As if speed matters: finding a place for slowness in education

by

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Abstract

Business world values, particularly efficiency, productivity, calculability, competition and speed, have been imported largely unchallenged into contemporary Western education, rationalizing teaching and learning in the process. In this thesis, I explore how slower and more deliberate learning environments, particularly those more attuned to a child's own inner learning rhythms, have become a luxury in the present age of Fast education. I look at how Fast education practices generate greater levels of stress and anxiety among children and young people while also risking a disconnect with school and a disenchantment about learning generally. My thesis (which takes the form of an in-depth literature review) centers on the following research questions: *1) How have faster and more rationalized methods of teaching, learning and evaluating commonly found in contemporary education systems supplanted the slower models of education? 2) How have faster elements of learning in education become accepted, implemented and normalized to the point where they have become the default models for educators, administrators and parents? 3) What are some of the implications of faster education? and 4) How may educators and administrators still tailor and enact curricula with slowness in mind?* Research on Fast education practices is limited, this despite the fact that the business of Fast education and the values of efficiency, productivity, calculability, competition and speed have become the defining characteristics of contemporary education. Yet, much like the Slow Food movement that precedes the Slow Education movement, slowness is gaining attention and traction.

As a Slow teacher, I am advocating for a sense of balance and the rightful place of slowness, possible even in Fast education, because slowness is imperative to children's learning experiences, not to mention their educational dignity.

Résumé

Les valeurs du monde des affaires, en particulier l'efficacité, la productivité, la prévisibilité stratégique, la concurrence et la rapidité ont été importées, en grande partie sans contestation, dans le système éducatif occidental contemporain en rationalisant l'enseignement et l'apprentissage dans le processus. Dans cette thèse, j'explore comment les milieux d'apprentissage plus lents et plus réfléchis, en particulier les milieux adaptés aux rythmes d'apprentissage naturels de l'enfant, sont devenus un véritable luxe à l'ère actuelle de l'éducation rapide. J'examine de quelle façon les pratiques « d'éducation rapide » génèrent des niveaux de stress et d'anxiété élevés chez les enfants et les adolescents et comment elles risquent de provoquer le décrochage scolaire et peut-être même un désenchantement envers l'apprentissage en général. Ma thèse (qui consiste en un examen approfondi de la documentation) porte sur les questions de recherche suivantes : *1) De quelle façon les méthodes d'enseignement, d'apprentissage et d'évaluation plus rapides et plus rationalisées, que nous pouvons couramment observer dans les systèmes éducatifs contemporains, ont supplanté les méthodes d'éducation plus lentes? 2) De quelle façon les éléments d'apprentissage au rythme accéléré ont-ils été acceptés, mis en œuvre et normalisés dans le système éducatif, au point où, ils sont devenus les modèles par défaut pour les éducateurs, les administrateurs et les parents? 3) Quelles sont certaines des conséquences d'une éducation en accéléré ? 4) Est-il possible pour les pédagogues et les administrateurs d'adapter et de mettre en œuvre des programmes qui intègrent le concept de la lenteur ?* La recherche sur les pratiques de l'éducation en accéléré est limitée, et ce malgré le fait que l'entreprise de « l'éducation rapide » et les valeurs d'efficacité, de productivité, de prévisibilité stratégique, de concurrence et de rapidité sont devenues les caractéristiques déterminantes de l'éducation contemporaine. Pourtant, tout comme le mouvement « Slow Food » qui a précédé le mouvement « Slow Education », la lenteur gagne en attention et en popularité.

En tant qu’enseignant qui adhère au mouvement « Slow Education », je préconise une approche équilibrée qui accorde une place légitime à la lenteur dans l’éducation. Celle-ci est possible même dans un système « d'éducation rapide », car la lenteur est impérative pour les expériences éducatives des enfants, sans parler de leur dignité du processus d’apprentissage.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Main Argument, Purpose and Research Questions

At the heart of this thesis is a hopeful wish. It is a wish I hold for children and youth today and in the future, and one that is indicated in the title of this thesis: *As if speed matters: finding a place for slowness in education*. Simply put, my wish is that speed does not continue to consume slowness; that slowness in learning is given the rightful place it deserves.

That being said, I believe there is a place for slowness in education without having to overhaul education systems themselves. Still, we live in a world where education systems have come to mirror the business world, and where business world values, particularly efficiency, productivity, calculability, competition and speed have been imported largely unchallenged into education with harmful consequences, as many education and social theorists such as Holt (2002), Apple (2005) and Grenier (2016) have pointed out. In my thesis, I explore the following questions*1) How have faster and more rationalized methods of teaching, learning and evaluating commonly found in contemporary education systems supplanted the slower, more enchanting models of education? 2) How have faster elements of learning in education become accepted, implemented and normalized to the point where they have become the default model for educators, administrators and parents?; 3) What are some of the implications of faster education?; and 4) How may educators and administrators still tailor and enact curricula with slowness in mind?* Here, I should emphasize that I am not arguing for the end of fast forms of education per se and the start of limitless slowness; rather, I am advocating for a sense of balance and the rightful place of slowness in education, because slowness is imperative to children's learning experiences, not to mention their educational dignity.

1.2 The Slow Learning Experience

As an enthusiastic long-distance walker and voyager, I have come to recognize the similarities that can be found between a child's education experience and that of a long journey. A child's education experience is, in many ways, comparable to that of someone undertaking a pilgrimage, in that it presents an opportunity for a potentially transformative experience for the person involved. Much like a long journey, a child's education experience will be challenging and not without a degree of risk and moments of disappointment; however, one would hope it would also be meaningful and of value to future life experiences.

What is more, we can venture that, much like a person who undertakes a long journey, the educational journey of a child will be twofold: exterior and interior. That is to say that the exterior or physical learning environment of the school space works in duality with the interior learning environment that is the child's mind.

The exterior learning environment of an accelerated or fast-paced classroom will typically see the teacher trying to implement the content curriculum by maximizing the number of learning situations and moving rapidly and efficiently through the course content. Concurrently, the child's mind works frantically to keep pace, decipher and process knowledge and produce outcomes under pressure of the temporal regime that pervades such a learning environment. Conversely, we can envisage a slower more deliberate exterior learning environment – the slow classroom – where a child is invited by the teacher to connect and interact differently with the course content at hand; he or she is permitted the luxury to observe, encode, decode, question, contemplate and apply the content at a tempo more fitting to the student's own natural inner learning rhythm. In such an environment, slowness in learning is given the rightful place it deserves.

The temporal boundaries and limitations that pervade what I characterize as the Slow and Fast classrooms are as distinctive as they are different, and, as a consequence, generate vastly different learning experiences and thus, educational journeys for the child. An analogy of slow and fast teaching might be drawn to the hare and the tortoise in Aesop's famous fable. Slow teacher and author Jamie Thom (2018) explains that Mr. Hare's fast learning journey is composed of many isolated and erratic lessons, "tightly and energetically compressed into an hour... full of stimulating images…[and] spectacularly well organized." Mr. Hare has a "manic energy" about him and moves "with irresistible speed" (pp. 25-26). Mr. Tortoise, meanwhile, is more serene and refined. His lessons, which are carefully considered and have a sense of direction, are insightful and purposeful; they tend to be less reliant on Power Point slides and images. Mr. Tortoise's students have acquired the tools and resources necessary to improve their learning and are attentive to their role as learners (Thom, 2018). Thom (2018) ends his analogy by informing us that the success of Mr. Tortoise and his students has much to do with the teacher's having a coherent long-term picture in mind, and establishing a slower learning environment where teaching and learning happens progressively, over time, to facilitate the building of skills incrementally. On the other hand, Mr. Hare's "myopic thinking" and "mindless doing" approach to teaching and learning and his persistent "focus on results and achieving target grades" mean that he is "missing opportunities to prepare them [his students] for further school (or indeed, life) experience" (p. 27).

As I indicate throughout this thesis, contemporary education in North America reinforces the culture of speed, resting on the "time is money" principle, which according to the social theorist Jeremy Rifkin (1989) "best expresses the temporal spirit of the age" (p. 12). This is epitomized most markedly in its assembly line thinking, orientation towards results and grades,

and its reinforcement of conformity and competition, a model borrowed from business and industry, particularly Fordism, that made its way into education by way of the social efficiency movement in curriculum studies that, in the early part of the 1900s, would usher in 'a new system of education tied to the "callings in life . . . professional, commercial, productive and domestic"'(Kliebrand, 2004, p. 86). Conversely, Slow education, which has materialized precisely in response to the accelerated, predictable, and pragmatic rhythms of Fast education, conjures an altogether different image. Fundamentally, it recognizes the indispensability of non-cognitive human traits and abilities such as curiosity, interpersonal skills and grit, and understands that a child's natural rhythm of learning is paramount to both their sustained well-being and happiness and enhanced academic attainment.

1.3 A Professional Perspective

Moving forward, I feel it is important to point out at this early stage that the difficulties often associated with Fast education, as discussed in this thesis, are not, in my opinion, fundamentally to do with the substance of the curriculum or the subjects being taught as they are with the Fast education teaching and learning processes we have come to use and accept as normal. These processes are themselves a symptom of educational policymaking: the influence of business-world values and curriculum overload.

Over the years, having spoken with many co-teachers and friends at every level of the education field, I have come to realize how a teacher's teaching approach and methodology is greatly influenced by the rigidity of tight, over-crowded schedules and the precisely timed lesson plans they spawn. I have learned that mapping out precisely-timed lesson plans and cramming the learning schedule with content places constraints on learning. Not only does it force the

teacher to take short cuts and accelerate the learning process, it often spoils the chance for spontaneity, reduces opportunities for authentic circumstantial learning and dampens student self-expression. Needless to say, sometimes learning is lost.

Integral to Slow learning is the need to break away from the stifling nature of man-made time. What matters most on a child's educational journey is how deeply they connect to what it is they are learning, how intimately they engage with the required content and how much quality time, space and depth they are afforded to understand and apply what it is they know. The effectiveness of one's learning corresponds to the length, depth and pace one is afforded during one's learning experience. Sadly, it is my belief that while time, speed, efficiency, productivity and calculability continue to be imposed on education, the fruits of a child's learning will continue to primarily be the grades they receive, which often misleads them into believing they are good learners. This means that the widening, strengthening and liberating of the mind so integral to learning continues to be overlooked.

1.4 Organization of Thesis

Much of the first part of this thesis is concerned with grappling with how speed, efficiency and time alter the education journey of the child, while the latter part explores slowness and especially examples of slowness in education. To give the reader clear indication as they venture forth, I feel it is necessary to define some of the key terms and outline the main ideas presented in each part of the thesis. The following synopsis also shows how each chapter was deliberately approached as an in-depth engagement with particular thinkers, writers, educational theorists and practices.

In Chapter 2, *Society and Temporal Imperialism*, I explore modern Western society's reformulation of time; or how our conception of time has shifted from something naturally forming to something artificial and manmade, resulting in time becoming viewed as a scarce commodity. Referring primarily to the works of American economic and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin and German novelist Michael Ende, I exam how temporal imperialism – *the imposition of new and unfamiliar time standards on cultures and societies with long-established rhythms of time in order to cultivate new time values of punctuality and speed* – has become detrimental to the overall quality of a student's schooling experience and learning journey. Later in Chapter 2, I touch on the concepts of flexibility in time and unstructured time, drawing attention to the negative overtones such flexibility presents to societies that place increasingly great value on speed, productivity and efficiency in everyday life.

In Chapter 3, *The Arrival of Speed, How It Entered Education and Its Ramifications,* my argument centers on the emergence of speed as a prized social value in the North American psyche. In this part of the thesis, I look at how high-speed capitalism or *fast capitalism* – a postmodern stage of capitalism identified by social theorist Ben Agger (2004) – has accelerated and intensified, causing the rise of many late twentieth century social problems, the disconnection of people from their naturally forming circadian rhythms, and the disappearance of slowness. Here, I mention the relentlessness of our hurried contemporary lives and its harmful impact on society before considering how the "*mad theology of speed*" (Jamie Thom, 2018, p. 14) has entered into education systems bringing with it time-based biases and pressures that, I believe, are counterproductive to *effectual* learning. Consideration is given to how aspects of Fast education such as the aforementioned conveyor-belt thinking, product oriented mind-sets and obsessions with tests, assessment objectives and grades have conspired with tight

scheduling, overcrowded content curriculum and a push-down mindset (the pushing of academic standards from one grade down to the next) to alter the temporal dynamic of contemporary education. The burden of these expectations on children frequently obliges them to learn earlier, faster and more efficiently than ever, which not only adds to their stress and anxiety levels, but often comes at the expense of deeper, more meaningful learning experiences along with the premature disappearance of a child's time to be a child.

In Chapter 4, *The Rationalization of Education –Efficiency,* I consider contemporary education's fixation with efficiency. I look at how the integration, entrenchment and normalization of efficiency within education systems, and their ensuing standardization, is detrimental to skilled teaching and meaningful learning processes. Referring largely to the ideas presented by British sociologist Gary Wilkinson (2006), in his paper *McSchools for McWorld?,* as well as the cautionary words of Sociology of education professor Anthony R. Welch (1998), I consider how economic and business principles fuel efficiency in education. These practices have all but subordinated other more enchanting systems and approaches towards teaching and learning thus marginalizing the more empathetic social values of sustainability, community, cooperation, generosity, patience, reflection, all of which draw on slowness, while doing little more than building students into human capital for the mass labor market. The presence of these dehumanizing practices can be traced back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and especially to the dominant principles of scientific management as devised by Frederick W. Taylor, which infiltrated the curriculum and continue to have harmful and dehumanizing consequences today as education systems maintain their quest for efficiency.

Rationalized education systems work, but for whom? The answer put forth in Chapter 5, *The Rationalization of Learning***,** is that rationalized education systems, operating with an

emphasis on productivity, calculability, efficiency and control, appear to favor themselves rather than individual students, as quality, competency and mental well-being are often supplanted, and the magical elements or enchantment in learning is eliminated. Drawing on three scholars – George Ritzer's highly influential book *The McDonalization of Society*, German sociologist Max Weber's theory of rationalization, and the ideas of macrosociologist Frank Elwell, I reflect on how elements of organizational rationalization thinking, by which traditional, emotional and spiritual forces as influencers for societal behavior were replaced by formal rules, regulations, and procedures based on reason, have increasingly worked their way into education systems to detrimental effect. Here, I explore how rationalization, whose primary focus is on efficient, measurable and predictable outcomes, and whose culture is increasingly dominated by "technocratic thinking" (Elwell, 1996), systematically roots out anything that is remotely "magical, mysterious, fantastic, [and] dreamy" (Ritzer, 2000, p. 132). In the process, such thinking squeezes the life and joy out of learning and teaching experiences, generating instead dehumanizing and disenchanting systems, students and teachers. I argue that a rationalized, Fast education experience that is "geared solely to the product [of] test results" (Holt, 2002) and driven by the pursuit of higher academic standards and policy initiatives focused on an "education for employment" rhetoric (Apple, 2005, p. 275) – two characteristics of Fast education – is simply too much for many students to digest and enjoy.

In Chapter 6, I look at Slow education in theory – but choose to explore slow learning by seeing what it looks like in practice. I pay particular attention to how a teacher's attitudes and relationships towards time, the curriculum and their students inform their teaching and implementation of the curriculum differently. I draw on my own slow learning experiences as a student at Gosfield Community Primary School, a public elementary school in Essex, England,

before exploring practices at two non-mainstream institutions, Ecole Rudolf Steiner de Montréal, a Slow school in Montreal, Canada, and Blue Gum Community School in Canberra, Australia. Throughout, I aim to clarify several misconceptions around Slow education, notably around the word *slow* or the notion of *being slow*. Here, I question the soundness of the widespread assumption that speed equates to aptitude, slowness to a deficiency in academic aptitude. Finally, and this especially at a post-COVID time when wellness is receiving increased attention, brief consideration is given to how the practical application of slowness in learning supports relaxed cognition so as to reduce stress and anxiety in students.

In Chapter 7, I turn to British educator and author Jamie Thom (2018) as I present practical methods and ideas that teachers can integrate into their evolving practice to help them bring greater slowness into the classroom. I conclude by pointing towards the emergence of empathetic social consciousness movements - such as organic, small-scale farming and slow fashion – as sustainable response mainstream systems, and how they offer a more viable and sustainable alternative to faster, less sustainable modes of living.

It is my hope that I and other teachers can, in some small way, redefine how we view time and speed; that we can take the necessary steps to embrace slowness and democratize time in education. We need to combat speed and efficiency's relentless overpowering of contemporary education and its acceleration of the teaching and learning process, while establishing an educational framework that is both congenial to and compatible with the natural rhythms of students' learning.

Chapter 2: Time and Temporal Imperialism

"[E]very living being, event, process or object has its own inherent time or pace, its own *tempo giusto*"

-- Carl Honoré author of *In Praise of Slowness*

In Michael Ende's enchanting yet disconcerting 1973 novel *Momo,* "a battle is brewing over the politics of time."[1] In the story, dark powers in the shape of sinister men in grey suits from the Time Saving Bank descend on the friendly inhabitants of a sleepy and peaceful southern European city, bringing with them an icy cold air. Soon, the city's inhabitants are obsessed with saving and banking time, and become alienated from the rhythms of the natural world around them, losing all sense of the true meaning of their lives. As the story unfolds, the city finds itself in the "grip of a nightmare" (Ende, 1973, p. 95). Through coercion and the spread of time-saving propaganda and sloganeering, overseen by the men in grey suits, the business of time saving becomes contagious, reaching epidemic proportions among the increasingly hurried and progressively intolerant adult population. In their desire to "live the right kind of life" (p. 66) by not squandering time, the city's inhabitants become estranged from time itself and regard even the enchanted act of daydreaming almost as a criminal offence. The air of blissful timelessness that once infused the city is lost as time, reduced to material commodity, is robbed of any of its enchanting content and mystery. The driving force behind the inhabitants' blind fixation with time, speed, and efficiency is the heavenly image of a future of timeless time, promised to them by the powerful men in grey suits. Sadly, the promise is illusory.

[1] Jeremy Rifkin, Time Wars, p.10. Quotation taken from Rifkin's opening argument on the new temporal warfare taking hold of Western society.

The elusive image of timeless time hangs like a carrot on a stick, continually retreating, and resulting in their perpetual malaise and time sickness.

In this chapter, I will explore how Western society interacts within the construct of artificial, man-made time, with particular consideration given to the concept of time as it pertains to educational settings such a school. To achieve this, I will draw on works on the subject of time, reading Michael Ende's novel *Momo*, in relation with Jeremy Rifkin's (1987) insightful examination of our changing perceptions of time in his *Time Wars*.

In his thought-provoking examination of slowness and slow living movements, the Canadian journalist, Carl Honoré (2004) observes society's noticeable detachment from and disregard of traditional and natural time boundaries such as honoring Sundays and the changing of seasons, before suggesting that "The very nature of time seems to have changed" (p. 35). Honoré's observations will strike a chord with many time-stressed individuals whose lives are lived against the clock. This scenario rings particularly true in a modern Western context, as supported by social theorist Jeremy Rifkin in his powerful work, *Time Wars* (1987). There he explores the development of time-keeping technology and its repercussions on contemporary society. Rifkin (1987) is more candid and unequivocal than Honoré in his assessment of how our temporal orientation or concept of time has been changing for the worse, with "contemporary Western culture...so utterly obsessed with timetables and deadlines, due dates and expiration dates..." (p. 69) that it "finds itself incapable of catching up with the time demands of the modern age" (p. 21). Rifkin (1987) goes on to declare that we have "brand[ed] our temporal biases onto the ancient rhythms of the universe in the hope of sequestering time" (p. 10). That is, as if by some grand act of cultural social conditioning, much of Western society has come to believe that time is a tangible thing, "a rare resource" (p. 12) that can be chopped up into rigid periods and

neatly packaged within fabricated “artificial time environments” and “time ordering systems” (pp. 20-21 & p. 221) in the form of “calendars, clocks, schedules, and now computer programs” (p. 14). Time is no longer cherished and venerated “for the rhythmic pulse of the natural world” (p. 101) with its “incoming and outgoing tides, the rising and setting of the sun, and the changing seasons” now deemed superfluous in our technologically-driven modern era (pp. 20-21). Instead of being an abstract, naturally-forming entity or concept, time is now routinely viewed as a mechanized and commoditized resource that is often in short supply. “Time is seen as linear, fast-moving, ever accelerating, and a scarce resource,” asserts Rifkin (1987, p. 72).

Within the context of an industrial setting, such as a factory production line, with its deadlines and output targets, fast-moving time may have its place. In an environment such as a school, however, likening learning to operating a production line or accelerated learning makes little if any sense. As conveyed so vividly by Ende (1973) in *Mom*o, and as will be discussed throughout this thesis, imposing on one sphere of society, in this case a contemporary school setting, an ideology conceived in a different time and sphere, that being a twentieth century factory system, is quite unnatural. Such an accelerated and reduced education experience threatens to sacrifice what makes the learning journey enjoyable and worthwhile. Yet, as Kliebard (2004) points out, for early twentieth century social efficiency reformers, schools at the turn of the century were already on a different educational journey, imbued with an objective “to adopt a much more direct and more pronounced social purpose” (p. 79). Kliebard (2004) explains: “The basic intention of social efficiency’s proponents was to overthrow the established order in education as represented by the traditional humanist curriculum” (p. 77). For the humanists, preserving their ideals of intellectual development and mental discipline would prove arduous with the social efficiency movement’s educational doctrine strengthened by the “now-

potent backing of science in order to insure it" (p. 76). Portrayed as "irrelevant" and "of no value to the new population then entering school" (p. 77), the academic curriculum appeared, to exponents of the social efficiency movement, wasteful and "represented a great loss in efficiency" to such an extent that it was considered harmful to children who, according to education reformer Leonard P. Ayres, were in danger of "retardation" or "not making normal progress in school" (cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 87). For Ayres, it would be necessary for the so-called inefficient curriculum "to be replaced by a curriculum attuned to the needs of a new population and a new industrial order" (Kliebard, 2004, p. 87). Needless to say, "scientifically attuning the curriculum" would become inevitable (Kliebard, p. 84).

