Teacher Development as an Outcome of Canadian Studies Curriculum Development

Ronald J. B. Carswell
university of calgary

Cet article rapporte les conclusions d'une enquête sur le perfectionnement professionnel et personnel des enseignants membres des projets didactiques de la Fondation. Bien que la plupart des conclusions soient fondées sur les réponses aux questionnaires et sur des témoignages personnels, la grande conformité de toutes ces sources valide ces conclusions. L'analyse du matériel révèle qu'à la suite de leur participation la plupart des enseignants ont constaté des améliorations personnelles et professionnelles, éprouvé de la fierté et de la satisfaction face aux résultats, se sentent plus disposés à opérer des changements en éducation, s'intéressent davantage aux théories et aux recherches pédagogiques et ont noté des améliorations dans leur enseignement qui ont été très profitables à leurs élèves.

The purpose of this paper is to report the findings of a survey of published and unpublished documents produced by and about teacher developers, to determine what professional and personal changes are reported as a result of involvement in projects supported by the Canada Studies Foundation.

Since its inception, one of the primary goals of the Canada Studies Foundation has been to develop programs that involve the classroom teacher at every stage of planning and implementation in the curriculum development process. This is not surprising considering the precursor of the Foundation — the National History Project and its subsequent report on the teaching of Canadian history, civics, and social studies, *What Culture? What Heritage?* In this study Hodgetts was forced to conclude:

> In summary, the great majority of Canadian studies teachers must share with other educators the responsibility for the poor quality of civic education in our elementary and secondary schools. . . . After making every allowance for their many difficulties, we must conclude that these teachers, through lack of drive, interest, professional pride and other factors, are not meeting high enough personal standards of excellence, nor are they fulfilling the reasonable expectations of society. (1, p. 110)

Anderson (2) suggests that "perhaps the most damning finding was an unsolicited statement from about thirteen percent of the students who wrote the open-ended essay . . . that 'even some of the teachers seemed as bored as we were.' "

This depressing state of affairs was attributed to a combination of stereotyped and highly inflexible approaches to the study of Canada and insufficient and often inadequate teaching materials. In phase 1 (1970–75) of the Canada Studies Foundation the major aim was to alleviate the depressing state of teaching about Canada by establishing the feasibility of producing and encouraging the production of Canadian studies materials leading to greater understanding of Canada and its problems. The involvement of practising classroom teachers in this enterprise was seen as a major, but not the only, way to achieve this goal.

It was hypothesized that placing the teacher at the centre of curriculum development would overcome the seeming paralysis of teachers in the area of Canadian studies. More specifically Carswell (3) recommended that the Foundation evaluate changes in teacher developers, especially in the areas of knowledge of and attitudes towards Canada and improvement in teaching ability, that occurred as outcomes of involvement in curriculum development. Since it is part of the conventional wisdom about teaching that not only is curriculum development beneficial to teachers, but teachers are involved in it anyway as they make decisions about what, when, how, and why to teach, the cynic may well ask, so what else is new?

What was new in Canada Studies Foundation projects was that development teams were expected to follow the curriculum-development process from the selection of objectives or intended learning outcomes to dissemination of products and processes. They were given monetary and professional support and the decision-making responsibility to engage in research, formulation of objectives, development and/or selection of materials and teaching strategies, field-testing procedures, evaluation techniques, and in-service education of other teachers. In short, teachers were regarded as professional leaders with expertise in curriculum development.

Although not every possible source related to the effects of Canada studies curriculum development on teachers has been examined, all major studies were located and many ephemeral unpublished documents were analysed. The materials may be placed in four categories, depending on the techniques used to gather data and the verifiability of the findings.

In the first category are quasi-experimental studies which regard the curriculum-development work as an independent variable and use a post-test-only control-group design or a matched group for comparison purposes. Two of these are theses written by Grandy (4) and Richards (5), and the study by Anderson (6) is an extension of another empirical study.

The second category is composed of studies which used questionnaires and/or interview techniques to gather data concerning teachers' perceptions of changes which had occurred in their behavior as a result of curriculum-development work. The most extensive and significant of these is the *External Evaluation of the Canada Studies Foundation* (7) which was prepared by a team of experienced professionals from across Canada. In

addition, theses by Allen (8), Burke (9), Favaro (10), Miller (11), and Noonan (12) inquired into the general and specific changes noted by teachers as a consequence of involvement in Project Canada West. The monograph by Miller and Dhand (13) is an extension of Miller's work.

In the third category is one content analysis by Davies (14), which reported benefits claimed by Project Canada West teachers in their annual reports of 1971 and 1972.

