

Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

2011-2012 Seminar Series

Dr. Hans Smits, University of Calgary

Is there an historical mission for teacher education?
Or is it too late?

ABSTRACT

The topic of the presentation is whether teacher education can be understood to have an “historical” mission. By that I mean whether it has, as a university-based discipline and activity, a responsibility to renew the world, for natality in Hannah Arendt’s terms. The other side of that question is whether teacher education can be contained as the product of science, so to speak, which carries with it the danger of reductionism, and diminishment of the obligation to think. A perspective I offer is that the preparation for and understanding of teaching implies the need to more fully assume an historical perspective, but that we are also always too late: we are always educating for “a world out of joint” and that preparing for the world as it is risks foreclosing on the responsibility to also change that world. I argue that this raises difficult questions for the purposes of teacher education. Teacher education cannot simply be for the purposes of adapting or responding to what already exists. To set the world anew means taking seriously the opportunities we can create for both teachers and learners in not just laboring well within existing structures and forms of practice, but participating in thinking about what is both needed and what is possible. While the idea of a “mission” for teacher education is arguably a problematic idea from a number of perspectives, there is nonetheless an urgent need to critically take up questions of purpose.



BIO

Hans Smits retired from the Faculty of Education, University of Calgary in June 2011. While at the University of Calgary, he served as an Associate Dean responsible for the Faculty’s Master of Teaching Program. His research interests include teacher education, hermeneutic inquiry in education, and curriculum theory. Dr. Smits’ recent work includes an edited collection (with Rahat Naqvi) *Thinking about and enacting curriculum in frames of war*. Lexington Books, 2011; a forthcoming collaboratively edited volume (Peter Lang) entitled, *Provoking Conversations on Inquiry in Teacher Education*; and a chapter, “Nocturne and fugue: Canadian curriculum theory as possibility.” (In Stanley, D. & Young, K. (eds.) *Contemporary studies in Canadian curriculum*, 2011).



Thursday, March 1st, 12:30 – 2:00
SCARFE Rm. 310
(light refreshments provided)