2.1 Temporal Imperialism and the child

Preceding Rifkin's work by fourteen years, Ende's novel *Momo* remains a significant and timely reminder of the forbidding reality facing much of the Western world today: "temporal imperialism" (Rifkin, 1987, p. 135). Throughout *Momo*, the men in grey suits "legitimize the way they manipulate and regulate social time" (Rifkin, p. 14). For these menacing men, "[a]dults are far easier to turn into timesavers," and bring under their direct control, while the city's children become their sworn natural enemies. But for the existence of children, announces a corrupt judge to the men in grey suits, "mankind would have been completely in our power long ago" (Ende, p. 107).

Unsupervised by adults, wild and in danger of becoming "morally depraved" (Ende, p. 167), the children of the city, of which ten-year old Momo is one, indulge in the luxury of "flexibility in time" (Eriksen, 2001, p. 130). Flexibility in time was an idea introduced by English anthropologist Gregory Bateson and later defined by Norwegian anthropologist Thomas

Hylland Eriksen. In his study of how slow time has become a limited resource in the information age, Eriksen (2001) conveys the Batesonian notion of flexibility in time as "vacant time, empty time, time available which has not been efficiently filled with specified activities or a specified kind of information input" (p. 130). Unlike compressed time, where all the gaps in one's day are filled to overflowing, flexibility in time is more akin to unstructured time. For the men in grey suits from the Time Saving Bank, unstructured time is contentious. In *Momo*, the idea of children having flexibility in time and "loafing around" the city (Ende, p. 167) sits uneasily with the city's authorities: "[t]ime for meandering thoughts, for slow activities with no instrumental aim and no fixed duration" (Bateson cited in Eriksen, 2001, p. 130). The existence of such an unstructured and timeless time environment, the men in grey suits quickly realize, is not only unpredictable and difficult to control, but makes transforming children from "the raw material of the future" into "an army of experts and technicians" enormously challenging (Ende, p. 167). Before long, the city's children are taken care of – quite literally; they are rounded up and dispatched to newly built centres know as 'child depots,' Ende's euphemism for schools, where children remain captive under the watchful eye of supervisors. Here, they are taught how to play functional games of 'real' value to society, like data retrieval (Ende, p. 193) so as to be "moulded into useful and efficient members of society" (p. 167). Their *eigenzeit* (or *own time*) is stolen from them. The children, who no longer have time for fun, live out their wretched school lives in terror of the men in grey suits. For these men, play is deplorable and children should be *educated* out of it. Gradually, the city's children are conditioned not to deviate from the "TIME SAVED IS TIME DOUBLED!" principle (Ende, p. 65; emphasis in the original) and come to believe that "idleness is the enemy of the soul" (Rifkin, p. 95). Ende's narrative brilliantly portrays the

machinery of temporal imperialism at full force, as it brutally alters the lives of the city's children, leading to loss of their vibrant imaginations and inner spirit.

Rifkin (1987) writes at length on the subject of temporal imperialism in relation to children and education. Children, who are "temporally uninformed" before entering school, he emphasizes, are "easily molded to the temporal demands of the clock and the work schedule" (Rifkin, p. 110). "Indoctrinated" and "habituated" in "training grounds" to "embrace the new concept of scheduling," they become disciplined "in the ways of the new temporal orientation" in which they find themselves (Rifkin, pp. 111-113). From the industrial age to the present day, a primary function of the public school system has been to strengthen a culture's temporal orientation by cultivating the desired time values and temporal dispositions in children. This point is reinforced by Hamilton:

> By the twentieth century, the batch production rhetoric of the 'classroom system' (for example, lessons, subjects, timetables, grading, standardization, streaming) had become so pervasive that it successfully achieved a normative status—creating the standards against which all subsequent educational innovations came to be judged. (cited in Goodson, 1995, p. 28)

As Rifkin (1987) points out, commentating on scheduling in the early 1800s: "Educators enthusiastically embraced the new concept of scheduling and were quick to transpose the disciplined rhythms of factory work directly into the classroom" (p. 112). Today, "[t]o be punctual, disciplined, fast-paced, and future-directed" (Rifkin, p. 113) is, for many nations, desirable, associated with their economic welfare.

That the aforementioned ‘desirable’ thinking and behaviors of punctuality, discipline, speed and ambition entered educational environments is unsurprising. Rifkin’s historical analysis makes this point clear. Once “sporadic, leisurely, unpredictable, and…tied to experiences rather than abstract numbers” (p. 101), time, as it was perceived in medieval times, succumbed to the industrial age and the factory system of production. With its new mechanized system came the emergence of the mechanical clock, “ a radical new tool to assert power over the masses” (p. 102) whose intrusion in the lives of the “working population” ultimately “conditioned the human mind to perceive time as external, autonomous, continuous, exacting, quantitative, and divisible” (p. 103). The outcome: seconds, minutes and hours replaced sunrise, high noon, and sunset (Rifkin) resulting in the new temporal dynamic of society. Much like the early industrial worker, the school-age child was now expected to surrender his or her own naturally occurring temporal rhythms for the temporal regimentation and time discipline imposed on them by the school.

Both Michael Ende’s time-saving narrative in *Momo* and Jeremy Rifkin’s insights and observations about time in *Time Wars* alert us to an old and familiar, yet intensifying and perplexing, problem facing education today, one that challenges those responsible – from parents to teachers to administrators to policymakers – to confront and respond to it as best they can in order to find a suitable remedy. The issue specifically centers on how temporal imperialism, and that of accelerated time and time pressure, imposes itself on contemporary education, particularly in relation to learning; or more expressly, how temporal imperialism becomes detrimental to the overall quality of a student’s schooling experience and his or her enjoyment of learning. As Honoré (2004) correctly points out, “Schools teach [children] to live by the clock and use time as efficiently as possible” (p. 249). This is a point Rifkin (1987) substantiates:

> One of the teacher's primary responsibilities is to establish a pace and rhythm in the classroom that mimics the tempo in the larger world for which the children are being prepared…Children are taught to cram, compartmentalize, and segment their learning to conform with the dictates of clocks, bells, and schedules. Even the pace and tempo in the hallways…resemble the frenetic and often frantic rhythms of the larger urban environment. (p. 71)

In an accelerated or Fast education system, predictability, calculability, punctuality, efficiency and speed are inescapable implications for the students and teachers. From first-hand experience inside the classroom, I have seen how they dictate the increasingly hurried tempo of a student's schooling experience, often generating a sense of overwhelming academic uncertainty among students and hindering their learning ability and potential. The faster pace of learning, helped by curricular directives, means that deeper learning is frequently sacrificed and quantity takes precedence over quality. This is a point raised by education advocate and filmmaker Vicki Abeles (2015), as she quotes neuroscientist Laurence Steinberg: "emphasizing quantity over quality, and content over mastery of complex skills, our traditional education model is missing crucial opportunities to enhance brain maturation at a critical time" (p. 37). In many ways, a more natural process of learning, as will be discussed frequently throughout this thesis, resists attempts at greater efficiency and speed. In short, a student expected to race through content and pass tests cannot be expected to *learn* without sacrificing something in return.

Time-based bias is embedded in just about every aspect of the school day, which in turn generates considerable pressure on young minds. Here are a few examples: early inflexible start times, predetermined blocks of time for learning, rushed transition times between classes, project deadline times, an emphasis on test preparation time, little time afforded to savor and digest food

at lunch time, regulated toilet time and equally regulated time for creative play and socialization at recess. Based on personal and professional experience, I have noticed that most children and adolescents are unaccustomed and ill-disposed to submit readily to the "no standing still" (Berg & Seeber, 2014, p. 8), 'keep busy' and productive principles of temporal imperialism: in short, the frenzied rhythms that schools impose. They long for the chance to step off the ferocious treadmill and enjoy flexibility or empty time: time not filled with specified activities. Like an intimidating shadow, the frenetic pace of school life follows children home in the shape of increasingly large amounts of homework and scheduled organized after-school sports activities.

As classroom teacher and author Jamie Thom (2018) asserts, "In our content-rich curriculum, we often feel the need to rush through material" (p. 60). He continues: "classrooms should be sanctuaries of routine, patience and calm that teach vital 'slow' skills: listening, concentration and most importantly the capacity to reflect and think about learning" (p. 12). If adequate time for reflection is not allowed, he believes, "a significant number of students will give up…" (p. 61). To this end, I believe the imperialistic time mindset dominating temporal dynamics in Western education today necessitates greater scrutiny, with the view of ultimately developing a more empathetic and humanistic appreciation of a child's *own* naturally occurring temporal rhythms of learning. Indeed, Rifkin (1987) urges just that, imploring us "to develop a far more sophisticated understanding of the politics of time" (p. 13).

It is with Rifkin's counsel in mind that consideration must be given to time's elusive nature and how it is understood and valued differently, culturally and biologically speaking. "No two cultures share identical conceptions of time" (Rifkin, 1987, p. 59). The temporal landscape that dominates the ethos of one culture, engraining itself deep into the minds of its people, for instance, may be regarded rather confusingly or unfavorably by another. It is a point I am

frequently reminded of by students from countries such as India, whose time orientation is more cyclical than linear (Honoré, 2004). For many of these students, coming to grips with Canada's more linear and rationalized temporal standard and order of regularity often proves challenging. Indeed, Canada's educational systems have established their own durational rules, governing what is acceptable in terms of the time to cover virtually everything from course content to the length of an examination and, as I have already mentioned, even how much time one gets for recess and lunch. Institutionalization of time frequently causes many of the older students I work with considerable distress as they are unfamiliar with the unbending demands of schedules and deadlines that are part of the country's temporal standard. As Satish Kumar, Indian activist and founder of The Small School in England, makes clear, "It is a Western disease to make time finite, and then to impose speed on all aspects of life" (cited in Honoré, 2004, p. 32).

As Ende (1973) graphically describes in *Momo*, temporal imperialism is pervasive in all aspects of life, going far beyond the school setting, often invading the most private areas of our personal lives. For instance, Rifkin (1987) emphasizes that employers have even superimposed a "set of rigid standards governing how much time the employee can officially grieve before returning to work" (p. 62). This is yet another example of temporal imperialism at play, and a legitimate point of contention for many people coming from outside of the North American temporal dynamic, whose rituals, customs and traditions may necessitate longer periods of time to express their grief in the event of the death of a loved one.

Research suggests that a person's representation of time may influence the speed at which they learn. In a study to determine the differences in attitude and judgment in time awareness among seventy-three male undergraduates, psychologists Robert Knapp and John Garbutt (1958) identified three distinct time groups: Dynamic-Hasty, Naturalistic-Passive, and

Humanistic. Although dated, the study, known as the Time Metaphor Test, affords a unique insight into how we experience time differently. We have to wonder why such a study (on which Rifkin draws) has not (to my knowledge) been replicated.

In brief, in a series of tests, participants were presented with a range of images representing time – from fast-moving to static – and asked to choose the five images that *best* expressed their notions of time, and the five that *least* adequately expressed their notions of time. The study's findings revealed that the Dynamic-Hasty group of students, who just so happened to be high academic achievers and the most successful students on standardized tests, thought of time as a speeding train, a dashing waterfall and a fleeing thief. This was quite unlike the Naturalistic-Passive group, who chose images from nature: drifting clouds, a road leading over a hill, and The Rock of Gibraltar: images that depict time as motionless. Finally, the Humanistic group identified images that viewed time as "either human or human surrogate figures" (p. 431): an old woman spinning, a burning candle, a string of beads.

Rifkin's (1987) interpretation of Knapp and Garbutt's (1958) analysis is pertinent to the ongoing discussion and worthy of summary. Of the Dynamic-Hasty group, he reasons that they regard time as "an obstacle to overcome and an enemy to defeat," and who view learning fast as a defining characteristic of a good student, which in post-industrial, North America is, as Rifkin claims, something "we have come to pay homage to." On the contrary, for the Naturalistic group, "[t]ime is seen as cyclical, repetitive, and sacred," reminiscent of Buddhist or Eastern thought and of a temporal perspective evocative of "pastoral cultures." Of the Humanistic group, he suggests their images were "related to the time sense that dominated classical Mediterranean thought" (pp. 72-73).

The significance of this study, though somewhat dated, as noted, is crucial for teachers and policymakers alike. Put simply, a child's disposition to learning; that is to say, their ability to absorb, understand and apply content and the level of care and attention given to learning, is deeply connected to personally-experienced temporal rhythms and perception of time. Honoré (2004) makes a relevant point when he reminds us that, "[E]very living being … has its own inherent time or pace, its own tempo giusto" (p.38). Yet, in "hyperefficient" time environments such as school (Rifkin, p. 239), and in societies motivated by speed and efficiency, greater valuation and credibility is given to so-called faster and more intelligent students, and marginalization of those students with slower temporal orientations. As Rifkin (1987) corroborates:

> [O]ur entire educational system penalizes those students who view time in more passive, natural forms. These kinds of students are likely to be more open and vulnerable, less controlling and manipulative in their approach to learning. They are apt to view life more as an aesthetic experience than a contest. They learn more by participation than by detachment. (p. 73)

In virtually every sphere of life in the modern age, from transportation to food production and from medicine to farming, slow persists alongside fast. Yet, "When fast and slow time meet, fast time wins" (Eriksen, 2001, p. 150). According to sociologist Ben Agger (2004), the intensification and speeding up in how we live our lives today can now also be attributed to the Internet and World Wide Web, which he proclaims have "colonized the planet," leading to profound changes in "the ways we start our days (with e-email), communicate (e-mail, again, and chat), learn about and teach the world (Web pages), entertain and stimulate ourselves, shop and travel, and make intellectual contracts" (p. 3). To paraphrase Agger, just about everything

we do in our day to day, Western lives, including communicating, corresponding, connecting, consuming, studying and working have accelerated exponentially because of the Internet. In less than a generation, the Internet has compressed time to the point where we now as if seamlessly move between everyday life, family, work, school and social lives, without any boundaries between realms once considered distinct. Put simply, the Internet and the breathtaking acceleration it brings has eroded the social boundaries that shape our lives and has, in return, delivered us into "instantaneity" (Agger, 2004, pp. 3-5). While, the Internet is the conduit to the speed we now crave, it comes at the expense of slowness and sacrifices slow living and all that such living gives. Andreas Huyssen (1994) echoes this paradox in his book *Twilight Memories*, a collection of essays on memory and amnesia in the postmodern world. He cautiously declares: "The high-tech world we have entered is neither apocalypse nor panacea" (p. 5); yet, "the more we live with new technologies of communication and information cyber-space, the more our sense of temporality will be affected" (p. 9) Today, more than ever, suggests Agger (2004), we desire and "expect things quickly, instantly, including our fast food, fast cars, fast bodies, fast work, fast reading, and fast writing" (p. 5). Yet, more than ever, our modern lives are in need of reflection, mindfulness, patience, empathy, and inquisitiveness, the virtues that slowness and slow living propagate– as I will also argue.

As I write this thesis, the world community is coming to terms with the gravity of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the enormity of its impact on our everyday lives. Quite literally, it has taken a virus and the ensuing virtual house arrest to slow us down, forcing the hurried lives of billions of people around the world to a screeching halt. Normality suspended, with many people under-stimulated, the enforced slow down has given those of us fortunate enough not to be living a knife edge existence or facing extreme hardship sufficient time to reflect on the pace

at which we live our lives. Our once hurried days sidelined, a new life could be re-imagined and a slower perspective take hold as we considered ways to confront our boredom and fill our time, which now crawls by spider-slow. For many people, this new, slower existence may be the first time since childhood that they have been afforded an abundance of vacant or empty time. Who knows what silver lining may have come from such a severe social catastrophe? Slowing down and simply becoming reacquainted and reconnected with the natural rhythms of the self, and reclaiming a sense of the true meaning of our existence, may even prove to be an antidote to the velocity at which we live out our modern time-depleted lives.

Chapter 3: The Arrival of Speed, How It Entered Education and Its Ramifications

"Speed is a great gift until it gets out of hand"

Thomas Erikson – The Tyranny of the Moment

In the winter of 1967, Donald Campbell, a British world land and water speed record breaker, attempted to regain his water speed record in the tranquil setting of Coniston Water in England's Lake District. Having already rocketed to a spectacular speed of over 310 mph (500 km/h), Campbell decided to make an even faster second run. Turning his jet-powered speedboat *Bluebird* into the stillness of the lake's waters, he applied the throttle and accelerated, surging forward and reaching full velocity in a matter of seconds. Yet, unbeknownst to Campbell's team, who were stationed at one end of the lake measuring Campbell's speed, something was amiss. Without warning, the boat catapulted out of control across the water, split into pieces and sank soon afterwards. Campbell's body was not discovered until 2001, a full thirty-four years after the event.

Holder of multiple land and water speed world records, Campbell was not alone in his pursuit of supersonic speed. In reality, he was a speed pioneer and part of the modern age that had come to venerate the increase in speed, someone who enthusiastically viewed the notion of speed as a sign of technological advancement and success. Notably in the Western world, this epoch was, according to Rifkin (1997), a period "characterized by…a restless energy that preys on speed records and shortcuts, unmindful of the past, uncaring of the future, [and] existing only for the moment and the quick fix" (p. 21). By the turn of the twentieth century, amid the intensification of modernization and the fervor of Frederick Winslow Taylor's principles of scientific management and the efficiency of the Ford production line, speed, along with the

emergent values of individualism, utility, efficiency, productivity, competition, and consumption – spawned largely through the rise of high-speed capitalism (Taylor, 2014) – had "risen into prominence as a value of Western society and [was] an important factor in the motivation of individuals" (Rifkin, 1997, p. 73). Not surprisingly, then, to be efficient, productive and fast were virtues that would come to define the national psyche of many rapidly industrializing, Western nations, particularly the United States of America (Eriksen, 2001). These emergent values would form the production power that would rapidly propel Western society towards a faster order of things, or what Agger (2004) describes as a new stage modernity called *fast capitalism* (p. 2), the implications of which have now reached all areas of society, including education.

At the time of Campbell's ill-fated attempt to regain the world water speed record, much of post-war Western society was already profoundly "transfigured by acceleration" (Colvile, 2016, p. 7). Indeed, the foundation for today's accelerated way of life was established almost two hundred years ago, largely as a result of nineteenth century technological advancements, in the interconnected systems of transportation and wireless communications (Taylor, 2014). Inventions such as the photograph and telegraph (1830s), the transatlantic cable (1866), the telephone (1876), and the wireless telegraphy (1895), whose developments were made possible by railroad expansion, were, as Postman (1992) observes, part of a "communications revolution" (p. 42) that came to form the physical infrastructure, rapidly "transform[ing] the face of material civilization" (p. 44). With the "connection between duration and distance" significantly reduced to the point of elimination (Erikson, 2001, p. 57), acceleration became ubiquitous and society succumbed to the "cult of speed," an expression often used by the Canadian journalist, Carl Honoré (2004). Yet, according to the cultural critic Mark C. Taylor, in his provocative book

Speed Limits (2014), as the tempo of modern life accelerated and intensified throughout the twentieth century, the cult of speed inflicted enormous psychological harm on people. Taylor (2014) elaborates on his claim by explaining that though "exhilarating" for some people, society's adaptation to speed was less than smooth. Now "[w]ith the landscape incessantly rushing by faster than it could be apprehended" (Taylor, 2014, p. 23), disorientation, fragmentation of attention, psychological exhaustion, physical distress, anxiety, and even neurasthenia became, according to physicians of the day, common disorders, contributing to the alteration of the human mind, to the point of altering emotional temperament (Taylor, 2014). Rifkin (1987) goes deeper by suggesting that "this greatly accelerated time orientation" has potentially damaged our intimate relationship with the rhythms of social life, estranging us from the "organic bond with the pulse of the natural world" (p. 36). That is to say, speed has alienated us from the slower-paced rhythms established and maintained by the human species over thousands of years (Rifkin, 1987). Unquestionably, the extent and intensity of acceleration in all domains of our modern lives means that we have had to adapt accordingly, raising the question that if our minds have indeed adapted to speed and are indeed programmed for it, then what are the downsides of such reprogramming?

Both Honoré and the British political commentator Robert Colvile hold the similar opinion that the human brain is now programmed or "hardwired" (Honoré, 2004, p. 33) for speed, and that acceleration is something we "crave…and demand" (Colvile, 2016, p. 29). Emeritus Professor and renowned cognitive scientist Guy Claxton (1998) adds to this view, suggesting that "in contemporary 'Western' society… we seem to have generated an inner, psychological culture of speed…mirroring the outer culture…" (pp. 5-6). For his part, the Czech-born French writer Milan Kundera theorizes in his novel *Slowness* (2002) how "speed is the form

of ecstasy the technical world has bestowed on man" (p. 2), only to lament later that speed (not ecstasy) is not without crude and impetuous side effects, notably the vanishing of "the pleasure of slowness" (p. 3). "Speed is modern, and modernity has existed for at least a couple of hundred years" insists Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2001, p. 57) who then bemoans, at length, the downside of speed which has led to simplification, creating an assembly line effect and accompanying loss of precision.