Finally there are the many reports prepared by all the development teams and Foundation officers which may be found in the archives of the projects, files of the Foundation, issues of *Contact* (15), and records of conferences and meetings; for example, see Allard et al. (16), Carswell (17), Patton (18), Roald and Anderson (19), and Sabey (20). These documents were based on personal experience and reported the joys and frustrations as well as the progress of the teams as they struggled with curriculum-development problems.

It is clear that much of the data used to establish conclusions is based on personal testimony and data contained in answers to questionnaires. This could lead to some questioning of the conclusions; however, the following pages will show a high level of congruence of results among the various sources, providing strong evidence for the validity of the findings.

Before listing the lengthy and convincing list of positive outcomes in the experience of teachers as curriculum developers, it may be useful to note some of the less positive outcomes. Compared with the advantages accruing to teachers, the disadvantages are minor; however, they are mentioned so that those engaging in development projects may be forewarned. The most frequently mentioned negative outcomes for teachers involved in curriculum development were time pressures, neglect of classroom, and poor public relations. Burke found that 18 out of the 56 teachers she surveyed had experienced some hindrance in their professional growth. She summarized the major problems as follows:

> They lacked time to fulfill other professional responsibilities. . . . They did not prepare lessons in other subject areas thoroughly or did not apply themselves to other subjects, did not pursue graduate work, experienced frustration that was debilitating, did not read in a diversified field, dropped some professional associations, became less involved with the staff in their home schools, and neglected students not involved in P.C.W. (9, pp. 145ff.)

Most of the preceding problems follow from a lack of time to engage in curriculum work. Anderson (2), Burke (9), Grandy (4), Miller (11), Miller and Dhand (13), and Richards (5) all reported some teachers perceiving time pressure as a negative effect of curriculum-development work. Allen (8) reported, and the external evaluation (7) suggested, that most teachers would prefer blocks of released time rather than a day or half-day at regular intervals for development activities. A study by Hilsum and Cane (21) showed that teachers in Surrey, England, spent about 41 hours per week on

their work with 42% of that time on activities which did not involve direct contact with students. Although we have no way of knowing whether these figures apply to the teachers presently under consideration, we do know that teaching involves much more than direct contact with students. Allen (8) and Miller and Dhand (13) reported that the amount of donated time (i.e., not released from regular duties) by participants was about five hours per teacher each week. Favaro (10) indicated that 165 hours of regular meeting time plus that much time again in individual work was involved in the first draft of a simulation game. It appears that at the onset of curriculum-development projects, teachers do not realize the amount of time that will be involved and that, even with released time, some re-allocation of their time resources will need to be made.

Anderson (2), Burke (9), Miller (11), and Miller and Dhand (13) reported specific comments by a few teachers related to neglect of their classes. Most comments had to do with inadequate preparation for teaching, lack of attention to students, guilt feelings related to leaving the class to a substitute, concern about the quality of instruction by the substitute, and double preparation required for their own work and preparing for a substitute. Some of the comments may arise from overly high self-imposed standards; nevertheless, there is a need to consider and plan for the effects on continuity of regular programs that the releasing of teachers will create.

A common negative outcome commented on by Allen (8), Anderson (2), Burke (9), Miller (11), and Miller and Dhand (13) was a lack of communication, about their project aims and processes, with non-project fellow teachers, administrators, and school system authorities. Anderson (2) reported that 20 out of 22 teachers surveyed had problems with helping other teachers understand their projects; Miller (11) found that 23 out of 59 teachers felt that other staff did not understand the nature of their involvement in curriculum development; the external evaluation (7) found that communication with local school authorities had been neglected and that much more attention to such communication would have resulted in considerably more support for the teachers. As the lack of understanding in some developers' schools seemed to be expressed as professional jealousy through a "who are you to be doing curriculum development?" attitude, Noonan (12) found project members requesting programs designed to improve their skills in human relations. The need to develop good public relations and effective communication networks is obvious from the above responses. It may be difficult at the early stages of curriculum development, when the teachers are unsure of themselves and their tasks, but an effective information program is necessary within a teacher's own school, as well as in the school system and community.

Such drawbacks as those listed above may be overcome when development teams are aware that they may occur. On the other hand, there are a

multitude of positive outcomes of curriculum development that may be considered in the broad categories of both personal and professional self-improvement – higher morale and satisfaction, more concern about educational theory and research, greater predisposition to change behavior, and increased benefits for students in developers' classrooms.

