

**McGill Journal of Education**  
**Revue des sciences de l'éducation de McGill**



Alan Edmunds, Jodi Nickel, & Ken Badley. *Educational Foundations in Canada*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. (2015). 360 pp. \$79.95 (paperback). (ISBN 978-0-19-543380-7)

Michael Holden

---

Volume 51, Number 2, Spring 2016

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1038614ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1038614ar>

[See table of contents](#)

---

**Publisher(s)**

Faculty of Education, McGill University

**ISSN**

1916-0666 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

**Cite this review**

Holden, M. (2016). Review of [Alan Edmunds, Jodi Nickel, & Ken Badley. *Educational Foundations in Canada*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. (2015). 360 pp. \$79.95 (paperback). (ISBN 978-0-19-543380-7)]. *McGill Journal of Education / Revue des sciences de l'éducation de McGill*, 51(2), 973–976. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1038614ar>

ALAN EDMUNDS, JODI NICKEL, & KEN BADLEY. *Educational Foundations in Canada*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. (2015). 360 pp. \$79.95 (paperback). (ISBN 978-0-19-543380-7).

**E***ducational Foundations in Canada*, a pan-Canadian text, serves as a strong introduction to the complex profession teacher candidates have chosen to pursue. As emerging educators, candidates grapple with a range of pedagogical and professional questions in their teacher education programs. Throughout, Edmunds, Nickel, and Badley follow candidates as they progress through their courses and field experiences, incorporating examples from across Canada to highlight unique aspects of each jurisdiction. These varied contexts support the authors' contention that teaching is a reflective practice (Schön, 1983), and that new teachers should consider multiple perspectives as they prepare to enter the classroom. Thus, *Educational Foundations in Canada* would be of particular value to teacher educators running courses for candidates at the beginning of their teacher education programs.

Structurally, the text is separated into eight chapters, each introducing a different aspect of the profession. Focus topics and issues range from classroom management and assessment practices to curriculum design and school governance, as well as the historical, philosophical, and sociocultural influences on teaching in Canada. While many textbooks have explored similar educational influences in a Canadian context (Cherubini, 2005; Drake, 2007; Egbo, 2009; Wotherspoon, 2009), Edmunds, Nickel, and Badley's book is set apart by contending that these issues both affect and are affected by teachers. That is, the authors suggest that incoming teacher candidates shape their professional practice by reflecting on these influences, considering how to address them in their classrooms.

This active relationship between teachers and educational issues underpins the content and organization of the text. Each chapter begins with explicit learning objectives and includes a variety of critical reflective questions. In exploring the philosophical roots of education, for example, the authors encourage teacher candidates to consider their own ideological assumptions and develop a specific

philosophy of education. In so doing, the text draws on educational theories to develop candidates' professional perspectives. The authors successfully connect theory to practice in each chapter, including through practical applications, specific classroom examples, and case studies from their own experiences as well as the experiences of former candidates. As Stark and Torrence (2005) note, these case studies enable the reader to actively engage with each issue and connect the authors' experiences to their own fieldwork.

Perhaps the most valuable chapter for emerging educators is the first one, "Teaching as reflective practice." While reflective practice is not a uniquely Canadian concept, this perspective aligns with the text's pan-Canadian approach by encouraging teacher candidates to consider more than their immediate, localized response. Edmunds, Nickel, and Badley suggest that teacher candidates are best able to make sense of educational issues by understanding their own teaching attitudes and by engaging in active, critical reflection throughout their career. They contend that "you have to be willing to identify and scrutinize your assumptions and perceptions about teaching and, after having done so, go back to teaching with renewed and revised assumptions and perspectives" (p. 7). These recommendations reflect both seminal texts (Dewey, 1938; Schön, 1983) and more recent investigations of critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995; Zeichner & Liston, 2014).