Our thirst for speed appears to hold no bounds. Yet, a clear distinction must be made at this point between what can be characterized as heightened moments of short-lived exhilarating speed and that of a hectic and a hurried *life*, as each are entirely different things with potentially different outcomes. While brief moments of heightened, pulsating speed – of the thrill-seeking, high ecstasy variety – may have a place in the lives of many people, such an indulgence in speed is not to be confused with a life that is chronic, prevalent and arduous: that of the hurried, time-stressed life. This is a point Parkins and Craig (Slow Living, 2006) substantiate in their examination of the Slow Food movement as they declare: "We are enslaved by speed and have succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast Life" (p. 53). The Fast Life under discussion here is persistently frantic, over-scheduled and unmanageable, and has come to permeate much of contemporary Western society today, often pushing to the limits of human tolerance. Mark C. Taylor, (2014) adding to Parkins and Craig's (2006) observations, encapsulates both the breathlessness and absurdity to which our fast-paced, contemporary Western life has led us. In the introduction to his book *Speed Limits* he seethes:

> …just-in-time everything…sleeping with an iPhone beside the bed…checking email all night…longer and longer workdays week after week….everything speeds up until time

> itself seems to disappear, and fast is never fast enough – everything has to be done now, instantly. (p. 1)

Modernity brings with it speed, or as Eriksen (2001) claims, "Modernity *is* speed" (p. 159; emphasis added), and while much of modern society may enjoy the vast benefits that heightened speed provides, particularly in the area of technology, the tyranny of a fast, over-scheduled or hurried life causes many of us to live what Eriken (2001) describes as "a fragmented and rushed temporality" (p. 148), which comes with unintended consequences. The relentlessness of a fast or hurried life is, I believe, both disruptive to our well-being and unsustainable in the long run. That is to say, our physical, mental and emotional health suffers and risks serious problems as a consequence of being constantly exposed to increased levels of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, which are the product of the body's response to a hurried life. In their joint article for *Psychology Today*, Sword and Zimbardo (2013) soundly reinforce this argument:

> We can try to sustain living at breakneck speed but sooner or later, physically, mentally and/or emotionally we fall apart. Our bodies – and minds – weren't meant to endure continual stress. Blood pressure spikes – and eventually remains at an elevated level, hearts wear out, we become irritable and easily angered, and we get upset – sometimes to the point of weeping - from frustration and exhaustion. (p. 1)

An unceasingly hurried and stressful life, then, is detrimental to the health and well-being of most people, but particularly for adolescents who, according to prominent neurologist Frances E. Jensen (2015), respond differently to stress than adults do. In her thorough yet accessible book

The Teenage Brain, Jensen (2015) cautions that "stress is terrible for learning," and that the "effects of stress on learning and memory on teenagers can predispose them to mental health problems, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" (p. 173). Jensen's research and theories on stress and the teenage brain become even more pertinent when considering Robert Colvile's (2016) disquieting words on the subject of the brain and stress, when he says, "Stress also weakens the brain, by breaking down the neural loops that hold short-term memories together…the greater amount of stress we experience, the smaller volume of grey matter in our brains" (p. 55). Furthering the discussion of speed's destructive nature, Taylor (2014) is forthright in assessing where speed is taking us, suggesting that unless we slow down certain processes soon, "increasing speed threatens the complex social, cultural, political, economic, technological, and natural networks on which life depends" (p. 6).

Clearly, we live in an era in which speed is inescapable, and where people appear habituated to fast living, at least outwardly. Nonetheless, the demands of fast lifestyles come with an accumulation of "possibly serious side-effects" to both the individual and society as a whole (Eriksen, p. 59). These side effects include: a "poverty of attention" and "perceived lack of empathy" (Colvile, 2016, p. 47 & p. 52); being "less patient…less spontaneous, less joyful" (Rifkin, pp. 19-20); an increase in stress and anxiety (Taylor, 2014); a "compulsiveness around punctuality and using time efficiently" and "becom[ing] surly" and antagonistic when forced to wait (Elkind, 2007, p. 204).

We have reached a point in time where modern civilization pays a heavy toll for its preoccupation and obsession with speed. Ours is a hectic and hurried world in which quantity trumps quality and chronic stress and bouts of impatience are on the rise. On this point, Taylor (2014) is prophetic, suggesting that worse is to come: "As acceleration accelerates, individual

societies, economies, and even the environment approach meltdown." More optimistically, though, and as a means to avert, or at least minimize, society's imminent psychological, social, economic, ecological meltdown, Taylor draws on the insight of Nietzsche, calling for a prudent "transvaluation of values" (p. 342), or, more precisely, the re-cultivation of and commitment to the values that he believes have been greatly repressed; these being, "relationships, community, cooperation, generosity, patience, subtlety, deliberation, analysis...and reflection" (p. 343), all of which are tied to slowness. The re-cultivation of values is a crucial point that I will touch upon later in the conclusion of the thesis.

At this stage of the discussion, however, I need to be clear that I am neither a romantic idealist nor a detester and resister of speed. Much like many people living in North America, I have a complex relationship with speed. On the one hand, I profit enormously from the extraordinary benefits that speed provides in the form of fast transit systems and high-speed Internet connections; yet, on the other hand, I am frequently at odds with what appears to be the blind compulsion that everything fast is efficient and must, therefore, be good. Put simply, not all things fast are good, a point Honoré (2004) must have had in mind when he sagely advised that "some things cannot, should not, be sped up. They take time; they need slowness" (p. 4). This pearl of wisdom is of course open to individual interpretation and circumstance. Take writing, for instance. For some people, writing is a deeply reflective undertaking that requires slowness to arrive at the best results, while for others writing at speed and under pressure of a deadline can yield the same. Similar thinking applies to a multitude of everyday activities from walking to eating and cooking to driving. In a sense, like most people, I can be both Hare and Tortoise in my daily life; but, most importantly, and this is significant for my health and mental well-being, I try to stay mindful about why I am going fast or slow. In other words, I try to be attentive as

possible to the speed at which I do something and why. Driving at breakneck speed will only cause me unwanted anxiety and stress, so I don't do it. Taking the time to listen to people carefully and patiently, without distraction, greatly improves my understanding of what is in someone's mind and affords insight into their needs. This careful attention to speed that I speak of draws us closer to the issue at hand, namely the place of speed in education and learning and the effect of a hurried life on children and adolescents.

"The claim that faster is always better is nowhere more questionable than when reading, writing, and thinking" (Taylor, 2014, p. 279), three aptitudes that happen to be indispensable to students throughout their formal learning experiences and school life. Yet, these three fundamental aptitudes, among others, may not be receiving the slowness they deserve. Embedded in the structure of education is the prevailing assumption that speed equates to intelligence and resides in efficiency and productivity, while in slowness can be found inefficiency and idleness. Although speed in education is an alluring idea, and one typically held in cultures valuing and celebrating displays of productivity and efficiency, I believe it is both a deceptive and dangerous fallacy. Put simply, speed is counterproductive to *effectual* learning and teaching. Moreover, as a consequence of increasingly broad and overcrowded planned content curricula, which cannot always be enacted, speed becomes the enemy for teacher and student alike. As author of *Slow Teaching*, Jamie Thom (2018) cautions: "pace can be overrated: it needs to be coupled with essential slow skills…It is time to control the mad theology of speed that is damaging the teaching profession; to press pause and reflect on an educational system that is being stretched to its limits" (pp. 13-14). For Rifkin (1987), the mad theology of speed translates, in practice, into children competing with the clock in classrooms where they speedily absorb material which then must be recalled even faster if they are to score high grades. Attaining high

grades, Elkind (2007) reminds us, "read as a measure of *their* [a student's] competence…rather than how well they learn" (p. 56). The temporal dynamic of contemporary education is for some children, the ones who play ball, entirely rewarding. Yet, for most children it is repressively fast and in conflict with their natural rhythms of learning, so much so, that it has potentially damaging, unproductive and inefficient outcomes for students, teachers and society, resulting in greater discouragement and apathy in the field of education.

To reiterate, rooted in the structure of Fast education are such characteristics as: "conveyor-belt" thinking (Holt, 2002, p. 1), product and result-oriented mind-sets (Wright, 2014), and an "obsess[ion] with marking schemes and assessment objectives" (Grenier, p. 79, 2016). The late Professor Maurice Holt (2012), founder of the Slow Education Movement believed as much:

> What has failed the West in the industrial world is failing it in the world of education: … a relentlessly faster day and little time allowed or spent considering the long term purpose of a liberal Western education have led to the demoralisation and demotivation of thousands of pupils, teachers and parents…[E]ducation has become fast food: low in nutrients, easily digested but ultimately bad for your health. Convenience has replaced value.[2]

Thomas Eriksen (2001) points out that "speed is excellent where it belongs" but has the tendency to "affect slow time adversely" by "fill[ing] all the gaps" (p. 59). In many fast learning environments, speed hinders slowness and disrupts learning outcomes adversely at multiple levels, especially for students with slower learning rhythms, or who are more physical and

[2] Taken from http://sloweducation.co.uk/2012/07/06/today-we-launch-the-concept-of-the-slow-school/ Assessed March 2017. Inactive since 2021.

kinesthetic in their learning. Take, for example, the harmful effects of reduced free play, shortened student exploration and fewer opportunities for hands-on learning at preschool. These are all forms of learning which have been reduced by and replaced with the push-down curriculum (Harmon & Viruru, 2018). The outcome, according to early childhood educator McKenna Meyers (2018) is that young children are under growing pressure "to learn earlier and at a faster pace than ever before" (p. 1). In contrast to the more natural or rhythmic approach of traditional early childhood education, speed and efficiency are essential components of push-down teaching-learning approaches. In the push-down curriculum, a more sedentary, play-deprived learning environment is favored, in which 'drill and kill' exercises, rote learning and early use of technology dominate. Meyers (2018) stresses that in such environments, children are "becoming hardwired for speed and instant gratification" and that "[w]hen entering preschool and kindergarten, they struggle to control themselves, follow directions, and pay attention" (p. 1).[3] In an attempt to "build stronger academic skills at a younger age" (Harmon & Viruru, 2018, p. 2), children in the fast, push-down classroom are not encouraged to learn appropriate academic content and reach arbitrarily set benchmarks incidentally, at their own pace, through playful educational approaches. Not surprisingly, "as the standardization and higher expectations of academic skill mastery increase[s]," genuine student engagement and interest in the material and enjoyment in learning diminishes (Harmon & Viruru, 2018, p. 2). As David Elkind (2007) is at pains to point out in his acclaimed book *The Hurried Child*, "The pressure for early academic achievement is but one of many contemporary pressures on children to grow up fast" and appears to have largely diminished the educational concepts of readiness and biological limitations on learning once lauded by developmental psychologists (p. 8). Agger (2004)

[3] Taken from https://wehavekids.com/education/Common-Core-Big-Government-Parental-Anxiety-and-the-Destruction-of-Preschool Assessed May 2018. Site updated April 2020.

concurs, “Kids are taught to accelerate,” (p. 103) and Honoré (2004) asserts that “Children are not born obsessed with speed and productivity – [but] we make them that way” (p. 249). In this light, Eriksen’s bold statement: “it is slowness not speed that is threatened” (p. 154) takes on a cautionary tone that would be wise not to ignore.

As we have seen, speed devalues the importance of slowness in education. In so doing, I believe we fail to appreciate the true nature of teaching and learning; that is to say, the profound sense of enchantment and wonder and an openness to the unknown, in which, declares Grimmett (2022) “teachers become pedagogically wide-awake, experiencing increased presence in the moment with students, together with a heightened sense of ethicality, intellectual poise, and inner serenity” (p. xii). To this end, the current values of efficiency, productivity, competition and speed, a mindset imported into schools from the speed-obsessed culture, and the impersonal, predictable and accelerated educational landscape such values generate, require greater examination. Here, again, I should stress that I am not arguing for the end of Fast education per se and the start of limitless slowness; rather, I am advocating for a sense of balance and the rightful place of slowness in education, because slowness is imperative to children’s learning experiences, not to mention their educational dignity and well-being. I would argue that it *is* possible, even desirable, that all students and teachers create opportunities for themselves for slowness in their teaching practice and learning endeavors. This is something I will look at in more detail in the thesis as I explore Slow education.

3.1 The Value of Slowness

Earlier in this chapter, I referred to Honoré (2004) and his wise counsel as he asserted that “some things cannot, should not, be sped up. They take time; they need slowness” (p. 4). As

an adult education teacher, working predominately with returning students, commonly referred to as dropouts, I heed Honoré's sound advice myself in my own practice, and actively encourage my students to move at a rate appropriate to their own rhythm of learning. However, this is no mean feat simply because the overpowering forces of Fast education have conditioned many of my students, from a young age, to believe they are *slow* and must, therefore, move faster. Moreover, many of my students have been deeply wounded by school and have integrated a message pushed down on them by Fast education systems throughout their schooling that they are not academic and are therefore less intelligent. The outcome is that they feel demoralized and vulnerable. For these reasons alone, I strongly believe that the learning processes for these wounded students should not be sped up without just cause, and that *all* students require space for slowness in their learning in order to help them to grow emotionally, mentally, spiritually, creatively and academically. This is simply good educational practice, a belief that is shared by Mike Grenier, House Master at Eton College, England, who insists that "a Slow approach to learning is the best way to give the human mind the dispositions and habits required to thrive and flourish" (2016, p.93).

Good learning requires sufficient time. Integral to Slow learning is the need to break away from the stifling nature of time *and* to take time seriously. Slowness needs to be regarded as a fundamental human value, to which education systems must give life. Yet, no matter how logical this idea appears, even to experts in the field of education, it would seem that Fast education and slowness in learning are in conflict with one another, with the former coming out victorious. This is particularly the case when the demands of tight-scheduling and the overloading of the content curriculum – a top-down, pragmatist dictate –pressure students to be productive and efficient, and in so doing intrude on the more humanist learning curriculum,

which requires that “students [are] given some time, freedom and encouragement to explore” (Claxton, 1998, p. 222). On this point, I quote A.S. Neill (1992), the founder of the free school Summerhill School, who remarks, “We must…ask ourselves how much the curriculum does to produce academic failures” (p. 132). Here, I feel, it would be wise for education policymakers, curriculum designers and Fast education proponents to remember that a child's temporality and relationship to time, and the speed at which they learn, can often be at odds with the tight school schedule and overcrowded content curriculum which controls and governs much of their lives.

Before looking at the accelerated lives of students outside the school environment, brief mention must be given as to why curricula have become overcrowded in the first place, if only to better understand how speed is a symptom of such overcrowding. According to Cuthbert Majoni (2017), Director at Zimbabwe Open University, the “prevalence of Curriculum overload [has] been reported in many countries both developing and developed countries… [and] has been necessitated by the need to meet a wide range of needs,” notably related to technological advancements, environmental changes and societal expectations (p. 156). Majoni (2017) reports that government legislation and directives intended to change the curricula are “due to pressure from interest groups,” and have subsequently led to subject hierarchy and an increase in the size, volume and content of curricula, but not the quantity of time needed to achieve objectives (p. 157). The outcome is overload. In Australia, reasons for curricula overcrowding centre around the lack of teacher involvement at the design and planning stages of curricula, and a “claim for territory” mentality, with subject-based writers and advisors dedicated to “maintaining the scope” of their own area within the curriculum, often at the expense of the curriculum as a whole (APPA, 2014, p. 6). According to a 2014 report commissioned by the Australian Primary Principal Association, a significant consequence of writer and advisor loyalty is “the

overcrowding of the documents and, ultimately, the curriculum" (p. 6). The report goes on to question "whether a teacher in a regular classroom can deliver the curriculum in the time available" (p. 8) before recommending an analysis of the "impact on the learning and achievements of students, and the staffing and resourcing available to primary schools to fully and successfully implement the Curriculum" (p. 9). Overloaded curricula could be lessened if teachers, who are not part of the planning fraternity, and do not have the vested interest of policy makers, were able to appraise and scrutinize the educational logic applied to curricula. Whether intentionally planned or not, overloaded curricula, push-down classrooms and the subsequent acceleration in the learning processes are part and parcel of modern-day Western schooling for many students – as well as in their lives outside of school.

The historical shift in speed mindset and the "educational hurrying" (Elkind, 2007, p. 7) that speed and efficiency have implanted in education systems appears to have colonized home life for many children, and all in the space of two generations. "Ours is a hurried and hurrying society," declares David Elkind, with "a heavy burden for many children to achieve early and grow up fast" he laments (2007, p. 57 & p.204). On this point, social theorist Ben Agger (2004) believes that the boundary between school, which he argues, is "increasingly organized along workplace principles", and home, have been "gradually removed," with dire consequences on childhood (p. 83). We live at a time when many North American children are "on adult schedules," and where home life has been reduced to a series of hurried interactions and accelerated performances. "[H]ouseholds are frenzied sites of multiple roles, obligations, lifestyles, diets, exercise regimes, computing, phoning, television, movies, and music," leaving families with little quality time to simply connect and communicate (Agger, 2004, pp. 84-85).

To better understand just how school has permeated into home life, causing a noticeable shift in social attitudes, we need to return to mid-twentieth century America. “[T]he massive curriculum movement of the 1960s,” Elkind (2007) puts forth, was born out of a perceived fear of falling behind the Soviet Union’s space program. The social apprehension around early academic performance and achievement that followed, it appears, was engineered quite intentionally. According to Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt (1999) former senior policy advisor to the U.S. Department of Education, upon the launching of *Sputnik* and the subsequent passing of the National Defense Education Act in 1958 by the U.S. Congress, the stage was set for “incredible federal control of education through heavy financing for behavior modification, science, mathematics, guidance counseling, and testing, etc., involved modern techniques developed from scientific principles, the full weight of which would be felt at the end of the century” (p. 53). As a result of policy, official and unofficial proclamations were directed towards parents “on the importance of learning in the early years” and accelerating the acquisition of intellectual skills such as reading (Elkind, 2001, p. 6). Parents ignored these proclamations at their peril and risked being branded by society as bad parents; consequently, the child’s feelings or preferences were often overlooked (Elkind, 2007). On the emotional anguish faced by parents to be successful parents in the eyes of society, Elkind (2007) asserts, “We hurry children because stress induces us to put our own needs ahead of their needs” (p. 27). Today, it could be said that parental pressure is even more intense. As Elkind reminds us, while early intellectual achievement was once looked upon suspiciously by the culture, it is now not only accepted but embraced as an enviable attribute openly applauded by both parents and wider society alike. For the hurried child, the pressure of dealing with an over-scheduled after-school life, full to bursting with organized sports, music lessons, excessive amounts of homework, and

not to mention social media commitments, leaves them vulnerable to stress, not to mention the prospect of a swift, untimely and unnatural end to their childhood.

One contributing factor to a child's over-scheduled after-school life is after-school academic work or homework. As a teacher working largely with returning students in their late teens and early twenties, I long ago realized that homework was an onerous undertaking for them, and something that was rarely completed, in most part, because of a lack of time due to work commitments, but also a genuine lack of motivation. Like Agger (2004), I happen to believe that "[h]omework is primarily a substitute for *free time*," especially for elementary school children and young adolescents (p. 99). Agger stands resolute by his thoughts, taking aim at the invasive nature of homework on home life and insisting that it is a manufactured part of the hidden curriculum that deliberately robs children of a surplus of time that would otherwise be spent in pleasurable and "loosely structured" ways (pp. 99-100). "Homework [is] designed to suck up kids' time [in] preparation for an adulthood of too much to do and too little time to do it" (p. 100). While homework advocates may point out the benefits of homework, I believe it is but one more characteristic of Fast education, and one that both greatly accelerates and violates childhood, effectively diminishing it.

With this last point in mind, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that framed within this context of an accelerated and rapidly changing society, we may be returning to the Victorian age where the "category of *the child* did not exist" (Agger, 2004, p. 89). Agger (2004) builds on this argument by suggesting that "[w]e are, in effect, reverting to premodern conceptions of the child as a small and not particularly needy adult" (p. 92). Clearly, our adult view of childhood has become distorted – maybe deliberately so – to the point where many parents expect their children to perform academically at the expense of experiencing childhood

pleasures such as building strong friendships, or developing values of good character such as volunteerism and helping people in need. Indeed, parents from industrially developed nations have become so attached to the idea that early acquisition of academic skills is paramount to their children's future professional lives, that they inadvertently trap them in a vicious circle: The more crowded a child's schedule, the tighter it becomes; the tighter the schedule, the more the child has to do; the more he does, the busier he is; the busier he is, the more hurried his life; the more stressed he is likely to be. Honoré (2004) half seriously quips that "Many children are now busier than their parents,…[yet] suffer most from the orgy of acceleration" (p. 10) while Elkind (2007) takes a more cautionary tone, reminding us that "hurried children work much more than they play, and this is the reason that they are so stressed" (p. 217). Rather disturbingly, home and school environments have both educated children to speed up, (Agger, 2004, p. 103) and home and school also teach children to assume adult-like lifestyles and behaviors at younger and younger ages, particularly those behaviors related to "performance, performativity (attention to task), and acceleration" (Agger, 2004, p.103). Agger (2004) continues:

> The developmental segue from childhood to adulthood is being blurred not to make adult life more playful and carefree but to rob youth of its purposive purposelessness, its joie de vivre, its frivolity. We are doing this…not simply to prepare children for adulthood but to substitute adulthood for childhood. (p. 103)

Yet, the case that acceleration and hurrying are detrimental to our health and well-being is not shared by everybody. For instance, Robert Colvine (2016) believes that many of the side effects from fast living –namely stress and sleep deprivation – "are all, ultimately, within our ability to control," providing "we learn the right lessons" (p. 41). But children, it would seem,

are not learning the right lessons from the adults in their immediate environments, who, according to Agger (2004) “have had their own lives accelerated and administered” (p. 104). More pertinently, Elkind (2007) tells us that “children perceive hurrying differently from the way we [adults] do” (p. 213) and cautions us that “*children are most like us in their feelings and least like us in their thoughts*” (p. 208). As A.S. Neill (1992) reminds us, “[children’s] values are not our values” (p. 25) and we would do well to adhere to this advice both at home and in school.

