The Canada Studies Foundation: A Canadian Approach to Curriculum Intervention

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La Fondation d'Etudes du Canada est née du Projet d'histoire nationale (1965-68) qui, dirigé par A. B. Hodgetts et financé de sources privées, a été la plus grande étude jamais menée dans les écoles du Canada. Les sérieuses lacunes relevées à cette occasion dans l'enseignement des études canadiennes ont entraîné la création d'un programme expérimental de cinq ans, financé lui aussi par le secteur privé, dans le but de trouver des moyens d'améliorer la situation. La Fondation est un organisme centré sur les enseignants qui, de 1970 à 1975, s'est employé à patronner des projets répartis dans toutes les provinces et utilisant les deux langues officielles. Ce faisant la Fondation a fait la preuve que la coopération interprovinciale dans l'éducation au Canada était possible, ce qui lui valut, en 1975, le soutien financier du Conseil des ministres de l'éducation, Canada, et du Secrétariat d'Etat. L'étude qui nous intéresse établit une comparaison entre les travaux de la Fondation, ceux de la Ford Foundation aux Etats-Unis et ceux du Humanities Curriculum Project en Grande-Bretagne, trois organismes ayant des objectifs, des méthodes et des problèmes similaires.

It will soon be a decade since the publication of *What Culture? What Heritage?* (1), a study that made publishing history in Canadian education as a best seller that appealed alike to professional educators, the media, academia, and a broad spectrum of the lay public. Based on actual classroom observation across the country, it remains the most comprehensive and thorough study that has ever been made of the teaching of any subject area in Canadian schools. It was carried out by A. B. Hodgetts, who had been a history master for thirty years at Trinity College School, a long-established independent school for boys in Ontario (and a major training ground of the Canadian corporate elite). Formally called the National History Project, the $150,000 study was launched in 1965 as a centennial project by the Board of Governors of Trinity College School. From it evolved the Canada Studies Foundation (CSF), now completing the seventh year of its existence, and as unique in many respects as the original project that gave it birth.

The Foundation is an interesting case study of the politics of curriculum intervention and educational change. The sponsors of the National History Project were astute enough to foresee that a privately sponsored study, free from the constitutional implications of the British North America Act, could report more freely on the teaching of Canadian studies than one financed by any government or public agency. This independence enabled

the National History Project to complete kinds of research that the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism reported should be done but felt unable, for political reasons, to undertake itself (2, p. 7).

In essence, *What Culture? What Heritage?* was an assessment of the state of civic education – that is, of the influence of formal instruction in developing the feelings and attitudes of young Canadians towards their country and its problems and in promoting the knowledge upon which those attitudes were presumably based. It was prompted by the desire to investigate "the unsubstantiated but very extensive volume of criticism that questions the value of Canadian Studies..." and by a belief that "the quality of civic education in any nation is an important factor in molding that nation's future" (1, p. 1). Its conclusions are now familiar enough, centering on the dominance of a narrow, almost pedantic view of Canadian history and civics (which for Hodgetts were the core of civic education), a bland consensus interpretation, and abysmal teaching methods observed in most of the nearly 1000 classrooms visited.

Hodgetts' study touched a raw nerve in a body politic that was still bathing in the euphoria of Expo and Trudeaumania, and adopting an increasingly nationalistic stance. The time was ripe for adoption of his main recommendation, that a Canadian Studies Consortium – later to be called the Foundation – be established. Steps to this end had begun even before the publication of *What Culture? What Heritage?* (2, p. 10), when, as Director of the National History Project, Hodgetts established liaison with the educational establishment by reporting to the Board of the Canadian Education Association. This body gave the seal of approval to his plans for school visits in the 10 provinces. (This was prior to the formation of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.)

Following his work in the field, Hodgetts established liaison with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, which played a major role in the editing and publication of the report as a joint venture with the National History Project. In 1968/69 the latter became in effect an Institute project, in the form of a "Feasibility and Planning Study for a Canadian Studies Program." The Institute thus became the midwife of the Canada Studies Foundation (3, p. 14). In September 1968 a brief was presented to the Council of Ministers of Education, seeking official support for interviews and other work planned for each province. This support was granted unanimously (2, p. 11). Four hundred interviews were conducted at all levels of education in all provinces, and these confirmed the strong positive reaction to *What Culture? What Heritage?* and its recommendations. The work culminated in an invitational conference in Toronto in February 1969, attended by more than one hundred delegates from across Canada, from within and outside the educational community.

