs are seen as a way to aid in the transition from university to classroom, supporting the ongoing process of learning to teach. A successful induction program requires a “comprehensive plan that formulates and quantifies the expectations of the induction program” (Portner, 2008, p. 7). Programs should be structured to provide the skills necessary to assist beginning teachers in their development into high-quality, effective teachers. Such skills

are developed through problem-solving and decision-making opportunities, collegiality with experienced teachers, and support in classroom management (Doerger, 2003). These needs require addressing in the first three years of teaching, as they provide a solid foundation on which to build a teaching career.

Mentoring as a Component of an Induction Program

Quality induction programs, which are designed to meet the needs of beginning teachers by offering support and professional development, not only hasten the development of effective instructional practice but can make a difference in teacher satisfaction (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). One component of a successful induction program that cannot be overlooked is mentoring. Induction programs that include a comprehensive mentoring component are significantly more effective in providing emotional and professional support (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). It usually takes educators three to seven years to “reach maximum impact on student learning” (Stanulis & Floden, p. 112). With the provision of one-on-one mentoring support, this time is significantly shortened.

Mentorship is often seen as simply easing teachers into their new role by answering questions and providing emotional support. In reality, it is much more complex, consisting of developing new teachers’ learning through reflective thinking based on regular examination of themselves and their instructional practices (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). A comprehensive definition of mentoring is the “one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee) by a more experienced practitioner (mentor), designed primarily to assist the development of the mentee’s expertise and to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession” (Hobson et al., 2009, p. 207). Mentoring emphasizes engagement in joint inquiry to help beginning teachers understand the importance of learning from practice, while providing tools useful for studying teaching (Stanulis & Ames, 2009). As such, mentoring is the most “complex and intricate role in the induction process” (Portner, 2008, p. 7), and has a significant impact on the beginning teacher.

Benefits of Mentoring

As a form of beginning teacher support, mentoring offers the opportunity for improvement in teacher quality and strengthens the connection between teaching and student engagement, resulting in effective, balanced instruction (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Through reflective thinking, mentees are assisted in understanding what is happening and the reasons why, in order to act more effectively (Bullough et al., 2008). Without the process of mentoring, these beginning teachers are at risk of being inadvertently influenced by experienced teachers who resist change, resulting in a “cyclic reproduction” of teachers who are not responsive to the individual and collective needs of their students (Doerger, 2003, p. 1). The ultimate objective is to understand students’ needs and to create a toolbox of strategies to meet these needs. Perhaps the most important benefit from the viewpoint of the beginning teachers is the provision of emotional and psychological support, as the mentor assists in putting difficult experiences into perspective and creates a safe space for venting frustrations. Beginning teacher mentoring reduces feelings of isolation, increases confidence and self-esteem, and stimulates self-reflection and problem solving (Hobson et al., 2009), resulting in a win-win situation for all. Therefore, because of increased morale and greater job satisfaction, the benefits of mentoring cannot be overlooked.

The Role of the Mentor

The key factor in mentoring is, of course, the skill and development of the mentor. The primary role of the mentor is to develop beginning teachers’ capacity and confidence to make

informed decisions, expand their pedagogical knowledge base, and develop their teaching abilities (Portner, 2008), while guiding them to independence as competent and confident teachers. Mentoring must be responsive to the needs of the beginning teacher, as all teachers have different beliefs, values, and experiences (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). Accordingly, the beginning teacher should be treated as an adult learner, with skills, strategies, and knowledge to share and contribute (Hobson et al., 2009). The mentor's role is to assess the type of support required and decide upon the necessary action, whether guiding or coaching. The mentor's skill and expertise determine the depth and quality of the interaction.

For a mentoring relationship to work, the roles and responsibilities of mentor and beginning teacher must be clearly established (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). It must be understood that a mentor does not operate in a supervisory capacity, as it is not the mentor's role or responsibility to evaluate. Any data gathered during teacher observations are used for reflection purposes, not judging. The quality of interactions is of utmost importance with the relationship being of a collegial nature, not hierarchical, thus becoming a partnership in which learning, questioning, and challenge is shared (The Board of Regents, 2009). A relationship that is undermining and condescending is not conducive to support. There must be a willingness by the beginning teacher and the mentor to participate, with both parties perceiving mentoring as having a "substantial and meaningful influence on the novice's learning to teach" (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005, p. 680). Vital to the mentoring relationship is the atmosphere of trust and respect between mentor and beginning teacher.