As parents of two young children, my wife and I frequently go to great lengths to honor their naturally occurring rhythms, making available to them the empty time and physical space needed to engage in magical thinking or daydreaming, which we both agree is essential nourishment for a creative and reflective life. Personally, I believe children need regular periods of slowness and unstructured time in their lives as an escape from the accelerated worlds they inhabit, in all its multifarious forms, from playing computer games and being consumed by social media to racing from one organized event in their tight schedule to the next. Quoting Charalampos Mainemelis, a professor of organizational behavior, slow professors Berg and Seeber (2014) point out:“The major obstacle to creative and original thinking… is the stress of having too much to do”(p. 28).While parents are not exclusively at fault for accelerating the lives of their children, they are not entirely blameless either. Yet, as alluded to earlier, modern-day parents view of childhood may have become impaired to the point where “[w]e prefer to think of our children as endlessly flexible and resilient materials…expect[ing] them to adapt more to adult life programs than we adapt to their child life programs” (Elkind, 2007, p. 27).

If we have learned anything from this chapter on speed and its importation into education systems, it is that a child’s educational journey and learning potential, not to mention their

mental health, can be adversely affected when the “mad theology of speed,” as Jamie Thom (2018) puts it, gets out of control. Factors such as curriculum overload, teaching to the test and the push-down classroom accelerate teaching-learning approaches, suggesting that speed is a symptom of education policymaking. While the essence of learning anything well lies in the trials, challenges and obstacles that one needs to face and overcome, learning well under the devices of speed and time controls is simply unfeasible for many students. Put plainly, not all students are fast students, and not all children learn well in the fast classroom.

Chapter 4: The Rationalization of Education– Efficiency

"Education is at present concerned with outward efficiency, and it utterly disregards, or deliberately perverts, the inward nature of man; it develops only one part of him and leaves the rest to drag along as best it can"

Krishnamurti – Education and the Significance of Life

In the summer of 2006, I and around fifty other enthusiastic undergraduate students filed into an auditorium at Concordia University's downtown campus in Montreal to begin *Psychology 280 – Adolescence*: a required course for students majoring in education. Looking back, I now understand how this course was both a major failure and huge success.

Within the space of a few course lectures, a growing disquiet had replaced the early enthusiastic atmosphere, and the once healthy attendance began to dwindle. The course felt weirdly disconnected from the real world, and the detached and somewhat mechanical teacher-fronted instruction was uncongenial and not to the liking of everyone. As a result, what had once been a relatively large and eager group of mature scholars was soon reduced to a cluster of disenchanted adults who, disappointed in their yearning for a deeper exploration of the psychology of young adults,were simply going through the motions in order to attain the highest grade possible and three more credits.

Psychology 280 – Adolescence was a vertically integrated course in every sense. From its customized textbooks and machine-graded multiple choice examinations to its pre-determined course-pack videos and pre-set classroom discussions questions – each contributing to its predictable and impersonal nature – the course was a good example of a well-organized, streamlined and fast-paced course perfectly suited for the shortened duration and accelerated tempo of the summer schedule. In retrospect, however, both the students and the professor paid a

heavy price for the efficient nature of the course, as all of us, to some degree, were impoverished and reduced by the process. The student's learning experiences were viewed largely in economical and quantifiable terms. With grade attainment being the principle motivator, along with a product orientation towards learning, the importance of the subject's content and the joy and difficulty of learning about the subject itself was diminished. The professor, meanwhile, was reduced to the role of human dispenser or teacher technician, seemingly bound by the predetermined course objectives and assignments, as outlined in the textbook syllabus, which he duly gave to us in prescribed fashion in readiness for the examinations. To what extent he was bound to do so we will never know. The course, however, had one indemnifying feature and was hugely successful in one regard. It was good for business. For both the professor and Concordia University, the requisite standards were met and high grades were most likely achieved – for it was almost impossible for any student not to pass the course. Yet, notwithstanding the passes and improved GPAs, the course, its professor and the University itself failed its students in a multitude of ways.

At the heart of this failure, I believe, is what Rifkin (1997) refers to as the "temporal value of efficiency" (p. 132). Today, the value of efficiency, or the more aptly named 'cult of efficiency' as it is sometimes called, is firmly entrenched in contemporary education systems around the world to the point of normalcy if not adoration. Yet, despite enjoying widespread reverence, efficiency in education, it would appear, has detrimental effects on students' learning processes and outcomes. This is a point made by British sociologist Gary Wilkinson (2006) in his paper *McSchools for McWorld?,* in which he argues that efficiency in English state schools "appears to have one principal measure, academic attainment…with better 'results intended'" (p. 89). Wilkinson (2006) substantiates his claim by insisting that the needs of the marketplace for

competent workers have resulted in “education policy which appears obsessed with measurable indicators” (p. 89). According to Wilkinson (2006), this quest for efficiency has in turn led to the standardization and “uniformity of curriculum content and pedagogic style” (p. 92), an increased focus on mathematics, English and science “and contempt for classics and history” (p. 89), with greater stress placed on outputs in the form of test scores achieved, grades and league tables, “rather than inputs and process” (p. 89). For all students, their education journey has been reduced or narrowed to the point “that what comes to matter is that which is numerically calculable” or statistically quantifiable (p. 91).

The seemingly unshakable place of efficiency in education is costly to all students, but particularly harmful to the educational experiences of vulnerable students, especially those from “marginal and disadvantaged groups” (Welch, 1998, p. 159).This happens to be the category of student I work most closely with in my day-to-day practice as a teacher. In his hard-hitting paper, *The Cult of Efficiency in Education,* Anthony R. Welch (1998) declares that “the rising tide of efficiency in contemporary education often masks not only the reduction in both the quality of education provided, but also attempts to increase the productivity levels in education, particularly in the public sector” (p. 158). Here, Welch (1998) is sounding the alarm bells, drawing our attention to the encroachment and rise of efficiency in public education, a movement that he feels is motivated by the principle “that both individual worth and the worth of education can be reduced to economic terms” (p. 158). Alluding to human capital theory, Welch (1998) cites the goals of cost cutting, the application of “an ethos of business style principles” (p. 157), the characterization of individual students as commodities, and education as investment rhetoric, as distinguishable features of publicly funded education system being covertly “run on business lines to be efficient” (p. 159). Not surprisingly, Welch goes on to stress the substantial harm

caused by efficiency in education by telling us that “These goals were often achieved at a considerable cost in social terms, particularly in terms of a loss in equity and a narrowing of the curriculum” (p. 157).

In their paper *Efficiency in Education*, Johnes, Silva and Thanassoulis (2017) are quick to distinguish the terms ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness,’ referring to efficiency as ‘doing things right,’ and effectiveness as ‘doing the right things’ (p. 331). I mention this distinction to draw attention to the notion that ‘*doing the right things*’ appeals more to the desire to do what is best for children and their learning. By association, ‘*doing the right things*’ is often altruistic in nature, far from straightforward, and frequently involves a degree of messy and unexpected complexity. On the other hand, ‘*doing things right*’ applies more to objective, straightforward and predictable thinking and a desire for cost-effective outcomes tailored to business purposes. *Doing things right* is concerned with the most efficient way to do something. The methodological approach behind Fast education compromises learning by placing efficiency above effectiveness with a focus on results over learning processes. For example, summative evaluations in the form of one-hundred percent weighted standardized tests are considered an efficient method of grading students. In contrast, formative evaluation and assessment, in the form of graded portfolios, research presentation projects and self-directed assignments, which provide students with meaningful opportunities to apply new knowledge through creative endeavors, while effective, are slow moving, time-consuming and challenging to execute. While we should applaud the value of efficiency when it is used to improve the general running and functioning of a school’s business affairs, we should be wary if the focus on efficiency reduces the quality, depth and effectiveness of teaching and learning outcomes. For Welch (1998), efficiency symbolizes “the demoralization of the school system; dollars saved and human

materials squandered; discontent, drudgery and disillusion" (p. 157). And while the input-output rhetoric of a business organization has a place in public education, primarily as a way to provide greater resourcefulness and functionality of a school as a business enterprise, student output in the form of increased productivity levels and examination success is less amenable to the demands of efficiency.

In much the same way that the early industrial factory workers were "objectified, quantified, and redefined in clockwork and mechanized language" of the day (Rifkin, 1997, p. 132), a comparable fate has befallen many of today's students. That is to say, they have become victims not only of "artificial temporal orientations" (Rifkin, 1997, p. 230), tight scheduling, and accelerated and over-loaded curricula, but they are also subjected to an overemphasis on efficiency in learning. Aside from standardizing processes and eradicating subjectivity (Eriksen, 2001), efficiency, whether inadvertently or intentionally, causes us to neglect or at least underemphasize the more empathetic social values of sustainability, community, cooperation, generosity, patience, and reflection, which are all parts of slowness. Moreover, efficiency mistakenly causes us to disregard the "less directly quantifiable elements of education," or elements with less "economic value" (Welch, 1998, p. 158) such as certain non-cognitive traits, which education innovator Bernard Bull (2016) specifies as self-discipline, grit, curiosity and interpersonal skills. Such values and traits are integral to the fundamental well-being and health of both the individual and their community and society. As Eriksen (2001) candidly remarks, "the extreme fetishisation of efficiency makes us forget real values" (p. 141). What is more, devotion to efficiency in the education sphere risks a lasting detachment from the deeper, slower and more rhythmic educational environment. As the American educationalist and philosopher Nel Noddings (2003) cautions: "we do not want students to sacrifice reflective

thought, exploration, and artistry in a quest for efficiency" (p.113). Much like Noddings (2003), though, I fully accept the need for young people to be educated on the importance and value of being efficient and organized, particularly as it pertains to their daily routines and chores, and, I would add, as a form of liberation to enjoy more of the things they value most in life. Paradoxically, schools that place great value on and have a near fixation with efficient methods in learning, create an educational environment that not only disregards a student's learning rhythm, but also fail to prepare students to be more innovative, curious, and empathetic. As Noddings (2003) wisely points out, "To teach children something about efficiency is very different from employing efficient methods to teach them" (p. 113).

"An efficient education process, it is assumed, imparts knowledge much as an efficient factory instals parts on its assembly line," asserts Abbott(2010, p. 212). Understanding this thinking to be present in much of contemporary education, there is cause for concern that an efficient and narrowing approach to learning overlooks the intricacy and enchantment of learning itself. Efficiency, argues Welch (1998), "often masks an economistic, technicist conception of education," reducing it largely to rote learning, cramming for tests, and a narrowing of content (p. 157).The outcome of an educational experience where the values of efficiency, speed, competition and productivity are front and centre of a child's learning is lean on naturalness, exploration and joy, which arguably leads to a diminished and self-diminishing education.

When John Dewey (1997) tells us that "[e]verything depends on the quality of the experience which is had" (p. 27), he is counseling us to construct and arrange learning experiences carefully. He is emphasizing that those experiences become educative or "worth while educationally" (p. 33), so that they may positively influence "the quality of subsequent experiences" (p. 35). At the same time, he wants us to promote the intellectual, moral, emotional

and spiritual growth of young people, “specify[ing] the direction in which growth takes place” (p. 36). The encroachments associated with efficiency in education and learning – streamlining, productivity, speed, utility, competition, quantification, conformity, predictability, and the elimination of reflective thought, and emphasis on knowledge – I would argue, have established a new educational ethos that not only limits the academic and non-academic growth potential of many students, but also severely misdirects the course in which that growth takes. Such educational misdirection is often legitimized, though, in the name of economic advancement.

Consider for a moment the educational ethos and direction put forth by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) who, in the pursuit of continued global economic growth, have become the unofficial overseer responsible for shaping global education discourse and policy through its educational recommendations and programs. In an open letter to Dr Andreas Schleicher, director of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), more than sixty leading academics from around the world claim the OECD has used its enormous reach and global power for “dangerously narrowing [sic] our collective imagination regarding what education is and ought to be about” (Heinz-Dieter, M & Zahedi, K. 2014, p. 872). Citing the implementation of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000, the collective group of distinguished and disgruntled academics insist that the “OECD's narrow focus on standardised testing risks turning learning into drudgery and killing the joy of learning”(p. 874). The accusations and associated concerns contained in their letter to Dr Andreas Schleicher are damming of the PISA regime and the ranking wars with their increased reliance on quantitative measures, which necessitate a greater proportion of “multiple-choice testing, more scripted "vendor"-made lessons, and less autonomy for teachers” (p. 873). Motivated to see their nation climb the international ranking table as quickly as possible, many

nations have resorted to the imperative of efficiency, narrowing the range of measurable aspects of education in order to obtain more desired results, often from fewer resources. Accusing PISA of neglecting the main goals of public education by taking "attention away from the less measurable or immeasurable educational objectives like physical, moral, civic and artistic development," the academics insist public educations systems around the world have short changed society by failing to "prepare students for participation in democratic self-government, moral action and a life of personal development, growth and wellbeing" (p. 872). It is my view, from first-hand experience, that many young people leave school having been harmed and impoverished by a fast, efficient and rationalized education experience, and that an educational ethos focused chiefly on predetermined, standardized learning objectives prepares them more for gainful employment and less for a successful and enriching personal life: strong relationships, healthy mental and psychical well-being, financial competency and greater self-reflection and empathy.

"Today efficiency pervades every facet of life: it…has burrowed its way into our economic life, our social and cultural life, and even our personal and religious life" (Rifkin, 1997, p. 124). Adding to Rifkin's assertion, there is little doubt that the tentacles of efficiency have tunneled their way into contemporary education, too. So demanding of attention are the characteristics of efficiency in education: its reliance on summative standardized tests and "evidence-based practices" (Berg & Seeber, 2016, p. 34); its drive for the attainment of credentials (Bull, 2016, p. 25); and an emphasis on preparing students for the mass labor market by delivering "the knowledge and skills that business needs" (Holt, 2002, p. 5), that students scarcely have enough quality time to immerse themselves in learning for the sheer joy of it. Yet, while education's fetishisation of efficiency continues to intensify today, the origins and

historical relationship between education and efficiency and how we got this way need brief exploration.

Efficiency's infiltration and intensification in education is far from a recent phenomenon. To better understand how we reached the point where the "means-ends values of economy and efficiency permeate social institutions and practices" (Welch, 1998, p. 159) and the economic rate of return mindset has come to dominates education and resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum and an accelerated learning model, we need to return to two historical points in time from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

When British statesman Robert Lowe declared rather conceitedly "if it's not cheap it shall be efficient; if it is not efficient it shall be cheap" (Welch, 1998, p. 160), he was capturing the essence of the Revised Code, a scheme introduced into British education in the mid-nineteenth century. According to Welch (1998), the Revised Code was introduced to regulate spending and was born out of "middle-class fears of rising calls upon the state funds for elementary schools…and the needs of a business age" that urgently required a literate workforce. Now working-class children were expected to achieve standards "based on the assumed needs of industry," the success or failure on which "teachers' salaries were dependent" (Welch, 1998, pp. 160-162). In effect, the Revised Code not only humiliated teachers, forcing them to renounce their professional integrity by falsifying attendance and examination results, but also impoverished them as they were slavishly "dominated by the standards…and mechanical form of pedagogy" ardently implemented by the scheme (Welch, 1998, p. 161). Not surprisingly, adds Welch (1998), "education was made poorer as a result" as "children were drilled rather than educated," memorization replaced reasoning (p. 162). The '*If it's good for business then it's good for government'* attitude behind the Revised Code had "punitive effects" (Welch, 1998, p.

172) on education, giving rise to efficiency's elevated status in the field which, as we have established, is more concerned with feasibility and value for money than it is with the feelings and sensitivities of its teachers and students.

On the other side of the Atlantic, at around the turn of the twentieth century, a second turn of events would greatly sway educational thinking of that period and further disconnect teachers from their students and alienate students from their learning. To combat the apparent climate of inefficiency and "wastage" present in education at that time, and spurred on by business interests and corporate principles, the United States education system succeeded to actively transport and implement the autocratic principles of scientific management, as devised by Frederick W. Taylor, into schools: the principles were "economically and politically driven by conservative political interests," rather "than an argument based on education" (Welch, 1998, pp. 165 &163). According to Rifkin (1997), Frederick W. Taylor "turned efficiency into a science" (p. 132). Wielding control over all six temporal dimensions: "sequence, duration, schedule, rhythm, synchronization, and time perspective,…Taylor's principles of scientific management were designed with one goal in mind, to make each worker more efficient," with "all nonquantifiable elements of worker behavior" deemed superfluous all but eliminated (pp. 127-128). The newly formed efficient worker was reduced to little more than an object of utility – "an automaton" – and was no longer responsible for his own time, which would, instead, "fall under the absolute control of management" (Rifkin, 1997, pp. 128 & 130). Worst still, for the once independent artisan worker, was the appropriation of their firsthand knowledge by management, who, in so doing, dispossessed "[the now efficient worker] of any capacity to make decisions regarding the conception and executing of his task," thereby leaving him exposed and vulnerable to management control (Rifkin, 1997, p. 130). Needless to say, it was only a matter of

time before Western society would experience the emergence of the cult of efficiency in education.

In effect, claims Welch (1998), across the country, the United States' education system succumbed to the whims and demands of business and United States capitalism to "service the needs of an industrializing economy" (p. 164).However, what at first appeared to be a noble experiment by the state came to have a deleterious effect on children's learning. As the state adopted the financial burden of training, education became streamlined, increasingly "along practical and utilitarian lines" (p. 164), resulting in the marginalization of book and scholastic learning and the increase of vocational courses in schools. The outcome, according to Welch (1998) was that "the quality and quantity of education was reduced, by a concentration on economies and business ideologies" to the point of impoverishment (p. 165).

In *Overschooled but Undereducated*, John Abbott's (2010) narrative on the short-termist attitudes prevailing in present education, he recounts a story in which the President of the powerful Carnegie Association for the Advancement of Teaching announced, "What is needed is an education system that is *carefully adapted* to the needs of the economy…A system…geared to the needs of the state, not the individual" (p. 127 [emphasis added]). To paraphrase the President: what was sought by the state was a carefully engineered education system; one that not only disregarded the interests and learning experiences of children – by eliminating seemingly wasteful and impractical learning processes – but in its place intentionally prioritized business enterprise and the economy. Together with renowned psychologists Edward Thorndike and John B. Watson, Frederick W. Taylor implicitly took up the Carnegie Association's charge and helped fashion a philosophy of education whose primary focus was to promote and implant the values of efficiency, speed and productivity in the minds of students. This was a feat they achieved by

objectively testing, assessing and quantifying their learning outcomes; or rather, as Abbott (2010) dryly suggests, by calculating "the precise quantification of inputs (that which was taught) and outputs (that which could be measured)" (p. 127). The rest is, as they say, history, and ever since students have learned to integrate the narrative that speed, efficiency and productivity, not to mention grade attainment, matter most in learning. Sadly, though not unexpectedly, the dominant principles of Taylorism and the scientific management ethos that guided public education systems have endured and continue to influence education today, particularly in North America, often with negative effects. This thinking is corroborated by Maduakolam Ireh (2016) in his critical paper *Scientific Management Still Endures in Education*, who states:

> To a great extent, administrative practices in such school systems are replete with principles and philosophies reminiscent of Frederick W. Taylor's scientific management…[as] Control for efficiency is enforced through legislative mandates, state-wide standards, administrative rules and policies, and district-wide evaluation processes. (p. 18)

The harmful consequences of efficiency in education are as profound as they are broad. Not only is the deep-rooted mindset of efficiency responsible for "restricting the creative capacities and unique potentials of students" (Ireh, 2016, p. 16), it also emphasizes narrow learning outcomes, tied to quantitative methods such as test-based proficiency, frequently at the expense of skilled teaching, meaningful learning processes, and the personal and intellectual growth of students. This in turn serves to dehumanize and diminish human relationships between teachers and students, reducing what should instead be harnessed, namely a "nurturing

environment for creative teaching and learning" (Ireh, 2016, p. 19). One outcome is the failure in supporting the applied skills believed to be essential for living and working in the 21st century, such as collaboration, creativity, and self-direction. Citing a report by the National Leadership Network Study Group on Restructuring Schools produced in 1991, Ireh (2016) highlights "that the existing system has failed in teaching basics such as thinking and reasoning, problem solving, use of information for knowledge production and learning" (pp. 1-2). More ominous are the despairing words of the Indian philosopher Krishnamurti (1981), who long ago believed that students in "the present system of education…[had become] subservient, mechanical and deeply thoughtless" (pp. 14-15); such an educational system had left many students "incomplete, stultified and uncreative" (p. 15). A resolute Welch (1998) goes one step further by insisting that the application of the principles of scientific management in education are largely ineffective as they fail to "comprehend equity" and are ill-suited "to respond to the needs of Blacks, rural dwellers, poor Whites and the growing portion of immigrants in the US" (Welch, 1998, pp. 162& 165).

The dark clouds of Taylorism remain to this day, and have, according to Abbott (2010), "deadened the imagination of millions of children in many countries" (p. 128). Moreover, much like the intuitive artisan tradesperson of yesteryear, whose knowledge and skills were appropriated by management to maximize efficiency, contemporary teachers, too, have had their intuitive wings clipped for reasons of efficiency. For Grimmett (2022), limiting a teacher's pedagogical proficiency and full potential for the sake of efficiency has caused significant harm to the profession:

> Teaching has become a mundane, almost perfunctory, endeavor to match external expectations, perilously close to degenerating into rote learning rather than inducting

> students into valued cultural practices. It is in grave danger of losing its enticement, leaving teachers with reduced motivation and unhinged purpose in their practice. (p. 4)

Much like Grimmett, who believes policy makers now dictate educational policy with teachers regarded as little more than "functionaries" (Grimmett, 2022, p. 3), Abbott (2010) argues that "[s]chools are increasingly defined by politicians as mechanisms to meet the ambiguous specifications of the National Curriculum, and the teacher has inevitably been replaced as an instructor, the person who delivers to a model designed by a committee of experts" (p. 179). As if to prove this point, I have adapted the following passage taken from Jeremy Rifkin's (1997) *Time Wars*. Replacing '*worker*' for '*teacher*' and '*employees*' for '*students,* one gets a lucid idea of how education is under attack from the tyranny of efficiency and how the responsibility to educate has been seized from teachers:

> Taylor believed that as long as the *teachers* maintained both knowledge and control over how their work was to be done, it would be impossible to elicit maximum efficiency. Left on their own, *teachers* would let other "human" considerations enter into the work process. Feelings and emotions would come to the fore, tempering and even undermining the prospect of attaining maximum efficiency. For example, *teachers* might consciously choose to moderate their work pace to accommodate the needs of slower *students* (p. 129).