The major outcome of the conference was the establishment of a steering committee chaired and selected by Hodgetts to explore the possibilities of a

co-operative national Canadian studies organization (3, pp. 16–17). The committee subsequently prepared and circulated a draft proposal to establish a permanent Canada Studies Foundation as a politically and financially independent organization funded jointly by private enterprise and senior levels of government. It was soon apparent that it would be more feasible to develop an intensive, privately funded experimental 5-year program that might demonstrate the possibilities of later long-range funding by governments. Contacts with the business community, with every major educational organization in Canada, and with several in the United States indicated that this plan was feasible. (3, p. 18)

Funding the Foundation's first phase (1970–75) was thus essentially private, although substantial support was later obtained from the Canada Council and the federal Department of the Secretary of State — in both cases with the tacit approval of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. A striking aspect of the funding arrangements was the tapping of Canadian sources that had previously restricted their support almost entirely to post-secondary education. Historically, it is of interest that an earlier major effort to promote educational innovation on a national scale — the Macdonald Education Movement, which attempted to upgrade rural schooling and to introduce practical subjects (home economics and industrial arts) into the system on an experimental demonstration basis — adopted a somewhat similar strategy during the early years of the present century. It was also financed privately — by the tobacco millionaire philanthropist, Sir William Macdonald (4, pp. 299–300).

Throughout the planning period, full cognizance was taken of contemporary experience in Canada and elsewhere in the promotion of educational innovation. Such experience suggested that a major innovative thrust should be preceded by a number of experiments at the local level to indicate the readiness of the educational system to accept change. The feasibility study culminated in a small invitational conference held at Trent University in May 1969 to consider in detail and to make recommendations about the organization and structure of the proposed foundation. A related purpose was to begin preparing specific project proposals, a process that led eventually to the establishment of the Laurentian Projects and Project Canada West (the largest endeavors to be funded by the new organization). Following the conference, the decision was taken to incorporate the Foundation. At the same time the Ontario Minister of Education, William G. Davis, then serving as chairman of the Council of Ministers, agreed to present the general idea of the Foundation to the Council and to seek approval of liaison between the two bodies, and representation of the ministers on the Board of Trustees of the new organization. These suggestions were unanimously approved by the Council at its St. John's meeting in July 1969 (3, pp. 25–26).

The constitutional niceties of attempting educational innovation on an

interprovincial or national scale (the former term seemed politically more acceptable) were apparent and recognized. Given the history of efforts to promote meaningful national co-operation in Canadian education — particularly at the classroom level in a sensitive subject-matter area — the support of the Council was remarkable. This was particularly true of support from the Province of Quebec, traditionally and understandably the most, though by no means the only, sensitive jurisdiction where provincial autonomy was concerned. Quebec support was a harbinger of future Francophone participation in the work of the Foundation — participation on a scale vouchsafed to few national organizations, especially in education, during a period of extreme political sensitivity in Ottawa–Quebec relations and Anglophone–Francophone relations in Canada generally.

If the charismatic figure of Hodgetts was indispensable to the establishment of the Canada Studies Foundation, a second charismatic figure, Walter Lockhart Gordon, was to prove equally indispensable to its future. The leading spokesman of Canadian nationalism and one of the most influential figures in the nation's public life, Gordon, having recently retired from politics, agreed to serve as chairman of the Board of Trustees. As chairman, he played a critical role in fund-raising and in the delicate political negotiations that were necessary to ensure the Foundation's continuation after 1975. The Board, composed of many distinguished Canadians, together with an academic advisory panel and a small secretariat of which Hodgetts served as director, formed the essential structure of the Foundation.

Given the known strong convictions and personalities of Hodgetts and Gordon and their public identification with the nationalist cause in Canada, it was inevitable that the Foundation would be viewed in many quarters — apprehensively or otherwise — as a nationalist endeavor. Certainly its concern for civic education implied broad political aims, expressed in such objectives as the following (5, pp. 6–7):

1. To encourage co-operation "between people from different levels of education and from different regional and linguistic groups in the development of Canada Studies materials."
2. "To build up a network of communications among educators across Canada that will facilitate the exchange and use of these materials in the schools of every province."
3. To encourage broad programs "including course content, teaching methods and the kinds of intellectual skills, attitudes and value systems that civilized living in a country like Canada requires."
4. "To demonstrate to the ten departments of education that co-operation among educators in the area of Canadian Studies is feasible and desirable and that this co-operation can be achieved without doing injury to provincial autonomy in education."