The Mentoring Relationship

The success of the beginning teacher is in large part determined by the quality of the mentoring interaction with the designated mentor. Although friendship and advice are valued at the beginning of the relationship, a more educative dialogue is necessary. In order for professional growth and development to occur, it is important to stimulate and encourage reflective thinking through learning-focused conversations regarding instructional practices and student needs. During learning-focused conversations, cognitive complexity, which includes the ability to think reflectively, is developed with the goal to create "mindful teaching" (Bullough et al., 2008, p. 1856; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005, p. 681). Effective mentors are committed to the mentoring relationship and guide beginning teachers to independence as competent and confident teachers.

Mentoring should provide frequent, intensive, and individualized support (Allen, 2009). Mentoring cannot be hit and miss, grabbing a few minutes of conversation in the staffroom or exchanging pleasantries in the hallway. Support needs to be specific, tailored to the individual needs of the beginning teacher over a sustained period of time. When the support is relevant and connected to the daily challenges faced in the classroom, the greatest learning occurs.

Conclusion

Beginning teachers know how to act like teachers when they graduate from university, but they require continued training in how to think like teachers (Boreen et al., 2009). This is what mentoring does. It builds capacity in the beginning teacher to respond to the ever-changing demands of the classroom. It develops the beginning teacher's confidence in his or her problem-solving and decision-making skills. It fosters a professional identity and vision as an educator. With the support of administration, team leaders, colleagues, and experienced and beginning teachers, the potential of mentoring cannot be underestimated; it can only be explored, enhanced, and celebrated.

References

- Allen, J. (2009). *A sense of belonging: Sustaining and retaining new teachers*. Stenhouse.
- The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. (2009). Faculty mentoring resources @ uw Oshkosh. *Mentoring skills*. Retrieved August 19, 2008, from <http://www.uwosh.edu/mentoring/faculty/skills.html>
- Boreen, J., Johnson, M. K., Niday, D., & Potts, J. (2009). *Mentoring beginning teachers: Guiding, reflecting, coaching* (2nd ed.). Stenhouse.
- Bullough, R. V., Jr., Young, J. R., Hall, K. M., Draper, R. J., & Smith, L. K. (2008). Cognitive complexity, the first year of teaching, and mentoring. *Teachers and Teacher Education*, 24, 1846-1858. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.02.001>
- Doerger, D. W. (2003). The importance of beginning teacher induction in your school. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/iejll/+Daniel+W.+Doerger>
- Fantilli, R. D., & McDougall, D. E. (2009). A study of novice teachers: Challenges and supports in the first years. *Teachers and Teacher Education*, 25, 814-825. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.021>
- Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22, 219-232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.09.002>
- Helsing, D. (2007). Regarding uncertainty in teachers and teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 1317-1333. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.06.007>
- Hobson, A. J., Ashby, P., Malderez, A., & Tomlinson, P. D. (2009). Mentoring beginning teachers: What we know and what we don't. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 207-216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.09.001>
- Lipton, L., & Wellman, B. (2003). *Mentoring matters: A practical guide to learning-focused relationships*. MiraVia.
- Norman, P. J., & Feiman-Nemser, S. (2005). Mind activity in teaching and mentoring. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 679-697. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.05.006>
- Portner, H. (2008). *Mentoring new teachers* (3rd ed.). Corwin Press.
- Scholefield, A. (2008). *New teacher induction/mentorship*. <http://www.teach.educ.ubc.ca/resources/mentoring.html>
- Stanulis, R. N., & Ames, K. T. (2009). Learning to mentor: Evidence and observation as tools in learning to teach. *The Professional Educator*, 33(1). http://www.theprofessionaleducator.org/articles/combined%20spring_09.pdf
- Stanulis, R. N., & Floden, R. E. (2009). Intensive mentoring as a way to help beginning teachers develop balanced instruction. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60, 112-122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487108330553>

OPINION PAPERS

The Need for Change in Aboriginal Education

Angela Voutier

In spite of collaborative efforts of stakeholders to improve the graduation rates and overall educational success for Aboriginal learners, as a group they remain one of the most pressing concerns of school divisions today, especially in western Canada. On Manitoba reserves in 2001, for example, 70% of young people between the ages of 20 and 24 years had not completed a high school education (Argan, 2006). The graduation rate of Aboriginal students attending public schools is even lower than that of students attending school in their home communities (Richards & Vining, 2004). The lack of success experienced by the current generation of Aboriginal children is partly the result of a colonial system and government educational policies that were meant to marginalize and assimilate an entire group of people (Bennett, 2007). This much damage is hard to repair, and change is slow. There are, however, actions that can be taken to improve the educational experiences for Aboriginal people. The basis for all of these actions is government policy change, which is a slow, tedious process, but other measures are being taken in the meantime. School enrichment and magnet schools are two proven approaches to providing effective educational programming for Aboriginal students.