The reduction in the professional autonomy of teachers is, according to Welch (1998), caused by the "current imposition of business and market principles of efficiency upon schools and universities," (p. 171) which he asserts is "increasingly viewed as a sub-sector of economic policy" (p.172).Such is the interconnectedness of government policy, education and society that

the rationalized culture and efficiency mindset permeating Fast education, driven by economic imperatives, reproduces with often disastrous consequences irrational, inefficient and dysfunctional societies.

Chapter 5 - The Rationalization of Learning

"A world without magic and mystery is another irrational consequence of increasing rationalization."

George Ritzer – The McDonaldization of Society

In the summer of 2008, I, my wife and our two young children left Montreal, Canada and moved to Hiroshima City, Japan for what would be two very challenging but eventful years overseas. I had recently become a Quebec certified teacher and had gone to Japan as a participant in the JET Programme – a Japanese government initiative – where I worked as an assistant language teacher, assisting Japanese teachers of English principally in junior high schools in and around the city area. For all the wrong reasons, working inside Japan's educational system left an indelible impression on me, one that would radically and substantively alter how I perceived formal public education as a teacher in the future. Perplexed by my surroundings and troubled by the almost obsessive, militaristic efficiency in operation around me - the precision, predictability and rigidity troubled me greatly - I quickly sought diversion and found liberation in the works of education pioneers and social critics such as John Holt, Neil Postman and Ivan Illich. It was during this questioning period that I also discovered George Ritzer's highly influential book *The McDonalization of Society* (2000), and with it the ideas of German sociologist Max Weber, particularly his theory of rationalization. Both George Ritzer and Max Weber continue to help inform my understanding of the principles of Fast education all these years later.

Today, having become more familiar with Weber's work and George Ritzer's theory of McDonaldization, a work the American sociologist himself acknowledges "is an amplification and an extension of [Max] Weber's theory of rationalization" (p. 23), I believe that public education systems -in much the same vein as many other bureaucratic institutions – have

integrated into their philosophy and approach to education, through formal rules, regulations, and procedures, significant dimensions of organizational rationalization, to improve efficiency, cut costs and remain competitive. The implementation of rationalized policies, which have according to Rifkin (1987) “more to do with expediency, efficiency, profit, and utility” (p. 69), have done much to shape operations and procedures in the field of education. So what exactly is Max Weber’s theory of rationalization and how should we understand its place in contemporary education and the resulting ramifications?

5.1 Weber’s theory of rationalization

To better understand Weber’s theory of rationalization in its simplest form, we must picture Western culture as undergoing a vast and profound social transformation, moving from sacred to religious to secular to scientific and technical, the forces of which were largely beyond the control of its population. This transformational period, and the ideological forces, approaches and processes that would characterize it, would move the population away from its ways of thinking and behaving. These ways of thinking and behaving, which were guided, organized and engendered around traditional, mystical and spiritual forces “from within an ethical, religious, philosophical or even holistic context” of the traditional kinship system (Elwell, 1996) shifted to a thinking and behavior “increasingly dominated by goal-oriented rationality (zweckrational) [and] -- less and less by tradition, values and emotions” (Elwell, 1996). In his study of Weber and social organizations, macrosociologist Frank Elwell (1996) explains that these pervasive forces and the ensuing erosion of traditions eventually “caused people to abandon their traditional religious value orientation and encouraged them to develop a desire for acquiring goods and wealth” (p. 1). The world view of Western society shifted away from enchantment

and mysticism and the spiritual forces that directed it to become increasingly dominated by "technocratic thinking" (p. 1) and with it the growing dominance of "efficiency, coordination, and control over both the physical and social environment…and a decline of many traditional institutions such as the family, community, and religion" (p. 1). Landy and Saler gesture eloquently to this transformation: "Stone by stone, the more baroque buttresses on the cathedral of traditional belief were being carted away to the museum of cultural history" (cited in Grimmett, 2022, p. 22). And, somewhat inevitably, as Grimmett (2022) himself observes, "the increasing intellectualization and rationalization that accompanied the onrush of modernity led to an eventual and inevitable late 20th century emphasis on globalization" (p. 22).

Rationalization should be seen both as an approach and a key characteristic of the modernization of societies, one that shaped the way people think about problem solving and accomplishing tasks. While numerous societal benefits have accompanied rationalization, above all, an increase in the production and distribution of goods and services, especially in farming and manufacturing, the side-effects are also considerable, as the "ultimate human values such as social justice, peace, and human happiness" have been undermined and weakened (Elwell, 1996, p. 1). This phenomenon Weber called the irrationality factor; it is, paradoxically, the irrationality of rationality. As rationalization through bureaucratic institutions was established, greater bureaucratic coordination of human actions took hold (Elwell, 1996). This bureaucratic dominance eliminated the mystical, spiritual and religious world views, eroding many time-honored ways, and leaving in its place a values system predicated on efficiency, predictability, and calculability, and, most strikingly, a lack of moral accountability. Irrationality of rationalization grew as the only criterion for achieving goals was not morality but the most efficient means to accomplish the end. Western society became more goal-oriented, systematic

and calculating, and in its wake, more oppressive, dehumanizing, impersonal and "destructive of individual freedom" (Elwell, 1996, p. 1) for, with the implementation of tightly controlled, technically focused rules, regulations and procedures, economic logic became applied to human activity. As Thomas S. Hendricks (2016) explains: "Organizations exist for their own purposes, not the needs or interests of their participants" (p. 293). What matters most for such organizations "becomes the capacity to devise and control" and to be "freed from any deeper commitment that bonds [them to] the human community" (Hendricks, 2016, p. 294).

With increasing rationalization, human experience "undergoes restrictive formatting" (Hendricks, 2016, p. 290), resulting in dehumanization, depersonalization and disenchantment of the world. Intuitions and bureaucracies operating under a rationalized model formed by rules, regulations, and larger social structure tend to be unfeeling and dismissive of humanity involved in them. Ritzer (2000) echoes Weber's belief that the formal rationalization of institutionalized mechanisms "communicates a sense of coldness, hardness, and great discomfort," (p. 200) and dictates people's lives, or at least severely limits their options, such that "virtually everyone can (or must) make the same, optimal choices" (p. 23). Weber became concerned whether this rationalization would spill over into the "softer, more expressive social life—areas involving sex, love, family, art, and play," leading these aspects of life, too, to "become organized in regimented, technically focused ways" (Hendricks, 2016, p. 288).

Labaree (1992) claims that "For better or worse, formal rationality has shaped modern life...it has exerted a profound effect on technological development, economic growth, and the vast expansion of our knowledge about the world," with education being no exception (p. 141). Rationalized public education systems tend to be authoritative and test driven, dependent on streamlined, predetermined and narrow curricula. Contemporary education thus suffers from its

own irrationalities, ranging from dehumanization and disenchantment to depression and stress but also the threat of mediocrity. Owing to its emphasis on standardized testing, intellectual growth, mental stamina and personal aspiration become stunted. Students learn to dread learning and especially the hard work and application needed by them to learn *beyond* the test or grade, which are the linchpins in a rationalized system of education. This side effect of their rationality of rationalized education is a point I elaborate on near the end of this chapter when I consider the irrationality of grade dependency.

Early in the *McDonaldization of Society*, Ritzer (2000) draws our attention to the late American academic and ethnographer Ronald Takaki and his characterization of rationalized settings. Takaki declares rationalized settings as physical spaces or places where "the self was placed in confinement, its emotions controlled, and its spirits subdued" (Takaki cited in Ritzer, p. 25). Takaki's graphic depiction of a rationalized space is synonymous to that of Weber's "iron cage" hypothesis: "bureaucracies are cages in the sense that people are trapped in them, their basic humanity denied" (Ritzer, 2000, p. 25).I believe the "iron cage" phenomenon also applies to contemporary Fast education settings that have become progressively dominated by what Ritzer (2000) expounds as Weber's four rationalization processes or dimensions: "efficiency, predictability, calculability, and nonhuman technologies" (p. 23). The four dimensions of rationalization have unwittingly cast a menacing shadow over a slower, more personable and mysterious approach to learning, to the point of supplanting these narratives altogether. So that we may consider and better understand how these dimensions subjugate and work against what Weber referred to as enchantment, particularly as it relates to learning and teaching, the primary objective of this chapter is to explore three of the four dimensions of rationalization, efficiency having already been treated in chapter three. For Max Weber, rationalized societies have lost

their sense of enchantment, and with it their "magical elements of thought" (Ritzer, 2000, p.132), giving rise to chronic disenchantment.

5.2 The Three Remaining Dimensions of Rationalization

5.2.1 The Dimension of Predictability

Fiction writer and professor Graeme Harper (2017) believes "unpredictability to be the lifeblood of hope, the core of belief, the substance of our psyches, the unfulfilled potential that exists in each one of us" (p. 1). I would add that unpredictability is also the lifeblood of enchantment in learning. Conversely, rationalized education settings place great value in predictability. Harper (2017) goes on:

> we have codified our endeavors to remove unpredictability from our lives in centuries of laws and regulations that seek to limit unpredictability's legitimacy. We have grown increasingly to expect that our journeys from one place to another will take well-established routes, and that we will arrive at scheduled times. (p. 1)

As I alluded to early in the thesis, no journey is ever straightforward and predictable. Indeed, I would suggest that a child's educational journey is substantially more transformative when unpredictability in the learning environment is warmly embraced as offering opportunity to grow, rather than being seen as an interruption in learning of the curriculum.

So what of predictability in education? In the same manner that the McDonald's brand generates familiarity in the subconscious minds of its customers, by standardizing staff interactions, limiting menu options and providing an easily recognizable product customers can rely on, students intimate with a rationalized education experience have become accustomed to

(though not necessarily comfortable with) the structured and predictable world of Fast education. From predetermined curricula to unsurprising schedules, prearranged class assignments to worksheets and standardized examinations, a student's school life is almost constantly predictable. Students respond no differently in adapting to predictable rationalized environments than people in wider society, a point Ritzer (2000) makes when he says: "In a rationalized society, people prefer to know what to expect in most settings and at most times. They neither desire nor expect surprises" (p. 83). Holt (2002) emphasizes the function of predictability in the Fast classroom, telling us that "[t]he engagement between teacher and learner should be as predictable as possible, and variation between one teacher and another can be offset by scripting the learning encounter and tightening the form of assessment" (p. 5).

Yet, an over-reliance on predictability is problematic in an educational journey because students' cognitive ability, desired learning style, natural learning rhythm, and emotional well-being all play a significant role in their ability to learn, making learning processes and outcomes both very complex and unpredictable. Moreover, the excessive use of and reliance on predictability and standardization becomes a disservice to young people whose minds need nourishment, agility and resilience as they ready themselves for the unpredictable real world they will enter. This is a point which gives rise to the question: How does a Fast standardized education sustain children (if it does), preparing them adequately for the unpredictability of life and work?

In the field of education, predictability is an easy crutch – a streamlining technique – that removes any authoritative responsibility from the results. Predictability reduces learning to an almost expected outcome, thus ensuring that quotas are met and enough effective people are produced either for the workforce or post-secondary education. Placing economic interests above

the needs of students and authentic learning outcomes circumvents the primary aim of learning. The primary goal of predictability is not to educate young people to become more developed and empathetic human beings, but the best possible means for people to achieve a basic necessary ability. Yet, in doing so, predictability may inadvertently foster an unproductive temperament in the minds of students, who become complacent in their studies. That is to say, rather than actively applying, analyzing and creating as part of their formal learning and educational development, students operate on auto-pilot, doing little more than memorizing and retaining the material they need to successfully pass an examination. To this end, students' thoughts and perceptions effectively become streamlined, often with unforeseen consequences on personality and creative expression. That such an intolerance for unpredictability exists today in education in general and in learning outcomes in particular is not surprising. Kliebard (2004) points out that such thinking is grounded in Bobbitt's principles of efficiency and his "drive for the elimination of inefficiency in education" (p. 84), as well as in Taylor's "penchant for order and regulation" (p. 80) and desire for "a more orderly and less contentious society" as emphasized in his principles of scientific management (p. 82). As principal architect of modern curriculum development, Bobbitt's longing for predictability in educational outcomes can be encapsulated in his statement: "The first step in curriculum-making is to decide what specific educational results are to be produced" (cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 103).

What else is lost in a learning experience when predictability dominates education settings? Spontaneity and the unexpected are almost eliminated, the child's passion for learning is diminished and human resources such as "native common sense and power of judgment" (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 48), so integral to life, are underdeveloped. This is a line of reasoning Holt (2002) suggests when he says "[l]earning and teaching are often at their richest when the

moment gives rise to an expected insight, when what Dewey called the collateral experience can generate a new end and set in train new means to achieve it" (p. 3).Here, Holt is making reference to the concept of collateral learning, found in *Experience and Education*, in which Dewey (1938/1997) attempts to dispel the erroneous and dangerous notion that learning should be linear and fixed. Dewey asks of the learning experience:

> What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win the ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses his own soul...and loses [the] desire to apply what he has learned and...the ability to extract meaning from his future experiences as they occur? (p. 49)

For Dewey (1938/1997), collateral or circumstantial learning has the potential to form "enduring attitudes" towards learning that "are fundamentally what count in the [child's] future" (p. 48). Predictability, though, deprives students of the capacities that would allow them to deal with the circumstances they encounter in the course of their lives, as well as joy in such learning.

The reductionary nature of predictability is clearly encapsulated by Abbott (2010) when he says, "Rather than opening up more interesting possibilities, education has become more and more about giving the right answer" (p. 171). For teachers, predictability works against them as they become more detached from their art, to the point where they feel de-skilled. Abbott (2010) brings this to light by quoting a "bitterly disappointed" teacher with six years' teaching experience who claims: "A robot could teach in today's educational climate. The job is formulaic...There is no requirement for teachers or children to be able to question, create, analyse or discover...The school system has become a machine churning out clones..." (p. 171).

The push for greater predictability in school settings extends beyond regularizing the schedule to uninspiring school architecture, rigid dress-codes, banal food, and standardized examinations, and, where it is not a stretch, thinking back to Ende's novel, *Momo*, of reproducing automaton-like humans. Perhaps the last word on predictability should go to Ritzer (2000) who claims:

> No characteristic of rationalization is more inimical to enchantment than predictability. Magical, fantastic, dreamlike experiences are almost by definition unpredictable. Nothing would destroy enchanted experience more easily than having it become predictable or having it recur in the same way time after time. (p. 133)

5.2.2 The Dimension of Calculability

In addition to its emphasis on the dimensions of efficiency and predictability, and much like the operational processes associated with fast food production, Fast education involves the rationalized dimension of calculability. By calculability I mean the calculating, counting, quantifying and measuring of learning and academic outcomes for the purposes of determining whether a student is *successful* in their learning or not. What follows is not an extensive account of calculability (and its compatible term, quantification), but rather a brief look at the role of calculability as a rationalized element of Fast education. Later in Chapter 5, I take a closer look into contemporary education's dependency on calculability in the form of grades.

It is widely acknowledged in educational circles that educational systems sanction the calculability of many aspects of the learning process for management and classification purposes. That is to say, calculability in education is authorized by educational systems because it helps streamline the management and classification of children and teachers. For Ritzer (2000),

"calculability makes it easier to determine efficiency…[and] is also linked to control" (p. 63).

In her exposition of the quantification of education, senior lecturer and early childhood educator Nerida Spina (2017) draws on Theodore M. Porter's extensive work on quantification to suggest that calculability "requires both a "quest for objectivity" and a "quest for standardization" (p. 69). She elaborates: "In education ... numbers such as student achievement are presented as standardised and simplified reflections of reality. Although they communicate complex information and ideas...the use of numbers in standard and familiar forms makes them readily accessible" (p. 69). That is to say, the numbers collected on students' learning achievements present an objective 'truth' of students' more complex learning abilities, aptitudes and attitudes, making such data easily comprehensible and readily available to politicians and bureaucrats, not to mention parents. Spina (2017) intimates that governments and bureaucracies who "operate from centres of calculation," (p. 70) rely heavily on decisions based on statistics as they provide a "veneer of objectivity" and "afford legitimacy to political and bureaucratic decision-making" (p. 73). Calculability works because it produces large amounts of precise data on vast numbers of students very rapidly, meaning teachers and schools and politicians and bureaucrats can categorize and manage things more efficiently.

For Ritzer, (2000) calculability is problematic because "[it] is clearly linked to irrationality since, among other things, the emphasis on quantity tends to affect quality adversely" (p. 63). From my professional experience, such an emphasis on calculability tends to affect the quality of learning and teaching processes, leading to the production of mediocre work. The calculability or quantification of learning outcomes presents an illusionary scenario for both teacher and student who operate under duress to achieve grades. As Ritzer (2000) continues, "The focus seems to be on how many students (the "products") can be herded through the system

and what grades they earn rather than the quality of what they have learned and of the educational experience" (p. 66).

Here I feel some sympathy must be afforded to teachers, who have become collaborators as well as contributors to the dimension of calculability, which has ultimately resulted in greater standardization in their field. On this point, Spina (2017) stresses that "quantification is significant because it standardises both its object and its subject" (p. 70), meaning that teachers, who in their day to day practice, are required to "use these statistical and calculative methods are themselves constrained by the calculative apparatus they use" (p. 70). Or, I would offer, teachers are constrained by the calculative mechanisms they are *obliged* to use. This more nuanced understanding is particularly relevant to the positions in which teachers and students find themselves in because, as Spina (2017) explains: "the use of statistics produces knowledge that constitutes both teachers and students as manageable subjects who can be compared and judged against statistical norms and averages" (pp. 72-73). One such use to which statistics have been put in some countries, notably the United Kingdom and United States of America, is that teachers are judged on accountability measures tied to their students' grade performance.

John Abbott, author and president of the 21st Century Learning Initiative, observes that in many countries, but particularly in the U.K., educational policy more than ever places great emphasis on measuring performance, setting targets and collecting objective data for league tables. "What the politicians wanted was data, and data that would enable them to show that the policies they were applying were actually working" he asserts (2010, p. 169). However, policy-based quantification is dangerous, no more evident than in the over-reliance on grades.

5.2.3 The Irrationality of Grade Dependency

As touched on earlier, the rationalization of a bureaucratic system can create irrationalities within the system itself. With Fast education, one irrationality is its unhealthy dependency on grades. Note that I am using the word "grade" and not test, though tests are commonly used as a way to quickly measure school performance and generate grade. The irrationality and the discord that grade dependency creates is what many teachers and students deal with on a daily basis. Aware of this issue, Abbott (2010) says: "The constant neurotic focus on grades stops teachers from encouraging connections and fostering creative flexibility" (p. 175). The effects of grade dependency are seen most alarmingly in vulnerable students, who identify and associate grade success with their own sense of self-worth while overly sensitive students can easily become despondent and depressed in response to a poor or lower than expected grade. Grade dependency often overshadows the student's love of learning and their investment in the subject; the grade, as a matter of necessity and an artificial motivator, means that any love or intrinsic interest in the subject, and the growth and nourishment such interest can bring largely go unseen. Moreover, grade dependency narrows the scope of the course material covered; content is often reduced to digestible chunks for testing purposes, making it easier for students to recall, and quicker for teachers to teach and test. As Noddings (2003) reaffirms: "Everything a teacher does has to aim at some fact or skill that will appear on a test, and the overriding goal of teaching has become higher test scores" (p. 122). Sadly, this narrow approach leaves the student bereft of an appreciation and understanding of the subject. A glance at both the French and English secondary school history textbooks in Quebec will support this claim. Fundamentally important and relevant topics such as the Industrial Revolution and Residential Schools are afforded little depth and no more than a few pages of text, pictures and simple

comprehension exercises. Meanwhile, Bull (2016) draws attention to big data's growing presence in education. Schools have increasingly become structurally dependent on quantifying and grading performance to the extent that tests "[do not] exist to help individual students so much as help people organize large pools of students or to speed up the grading process for teachers" (p. 21). John Abbott (2010) states that intelligence test (a form of standardized testing) "reduce the complexity and diversity of human nature to a single number by classifying children simplistically as gifted, average or unintelligent" (pp. 20-21). Not only does grade dependency derail authentic learning, but it can dictate how students feel about themselves. Students who seek grades as a form of success have no appetite to enjoy learning in an authentic sense. They define their schooling success solely on grades and attainting credits and not on their personal growth and intellectual development. Their identity as students resides in the grades they attain. It does not matter what value the content holds as long as the grade is adequate. Consequently, their relationship to both the material and learning becomes superficial and inauthentic. Their hunger and purpose is for grades, and their subsequent behavior is defined by their purpose. Fast education perpetuates and propagates the irrationality of grade dependency, leaving many students either unable to recognize their own intelligence, abilities and qualities or under-appreciating them. Moreover, for grade dependent students approaching important examinations, the thought of failure is such a frightening prospect they often display heightened levels of stress and anxiety leading up to and during examination periods. I have witnessed this first hand at such regularity that I now integrate formative evaluation strategies to alleviate chronic student anxiety associated with 100% final examinations and grades.

