

# **The Peripatetic Journey of Teacher Preparation in Canada**

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# The Peripatetic Journey of Teacher Preparation in Canada

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# Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables	vii
About the Authors	ix
Preface	xi
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Joseph Stafford</i>	
<b>Chapter 1 From a Social and Emotional Educational Process to Missionary Conversion and Schooling: The 1600s to the Fall of New France in 1763</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Joseph Stafford</i>	
<b>Chapter 2 Teacher Preparation in British North America before the Establishment of Normal Schools, 1763–1840</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>Joseph Stafford</i>	
<b>Chapter 3 Teacher Preparation in French Quebec, 1841–1975</b>	<b>57</b>
<i>Joseph Stafford</i>	
<b>Chapter 4 The Creation of the Educational State, the Normal School and the Formation of a Polity in the Emerging “Age of Empire,” 1841–1918</b>	<b>91</b>
<i>Rosa Bruno-Jofré</i>	

<b>Chapter 5 Teacher Preparation in English Canada in the Interwar Period: 1918–1945</b>	119
<i>Rosa Bruno-Jofré</i>	
<b>Chapter 6 Shaking Teacher Preparation/Education: The Post-war Period and the “Long 1960s”</b>	149
<i>Rosa Bruno-Jofré</i>	
Index	183

# List of Figures and Tables

## Chapter 2

Map 2.1. Canada, Circa 1800. Designed by Graham Pope. 37

## Chapter 3

Map 3.1. Canada, Circa 1867. Designed by Graham Pope. 58

## Chapter 4

Map 4.1. Canada, Circa 1905. Designed by Graham Pope. 106

## Chapter 5

Image 5.1 Education Department Building and the Normal and Model Schools for Upper Canada, Toronto, Taken in the 1890s. 124

Image 5.2 Marguerite Bourgeoys, Photograph by Jules-Ernest Livernois (1851–1933), Library and Archives of Canada, A-023401. 127

## Chapter 6

Map 6.1. Canada, Present Day. Designed by Graham Pope. 156

## Chapter 5

Table 5.1. Average Salaries of Teachers, and of Wage-earners and Salaried Employees in Manufacturing Industries, as Percentage of per Capita Income in Each Province, 1926, 1929, 1933, 1938. 144

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## Preface

The history of education has been a rich field of scholarship in Canada over the past 50 years. From the 1970s, research by Michael B. Katz, Alison Prentice, Susan Houston, Chad Gaffield, J.D. Wilson, Paul Stortz and others inspired scholars to understand the history of schools, teachers and the emerging educational state within the broad contours of social, economic, cultural and political change. Canadian historians of education cannot be accused of focusing narrowly on institutions. *The Peripatetic Journey of Teacher Preparation in Canada* by Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Joseph Stafford exemplifies the best of this tradition, bringing to the reader an underexplored area of history that deepens our understanding of both Canadian history and the history of education. In the process, the volume brings into sharp focus the centrality of education in not only promoting but also articulating deeply held and changing beliefs about what it means to be human and what society is for.

Writing a history of any aspect of Canadian educational history is complicated by the fact that education is a provincial, not a federal, jurisdiction, with the important exception of Indigenous schooling. Undaunted by the archival and research difficulties involved in providing a pan-Canadian overview, this volume situates teacher training, education and preparation within national and global histories, and particularly histories of education. The book provides important insights into the ways in which international discussions and ideas about education percolated through various elements in Canadian society, through the filter of regional, class, gender and racialized identities, influencing people and the structures within which they worked and lived. It provides, furthermore, an overview of the last four centuries of educational change, giving the reader a view that is not only geographically and sociopolitically broad but also that extends through the *longue durée*. Beginning with the traditional practices of families and communities in teacher preparation in Indigenous communities on the brink of colonization, the book goes on to trace the myriad changes associated with missionaries, colonization, the development of the educational state and the professionalization of teaching, ending with the revolutions of the long 1960s. The authors explore general educational trends, such as education's shift in focus from religious, moral and spiritual concerns to the secular, utilitarian and state-oriented ones, rooting these in the larger political and socioeconomic contours of Canadian history. The book adds a deep chronological perspective to its vast geographical reach.

While the focus on teacher training and preparation allows the authors to directly address and redress an underresearched area of educational history in Canada, the authors show us how the subject of teacher training provides an unusual and extremely fruitful perspective from which to explore the role and meaning of education within Canadian society and beyond. Teacher preparation was a discursive space where the promise and hopes for what education could and should accomplish were actively discussed and debated. From informal training to normal schools, teacher training was also a place where people – including teachers, community leaders, administrators, elected officials, local school boards, parents and even children – came together to mobilize those ideas into practice. *The Peripatetic Journey* fully realizes the potential of searching the spaces of teacher preparation for answers to questions about education’s contested meanings and purposes – practical and aspirational, local and global.

For the book does much more than articulate a linear transitions of progress or decline. Each chapter includes abundant evidence of the fractured, fragmented and contested nature of educational stability and change of the multiple voices, motivations, beliefs, ideologies and interests that were worked out through the discussions about and practices of teacher preparation. The result is not a cacophony of discordant voices, in spite of the fragmentation and conflict the book reveals. In the skilled hands of these historians, the reader is able to see as well broad patterns of change over time, waves of action, interaction and response around a range of key issues identified, and disagreed about, by Canadians. In the process, this volume succeeds in articulating just how important *education* was to the social, cultural and political contours of the public as Canadians collectively remade their individual subjectivity and gradually imagined what it was to be modern. As the authors aptly succinctly sum up in their introduction, they not only aim at placing their analysis within “prevailing political and economic processes” in relation to overlapping discourses but also at “leading the reader to explore the objectives of schooling, the contextual role of teachers and the political intentionalities sustaining the various educational conceptions and policies.” In all this, and more, they have succeeded.

Ruth W. Sandwell  
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Kingston, Ontario