Inevitably, no single text can discuss every nuance of the many concepts affecting Canadian teachers. In most instances, Edmunds, Nickel, and Badley successfully introduce concepts and acknowledge the rich literature candidates may explore in more advanced teacher education courses. For example, while the chapter on legal and political issues does not examine policymaking (Delaney, 2002) or the implications of specific provincial laws (Kitchen & Dean, 2010), the authors do provide a detailed introduction to the similarities and differences across jurisdictions and how governance issues can affect teachers in their daily lives. Throughout, the authors raise critical questions for teacher candidates and encourage readers to consider their own responses to these issues. This approach should enable teacher candidates to consider these issues on their own or with their peers in a teacher education program.

At times, Edmunds, Nickel, and Badley's decision to introduce so many educational issues limits their ability to provide appropriate depth of discussion. Three instances stand out as areas for improvement, perhaps through additional discussion in teacher education courses, where this text is adopted. The first relates to authentic assessment. Edmunds, Nickel, and Badley appropriately recommend that teachers dedicate significant time to planning effective assessments, and contend that essential questions and enduring understandings may be best addressed through performance tasks rather than traditional pen-and-paper tests. When describing student evaluation, however, the authors dedicate disproportionate space to testing, test design, and the uses

of various test questions, leaving little room for the discussion of alternative evaluation methods. A similar shortfall arises in the authors' brief introduction to creation science. While the creation science debate does affect Canadian teachers (Laidlaw, 2007), the authors' ambiguity is problematic from a science education perspective (Wiles, 2006).

The text's third shortfall relates to an issue in diversity education. Edmunds, Nickel, and Badley note that some curricula emphasize "accomplishments of Western civilization...while other cultures are often given a peripheral role. Similarly, Judeo-Christian ideas are highlighted with a nod to other religions" (p. 281). Unfortunately, this criticism is often true itself of *Educational Foundations in Canada*. While the text is explicitly progressive and advocates incorporating diverse perspectives in Canadian classrooms, the authors draw on mostly European and Judeo-Christian perspectives. Despite the strong influences these perspectives have had on Canadian education, teacher educators using this text in their classes would do well to augment this occasional gap with sources that examine underrepresented perspectives in the Canadian context (for example, hooks, 1994).

These areas for improvement reflect the authors' recognition that condensing Canadian educational foundations into a single text "might seem impossible, or at least intimidating" (p. xiii). However, as an introductory text, *Educational Foundations in Canada* provides teacher candidates with a range of perspectives on the most essential issues they will face in the profession. By approaching these issues from a reflective, pan-Canadian perspective, the authors have created a text that is useful in multiple Canadian contexts, and which is well positioned to support students enrolled in teacher education programs.

MICHAEL HOLDEN *Brock University*

#### REFERENCES

- Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cherubini, L. (2005). *Teaching, learning, and schooling: A reflective engagement* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Delaney, J. G. (2002). *Educational policy studies: A practical approach*. Calgary, AB: Detselig.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Collier Books, MacMillan.
- Drake, S. M. (2007). *Creating standards-based integrated curriculum: Aligning curriculum, content, assessment, and instruction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Egbo, B. (2009). *Teaching for diversity in Canadian schools*. Toronto, ON: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kitchen, J., & Dean, C. (2010). *Professionalism, law, and the Ontario educator*. St. Davids, ON: Highland Press.
- Laidlaw, S. (2007, April 2). Creationism debate continues to evolve. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from [http://www.thestar.com/life/2007/04/02/creationism\\_debate\\_continues\\_to\\_evolve.html](http://www.thestar.com/life/2007/04/02/creationism_debate_continues_to_evolve.html)
- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Stark, S., & Torrence, H. (2005). Case study. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.), *Research methods in the social sciences* (pp. 33-40). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wiles, J. R. (2006). A threat to geoscience education: Creationist anti-evolution activity in Canada. *Journal of the Geological Association of Canada*, 33(3), 135-140.
- Wotherspoon, T. (2009). *The sociology of education in Canada* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Zeichner, K. M., & Liston, D. P. (2014). *Reflective teaching: An introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.