Grade dependency largely has its origins in rationalized education systems. The hallmarks of efficiency, calculability, predictability and control have combined to construct

educational environments where the students' genuine love of learning is not given the consistency and slowness it needs to blossom. It is not surprising that many students quickly adapt a survival mentality and efficient and productive strategies of studying and patterns of behavior that will help them remember and absorb information to be tested and graded on later. Such strategies as skimming and scan reading, rote memorization and cramming for a test may help students get the job done quickly and productively, but such corner-cutting behaviors are ultimately destructive to the students' love of the learning in general and the subject itself. The mechanics of a rationalized, Fast education experience have successfully eliminated any enchantment and awe in the learning process, while a dependency on grades distorts the students' motivation and deflates their genuine love of learning.

As Abbott (2010) emphasizes, "If you are forever doing formal tests and waiting for someone to give you marks, then you never learn the skills for assessing yourself and measuring your own knowledge and ability against genuine, outside challenges" (p. 175). Moreover, grade dependency tricks students into believing they are successful learners, which youth advocate Vicki Abeles (2015) reinforces in her book *Beyond Measure* when she says: "The institutionally fixed mindset [of education systems] celebrates academically adept students, rewarding them for their high scores and good grades and making them feel smart without ever really challenging them" (p. 119). Ultimately, though, grade dependency undermines rather than cultivates a relationship between the student and the subject and potentially harms a student's well-being. American author and educator Parker J. Palmer (2007) adds to the argument by explaining how grading denies "connectedness" among teachers and their students: "we are distanced by a grading system that separates teachers from students...by competition that makes students and

teachers wary of their peers, and by bureaucracy that put faculty and administration at odds" (p. 36).

For Palmer (2007), the answer to the current irrationality around grade dependency is clear and simple:

> To those who say we need weights and measures in order to enforce accountability in education, ...We need to make sure …that we measure the things worth measuring in the context of authentic education, where rote learning counts for little…; [and] that we know how to measure what we set out to measure; and... that we attach no more importance to measurable things than we attach to things equally or more important that elude our instruments. (p. xiii)

The solutions to grade dependency are many and varied. According to Abeles (2015), policy change and creative forms of evaluation would be altogether more meaningful and humane, and would "honor children's diverse strengths" (p. 120). American academic administrator and scholar Bernard Bull (2016) asks that instead of measuring school performance, could not tests and their resulting grades be "used with the main goal of helping each learner make substantive progress?", adding that "tests would be less about documenting and more about monitoring and helping people grow and learn" (p. 14).

For these ideas to take hold and policy change to occur, however, I feel governments and bureaucracies need to see beyond their own limited "centres of calculation" and accompanying fast thinking, thinking which makes the mistaken assumption that "only that which can be measured is true knowledge" (Orr, 1996, p. 699).

5.2.4 The Dimension of Control

When Bull (2016) introduces the question of agency as a critical contemporary issue in education, he is advocating for greater student independence and "the capacity [for students] to make choices for oneself, take ownership, and wield influence on oneself and one's environment" (p. 45). Promoting such an innovative agenda, he argues, would be for the betterment of society and the individual who, having exercised agency throughout their schooling, will cultivate the capacity to "become self-directed, a self-teacher, self-regulated, and a self-learner" (p. 45). However, he concedes that "Some learning environments are shaped more by the desire to keep students under control, ensure they are coloring between the lines, and get them to follow the teacher's instructions" (p. 49) which, he predicts, can only result in them becoming "persistently dependent on others" (p. 45).

Bull's remarks lead us to the fourth dimension of rationalization – that of control. In the context of McDonaldization, Ritzer (2000) defines it as "increased control through the replacement of human with non-human technology... includ[ing] not only machines and tools but also materials, skills, knowledge, rules, regulations, procedures, and techniques" (p. 104).[4] This is particularly the case in education systems, which have gradually and progressively gained control over teachers and students through the implementation of bureaucratic rules and regulations, along with manuals prescribing accepted procedures, behaviors and techniques.

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that the ordinary student is subject to a great deal of control in their everyday lives within atypical school environment. This comes through fear, discipline, punishment and reward, as well as by the artificially controlled time frames and temporal rhythms imposed on them in the form of schedules, blocks, bells, and the almost

[4] The discussion around non-human technologies and control as it relates to education is considerable and beyond the scope of this thesis.

unbending order and unnatural tempo over which they have no control. Striking for Rifkin (1987) is how the schedule wields immense power over our lives, as it "exerts far greater control over time allocation than the calendar…The schedule regulates micro time – events spread out over seconds, minutes, and hours of the day" (pp. 94-95), ensuring, albeit inadvertently, that all the gaps in a student's day are filled, thus "kill[ing] those empty, slow periods that are so important for creativity and directionless thinking" (Eriksen, 2001, p. 143).

Other forms of educational control reside in a student's school life. For instance, students are given little scope in the subjects they study, and in the content within the subject itself. Noddings (2003) asks, "Looking at the curriculum as a whole, are there opportunities for significant student choice? If not, the curriculum should be revised" (p.111). In today's Fast school systems, allowing students a modicum of choice and agency over the content curriculum is discouraged. In rationalized education systems that are largely controlling and impersonal in nature, "students are taught not only to obey authority but also to embrace the rationalized procedures of rote learning and objective testing," claims Ritzer (2000, p. 115). Those students who play the game and follow the system's rules are regarded as 'good' students, while those that do not are "labeled as bad students" (p. 115). He goes on:

> As a general rule, the students who end up in college are the ones who have successfully submitted to the control mechanisms. Creative, independent students are often, from the educational system's point of view, "messy, expensive, and time-consuming." (p. 115)

Sacrificing student choice and agency in schools for greater control may prove valuable from a cost, efficiency, and time-saving perspective. However, while greater control reduces uncertainty and unpredictability and keeps learning tidy, it does little to support the best forms of

pedagogy and learning, and fails to nurture citizens that can actively participate and contribute to their communities. When Krishnamurti (1981) tells us that "[c]onformity leads to mediocrity" (p. 9), and Abbott (2010) points out that "Education for many has come to mean doing what you are told and not asking awkward questions" (p. 4), we need to be concerned about to what extent bureaucratized control in education in the form of rules, regulations, procedures, and techniques dehumanize educational systems and produce little more than efficient citizens who are educated to conform to a desired pattern.

In "*Bureaucratization, education and the meanings of responsibility*," Hannah Spector (2019) claims that "American public schooling and its curriculum are bureaucratically controlled and organized" (p. 505), and have, in effect, "perpetuated the capitalist goals of efficiency and social control" (p. 504). The "up-to-date totalitarian brand" of bureaucracy (p. 511), she continues, "not only seeks to control the 'outward destinies' of individuals but also 'the whole inner life of the soul'" (p. 511). While such philosophical thinkers as Krishnamurti (1981) argue that "[e]ducation in the true sense is helping the individual to be mature and free, to flower greatly in love and goodness" (p. 23), in reality, the conditioning influences and controlling nature of education in the form of "mandated pedagogy," "uniform curriculum" and "a 'corporate model of tightly centralized, hierarchical, top-down control" (Spector, 2019, p. 516), mean that students are, as Krishnamurti (1981) asserts, "taught to conform, to accept the existing values" (p. 29). Greater self-determination, Abbott (2010) believes, would see a return to a more natural, constructivist inclination of education, where children and young people would take greater control and make decisions about their own learning.

Chapter 6 -The Slow School and the Fast School

"There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting…The degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting"

Milan Kundera

6.1 The Slow School Experience

In December 1980, when I was nine years old, my family and I moved away from the fast-paced and hectic environment of Greater London, leaving behind its colorful multi-ethnic and multi-lingual urban landscapes for pastures new and unfamiliar. Awaiting us, some sixty kilometers away, was a new and unhurried life on a farm near the village of Gosfield, Essex – a world of hedgerows and a bland white rural majority, whose accents were quite unlike my own thick East London inflections. To say that I felt like an outsider from another world would be an understatement.

Yet, despite whatever internal misgivings and conflicts I harbored, my school and classroom life at Gosfield Community Primary School was profoundly pleasurable, for it helped me realize that I could learn well, whereas before I felt profoundly incompetent. Moreover, it positively shaped and informed my current philosophy of education. The catalyst which transformed my learning experiences was, in large part, the different attitude towards time espoused by the school; that is to say, how time was understood, managed and honored within what was essentially a rural public school setting. During nature walks, arts circles, personal book-making projects, and reading sessions, students were afforded time to be fully engaged; we were never hurried. In retrospect, it is clear that the school consciously envisioned learning as a deeply engaging act, one which necessitated that time be flexible and available so we could learn at our own rhythms with real purpose and meaning and without too much mental strain. Thus, in

an educational setting where slowness was valued and thinking was more meditative and meandering, less deliberate and perfunctory, the students were able to reap what psychologist and educator Guy Claxton (1998) refers to as the "fruits of relaxed cognition" (p. 9). Looking back, I am quite certain the school's lucid and compelling vision was not an accident, but grounded in what the late American author and educator Neil Postman (1995) refers to as a "shared narrative" (p. 18) between teachers and students. This shared narrative "provide[d] an inspired reason for schooling" (p.18) and, I would further suggest, a crucial step in a person's life-long learning journey. The conscious and deliberate use of time, with its unhurried, unanxious atmosphere, allowed teachers and students to relate deeply and empathetically to one another, and in turn cultivate not only the shared narratives from which deep and purposeful learning could flourish, but also cultivate the creative space, intellectual freedom and genuine encouragement in which intuitive, contemplative and observational modes of thinking could occur, which in turn nurtured and strengthened knowing and learning. For instance, built into our nature walks were opportunities to observe birds, small mammals and insects (i.e., their colors, diets and habitats), this from the many bird houses, hiding places and insectariums strategically placed around the school grounds. During and following such walks, we would document our observations and the behaviors of a particular bird, mammal or insect that we were drawn to before completing additional research, using the school's library recourses to help us. Once the observations and research were complete, we would embark on our personal book-making projects. This usually involved carrying out such tasks as book binding, designing a front cover and title, and writing a content page. The book's content consisted of our findings, additional research and lots of colorful drawings. Essentially, from scratch, and after hours of devotion and

considerable learning and application of knowledge, we had created our very own reference book. Not once did we use a textbook.

In more ways than one, Gosfield Community Primary School was a slow public school. By slow, I mean that aside from the presence of a shared narrative, fostering genuine, long-lasting connection and togetherness, the teachers were cognizant of children's learning rhythms, mindful enough to have students work for extended periods on meaningful projects related to core curricular content, and sufficiently wise to place greater importance on the quality of learning processes and less emphasis on quantification, productivity and test results. The phenomenon of Slow education is thus multifaceted; it is constituted by a peaceful, complex and mindful interplay between the teacher and his or her students, buttressed between the pedagogical knowledge, expertise and passion the teacher has for the subject, the conditions the teacher creates to optimize authentic learning, and their understanding of the educational and developmental aims laid out in the curriculum. All these vital aspects converged organically to make learning transformative, purposeful and enjoyable for the students. In short, Gosfield Community Primary School valued what slow teacher, Jamie Thom (2018) describes as "incremental learning over time" (p. 27); the school emphasized learning at an *appropriate* speed, depth and rhythm for its students, such that they could value and build upon it. It was not at Gosfield Community Primary School that I learned to read, but it was there in a calm, unhurried and receptive learning environment that I learned to *love* reading, a passion that endures to this day. Yet, I should stress that despite having benefited greatly from my slow education experience, I believe Slow education should not be misunderstood as a countercultural reaction to a more rationalized Fast education experience: a kind of welcome reprieve from the onslaught of rote learning, unnecessary tests, and excessive homework. This is not the case. For

memorization of key concepts and facts, repetition exercises and drills, and progress tests and homework all have their place in Slow education; however, and this point is of great significance, these aspects of learning do not significantly direct or control a child's educational experiences, creating that overload and dependency which can so often be detrimental to a child's educational journey and love of learning. More accurately, intrinsic enquiry, autonomy, spontaneity, variety and creativity, aspects of learning that were central to my nature walks and numerous book-making projects at Gosfield Community Primary School, are considered of greater value in the Slow school, *even in* the face of extrinsic necessities and pressures often imposed by the statutory content curricula.

The actions of a Slow school are defined in terms of the goal or purpose it serves. As a parent whose children attend Ecole Rudolf Steiner de Montréal, a Slow school in Montreal, Canada, I know that the school's principles and practices place greater emphasis on the processes of learning than on learning outcomes, though both are considered important. In the case of a Slow school such as Ecole Rudolf Steiner de Montréal, for example, the school 'senses' the need to develop a child's heart as much as a child's intellect or mind. Embracing this thinking, a child's education, which is predominately nature-, arts- and music-based, is viewed as one continuous and connected journey, the activities and interactions of which consciously focus on the cultivation of the child's inner personal ecology (i.e., inner beliefs, values, patterns, thoughts, feelings, and emotions), while developing an understanding and connection to the outer environment. Moreover, because of its humanistic ethos and spiritual philosophy of education (that being Anthroposophy), learning is less hurried and the teachers are careful to follow my children's unique rhythms of learning. What's more, as a low-tech school, the skills children acquire often happen through a slow process of discovery, experimentation and investigation,

without the overhanging fear of tight schedules, inflexible deadlines and the time-is-scarce rhetoric often present in Fast education. Finally, because of its wholeness or holistic approach to education, Ecole Rudolf Steiner de Montréal rarely dispenses lumps of superficial knowledge and irrelevant information to be regurgitated on demand in the form of tests. Rather, they aim to consciously enable students learn how to learn. As Slow education advocate, Mike Grenier (2016) encapsulates, Slow school students are expected "to reflect and argue, to explore and discover, to challenge and question": such cognitive tasks, he goes on to say, take "time to develop…in each student…but [these] habits of mind outweigh the short-termism of fact-based regurgitation" (p. 86).

Efforts to understand and apply the Slow education vision require confronting several major paradigm shifts in thinking, both with respect to the field of education and inside the family home. One impediment found embedded in the current mindset in many educational circles, which has rippled into the outlook of parents, is that slow learning is unproductive, time-consuming, and geared towards unintelligent students, and that the limited resource of time must not to be squandered. Unsurprisingly, for many students, particularly those at the high school level, the Fast education mindset, and the time-based biases and pressures it generates, has serious consequences on their mental well-being. Simply put, the characteristics of Fast education have conditioned these already vulnerable students to believe they *are slow*. At this timely point, it is worth considering that the meaning of slow often propagated by many public education systems is *not* synonymous with positive adjectives such as calm, careful, unhurried, and reflective. On the contrary, in fast, mainstream education systems *slow* has come to mean inefficient, wasteful and dim, a point reinforced by Carl Honoré (2004) who asserts, "In many quarters, "slow" remains a dirty word while speed is to a large extent idolized" (p. 49). It is

perhaps inevitable, then, that people have become generally confused as to the nature of slowness or 'being slow,' and as a consequence may have formed misconceptions around it. Often, these misconceptions cause suffering, for to be labeled or stigmatized as slow comes with negative connotations, particularly for children at school. From professional experience, working closely with so-called 'slow' students, I know how such educational branding can be misguided profoundly destructive. Many 'slow' students are not slow at all; rather, they may be unmotivated and uninspired to learn, perhaps because they have been subjected to a brand of North American education that aligns itself to the values of efficiency and productivity and the "artificial rhythms of our high-speed culture" (Rifkin, p. 14, 1989) that not only dehumanizes and demoralizes them, but also inhibits their gaining of essential personal and academic resources or competences. These resources and competences, which include problem-solving skills, high self-esteem, optimism, self-directedness and learned resourcefulness, are instrumental in learning successfully, particularly under high stress conditions (Gustafsson et al, 2010). Consequently, many students leave speed-minded and dehumanizing school settings wounded, with low self-confidence, depression and anxiety, making them "more vulnerable to resource loss and less capable of resource gain" (Gustafsson et al, 2010, p. 56). That is to say, they can often leave school academically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually or creatively impoverished. Needless to say, for many students, the impact and potency of resource loss or impoverishment make it difficult for them to bounce back academically, socially or mentally. It makes for a bleak scenario, and one that Eton College House Master Mike Grenier (2016) underscores when he states: "For many students in England, their engagement with their studies resembles the dehumanizing experience of the factory worker in Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times" (p. 86).

To make these frequent misconceptions around slow and being slow less frequent, the responsibility falls on those working with children and adolescents at all levels in the field of education, including success-hungry parents, to avoid the prevailing assumptions that speed equates to ability and intelligence and slowness equates to a deficiency in academic aptitude. To reinforce this point, I refer to researcher Parisa Rouhani (2019) and the concluding paragraph of her Harvard University study:

> Even though the core design of the education system was built around the assumption that speed and ability are coupled, and has been optimized for the efficient ranking and sorting of students into positions in society, the findings of this study support the assertion that a student's speed does not necessarily reflect what the student is capable of accomplishing. For educational institutions to support and develop all students, it must abandon the false notion that speed is indicative of ability and allow for flexibility in its design so that all students have the time needed to achieve mastery. (p. 76)

Indeed, educators and parents alike would do well to heed the sage advice from Canadian educator and Slow education campaigner Shelley Wright (2014), who wisely points out that Slow education is not only a democratic act that helps cultivate ethical citizens with an abundance of resources, but also helps children "tap into their own innate motivation to learn" (p. 1).

Issues of best educational practice and outcomes today tend to be divided, falling on a spectrum between two opposite camps. One camp commonly referred to as process-oriented or student centered, holds that our current educational problems, which are serious and in need of addressing, are the result of Fast education practices, such as excessive testing and quantification, narrowing and standardization of content, and a one-size-fits-all approach to

education. The other camp, which tends to be more results-oriented, sees students as human capital and places great emphasis on academic attainment. The latter camp, at its most extreme, aligns itself with big business and a desire for continued economic growth, while the former pushes back against the standards-driven agenda, calls for a 'less is more' approach and strongly supports the empathetic and enchanting values of sustainability, community, cooperation, patience, reflection, and slowness. For individual schools and education systems that side with either of the two camps, the learning outcomes – both educational and developmental – can seem successful, as each camp's perspective is clearly influenced by its own bias. For the Slow education camp, the differences between Slow education and Fast education are as obvious as they are profound. Below I present Mike Grenier's (2016) standpoint on the culture of Slow education followed by the Slow camp's perspective of Fast education practices.

The culture of Slow education, according to Mike Grenier (2016), necessitates "deep thinking and creativity" in order for students to thrive. He adds: "Superficial knowledge is no better than empty rhetoric or false logic...[In] creating a stimulating and engaging curriculum it is equally important that time is made flexible" (pp. 81-82). Time, for Grenier, is not the antagonist: instead "time is on the side of all teachers if the process becomes more important than the content" (p. 86). On slow schools as effective learning environments, Grenier declares that "Slow schools are places where learning is paramount, and they are also environments in which trial and error are not only allowed, but actively encouraged" (p. 90). Rather than render students as after-thoughts in their own learning experiences, Grenier says that Slow education recognizes "that young people need stimulation and they need the chance to be actively involved in their learning" (p. 91). And, crucially, he maintains that Slow education seeks "to break free from the industrialized model" of education that is outmoded and harmful (p. 91).

The culture of Fast education in the eyes of the Slow education camp believe "[t]he pressure to proceed from one targeted standard to another as fast as possible, to absorb and demonstrate specified knowledge with conveyor-belt precision is an irresistible fact of school life" (Holt, 2002, p. 1). For Slow education advocates such as Holt (2002), the standardized education model "demonstrates the same deterministic thinking that governs the production of fast food" (p. 5). While Bull (2016) tells policy-level national reformist who "strive to find the model, method, and universal set of standards [in education] that can be applied across the board for the benefit of everyone" that in reality "there is no such thing as a universal model, method, or set of standards that is best for all students" (p. 2). For slow living supporter David Orr (1996), the culture of fast knowledge deems "only that which can be measured is true knowledge" (p. 699), with fast knowledge being "mostly linear" while slow knowledge is "complex and ecological" (p. 701).

While our ingenuity in rationalizing systems in general may be admirable, in education the mechanisms of rationalization frequently come into conflict with individuals' ways of learning. When we seek to maximize efficiency in learning by placing greater emphasis on standardization, calculability, and predictability (Weber's dimensions), we oversimplify teaching and learning, reducing both by overlooking the complexities involved.

Speaking professionally, I have long since understood and accepted that there is a fundamental connection in the learning process between depth and time. In just about every human endeavor – be it learning a musical instrument competently or carefully cultivating a budding garden in summer – to achieve a deeper, lasting connection and appreciation, not to mention a sizeable amount of knowledge in something, takes vast amounts of time. To present another, more metaphysical example: knowing one's self deeply – if this is at all possible –

needs an entire lifetime of profound spiritual, emotional and intellectual work, effort and self-examination to achieve.

To this end, for depth to be afforded the credibility it deserves as a transformative feature in the teaching-learning process, our current relationship toward time, within the parameters of how it functions inside the classroom, must be viewed in an entirely different way. We must look upon time more as an abundant, caring friend that understands and responds to a child's learning rhythms rather than as a cruel enemy out to defeat them. For when time is made elemental and is consciously woven into the building blocks of learning and teaching, and not regarded as a scarce commodity to be used sparingly, the outcomes for both student and teacher can be both greatly intensified as well as deepened.

Moreover, from my experience, when time is viewed with depth of learning firmly in mind, the teacher sees his or her role more as nurturing students for something bigger, more profound and longer lasting, rather than simply marshalling them for immediate returns and near future gains. Their prime concern becomes to sustain a student's natural inclination and ability to learn and build on their innate curiosity. Working with depth in mind, such a teacher, a slow teacher let's say, can "act with purpose, taking the time for deliberation, reflection, and dialogue" with their students (Berg & Seeber, 2016, p. 13). Sadly, so normalized has acceleration and brevity in learning become, that to question this is to occupy an almost antagonistic position toward speed. For their part, discussions around slowness in learning and learning rhythms are rare, which is not surprising given that, as I have already mentioned, an important duty for teachers is to ensure that the speed and tempo of life for children inside the classroom replicates that of the 'real' world that awaits then, a world, I might add, in which hurrying has become the norm for many children, and where attention spans and boredom thresholds are increasingly

short and fragile as children become more and more "accustomed to the rhythm created by commercial breaks on television" (Eriksen, 2001, p. 69). Going back to Huyssen (1994), they have become adapted to immediacy, especially through the frequent and rapid doses of dopamine inducing social media.