These objectives were to be promoted by improving the quality of Canadian studies mainly at the elementary and secondary levels. Further to

the fourth stated objective was that of demonstrating through the initial privately funded phase that the Foundation's work "should be continued and expanded by appropriate educational authorities." However, in pursuing all these objectives, Hodgetts and Gordon always recognized that any doctrinaire stance would be self-defeating and that "the Foundation cannot support any one ideological position or any single interpretation of Canadian reality" (6, p. 7). The term "Canada Studies" in the name of the organization was deliberately intended to convey the national, that is Canada-wide or "country-wide," perspective that the Foundation was intended to promote, although the generic term "Canadian studies" has usually been applied to its actual project work.

The Foundation was incorporated early in 1970. Much thought had already been given to the selection of an organizing principle for its work. Investigation had revealed widespread support for an interdisciplinary approach (already in use in various provinces) to both historical and contemporary problems, issues, or concerns. Such an approach seemed flexible, amenable to the use of a wide range of subject-matter materials; and it precluded reliance on a single textbook, which Hodgetts' study had revealed to be a major limitation of Canadian studies teaching.

Accordingly, the concept of "continuing Canadian concerns" was selected as the organizing principle: "continuing" implying the historical perspective deemed necessary for an understanding of significant contemporary issues; "concerns" implying questions significant to the quality of Canadian civic life. Eventually, a list of five or six statements purporting to describe the nature and characteristics of Canadian society was produced as a basis for developing questions or inquiry issues that would constitute "continuing Canadian concerns." The statements characterized Canada as a bilingual, culturally diverse, regional, vast, exposed, northern, industrialized, urbanized, democratic, and federal polity. The statements were widely assented to and seen by many as a valuable framework, even though because of their generality they proved to have limited operational value in curriculum development.

By the end of 1970, extensive project work was well under way, involving regional teams representing different levels and interests in education — classroom teachers, university professors, curriculum specialists, administrators, and community personnel. This co-operative process of "horizontal" interaction (across provincial and regional boundaries) and "vertical" interaction (among educators from various levels) came to be regarded as an outcome at least as important as any "concrete" products of the Foundation's work. The basic aim was to develop new opportunities for communication among teachers and students, both intra- and interregionally. This aim was to be achieved by a teacher-centred strategy, as opposed to the "top down" strategies that characterized the American curriculum reform movement of the early 1960s. The teacher-centred strategy was consistent

with the trend towards decentralization being promoted by most provincial departments of education by 1970, often at the prodding of teachers' federations. Curriculum development, defined generally (with limited concern for the distinction between curriculum and instruction), was viewed within the Foundation as directly related to professional development, as not so much a matter of creating curricula as of improving the teaching and learning of Canadian studies. This view anticipated the new recognition of the central role of the teacher in innovation that is becoming part of the current conventional wisdom of educational change. In any case, political considerations alone would have dictated a Foundation strategy of "seeding" or supplementing existing curricula in preference to developing totally new curricula.

At the peak of its first-phase project activity, the Foundation was sponsoring upwards of 50 teacher teams in all 10 provinces. These teams were organized under three umbrellas: Project Canada West (comprising 14 teams in the 4 western provinces), the Laurentian Projects (comprising three projects, all bilingual, totalling 6 teams in the 2 central provinces) and Project Atlantic Canada (comprising four projects totalling upwards of 25 teams) in the 4 eastern provinces. The work of these project groups was focussed on the following "continuing Canadian concerns": urbanization (Project Canada West); French–English relations and the impact of technology (Laurentian Projects); regionalism and cultural diversity (Project Atlantic Canada).

Regionalism, probably the greatest fact of Canadian life, soon manifested itself in curriculum theory and practice to the point that impressionistically one could think of several distinct educational cultures. Western Canadian educators subscribed to teacher-centred curriculum development almost as an ideology that was democratic, process-oriented, and strongly influenced by American theory. Educators in the central provinces were seemingly more subject-centred, impatient with if not assertively ignorant of curriculum theory, and, in Ontario, subject to hierarchical administrative modes. Francophone teachers shared some of these characteristics but, like their western counterparts, were bemused by scientific approaches to education and "recherche" models often reflecting recent American training consequent upon the great efforts of recent educational modernization in Quebec. Not coincidentally, this outlook minimized the potential political problems of Francophone participation. For Atlantic teachers, it was evident that Atlantic union in curriculum matters was hardly less difficult than in political matters: indeed, diversity in goals, organization, and method among the four provinces was consistent with their project's theme of cultural diversity. Regionalism was revealed even in the different governing structures employed by the three major project groups.