School enrichment, as presented by Richards and Vining (2004), means “providing additional resources to improve the performance of schools with proportionately large Aboriginal student populations” (p. 22). The budget increases can be used to engage Elders and to hire teachers with experience with Aboriginal learners, both of which will help to meet the needs of Aboriginal students.

Mystery Lake School Division established Wapanohk Community School in Thompson, Manitoba, to provide specialized educational programming for Aboriginal students. Funds have also been provided by the provincial department of education to employ a community school connector and to support other programs in place. These efforts have created success in many areas for this enrichment school, especially in the areas of governance, school programs, community involvement, and staff retention. Such enrichment could easily make a school appealing to Aboriginal students who need a place where they feel comfortable and experience success.

Another option suggested by Richards and Vining (2004) is the magnet school. In this by-product of school enrichment, one or more schools within a school division concentrate on Aboriginal cultural studies. Any student who lives within the within the school district or division may attend these schools regardless of race, and parents and students then have a choice of schools to meet their educational needs. More flexibility in catchment area boundaries, and generous programs of school enrichment, would help to focus resources, programming, and staff to those schools specializing in Aboriginal education, rather than spreading them too thinly across an entire division with everyone getting some, but not enough, financial support. Even the name *magnet school* sounds positive in attracting the Aboriginal students and encouraging them to succeed.

Showing consideration for identified concerns from the Aboriginal community is crucial for rebuilding relationships in education. It is an important step in improving educational programming and improving the relationships of schools with the communities that they serve. Parents and community members see themselves as being internal to the school system, yet “regularly missing for this group are opportunities to enter the school, making differences in their own lives and the lives of their communities” (Redwing Saunders, 2007, p.1034). If parental and community involvement is seen as a problem, then the educational system must be ready to

take their concerns seriously and act upon them. School enrichment and magnet schools provide evidence that this is being done.

School landscape or environment is of extreme importance to the success of students, as reported through the experiences of staff and students of four schools in Manitoba (Van Ingen & Halas, 2006). It is important for students to be able to identify with their surroundings at school and be able to see themselves as part of the school landscape, in order for them to be successful. A large percentage of Aboriginal students entering high school have a difficult time transitioning to a large, diverse institution such as an urban high school. By encountering school landscapes that promote the cultural and identity of the students, Aboriginal students will feel valued and experience more success. School enrichment and magnet schools help to provide this landscape, and give students a place with which to connect.

There are more successful Aboriginal people now than ever before. Essential lawyers, doctors, teachers, and trades people have successfully bridged the gap and become role models for others in their communities (Mendelson, 2006). Sadly, though, “the Aboriginal population continues to suffer from higher unemployment, lower levels of education, and below average incomes” (Mendelson, p. 4) in comparison to the rest of society. These problems have an increasing impact, not only on Aboriginal communities but also on our overall societal well-being, as the Aboriginal population continues to grow. Everyone loses when Aboriginal students fail to succeed. School enrichment and magnet schools are components of effective educational programming that should be considered by all shareholders, in order to ensure the success of Aboriginal students.

References

- Argan, G. (2006, September 24). Invest in Aboriginal education. *Catholic New Times*.
www.findarticles.com
- Bennett, M. (2007). Aboriginal children's rights. Is Canada keeping its promise? In R. B. Howe & K. Covell (Eds.), *A question of commitment* (pp. 265-286). Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Mendelson, M. (2006, October). *Improving Primary and Secondary Education on Reserves in Canada*. [www.http://caledoninst.org](http://caledoninst.org)
- Redwing Saunders, S. E., & Hill, S. M. (2007). Native education and in-classroom coalition-building: Factors and models in delivering an equitable authentic education. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30(4), 1015-1045.
- Richards, J., & Vining, A. (2004). Aboriginal off-reserve education: Time for action. *C.D. Howe Institute Commentary*, 198, 1-31.
- Van Ingen, C., & Halas, J. (2006). Claiming space: Aboriginal students within school landscapes. *Children's Geographies*, 4(3), 379-398.

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow?