The studies reported by Anderson (6), Grandy (4), and Richards (5) which used comparison groups to evaluate project teachers' perceptions of curriculum development found that Project Canada West teachers and Newfoundland members of Project Atlantic Canada were more positive towards curriculum use and planning than the matched comparison groups.

In terms of professional self-improvement, project teachers found that they had considerably improved their skills in and knowledge of curriculum development. The external evaluation of the CSF stated, "Teachers, who with the help of the C.S.F., become competent developers of curriculum for their classes will not and can not unlearn the skill or stop using it" (7, p. 18). Allen (8), Anderson (2), Burke (9), Davies (14), Miller (11), Miller and Dhand (13), and Sabey (20) all reported on project teachers' improved skills in and enthusiasm for curriculum development. As one teacher said in response to Miller's survey, "My most outstanding experience was being persuaded that classroom teachers can actually do curriculum development" (11, p. 155).

Other skills which participants reported more knowledge about and improvement in were deriving and stating objectives (Burke [9], Noonan [12], Miller [11], Miller and Dhand [13]), developing instructional techniques (Davies [14], Favaro [10], *External Evaluation* [7], and Sabey [20]), developing and using evaluation techniques (Anderson [2], Burke [9], Carswell [17], Noonan [12], Sabey [20], Wood [22]), and skill in communication and group techniques (Davies [14], Miller [11], Miller & Dhand [13], Sabey [20]).

The external evaluation (7) reported that most developers (98%) judged that they had an increased knowledge of and interest in Canada. Burke (9), Davies (14), Miller (11), and Sabey (20) show that participants engaged in extensive reading and research to improve their knowledge of Canada and specific topics related to the projects. Anderson (2), Davies (14), and Sabey (20) reported that developers' attendance at conferences and mixing with teachers from across Canada increased their understanding of other regions.

Not only did teachers become more competent in a professional way, but many claimed that they were more capable people and had more self-confidence after their experience in curriculum development. Studies by Anderson (2), Burke (9), Davies (14), Miller (11), Miller and Dhand (13), Roald and Anderson (19), and Sabey (20) all attest to this. The external evaluation presents the following quote which neatly summarizes teachers' reactions: " 'I know that I am a far more capable person and teacher as a

result of my experiences, and the principals and superintendents that I've worked under during these three years know it, too' " (7, p. 13).

Involvement in curriculum development certainly seemed to increase morale and provide considerable satisfaction to the participants. Anderson (2), Davies (14), Miller and Dhand (13), and the external evaluation (7) provided instances of teachers expressing pride in being accepted as an equal in curriculum development by other professionals, pride in completing a particular task or teaching activity, pride in working well with others, and pride in being asked to consult or make a presentation on their project.

Burke (9), Grandy (4), and Richards (5) investigated the question of whether participating teachers were more open to change and more apt to bring about change as a result of their participation in curriculum development projects. Burke (9) found that 66% of her sample felt they had influenced other teachers' behavior and 50% had implemented change in areas other than Canadian studies, while Richards states: "In summary it would appear that teachers as a whole desire a greater voice in curriculum development and change, but only if peers and administrators are fully prepared to supply the support systems necessary for such change and therefore, for better teaching" (5, p. 103). Grandy (4) found that the project teachers tended to be more closed-minded as measured on the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale (23) than other teachers, but because there was more variance within than between groups he did not speculate on the result. Whether project teachers are more open or closed-minded than other teachers and whether this is related to bringing about change remains to be researched, but reports in Sabey (20) concerning the establishment of a curriculum-development centre in Lethbridge, and new local development projects in Winnipeg and Vancouver, show that some project teachers are actively working to bring about change in their local areas.

It is generally considered that teachers have little time for considering research or theory in relation to their teaching. Burke (9), Miller (11), Miller and Dhand (13), Noonan (12), Richards (5), and Roald and Anderson (19) concerned themselves with this problem and concluded that developers were more research oriented, perceived the need for research and theory, used a theoretical base, and had more appreciation of the need for curriculum theory than they had before becoming involved in curriculum development. Specifically, Richards (5) found that 55% of the project teachers, compared with 25% of other teachers, perceived the responsibility to seek out research related to curriculum development; Burke (9) reported that the majority of teachers indicated that their experiences with Project Canada West (PCW) had made them more aware of and conversant with educational theory and research; Noonan (12) analysed the procedures of PCW teams and found that their approaches to curriculum and instruction were closely related to a theoretical design for curriculum development. Involvement in curriculum-development projects appears to

convince most teachers that a knowledge of theory and research in curriculum may be useful to help them achieve specific tasks associated with curriculum development.

