

EDITORIAL

Special issue on Elwyn Richardson

This Special Issue of ACCESS, the first for 2016, brings together diverse perspectives on the work of the New Zealand educator, Elwyn Stuart Richardson (1925–2012). The editors of this collection, Leon Benade and Nesta Devine were integral to the one-day symposium and exhibition on Richardson held in July 2013 at the School of Education, Auckland University of Technology, Akoranga North Shore campus. Speakers came from a range of fields touching on Richardson's work: art educators, general educators, those with an interest in science, and those from fields of art as artists and theorists. Investigations and explorations at the symposium brought to life Elwyn Richardson's educational philosophy and its practical applications.

Elwyn Stuart Richardson brought to the fore the importance of experimentation in his progressive approaches to educational work. From 1949 to 1962 Richardson worked as principal of Oruaiti, a small country school near the Mangonui Harbour in Northland, New Zealand, where his radical approaches managed to escape the incursions of governmental inspectors. In context of today's instrumentalised educational demands, imagine the action of discarding the official syllabus and constructing an integrated curriculum based on children's interests and curiosity. Imagine allowing first and foremost the process of observing things found in the environment, recording them by drawing and naming, then sharing and discussing the findings. Imagine following one's educational commitment to a pedagogic process of experimental studies beyond any state-mandated approach with a view to bringing together science, art, Māori language, palaeontology and other fields of enquiry to produce learning through discovery. Clarence Beeby, the then Director General of Education even granted to Oruaiti special status as an experimental school. It makes a fascinating story.

Leon Benade and Nesta Devine have worked with assiduous dedication with the authors gathered here to examine the richness of Elwyn Richardson's educational approach and legacy. What is at stake in this collection is the very matter of learning itself. How is learning to be approached when educational dogma, with great ease and facility, separates fields of knowledge into discrete areas, effectively keeping art and science apart? On the other hand, how is curriculum to be authorised when children, as learners, find implicit connections between this and that, when the discovery of facts is enabled through curiosity in 'the ordinary world'? Such an approach suggests John Dewey's philosophies of learning whereby the process of enquiry is a process of disclosure and discovery. This is, in turn, for Dewey a 'scientific' process, a logical organisation of formal relationships, out of which knowledge of the world becomes accessible and usable. Dewey rejected the view of the abstracted determinate proposition. For him, proposition-based enquiry enhanced the potential for discovering more about the conditional nature of knowledge. It opened up the possibility that knowledge could be applied in ways that are relevant to the daily life of thought and action.

With these thoughts in mind, this issue of ACCESS invigorates ways of thinking that informed Elwyn Richardson's approach to education. Further, it brings together a range of diverse applications of Richardson's commitments, and considers them in the dynamic of today's educational world. The contributors not only position Elwyn Richardson in his rightful place in an educational narrative, but also offer pertinent connections and reconsiderations for teaching and learning today.

Leon Benade suggests that the collection should be read as a whole. In compiling this editorial and reflecting on the collection I support this recommendation. I also endorse Nesta Devine's submission that Richardson rightfully remains relevant to new generations of educators.

Elizabeth M. Grierson

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, Australia

ARTICLE HISTORY

First published in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 2016, Vol. 48, No. 7, 655–656