Editorial:

Making Practice of Curriculum: 
Curriculum Making in Teaching and Teacher Education

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This issue spotlights research and practice on curriculum making, teaching, and teacher education. Based on lived and practical experiences in education, the authors in this instalment show how engaged inquiry is a form of curriculum in practice (Connelly, He, & Phillion, 2008). In this manner, the authors observe intently their role as educators by inquiring and practising through a self-reflective lens and/or alongside students and colleagues. Thus, whether it be a close-up of a Kindergarten classroom where the curriculum re-shaped and re-figured through the self reflective engagement of the Kindergarten teacher or a broader focus on how college instructors effectively develop their curriculum via practical and meaningful ways for professional development, we witness in this issue how educators experience and make curriculum from their own insightful personal, and professional knowledge, rather than from top-driven policy agendas. This work, indeed, is relevant during our present era of accountability because it transforms our standard concept of ‘curriculum practice’ into a more illuminating notion of making practice of curriculum through both professional and experienced knowledge. This active inquiry into curriculum, or curriculum making (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) is relational in nature and is centred on individuals working through curriculum issues, dilemmas, or experiences together with one another. The articles in this issue attend to curriculum making as they focus on: community, reflection, story, collaborative dialogue, and culturally sensitive/culturally responsive pedagogy as, all the while, authors are in relation with others in their field of work.

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Laura Southcott, in “Time well spent in a Kindergarten class: A teacher’s reflection on using talk to learn,” provides storied vignettes of her teaching experience in Kindergarten and what she has learned about oral language with young learners. This article is timely especially as full day Kindergarten programs are being implemented across Ontario. Southcott takes seriously the development of her students’ oral language skills through talk. As she teaches young learners, she digs deeply into her own reflections on teaching to challenge her assumptions about talk as a tool for learning. In this manner, she is a curriculum maker alongside her Kindergarten students as they teach her the rich importance of oral language, communication, and the value of literacy as learned in the classroom.

Employing the tool of oral language, Russell and Bullock, in “From Talk to Experience: Transforming the Preservice Physics Methods Course,” report on their efforts to engage teacher candidates in dialogue about learning physics and how to teach physics. This article is an excellent example of a collaborative self-study in which teacher educators make explicit their practice in order to enact a dynamic and meaningful pedagogy of education while in relation with teacher candidates.

In “Faculty Development in Community Colleges: Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching the Teachers,” Loretta Howard and Nancy Taber examine the experiences of adult educators in community colleges. While community colleges are an important part of the post-secondary education system in Canada, they are not studied as closely as schools and universities. This article focuses on the efforts of community college leaders and instructors working collaboratively to enhance the practice of community college instructors by developing effective faculty development processes for their peers. They stress the importance of understanding learning principles in order to make knowledge and theory practical and meaningful for adult learners.

Theodore Christou in “Reflecting from the margins of education faculties: Refiguring the humanist, and finding a space for story in history,” challenges educational historians to “evaluate anew the roles and purposes of their discipline within the realities of contemporary education.” He questions approaches to teaching the history of education that focus heavily on content knowledge or theory. He then makes a forceful argument for applying historical methods and sources through historical fiction in order to “capture and hold the imagination, and to broaden experience.” Using story to practice the curriculum of history is indeed a way of finding a space for story in history.

It has long been evident that Aboriginal students have been poorly served by Euro-Canadian educational approaches. In “‘Try to understand us’: Aboriginal Elders’ views on exceptionality,” Ron Phillips writes, “Ignoring the Elders, ignoring traditional and spiritual knowledge of the Elders, has not been successful.” Phillips reports on how Aboriginal Elders think about exceptional learners and, based on these Indigenous perspectives, offers suggestions for culturally responsive special education teachers.

Finally, and also connected to culturally sensitive pedagogy, Lu and Han in “Why don’t they participate: A self-study of Chinese graduate students’ classroom involvement in North America,” illuminate the challenges of Chinese graduate students in North American educational milieus. They uncover, through their own self study and working alongside one another,
significant factors that impact classroom performance. We hear their struggles and feel their obstacles along the way, and are brought to a full recognition that culturally sensitive curriculum is direly needed in our education spaces. The making practice of curriculum is insightfully presented through this self study.

We hope readers observe the making practice of curriculum in all the articles featured in this issue. We are hopeful that such rich accounts will advance our thinking about and reflection on what it means to be a curriculum maker in the 21st century. We are proud of the recent issues that BEJ has published. We want to thank the work of our diligent webmaster Igor Kamzic who has revitalized our BEJ website, allowing us to publish three issues in four short months. These changes should also help us to better serve authors and readers in the future. We hope you enjoy this issue.

References