The Foundation's deliberate policy of decentralization and project

autonomy was another factor that (inadvertently) fostered regionalism. With 80 per cent of financial resources (in any given year never exceeding half the cost of operating an average-sized urban high school) disbursed in the field from coast to coast, central control was rather restricted. In any event, projects perceived themselves as highly autonomous from the start. Consultative help was available from the central office, and teams were free to seek local assistance at their neighboring universities, or elsewhere, according to their own needs and on their own terms. As teachers became increasingly caught up in and fascinated by the process of curriculum development per se, it seemed at times (at least to the Foundation secretariat) that Canadian studies were relegated to the background. As teachers within each project came into contact (often for the first time) on a regional basis and later were able to exchange ideas on an interregional or nationwide basis, they were increasingly intrigued to find that despite their varying milieux they had a great deal in common professionally. The resulting empathy, rather than the sharing of "continuing Canadian concerns," provided the ultimate impetus for a substantive consideration of Canadian studies per se. Teachers rated their opportunities to work with people from other regions and cultures within Canada as one of their most positive experiences (7, p. 21). The process of curriculum development had apparently become a means of developing a new Canadian consciousness or sensibility.

Another factor that on the face of it seemed to foster regional perspectives at the expense (or to the neglect) of national perspectives was teacher predilection for local studies. Like the fascination with curriculum development, this seemingly parochial tendency proved to be an essential precondition for later fruitful work with colleagues, regionally and nationally. The end result was probably the greatest single achievement of the Foundation in its first phase — the creation of a national network of teachers, spanning all provinces. This network necessarily had to be built from regional bases, and developed slowly. In retrospect, however, it seems clear that just as the 5-year period of curriculum development was too long (a point emphasized in the external evaluation), interregional interaction among projects also developed too slowly.

Enough has been said to indicate that in the work of the Foundation there were those differing perceptions of objectives that are common in curriculum development. Another source of difficulty was that the Foundation changed or appeared to change its priorities. At the outset, production of materials for publication in commercial form seemed a major objective. The National History Project had drawn attention to the serious dearth of Canadian teaching materials. After 1970 this situation began to change, to the extent that today the output of Canadiana for use in schools presents serious problems of selection. It soon became evident that high Foundation

priority for a comprehensive publishing program, modelled on the packaged, structured, sophisticated programs of projects developed elsewhere, would consume most of the Foundation's available resources and require abandonment of decentralized field-based development in favor of a centralized "top down" approach.

The logic of decentralization was followed, and maximum autonomy was given to projects in publishing their materials, with the proviso that the Foundation's imprimatur would be given only to publications that met designated criteria. The result was that upwards of 30 items, most in commercial form, had appeared by the end of 1976, with more on the way – a creditable output that is enriching authorized provincial curriculum materials and in some cases, for example Indian studies, helping to fill serious gaps.

As curriculum development proceeded, the feasibility of the Foundation's objective of promoting "horizontal" and "vertical" co-operation among the different levels of education became increasingly evident. This process was well exemplified by Project Canada West, which used the talents of approximately 75 teachers and an equal number of consultants, pooling people and resources from the four western provinces (8). This created new patterns of co-operation among diverse groups, including most of the western universities, all the provincial teachers' federations, the provincial departments of education, and many of the larger urban public and separate school systems. For the Foundation as a whole, private support of two million dollars over the 5-year period was matched by well over a million dollars (in cash, time, facilities, and services) from the public sector (9, p. 4). This sum did not include the dollar value of teacher time and commitment far beyond the normal call of duty – a contribution that certainly matched the general public sector contribution and was perhaps the most notable of several "multiplying effects" of the Foundation's resources.

Dissemination has long been recognized as a major problem in curriculum development. In terms of large-scale output of materials, the Foundation's dissemination performance has to date been creditable. By the end of 1975, other forms of dissemination such as regional and national conferences and workshops had directly exposed some 4000 teachers across Canada to many and varied ideas and processes in Canadian studies. For project teams, these encounters were a means of formative evaluation;[1] for participating teachers, they were a valuable form of in-service education. Small-scale informal dissemination of materials and publication of a newsletter[2] were other means of influencing several thousand more teachers. To date, the Foundation has probably had more success in influencing professional practice than in influencing educational structures.

At this point, a brief comparison of the CSF with two foreign innovative educational endeavors – the Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP) in the United Kingdom and the Ford Foundation's Comprehensive School

Improvement Program in the United States – may be useful (10, 11). All have attempted to promote nationwide innovation.