Earlier it was noted that involvement in projects was perceived by a few teachers as detrimental to their classroom behavior. In contrast to this, studies by Anderson (2), Burke (9), Davies (14), *External Evaluation* (7), Miller (11), Miller and Dhand (13), and Richards (5) show that most of the participants felt that their teaching had improved and their students had benefited from involvement in CSF-sponsored projects. The improvements in teaching skills and knowledge ranged from deeper knowledge of children's abilities and needs, better questioning techniques, more use of inquiry approaches, simulation games, role playing, discussion, interviewing, and audio-visual aids to a stronger and broader grasp of content to be taught. In turn, teachers sensed a greater interest and growth in learning in their students as they were involved in using, evaluating, and improving materials and processes developed by the teachers. The external evaluation report summarizes this benefit in the following way: "Many teachers of Canadian Studies become better teachers through the C.S.F. – more aware of what they were trying to do, more able to interest and excite the youngsters whom they teach" (7, p. 26).

This review of materials related to perceived changes in the behavior of teachers engaged in curriculum development shows that most teachers experienced personal and professional growth, felt pride and satisfaction with their involvement, were predisposed to bring about change in education, were more concerned about educational research and theory, and reported improvement in their teaching with increased benefits for their students. Certainly the Canada Studies Foundation has achieved the aim of involving classroom teachers in the curriculum-development process, and, as a consequence, sparked considerable personal and professional growth in the participants.

REFERENCES

1. Hodgetts, A. B. *What culture? What heritage?* Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1968.

2. Anderson, R. M. The role of the teacher in curriculum development. *Newfoundland Teachers' Association Journal*, 1974, *66*, 16–24.

3. Carswell, R. J. B. *Canada studies evaluation proposal.* Toronto: Canada Studies Foundation, 1972. (Xeroxed)

4. Grandy, M. H. Teacher initiative in curriculum development: Comparative study of the attitudes of Newfoundland teachers involved in Project Atlantic Canada and Newfoundland teachers not involved in Project Atlantic Canada. Unpublished master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1974.

5. Richards, L. Perceptions of teacher role in the development of an on-going social studies curriculum project. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oregon, 1973.

6. Anderson, R. M. The results of teacher initiative in curriculum development: Some empirical findings. Paper presented to the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies, Edmonton, June, 1975.

7. Bernier, J.-J.; Duckworth, E.; Lecuyer, A.; & Sutherland, N. *External Evaluation of the Canada Studies Foundation.* Toronto: Canada Studies Foundation, 1975. (Xeroxed)

8. Allen, C. L. The Brunskill subproject: A case study. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1972.

9. Burke, M. Professional growth of teachers participating in Project Canada West. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1973.

10. Favaro, B. J. An ethnographic approach to formative evaluation of the simulation: Transition. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1974.

11. Miller, T. W. An analysis of teacher participation in curriculum development for Project Canada West. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1972.

12. Noonan, B. W. Theory and practice in curriculum development: An investigation. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1974.

13. Miller, T. W., & Dhand, H. *The classroom teacher as curriculum developer for Project Canada West.* Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 1973.

14. Davies, F. M. T. Project Canada West: A preliminary review of benefits derived from curriculum development. Unpublished report, University of Calgary, n.d.

15. Patton, J. (Ed.). *Contact.* Newsletter of the Canada Studies Foundation.

16. Allard, M., et al. *The development of resource material for the teaching of Canadian history in the secondary schools.* Toronto: Montreal/Toronto Research Group, n.d.

17. Carswell, R. J. B. Evaluation and Canada studies projects. Paper presented to the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies, Toronto, June, 1974.

18. Patton, J. *Outaouais project: Report to the Canada Studies Foundation.* Ottawa: Outaouais Project, April 1973. (Xeroxed)

19. Roald, J. B. & Anderson, R. M. Teacher initiative in curriculum development: Specific reference to Project Atlantic Canada. Paper presented to the Canadian Association of Professors of Education, Kingston, May 1973.

20. Sabey, R. H. *Project Canada West: Program development, people, processes, products.* Vancouver: British Columbia Teachers' Federation, May 1975.

21. Hilsum, S., & Cane, B. S. *The teacher's day.* Slough, Bucks: National Foundation for Educational Research, 1971.

22. Wood, R. The Laurentian Project: The adaptation and evaluation of curriculum units. *Contact,* 1960, *16,* 1–3.

23. Rokeach, M. *The open and closed mind.* New York: Basic Books, 1960.