And herein lies the root of the problem contributing to the conspicuous chasm in thinking between the Slow classroom and the Fast classroom. A Fast classroom, like the wider society it serves, celebrates speed and efficiency, values productivity and busyness, and applauds overwork and multitasking (Berg & Seeber, 2016). A Slow classroom responds to the entrenched model of Fast education by facilitating a more empathetic culture – deliberately slowing down and giving students opportunities for practice by creating moments of "timeless time" or "timelessness,"[5] which not only helps honor the naturally occurring internal rhythms and instinctive joy of learning latent in children, but helps develop a bond between them and the material so they may think and engage deeply. This is a point Thom (2018) is eager to make when he tells us that teachers need to mute themselves and embrace silence regularly in the classroom. In doing so, he stresses, the classroom atmosphere is then more conducive to deeper learning, greater focus and "meaningful output" and practice for students (p. 56).

In discussing the rhythms of learning in education, Mike Grenier tells us that in the Slow classroom "time is made flexible…and the slow teacher must be allowed to become a virtuoso, skillfully knowing which tempo to apply…[and] adapt[ing] her manner according to the concepts of classical rhetoric: skillful exposition, rhetorical questioning, proposing a false concept, appealing to ethos and pathos…" (pp. 82-85). The Slow classroom, unlike its faster counterpart,

[5]Timelessness is referred to by Berg & Seeber in their book *The Slow Professor*, and is defined by Charalampos Mainemelis as "the experience of transcending time and one's self by becoming immersed in a captivating present-moment activity or event" (p.26).

withstands the impulse of acceleration and the pressure of the content curriculum to do more in *less* time. The Slow classroom, in short, can be characterized as a sustainable and uninhibited environment where bewilderment and fascination are actively sought after and inspiration and enthusiasm are instilled. Far from being dominated by artificial time orientations, which "emphasize[s] speed and predictability" (Rifkin, 1989, p. 235), the Slow classroom validates and values a student's learning rhythms, giving them time to make the observations and explorations of things that will further develop their nature and intellect. Importantly, when students know that they are valued and their learning is of importance, they themselves feel valuable and motivated.

6.2 Slow Schools in Action

It is at this point in the thesis that attention is given to Slow education in action. While research suggests that there is neither a definitive model or single methodology of Slow education nor an archetypal Slow school to speak of, since the emergence of the *Slow School Movement* in England more than twenty years ago and in response to an upsurge in public demand, education worldwide has seen a steady growth in schools adopting methods or strategies that reflect and embrace the slow teaching and learning ethos. Each version of a Slow school is distinct, drawing on its own social, cultural and historical contexts to cultivate its mission and philosophical foundations (Smith, 2017). As Australian anthropologist and sociologist Stephen J. Smith (2017) explains: while Slow schools are respectful of the educational policy mandates and curriculum *in situ,* and "do not stand in opposition to mainstream modes of education and schooling," they are characteristically regarded as non-mainstream institutions (p. 24). Philosophically, adds Smith (2017), as an alternative model of

schooling, Slow education, to varying degrees, “parallels with self-directed learning, projected-based learning, challenged-based learning and certain aspects of so-called *free* and *democratic* schools” (p. 21; emphasis in the original).

In his investigation of non-mainstream education, Smith (2017) focuses his attention on the theoretical, pedagogical and philosophical underpinnings of Blue Gum Community School (BGCS) in Canberra, Australia, a school that “does not subscribe to any single or specific philosophy or approach…[but] views itself as a *research center*…[whose] approach is also “interest-driven, child-led, organic or eclectic learning” (p. 24; emphasis in the original). What follows is a rundown of the most notable findings taken from Smith’s in-depth investigation of the school, in which he carried out many open-ended interviews with key staff members as well as frequent observations of classroom operations in an attempt to gain greater insight into the day-to-day running of the school.

6.3 Blue Gum Community School

6.3.1 Founding Philosophy

The school, which caters for children from birth to grade 10, regards each and every child/student as “highly competent, capable, creative, responsible, resourceful and resilient, who therefore learns best through deep extended learning experiences where students actively engage in the exploration of individual and community interests/questions/theories for knowledge gaining and meaning-making” (p. 24).

6.3.2 Teaching and Learning

Unlike the more traditional *teacher-responsible* model of learning, the school embraces a *learner-responsible* model of learning that sees the students as producers of their own learning. Teachers, all of whom hold a "four-year teaching qualification from a recognized institution" assume the role of facilitator and guide, organizing their classroom environment along "pluralistic and facilitative" lines. The learning space is conducive to discussion and "divergence," and students are "afforded opportunities to negotiate and direct their own learning" (p. 25). Several less directly quantifiable non-cognitive skills and outcomes of education are mindfully targeted. These include:

> the ability of students to risk-take and persevere through new challenges; learning how to make effective judgments and to constructively critique their own work and that of others; the capability to pursue their passions, interests and questions to a deep level of understanding; the capacity to adapt to change; and openness to innovation and creativity in solving problems (p. 25).

6.3.3 Structure and Curriculum

Developed in accordance with mandated government policy and guidelines, the school's "educational project" or "emergent negotiated curriculum" is organic in structure, continuously evolving and has "clear teaching and learning objectives which are continually being assessed and re-assessed by teachers and students alike" (p. 25 & p. 28). The students actively participate in meaningful learning tasks, the objectives of which are set and evaluated by themselves and their peers (p. 26). Teacher assessment of "prescribed curriculum outcomes"is required, but not

to the detriment of celebrating student achievement and identifying areas requiring additional work (p. 25).

6.3.4 The Learning Environment

In terms of the configuration and arrangement of the classroom and furniture – "[t]he rooms are spacious and divided into various learning spaces—writing, reading, tinkering/construction, science, art, and mathematics," (p. 27) which generates "a physical environment and atmosphere conducive to student comfort and learning" (p. 23). The use of bells to signal class and recess times is absent, thus facilitating less distraction and opportunities for deeper learning. The school's outdoor spaces and gardens have been landscaped and designed to "maximize open-ended wild spaces that elicit imaginative and exploratory play and investigation" (p. 26). To maintain the sense of classroom community, students actively assume the role of community members and "have a responsibility towards the other members of the class" (p. 27). Weekly working pedagogical and mentorship days are in operation between a small team of educational directors and other teachers.

6.3.5 The Role of the Teachers

"Teachers are never seen as mere agents of curriculum delivery" (Smith, 2017, p. 27). More fittingly, they are regarded as co-learners within a community of learners (p. 29) or as "a coach…a provider, organizer and manager of customized learning in experiential learning environments" (p. 27). Teachers at BGCS are comfortable teaching through negotiation, exploration, investigation, debate and collaboration, and plan for "possibilities and

contingencies, rather than pre-determining an outcome (pp. 27-28). Moreover, while the teaching and learning of particular skills and core basics, including reading, writing, and mathematical concepts and processes is explicitly done through workshops, teachers embrace a more evolutionary, integrated and "dynamic and interactive" process of learning required by the school. This process of learning is largely applied and achieved through open-ended, engaging and autonomous tasks or research projects called *Explorations*, undertaken weekly across all subjects. Smith (2017) reports that "[e]xplorations or research options… can be pursued and achieved by students in their own ways" with close guidance and support from their teachers (p. 28).

6.3.6 Community, Accountability and Responsibility at BGCS

Community and belonging are central to the philosophy of BGCS, and as such the school is committed to the authentic cultivation of its ideals through cross-age peer mentoring, participating in community research internships by high school students, intergenerational opportunities with senior members in the local community and with students working alongside experts in a range of professional fields. These community-focused initiatives hone in on students' overall work-life skills and expectations and society's need for them "to function independently…to be critical, constructive and collaborative" (Smith, 2017, p. 29). The pedagogical direction of the school community means students are:

- "accountable for their actions and responsible, not only to themselves, but to their peers, teachers, parents, carers and the broader community;
- active participants and negotiators of their learning and research endeavors; and

- [receptive to] ongoing constructive critical comment and feedback from teachers and peers to pinpoint targets and strategies for individual learners' self-improvement" (p. 30).

6.3.7 Summary

Smith (2017) ends his paper by explaining how Blue Gum Community School is committed to the society it serves. By adhering consciously to its own Slow school pedagogical and philosophical foundations, BGCS "provides its students with a customized learning experience…in a learning setting which is sensitive to the learners' pre-existing cognitive structures," that allow students to be "enthusiastically engaged in pursuing knowledge, skills and understanding through enquiry-based, deep learning." In so doing, the school adheres more to a life-ready than work-ready ethos in which children become autonomous, responsible, reflective, critical and effective human beings (p. 31). While I have had no first-hand contact or interactions with Blue Gum Community School, I intuitively know that its way of teaching and learning and guiding ethos is remarkably similar to that which I experienced as a student at Gosfield Community Primary School in England and that which my children have enjoyed at Ecole Rudolf Steiner de Montréal. All three schools understand implicitly the place of slowness in learning.

Crucially, a Slow school and a slower learning environment as seen at Blue Gum Community School facilitates pleasure rather than pressure in learning, which in turn grants positive significance to a student's academic growth and, for the teacher, greater insight into the learning of the student. Berg and Seeber (2016) argue, this with respect to their environment of post-secondary education: "Environmental factors facilitate or interfere with creative thinking" (p. 28) not to mention, I would add, the quality and depth of learning outcomes. Schools are

notoriously busy environments where time is fragmented and precise schedules are crowded and predictable, and where children are caught between two temporalities or rhythms: their own and the artificial one of school. As Rifkin (1989) observes: “Even the pace and tempo in the hallways, as students move to and from classes, comes to resemble the frenetic often frantic rhythms of the larger urban environment” (p. 71). At school, there is no avoiding clock time and so very little quality time is afforded students to explore and go deeper. Yet, in their discussion on timeless time, Berg and Seeber (2016) tell us that “[r]esearch shows that periods of escape from time are actually essential to deep thought, creativity, and problem solving” (p. 26). A Slow teacher, and a Slow parent for that matter, understands this need for frequent moments of timeless time in learning. While inside the Fast school, a society’s time values and temporal orientation are superimposed on the school environment and culture, indoctrinating students to a reality where time is seen as something that is unbending. The Fast teacher, who perhaps has unconsciously and innocently accepted society’s time values, sets out on a fixed formula and narrow pathway driven by speed, efficiency and productivity “to condition the child to become a cog in the social machine” (Noddings, 2003, p. 102). To summarize Rifkin (1987), for much of the post industrial age, teachers have willingly accepted “the concept of scheduling” and “new time rules” as a way of presiding over the education of children whose temporal orientation becomes “habituated, not to say naturalized to Labor and Fatigue” (p. 112). Is it any wonder, then, that many perfectly capable young people have an ambiguous relationship with education in general and school in particular, and may not feel very motivated, or indeed are vulnerable and not able to learn under such time pressures? Like the industrial workers in the factory system before them, children caught in contemporary accelerated learning environments are “swept up into the temporality imposed on them” by schedules, blocks, bells, and deadlines that force them

"to conform to a rigidly defined set of sequences, durations, and rhythms over which they have little or no control" (Rifkin, 1987, p. 235).The value of punctuality and having children arrive at school on time is clearly a necessary and a valuable human quality, that for the majority of people will be of great use to them throughout their life. Yet, rushing and herding children through the learning cycles efficiently with productivity in mind, but without significant contribution or intellectual involvement on their part, is ultimately unsustainable and an entirely different thing from Slow learning. The link between acceleration in education and the detrimental effects it has on the mental well-being of students and their learning potential and outcomes needs to be explored further, particularly if education systems, policy makers and parents are to be convinced that the quality and depth of one's learning and the level of one's focus on intellectual work is greatly enhanced when time becomes more flexible. "We need, then, to protect a time and a place for timeless time," recommend Professors Berg and Seeber (2016, p. 28). If not, they go on to warn, "there is evidence that not only our work but also our brains will suffer" (2016, p. 28), as will the minds and mental well-being of many children.

Schools that tend to find a place for slowness such as *School 21* in Stratford, London, England and *Matthew Moss High School* in Rochdale, Northern England have gone to considerable lengths to integrate well-being and social and emotional development into their educational ethos and curriculum. Aside from having an emphasis on oracy development through dialogic teaching/learning, real-life community-based initiatives and project-based learning, designed for deeper and deliberate learning, both schools recognize the need to cultivate the inner character and emotional health of their students by incorporating essential resources for life such as: resilience, empathy, optimism, growth mindset, purposeful practice, mindfulness and kindness. The following quote from School 21 is proudly positioned on their Well-being page:

“Our school is designed to help every child grow: as human beings, intellectually, in maturity and character. We believe that if a child feels well inside themselves they achieve more” (School 21, 2021).

More needs to be said on the subject of slowness in learning, particularly as it relates to children’s unique learning rhythms and how the brain learns. Guy Claxton (1998) writes:“The mind…works at different speeds...Allowing [it] time to meander is not a luxury that can safely be cut back as life and work gets more demanding” (p. 2).On this subject he goes on to emphasize that “thinking slowly is a vital part of the cognitive armamentarium” or toolbox(Claxton, 1998, p. 2). Dreamy, ruminating, mulling over things and being contemplative or meditative are terms used by Guy Claxton (1998, p.2) in his radical book *Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind*, to describe the leisurely mental mode of thinking he fittingly calls tortoise mind. “To daydream is to resist the dominant motion of our busy culture” (p. 1) explains poet Claire Skinner (2019), who is happy to dwell on the book *The Poetics of Reverie* by French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. Much like Claxton, Bachelard believes a daydream “is the locus from where creative thought arises” and “is essential to creation of any kind” (p. 1). Yet, suggests Skinner (2019), for some Western cultures, particularly the United States of America, daydreaming is construed as ‘‘nonutilitarian” and wasteful, a guilty pleasure in which nothing is accomplished. Evidence would suggest such ideas are misplaced. Both Bachelard’s thoughts and Claxton’s research are relevant, maintaining that slowness and timeless time hold a critical place inside the school classroom, perhaps more than ever inside the Fast classroom. Claxton (1998) positively acknowledges the importance of hare brain thinking: the intuitive, quick commonsensical thinking that helps us to respond to immediate, often imperative situations, and the “deliberate conscious thinking” or controlled, active thinking we need to “way up the pros and cons” and

solve problems in our day to day professional and personal lives (p. 2). Yet, he goes on to argue that "societies of the West have rather lost touch with the value of contemplation," and that increasingly "only active thinking is regarded as productive" (p. 4). Claxton (1998) cites the widespread decline and devaluation of slow thinking and slow knowing on the West's intolerance of inefficiency and its growing urgency and impatience for finding answers and solutions. The "changing conception of, and attitudes towards, time… [and the] urge to think faster: to solve problems and make decisions quickly" (pp. 4-5), Claxton states, may have unintentionally trapped us in a single mode of mind. In our "high-speed mental climate," where time is a both a commodity and adversary, he continues, deliberate, controlled thinking has become the dominant, default mode of thinking as our busy conscious mind looks for explanations "to pre-existing question[s]" that are "reasonable and justifiable," searching for clarity in linear, regimented fashion "along a well-lit path from problem to solution" (pp. 7-9). As a consequence of modern Western culture's neglect of slow thinking and the slower, more enchanted ways of knowing, Claxton (1998) asserts that "the slower modes of mind have been lost" (pp. 5-6). The emphasis on deliberate thinking, he resolutely points out, has weakened both our (in)tolerance for confusion and "our sense of the *unconscious intelligence* to which these more patient modes of the mind give access" (p. 6).

Society's neglect of contemplative, intuitive, tortoise-mind thinking and the "credence" and justification it affords deliberate, hare-brain thinking has consequences for how we learn. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Claxton (1998), much like John Abbott, is particularly vocal with respect to how Western education systems and university education programs have overlooked how children's brains learn. He reminds us that "often learning emerges in a more gradual, holistic way" (p. 8) in a relaxed mode of mind where "one needs to be able to feel comfortable being 'at

sea' for a while" (p. 9). Yet, in Fast classroom environments where learning is more test driven and product-oriented, students commonly operate under time constraints, resorting habitually to the dominant default mode of thinking for their answers and explanations. Inside the Fast classroom, which mimics the tempo outside in the larger world, slowing down "[t]o spend time dwelling on the question to see if it may lead to a *deeper* question seems inefficient, self-indulgent or perverse" (Claxton, 1998, p. 5; emphasis in the original).

The fruit of relaxed cognition, as Claxton puts it, may be cultivated in greater abundance in the Slow classroom where time is made flexible and slow knowing is accomplished through deeper exploration. There, confusion is not just tolerated, it is welcomed as an opportunity to "dwell on details which do not 'fit' or immediately make sense" (Claxton, 1998, p. 13). However, one must bear in mind that, in practice, to establish a Slow classroom, while surrounded by a rationalized, faster reality, is highly challenging even with the most virtuoso, slow-orientated teacher at the helm. So what strategies can a teacher integrate into their pedagogy to enable a slower, more thoughtful, authentic and memorable learning journey for his or her students? What follows in Chapter 7 are some practical approaches to slow teaching and learning that can be integrated into a regular (viz, Fast) classroom environment.

Chapter 7 - Slow Teaching in Practice

"It is time to streamline teaching to focus on what can make a difference to young people, something that can only be achieved if we deliberately slow down and focus on what matters."

Jamie Thom

Somewhat unavoidably, faster, more rationalized methods of teaching, learning and evaluating are appealing at many levels to the point that they have become normalized as the default models for different stakeholders, notably educators, administrators and parents. As was touched upon earlier, the practice of assembly line or "conveyor-belt" (Holt, 2002, p. 1) teaching and learning seems uncomplicated, compact, and efficient, at least on the face of it. Moreover, "marking schemes and assessment objectives" (Grenier, 2016, p. 79) and "agreed-upon ends capable of numerical expression" (Holt, 2002, p. 3) provide measureable learning outcomes and, therefore, create greater consistency and predictability. Finally, preparing "students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy" (U.S. Department of Education – Race to the Top) is promised by delivering "the knowledge and skills that business needs" (Holt, 2002, p. 5), which in turn meets a country's economic imperative. Unsurprisingly, then, the elevation of rationalization of education and the ensuing standardization we see today has the support of centralized educational policymaking. In the process, slower models have been supplanted.

Many of problems in Fast education that we face today can be traced back to specific government policies and reforms that placed greater emphasis on efficiency, speed and measurement. Here, I do not mean to suggest that the practices found in Fast education have only recently come into conflict with the way we learn; they have, however, intensified today to the extent that contemporary education, at least from a Slow educator's perspective, has become

distorted and uneven, and potentially destructive not only to the mental health and well-being of many children, but also their love of learning.

As I have already alluded to, with a Fast education learning experience a false or illusionary type of learning is at play. In a sense, the act of learning is somewhat lacking; the learning is not authentic because the end goal – often passing tests or achieving grade attainment – is not real. Fast education imposes on students a learning experience that is inconvenient and undesirable, potentially creating within them a deep resentment not only towards the subject but also towards learning and school in general. This is not to say the experience of Fast education is ineffectual for everyone. A student can pass tests, excel in examinations and grasp subjects they may not enjoy studying and be indifferent to. The effort and discipline needed to study a subject with only the final grade in mind can positively control the outcome; however, such means to an end does not permit the cultivation of a deeper interest and a genuine love or appreciation towards the subject and learning. Learning in a Fast education setting requires one to be organized, efficient, productive and typically competitive. As a consequence, a student's limits are extended and stretched. On the other hand, learning in a Slow education setting compels in the student greater desire, curiosity, flexibility, reflection, agility, inquiry, and possibly collaboration, which give rise to opportunities that nurture a student's interest and induces them to fall in love with a subject – as I did with reading at Gosfield Community Primary School. In a sense, Slow education students are also being stretched and extended but in a different direction to those going through Fast education. Fast education, with its dependency on tests, rote learning and narrow curriculum, has little to do with nurturing one's love of the subject and learning. On the contrary, Fast education can effectively terminate the love and connection a student may potentially feel for a subject. In fact, Fast education propagates the idea that there is no need for

students to be curious and reflective or to go deeper into a subject. After all, to be organized, efficient and disciplined may be all that one needs to pass a test, and so students do not perceive the need to become *learners*.

7.1 Shifting the Lens from Fast teaching to Slow teaching

Throughout this thesis, I have indicated that policymakers, administrators and educators have, for reasons of expediency, efficiency and economics, given scant consideration to the fact that children have their own unique temporalities and rhythms of learning, which are often incompatible with the temporal forces that shape contemporary education. Confronted by these artificially imposed rhythms and time frames, children are being driven to learn in ways that are uncongenial. From a policy standpoint, for change to occur in this area, educational policymakers would first need to acknowledge that the artificially constructed time systems present in education, with their emphasis on speed and efficiency, bear no relationship to the natural rhythms of a child's learning, and that they are irrational in so far as authentic learning is concerned, and even potentially harmful to the health and wellbeing of many students. Such a shift in thinking – and thus acknowledgement for the need for slowness in learning –is unlikely, though, this at a policy level, meaning that any change *in practice* would need to instead come about from inside the classroom by teachers. For this to happen, and for the professional practice of teachers to operate through a slow lens as Jamie Thom (2018) suggests, two important shifts, I believe, would need to occur.