The HCP has promoted curriculum development around global topics – e.g. Love, War, and Family – reminiscent of the CSF's "continuing Canadian concerns" approach. Both organizations rejected the assumption that projects "be judged by the amount of pupil learning produced in a given period" (10, p. 16), just as both rejected an objectives model of curriculum design. Both stressed the importance of teacher autonomy, and soon discovered, not without dismay, that "the goals and purposes of the programme developers are not necessarily shared by its users." (10, p. 29)

Of particular significance to both organizations was the finding that "some degree of authority or charisma from a body external to the school is necessary to stimulate re-thinking of curriculum activity." HCP was concerned about the dangers of dilution "as [a project] is widely disseminated and as . . . communication is decentralized." As with CSF, ultimate aims were to enable teachers "to participate in the management of their own development" and "to help local authorities take responsibility . . . for . . . innovation" (10, pp. 49, 63). For CSF, the scope and diversity of its work, its deliberate strategy of decentralization, and the vast geographical area in which it operates (including 10 provincial jurisdictions) have provided greater challenges and may have resulted in less direct influence than has been true of HCP.

The Comprehensive School Improvement Program of the Ford Foundation (11) was a 10-year (1960–70) $30 million effort to diffuse a wide variety of educational innovations. Among the experiences shared by Ford and CSF were: the relative ineffectiveness of universities as agents of innovation (although in the case of CSF there were notable exceptions, especially in western Canada and Newfoundland); a "lighthouse effect," whereby innovation was more apparent and more accepted elsewhere than in the milieu where it was developed (apparently curriculum prophets are often without honor in their own jurisdictions); the perception that "project teachers almost universally felt the need to create their own materials" (11, p. 21) – with Ford, however, perceiving the resulting uneven quality of materials as a problem, while CSF came to view it as a positive means of curriculum development and professional growth.

Ford and CSF both discovered that levels of funding were not necessarily related to the achievement or success of projects. The support of each foundation proved an effective means of attracting other resources, and both found local support essential to providing local credibility. Both found the project director to be the key to the success of the projects, but CSF holding power for directors was much stronger than Ford's, mobility of directors having been a serious obstacle to success in the Ford program. In both cases, the varied governing structures of projects seemed little related to success of the projects.

The Ford suggestion that "a network of subsystems around the country could have major impact on a wide range of school systems" (11, p. 32) is consistent with CSF strategy. CSF projects constitute such a network. But in the second phase (begun in 1975) recognition is being given to the need for more precise guidelines for interaction, although broad goals remain unaltered. All projects must be interregional from the start, each containing teams from at least three regions of Canada. Project work involves an "integrated program of projects," ensuring cross-fertilization during a development stage shorter than before, and earlier, more systematic dissemination. Project directors retain most of their autonomy. Working languages are English or French, except for bilingual projects in which both official languages are used.

A major new initiative is the Canada Studies Communication Network, which is intended to perform information, consultative, in-service, and related functions bilingually on a nationwide scale, through regional liaison persons drawn from the first-phase pool of talent. It is anticipated that the Network will become the major agent of dissemination of new project work. By the end of 1976, a major initiative to promote interaction among Canadian faculties of education was under consideration. A Resource Guide for teachers was being developed as a means of providing both comprehensive and specific suggestions for the development of Canadian studies programs.

In conclusion, the very existence of a second phase illustrates the achievement of a major CSF objective, that of demonstrating the feasibility of interprovincial co-operation and the continuation of the organization under public funding. The formula for continuation involves a matching arrangement between the federal Secretary of State and the Council of Ministers of Education. Since the Foundation has always viewed itself as a "temporary system" in promoting change, it is hoped that before too long the methods and approaches it has tried to develop will become a part of normal educational structures. While a national mechanism for sustaining the impetus for change may still be required, it may not necessarily assume the particular form exemplified by the Foundation.

NOTES

1. Formative evaluation was primarily a project responsibility, with consultative assistance from the CSF Secretariat. Several projects stimulated formative and summative evaluation studies in adjacent universities. Final project reports comprised a form of summative evaluation. The article by Carswell (pp. 35–42 below) discusses approaches to evaluation within CSF. Copies of the final report of Project Canada West, *Program Development: People, Processes, Products* (Vancouver, 1975) are available free from any of the four western teachers' federations or from the Canada Studies Foundation, #300A, 151 Slater St., Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H3. Copies of the final reports of the Laurentian Projects are available in limited quantities at the same address, as is the *External Evaluation of the Canada Studies Foundation* (7). The latter was a summative effort aimed not at the evaluation of the projects and their personnel but at the effectiveness of the Foundation

as an organization in achieving its goals. This evaluation is discussed by Duckworth (pp. 27–34 below).

2. Readers interested in subscribing to *Contact*, the newsletter of the Canada Studies Foundation (free to individuals, $2.00 per year to institutions, bulk subscriptions available) should write to the address given in note 1 above. A handbook and directory are also available together with the sixth annual report, which describes the work of phase 2 to June 30, 1976.

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