Marian Goldstone

In the city
there is carpet on the floor
pavement on the playground
and magical AV rooms
that dispense canned knowledge
at the flick of a switch

But here
we learn where floors are rough boards
where playgrounds are dirt
and voices of ancient spirits
speak through our souls

In the city
a bell rings
and children, like so many filings of lead
drawn up by a magnet,
run quickly into a building

But here
a bell rings
a flock of wild geese flies overhead,
and we pause and watch,
and obey the calling of the moment.

It was the fall of 1979. I had just scribbled these few words on a scrap of paper as my rosy-cheeked, breathless class, fresh from their noon hour activities, bumped and jostled about as they hung up their jackets, rattled their tin lunch buckets, and clamored excitedly about the huge flock of Canada geese that had just flown by. As I had walked about the schoolyard just minutes before afternoon classes were to begin, I was pursued by a bevy of younger students, all negotiating for a turn to ring the old hand-held brass school bell. Then suddenly, the geese were overhead, and time and motion were suspended. School time, clock time, the concept of time itself ceased to exist. The pulse of something far more primordial drew us together as one. Mesmerized by the beauty and power of nature, we stood there for a long time, until the flock was well down "the ridge," and their honking had faded into the distance. It was a magical moment.

I recall that moment now, not because everything was marvelous in the "good old days." Today's young teachers who deftly download, e-mail and Xerox, shake their heads in disbelief when I describe the trials of carbon stencils and the spirit master copying machine. I, too, share their amazement when I consider, in light of today's legal-minded society, how unacceptable it would be for a lone teacher to march an entire school of children across roads and railway crossings to spend their noon hour at the skating and curling rink. I even describe to them the chill that ran down my spine that mid-August day as I inspected my first classroom, and opened the big desk drawer to find a regulation strap staring me in the face. I tell them that I was expected to use it, but that I quickly threw it in the back of a cupboard.

I also try to tell them about the “mystery,” as well. I try to describe just what created the magic that happened that fall day in 1979. Back then, there was also the general store, the community hall, and Mr. Johnston’s elevator. There was old Mrs. So-and-So, who was ninety, and someone else’s new baby, and Pete and Jean, who used to have me out to their farm for supper. Somehow, in that community, in much the same manner as when the geese flew by and time stood still, boundaries just strangely evaporated.

It wasn’t about just being at school. It wasn’t about just being the teacher. It was about being a part of a much larger whole; it was about being connected to elements so deep and vast that words alone could not name them. An old man at the general store in that community probably said it best when he sagaciously observed, “After a while the gravel just gets into your soul.” The farmland was poor in that area; sand and small stones were everywhere. He was right. It was just as he said. Whether people knew it or not, they were the land they lived on. They were the ancestry that flowed in their veins. They were the community and how they worked and played together. What happened to one happened to everyone. What happened to the land was reflected in the feelings of each citizen from the youngest to the oldest. Theirs was a knowledge that had grown from that place, that earth, and the things upon it. They might physically leave, but they could never leave that place behind. All of that “oneness” came to school and, in microcosm, to my classroom.

When I tell this story, I am often reminded that it was indeed a time long ago, and nostalgic as I may be, those days are past. While the innocence of this era cannot be replicated, time is not the only variable at work. The sense of closeness to our place on this earth is also a factor in this mystery. It’s that same sense of place that sees me driving back to that community each spring in hopes of seeing the crocuses as they bloom for a mile or so along the railway tracks that follow the ridge road. To this day, thoughts of the time spent in that school are never in isolation from the sense of place. They are always accompanied with the visual reminiscence of that little community, and the myriad other sensory memories associated with that experience.

It has been over thirty years since I first entered that humble classroom to embark upon what was to become my life’s work. I marvel at the advancements and changes that have since taken place, especially in technology. How far we have advanced in the creation of the tools that serve us! I feel proud to have been a part of the huge growth in professional development amongst teachers, as well as the huge expansion of knowledge about education. Our students, present and future, will be the benefactors of such growth.

However, in our quest for bigger, better, faster, let us not lose sight of the energy and power of community and place. Unlike subservient artificial extensions, place defines us. In unempirical increments unlike gigabytes and dollars, place inescapably permeates the very essence of our beings in a way that is fundamental to our very existence. It empowers us with a perspective that is individual and unique. It determines who we are. It grounds us and grants us stability in an unstable world. Acknowledgement of place is basic to the development of community and citizens. This force, combined with our many modern advances, creates energy to lead us into the future. Such was the fascinating mystery revealed to me the day the geese flew by. The implications for education are limitless!