The first change would center on teachers knowing more about how learning happens. This point comes in response to the claim by Abbott (2010) that "there is precious little consideration given to how children learn" (p. 179), Indeed, having spent four years at Concordia

University in Montreal working towards my bachelor's degree in education, I would tender the idea that not a single class looked closely at the brain and learning. The second shift comes in response to a statement by Clandinin and Connelly (1986), who tell us "It is important... that our inquiry into rhythm in teaching and teacher education begin by asking how time is experienced by teachers and other school participants" (p. 379). Once again, as an undergraduate student I never once attended a class where we discussed how time is experienced or how the rhythms of teaching and learning were engaged in the classroom, even though as Clandinin and Connelly (1986) make us acutely aware, "The first years of teaching are crucial to becoming a teacher for it is in those first years that a teacher develops his/her rhythmic sense of knowing the classroom and of knowing how to teach" (p. 386). So, without this essential knowledge, how do new teachers *learn* the value of slowing down inside the classroom so that these spaces can become "sanctuaries of routine, patience and calm that teach vital 'slow' skills: listening, concentration and most importantly the capacity to reflect and think about learning" (Thom, 2018, p. 12)? In an attempt to answer this critical question, I will use the remainder of this chapter to share several slow classroom strategies and ideas suggested by Jamie Thom (2018) in his book *Slow Teaching*.

While there is no definitive Slow school, we have already seen how schools such as Gosfield Community Primary School in England, École Rudolf Steiner de Montréal and Blue Gum Community School in Canberra, Australia, enable slowness to exist in teaching and learning. All three schools understand the learning natures and rhythms of their students and facilitate pleasure not pressure in learning. Moreover, all three are organic or holistic in their own way. This can be seen in the way they foster deep, long-lasting connections and slow relationships, emphasize the quality of the learning process over quantification, and cultivate a humanistic ethos by developing non-cognitive skills such as risk taking, resilience and empathy.

For any would-be teacher, they offer wonderful insights into slowness in education and how students can be active contributors in their own learning. The slow teaching ideas of Jamie Thom (2018), meanwhile, are grounded in pragmatism. While the early chapters in Thom's (2018) book *Slow Teaching* focus on important teacher tasks such as establishing a calm learning environment by decluttering and minimalizing the classroom, planning effectively for learning over time and communicating a positive teacher presence through effective body language, good posture and purposeful movement, what follows are summaries of a selection of slow strategies that Thom believes a teacher could incorporate into his or her existing classroom practice.

7.2 The Power of Modeling

"Modelling is beautiful in its slow simplicity" claims Thom (2018, p. 99). According to Thom (2018), not only does modeling provide students with valuable cognitive support "by illustrating exactly how they would approach the task themselves" (p. 100), but considerable confusion and uncertainty are reduced, thereby providing greater clarity and autonomy for the students and less "marking miseries" (p. 100) for teachers. For modeling to be successful, Thom (2018) suggests that the teacher assumes the role of the "slow expert" (p. 103) who, understanding his audience implicitly, caringly safeguards student confidence and motivation by providing "appropriate level" teacher-prepared models that are designed to inspire and not hinder performance. To maximize the effectiveness of these models, Thom (2018) informs teachers that "there needs to be time invested in evaluating its strengths and weaknesses" (p. 101) so as not to lose the "qualities and nuances" of the model or confuse the students. Such evaluation "requires slow and patient questioning" (p. 102) with the teacher even modeling "annotating [of] a model answer" thoroughly (p. 102). Rushing through a model would be counterproductive to learning,

as this process necessitates slowness, for it is the “unpicking and deconstructing [of] a model response that will result in learning gains” (p. 101). The eventual aim of the teacher is to foster “gradual ownership and more independence” (p. 102) in his or her students so they can work using their own initiative. Referring to Visible Learning and Teaching theorist John Hattie for ideas on how independence can be cultivated, Thom (2018) suggests that students could progressively work on partially completed model answers and eventually “introduce exams that are only partially completed” (p. 103). In addition to the teacher-prepared models and teacher-led modeling, individual students themselves should be encouraged “to talk to the class about the process of completing the work, refining exactly how they arrived at the successful end point” (p. 104). For Thom (2018), seeing students’ model and reflect on their learning in this way in front of their peers, while simultaneously developing their oracy skills “can send out powerful psychological messages and raise aspiration levels” (p. 104). He concludes by stating that the core aims of modeling are “to enable students to have a deeper conception of their own thinking and capacity to learn” (p. 106). As an advocate of modeling, I have found the most effective modeling experiences involve exploration, investigation, debate, collaboration and experimentation on the part of the students with me as the facilitator. While teacher-fronted modeling is often necessary, it should be applied in moderation, thereby giving space for the students to make their own discoveries and come to their own understandings.

7.3 Developing Reflective Learners

Jamie Thom (2018) is adamant: "as teachers there is more we could do to cultivate...the capacity to reflect" (p. 107) in our students, not only to understand “what is really going through their minds” (p. 107), but more critically so we may recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and so students may honestly self-assess their abilities and monitor their own knowledge and

understanding (Thom, 2018). Developing the faculty to reflect and think about why we do, say, and think things in particular ways serves us well beyond the classroom; yet, asserts Thom (2018), though indispensable beyond life after school, schools may value and even prioritize "skills to secure examination results" than deliberately teaching metacognitive strategies (p. 109). According to Thom (2018), regular use of "metacognitive strategies can build young people's capacity to avoid rushed thinking and encourage them to slow down the thought processes" that is so vital in learning (p. 109). But, as with many Slow learning approaches, considerable investment is required on the part of both teacher and student, as metacognitive awareness takes time to develop and "needs to be actively taught throughout the curriculum" (p. 109). Thom (2018) sees cultivating students' abilities to solve problems as essential in developing reflective learners, and outlines the three metacognitive steps of planning, monitoring and evaluation to achieve this.

Planning (i.e. devising a step-by-step action plan) does not come naturally to students, especially adolescents. I say this having often experienced mild bouts of frustration when my students intentionally or otherwise disregard even the most basic planning strategies. My hypothesis on why students neglect the planning process is that it could have something to do with the underdevelopment of their executive function skills – the mental processes that enable us to plan, prioritize and focus attention. This, and the likelihood that many students just want to get the 'job' done fast with little investment in the process, or have not been explicitly told how planning can help improve their ability to reflect and learn in the long run. "We need to slow them down, breaking the task down, so they can reach a deeper level of understanding of what they need to do" says British author and educator Alex Quigley (cited in Thom, 2018, p. 110). In order to put the brakes on, Thom (2018) suggests several planning strategies that include mind

maps, Venn diagrams, checklists and concept maps, before reminding teachers that these strategies need to be taught, modeled and practiced in order for students "to understand the nuances of different methods" (p. 110). "To help scaffold their own planning attempts" and "to slow down their rate of activity," Thom (2018) recommends that students become familiar with a "series of learned questions" that they can apply as they approach tasks, "to avoid the mindless completion" of the said tasks (Thom, 2018, p. 110 & p. 111). The list of questions is long and consists of the following:

> What exactly is this task asking me to do?
>
> What should I do first?
>
> What prior knowledge do I need to complete the task effectively?
>
> What strategies will I use to help me complete the task?
>
> Where might I go wrong with this task? (p. 110)

Thom (2018) emphasizes that there is no one approach or single strategy in the planning stage, explaining that students could collaborate and reflect on how best they would plan and respond to such questions. (Thom, 2018, p. 111)

The second metacognitive step is intended to help students move mindfully through their learning. Step two is monitoring. This is a step I need to improve upon significantly by being more deliberate with implementation of it in teaching practice. As Thom (2018) puts it, this is the time for students to open their eyes objectively: "to pause, reflect and question how effectively [they] are completing the task during the active practise phase" (p. 111). Much like the planning stage, the monitoring stage is scaffolded with a series of questions that Thom (2018) proposes should be "repeated and tested over time to ensure retention" (p. 112). This can

be achieved in a meaningful and practical way by building in brief ‘check-in’ points into tasks, which not only “provide a helpful way to build attentional awareness” (p. 112), but also “teaches students to be concerned with accuracy and refining their work as they complete it” (p. 112). The list of step two monitoring questions is as follows:

Am I on the right track?

What am I doing well?

What do I need to do more of?

Do I need to do something differently?

Am I following my plan? (p. 111)

Taking “ownership of a piece of work” underpins the third and final metacognitive step in the reflective process. This step is student self-evaluation. Thom (2018) encourages teachers to be “relentless” (p. 112) at this stage, to the extent that he believes it should be “in place before we accept work from students” (p. 112). Aside from accountability and ownership, self-evaluation helps reduce the chances of “poorly constructed and rushed work” that is so often the consequence of too little reflection. Moreover, this third step helps the student understand that their work carries more currency that just a grade, which is often hurriedly looked at and disregarded by many students before moving to the next piece of work (Thom, 2018). Without this vital step, Thom (2018) suggests “we lose the opportunity to hone reflective abilities...[and] drive young people not towards independent thinking, but towards compliance and laziness” (p. 112). From experience, I feel the biggest challenge for teachers at the self-evaluation stage is finding ways to help our students see its value beyond the immediate situation they find

themselves in. While some students may see self-evaluation as an essential life skill, helpful in their future professional, personal and inner lives, many may just go through the motions with little sense of appreciation of its benefits. As with steps one and two, the self-evaluation stage comes with multiple key questions for students to answer after they complete a task so that they can identify where they struggled and inform their future planning (Thom, 2018):

> What have I learned by completing this task?
>
> What are my strengths – what did I do well?
>
> Did I use my plan effectively?
>
> What are my weaknesses – what do I need to prioritise doing next?
>
> Does this represent my very best work? If not, what do I need to change? (p. 113)

It is perhaps opportune at this point to apply some sage wisdom to Thom's pragmatism, if only to acknowledge that teaching through a slow lens takes considerable skill and endeavor. While Slow teachers are not necessarily trying to remove the fast mindset and the values of speed and efficiency entirely from their practice, they are attempting to cultivate an environment that is occasionally distinct from it. Parker J. Palmer (2007) reminds us that "teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal or keep them from learning much at all" (p. 7), before lamenting that often times teachers are trained to "master techniques but not to engage their students' souls" (p. 20). Parker's judicious thoughts should resonate with all teachers, especially those teachers looking to transition away from the fast lens, and above all to those who have a desire to nurture the souls of their students.

7.4 Slow Marking

Mindless marking, “the repetitive process of providing endless comments on [students’] work” (Thom, 2018, p. 115) is the hallmark of the hurried teacher. I witnessed this kind of marking first-hand while working in the public-school system in Hiroshima, Japan, when I would often see teachers manically ploughing through piles of exercise books; they would glance cursively at each page before marking it in mechanical fashion with various symbols in red ink to indicate whether the answers provided were correct or incorrect. On the rare occasion a teacher would scribble a solitary comment or two at the bottom of the page, no doubt the customary ‘Good job!’ or ‘You’re doing well!’ and then continue mindlessly to the next page. Thom (2018) warns teachers against taking this busy approach to marking, explaining that “the automatic assumption that if we are marking a significant amount we are, by default, moving forward the learning of our students” is erroneous and should not be the main form of feedback (p. 116).

Mindless marking and the “irrational marking warrior spirit” (Thom, p. 116) that reinforces this prescriptive approach fails on countless levels. Not only does it disregard any endeavor and application on the part of the student, it neglects learning itself, for such an approach “does not result in equal learning gains” and the student improvement needed in the subject (Thom, 2018, p. 116). Thom (2018) argues for “a slower, less-is-more” approach that sees teachers use their “professional judgment” so that marking may become more “meaningful, manageable and motivating” (p. 116). Thom builds on his own advice by suggesting that marking in the form of feedback could be multifaceted and greater in scope by including “self-assessment, peer assessment and verbal feedback” (p. 117). This more inclusionary approach extends to teachers becoming more transparent in their discussions with their students: “they need to be clear why we are investing so much of our time in providing them with guidance” (p.

117). Aside from improved performance, greater self-regulation and ownership often come with effective feedback: Thom (2018) attributes effective feedback and productive dialogue with having a positive influence on building stronger relationships with students (p. 117).

While a thorough examination of feedback as an integral aspect of learning is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to briefly illuminate on what is deemed feedback, at least from an expert's perspective. According to author and educator Grant Wiggins (2012), "feedback is information [we receive] about how we are doing in our efforts to reach a goal" (p. 11). To paraphrase Wiggins (2012), feedback is neither advice nor an evaluation, but rather a playback conveyed to the student of the effects his or her piece of work has on the recipient – here the teacher (p. 12). Feedback delivered in this way becomes a powerful communication and learning tool. Essential to the approach advocated by Wiggins is to know when to give advice: "Before giving advice, a teacher would need to [ensure] that the learner has sought, grasped, and tentatively accepted the feedback on which the advice is based" (p. 12).In taking this approach, the teacher is establishing a feedback mechanism, by leaving feedback with the student and asking if they have any ideas how to improve. Only is the student likely to be more receptive. Wiggins (2012) lists seven keys aspects to effective and helpful feedback: "goal-referenced; tangible and transparent; actionable; user-friendly (specific and personalized); timely; ongoing; and consistent" (p. 13). Having integrated some of the ideas and techniques into my own practice, I can say that I no longer see feed back as an afterthought; rather, it has become integral to my teaching practice. As with modeling and reflecting, Thom (2018) is also thoughtful and sensitive to the art of marking and giving feedback, formulating his approach into three distinct stages. These being: before, during and post marking stages.

7.4.1 Before marking

Central to the before-marking stage is strategic thinking. For a teacher to avoid mindless marking, and to ensure they are not overwhelmed with work to mark, Thom (2018) calls on teachers to be selective in what they will mark. To achieve this, we should "map out what work will receive feedback from us and why" (p. 118). This more strategic, more precise approach will give feedback greater value, and teachers will not "overwhelm students by commenting on every aspect of their work" (p. 119). The following questions are intended to help teachers "know exactly what they are marking for" and will help students to "focus on the skills that need to be developed":

> What are the skills that I want young people to have secured?
>
> What will I not be commenting on in this marking?
>
> What will they do as a result of me marking this work?
>
> Do my students know what excellence looks like in this task?
>
> Do I know exactly what a strong response is?

A significant feature of the 'Before Marking' stage, according to Thom (2018), is seeing teachers work collaboratively with their colleagues so that marking becomes more "productive" and, I would add, more harmonious.

7.4.2 During Marking

Helping students move their learning forward should be at the forefront of a teacher's marking and feedback approach. To achieve this objective requires the teacher to slow down and

"be more thoughtful" about what they write and say to their students, and to consider how the feedback they transmit is "interpreted or received by a young person" (p. 120). Thom (2018) emphasizes the need for teachers to refrain from giving "vague and generic praise," which is unproductive, and instead "[frame] the feedback as instructional, while keeping it sparse and specific as possible" (p. 120). By taking this more strategic and mindful approach, the teacher is obliging the student "to think, reflect, then add in changes to their work" (p. 120). For example, Thom (2018) suggests that instead of a teacher writing the elusive "you need to include a wider range of vocabulary" on a text, he or she could write a more definitive request such as "What three words could you add here?" (p. 120). Finally, adds Thom (2018), on the occasions when verbal feedback is more desirable, teachers should get into the habit of writing separate feedback notes that "becomes our guides for conversations" with the students and the whole class.

7.4.3 Post Marking

Feedback is only valuable if acted upon successfully by the students. According to Thom (2018), much of this success will be down to the clarity of its delivery and the way it is received, and if the underlying culture of the classroom is one of "openness to trial and error and continuous improvement" (p. 121). For delivery to succeed, teachers would need to ensure that student confidence levels are not harmed, while encouraging them to see the benefits of making errors (Thom, 2018). While the ultimate aim for any teacher is to move their students "forward into a deeper understanding and mastery of the content," reaching this level will be "slow and painstaking" (p. 121). Once again, I humbly confess that the post-marking stage is an area in need of considerable improvement on my part.

If there were any misconceptions around the idea that a successfully functioning Slow classroom was exclusively down to a teacher creating more time, or simply slowing things down

a little, then the strategies as laid out by Jamie Thom and summarized here would suggest otherwise. As I previously stated in this thesis, Slow teaching is:

> a multifaceted endeavor; it is a peaceful, complex and mindful interplay between the teacher and his or her students, buttressed between the pedagogical knowledge, expertise and passion he or she has for the subject, the conditions he or she creates to optimize authentic learning, and his or her understanding of the educational and developmental aims laid out in the curriculum. (p. 91)

Conclusion

Scholarly research and academic scrutiny expressly about the Slow Education Movement is limited. Maurice Holt's seminal paper 'It's Time to Start the Slow School Movement' was written in 2002 and remains the go-to article for Slow education advocates and those wishing to learn more about slow education in general and the movement in particular. At the beginning of my enquiry, the apparent lack of academic interest in Slow education made the prospect of writing a thesis on the subject daunting. But, in hindsight I have come to realize that I was not casting my research net nearly far and wide enough. Now, having completed the thesis and having joined many dots in the process, I can say there is an abundance of academic sources that enhance our understanding of Slow education and Fast education. The origins of Fast education can be found by examining the ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor and John Frank Bobbitt and their desire for efficiency in curriculum (which they also wedded with assessment). There is a wealth of information on our changing perception of time and speed: 'Time Wars' by Jeremy Rifkin and 'Speed Limits' by Mark C. Taylor are but two informative resources. The net extends further to research and papers on rhythms in learning, the affects of the push-down curriculum,

and how the teenage brain learns. And finally, Frank W. Elwell and George Ritzer bring to light Max Weber's theory of rationalization and with it our understanding of standardization and disenchantment in learning. I could continue, but several main points are made: the origins and rise of Fast education are very well-documented, likewise the motivations and justifications for the response to it. As for future research, my hope would be to see longitudinal and/or ethnographic research conducted in schools that have to some degree embraced slowness in learning, if only to learn how teachers have adapted their practice and to know how being stretched and extended through a Slow education experience has helped students maintain a genuine enchantment in and love of learning.

On reflection, I believe I have investigated and addressed each ofthe four research questions at the heart of the thesis, making each the focus of one or more chapters. These questions were:*1) How have faster and more rationalized methods of teaching, learning and evaluating commonly found in contemporary education systems supplanted the slower, more enchanting models of education?(chapters one to three); 2) How have faster elements of learning in education become accepted, implemented and normalized to the point where they have become the default model for educators, administrators and parents?(chapter four); 3) What are some of the implications of faster education? (chapter 5); and 4) How may educators and administrators still tailor and enact curricula with slowness in mind? (chapters six and seven)* The seeds of slowness are growing, both in the field of education and beyond. But change is slow and never straightforward. Towards the end of *Time Wars,* Jeremy Rifkin (1987) turns his attention to the future as it pertains to time consciousness and society's temporal reality. Passing through a different era of time consciousness, he explains, alters our perception of time. From ritual to religious to historical and finally "into the fourth great era of time consciousness"

(p. 221), that of psychological consciousness, our perception of time has shifted. With each shift, Rifkin (1987) asserts that "humanity has distanced itself farther and farther from the rhythms of nature" (p. 222), leading to a "self-imposed exile from biological time" (p. 123). In a sense, the same could be said of the innate and natural rhythms in the ways we learn: they have been subdued, relegated, deemed obsolete for today's Fast classroom.

Still, a new collective consciousness looms on the horizon. Rifkin (1987) calls it an "empathetic consciousness," one that brings with it "a new time journey, one in which temporal awareness is used to empathize with the future" (pp. 224-225). According to Rifkin (1987), this rise in collective consciousness and the ensuing development of an "empathetic appreciation" for life, "where empathy substitutes for power," would eventually permeate across public policy (pp. 225-226), presenting "opportunities for rethinking and reimaging the political process" (p. 228). Put more succinctly: "time considerations will play a more direct role in determining the contours of political action" (p. 228). How should we interpret Rifkin's prophesy in the sphere of education? Will education policy finally recognize that a child's inner natural rhythms, so vulnerable, unpredictable and spontaneous, may not align themselves with the artificial, accelerated and controlled rhythms ever present in the contemporary classroom, with its premium on speed, efficiency, predictability and calculability? Can curriculum be enacted through a more nurturing, participatory and holistic approach? Will students be encouraged to identify and work according to their own intellectual rhythms, instead of subduing them? Or, will they continue to be "swept up into the temporality imposed on them… over which they have little or no control" (Rifkin, 1987, p. 235)?

To become part of this collective, and to re-evaluate the ethics of speed and efficiency in education, education policymakers, curriculum designers and administrators need to look beyond

education itself to see how the value of slowness and empathetic consciousness have taken hold across other domains. In observing the "positive potential in slowness" in other spheres, we can assess and contest the "dominant narratives or values that characterize contemporary modernity for so many" (Parkins & Craig, 2006, p. ix). Any assessment of the Slow Food movement, for instance, cannot fail to draw on its values and philosophies, which have moved away from the economy of acceleration to identify with a slower temporality. This is evident in its use of language. The recurrence "of words like 'careful', 'reflective', 'mindful', 'considered' and 'attentive'" in its discourse and manifesto not only drive home the ethos on which the movement is built (Parkins and Craig, 2006, p. 57), but signals its fundamental opposition to speed and fast food and all its stands for: "alienation, dislocation, insecurity" (p. 52). Simply changing the discourse around slowness is a step in the right direction, one that might help change the day-to-day classroom narrative and students' experiences of learning.

Parkins and Craig (2006) claim that there is "a desire for slow living being manifested in a range of social phenomena" (p. 2). The rise and growing popularity of empathetic movements such as slow agriculture, slow fashion, slow travel, holistic health practices and the Slow cities movement would appear to support their claim. If I were to place a call to action in this thesis, it would be for teachers to show the same desire and find a place for slowness in education.

I started to work on this thesis in early 2018. It has taken me almost five years to complete it, and to say that progress has been slow would be an understatement. Yet, because of the slow tempo and genuinely testing journey that unfolded, I have grown – both as an educator and a person. More than ever, I am unwavering in my belief that slowness in education can reap positive returns for individual students and teachers and for society as a whole.

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