

EDITORIAL

PUBLISHING EDUCATION JOURNALS IN CANADA

The 1977 Learned Societies meetings at the University of New Brunswick was the site of a gathering of editors of Canadian education journals. Acting on a call from the Canadian Journal of Education, the editors discussed a number of perennial issues in Canadian journal publishing, namely, finances and readership, governmental support - particularly from The Canada Council, and relationships with Canadian education associations.

A further meeting - called by the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) - took place at the 1978 Learned Societies at the University of Western Ontario. Editors or representatives from the McGill Journal of Education, Canadian Journal of Education, Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Interchange, Canadian and International Education, and the Journal of Educational Thought, joined representatives from the CSSE to consider many of the same questions raised at the Fredericton meeting.

The 1978 gathering, however, established a steering committee that was to provide a basis for annual meetings at the Learned Societies. In addition to setting an agenda for the editors, the existence of a steering committee offered some hope that the annual gatherings might be developmental, that is, building on the work of past meetings and not merely being a re-examination of the same issues annually. Whether the 1979 meeting at the University of Saskatchewan will justify such a hope remains to be seen.

The problems of journal publishing in Canada as discussed at Fredericton and London appear to be so enduring and formidable - like the Rockies or Canadian Shield - that editors faced with fiscal restraint and inflation can be forgiven if they despair of any solution or await the chances of Loto Canada. It does seem, however, that the difficulties that beset us should, at least, be analyzed and understood if not surmounted.

A continuing problem in financing is the relatively limited market for our journals. Education journals generally run a deficit which must be covered. If subscriptions are raised to meet cost, then the journals face the prospect of a loss in subscribers. At the same time that the journals face marked increases in printing and mailing cost and when individuals and institutional subscribers are reconsidering periodical expenditures, institutions and organizations supporting journals find themselves under pressure to limit their support.

Recent economic and fiscal history has accentuated the traditional Canadian solution to problems of cultural and educational survival - the appeal to government and particularly to the Federal Government. Given the relatively small amounts needed by most Canadian education journals, governmental funding is attractive. The Canada Council in particular has drawn the attention and energies of editors. That governments have a right and perhaps a responsibility to assist scholarly publishing is not an issue - rather, what is at issue are the results of that participation.

It would be unreasonable to expect governments to support all journals. In the case of The Canada Council, there is the clear feeling on the part of editors that journals are competing among themselves not on matters of quality of articles or format but in satisfying the requirements of evaluators. The point of this is that those associated with our journals begin to look upon other journals as potential rivals, to see the field of Canadian education periodical publishing as overcrowded, and to suggest that the demise of "rivals" will somehow enhance their own position.

There may be a large number of education journals in Canada; however, those serving a regional, let alone a national, constituency and providing a forum for the kinds of scholarly and professional work that goes on in faculties and schools of education are few and far between. If the attractions of governmental support - particularly at the Federal level - makes us lose sight of a precious resource in our national academic life, perhaps it is time to consider other ways of funding our journals and of establishing new ones to serve significant interests in education.

Although this is not the time nor the place to discuss new ways of funding, it is appropriate to conclude with a brief statement of the purpose of scholarly publishing in education. The single factor that best distinguishes universities from other tertiary institutions is the relationship between instruction-training and research. Within universities historically, research includes a wide range of activities - from public service professions such as law and engineering to history and linguistics. Without research, universities would remain elaborate training facilities providing initiation into professions and crafts that would not improve in technique let alone knowledge. In turn, research that remains out of the public domain contributes nothing to the purpose of the universities. Publications - and particularly journals - provide the means by which the full range of scholarly and professional thought and investigation can be brought out for the consideration of our peers.

Properly considered education journals are not an exercise in institutional or individual pride but rather an essential part of education as both a field of study within the universities and a public service profession.

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