



An exemplary ethical teacher: Professor Emeritus Ivan Augustine Snook (1933-2018)

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JOHN O'NEILL
Massey University

It is no exaggeration to say that Ivan Snook, a philosopher of education, was revered for the quality and impact of his teaching during a career—more accurately a whole way of life—that lasted almost 60 years until his death earlier this year. Ivan's teaching took various forms: schoolteacher, university lecturer, public intellectual, social justice activist. By all accounts he was a virtuoso in both institutional and public pedagogies.

Throughout these decades, Ivan was accompanied, supported, defended, stretched and challenged in equal measure by his wife and soulmate, Josie. And, the ways Ivan and Josie's children and grandchildren now live their own lives are a lasting testimony to the values and commitments by which Ivan and Josie interwove their extensive professional, church and community activities and associated networks of relationships.

Ivan was first and foremost a teacher in that larger sense of helping others to gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to lead their best possible life. Ivan completed a Trained Teachers' Certificate in 1961, a Diploma of Teaching in 1962, a BA (University of New Zealand) in 1962 and an MA (1st class Honours) in Education (University of Canterbury) in 1965. He was a secondary school teacher of English, Latin, Social Studies and Geography between 1961 and 1965. He completed a PhD at the University of Illinois in 1968 and then returned to Christchurch as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Reader in Education from 1968 to 1980, teaching all courses in the philosophy of education, including a masterate course in moral education. He was an active member and branch official of the Association of University Teachers during his time at Canterbury.

In 1980 Ivan took up the position of Professor of Education at Massey University, where he was also Head of Department (1985-1990) and Dean of the Education (1989-1993) until his early retirement through ill health. Ivan was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus in 1994, and also an honorary doctorate by Massey University in 2012. He received the McKenzie Award, for contributions to research and to the association, from the New Zealand Association for Research in Education in 1994. He was awarded fellowships by the New Zealand Educational Institute and by the Philosophy of Education Association of Australasia in 1995.

These are all hallmarks of an examined and self-examined academic life worth living. Yet, Ivan is remembered fondly by students and colleagues because his work as a teacher involved so much more than the performative rites of the academy. He was a prolific national commentator and columnist on education matters, averaging 15 talks a year to education and community

groups. He was a regular speaker for 20 years on National Radio's Sunday Supplement programme.

Before and during his retirement, Ivan's appreciation of teaching and the work of teachers was regularly called on in the teachers' college and polytechnic sectors. Following his retirement, Ivan remained an active contributor to education policy and practice debates through his leadership contributions to the Massey University Education Policy Response Group and the Quality Public Education Coalition.

In the 2000s, Ivan was a Crown appointee on the Tertiary Education Advisory Committee and a member of the Health Professionals' Disciplinary Tribunal. He was also a consultant on the creation of their respective codes of ethics for both the New Zealand Teachers Council and Ako Aotearoa. Elsewhere, his unwavering commitment to the social justice mission of the church proved to be perennial thorn in the side of the institutions of the Catholic Education Office and the Catholic Diocese of Palmerston North.

Ivan's appreciation of teachers, their work and their role in society is possibly best summarised in the opening paragraph to his 2003 book, *The Ethical Teacher*, and so let that serve also as the last word here.

Teaching is an activity in which ethical issues are central. For one thing, teaching involves close personal relationships: between teachers and students, between one student and another and between one teacher and another. There are also important relationships involving parents, board members, advisors and school administrators. Secondly, teaching occurs in a very tightly controlled and regulated institutional structure in which there are hierarchies of control and rules to be obeyed. Only prisons and the armed forces can approach the school for rigidity of structure. Thirdly, in the school some persons are more knowledgeable than others, have more authority, and hence the opportunity to influence immature minds in all kinds of ways. The possibility of misuse of power is very real. Finally, the school exists for an ethical purpose: to change people in certain ways. Teaching, then, involves ethics in its aims, its methods and its relationships.

REFERENCES

Snook, I. (2003). *The ethical teacher*. Auckland, New Zealand: Dunmore Press.

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