CLIO IN THE CURRICULUM: VINDICATED AT LAST

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the changes in the focus of history education in Canada over the 40-year period, 1973 to 2013. It also looks at cultural influences, prominent critiques, and varied responses over time. It includes discussion of the current initiatives which aim to transform history education.

Since this article is a review of the history curriculum in Canada over the past 40 years, I thought it appropriate to choose a title that is reminiscent of one I used for an earlier article with a similar purpose. I called a 1998 article in the journal *Canadian Social Studies* "Clio in the Curriculum: The Jury is Out."[1] This was a reference to a comment made by curriculum scholar, David Pratt in 1983: "School history is in the dock, and the judge must decide between execution and rehabilitation."[2] In the present article, I contend that the place of history in the school curriculum has become increasingly secure, following precarious times.[3]

A 1973 SNAPSHOT OF HISTORY EDUCATION

The establishment of the Association for Canadian Studies took place amid rising nationalism, accompanied by related concerns about American cultural influences. Canadians were still basking in the euphoria of the late 1960s. In 1967, they had experienced a surge of nationalistic pride, as they engaged in centenary celebrations and welcomed the world to Expo '67 in Montreal. In 1968, they voted in a charismatic prime minister, who, at least for a time, was a refreshing change from his stodgy predecessors. While these events buoyed the confidence of Canadians, the 1970 October Crisis in Québec convinced them that the country could use some timely rescue efforts.

Concerns about American cultural influences naturally included education, and there was a particularly harsh spotlight on the history curriculum and textbooks. Members of the public and educators alike, expected textbooks, and history textbooks in particular, to represent a Canadian viewpoint. Branch plants of American publishers,

located in Toronto, had used a strategy of Canadianizing American textbooks for years. This involved inexpensive alterations such as changing spelling, exchanging American flags for Canadian, and inserting Canadian locations. The Ontario Royal Commission on Books and Book Publishing released its findings in 1973, encouraging the publishing of Canadian textbooks for Canadian students.[4]

Educational policy-makers were committed to responding to the findings of a recent spate of studies of the content of provincially authorized textbooks.[5] These studies, which began in the late 1960s, were predominantly sponsored by provincial human rights commissions, departments of education, and aboriginal groups, and included two federal government royal commissions. A 1970 study sponsored by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism concluded that after 1760 [history] texts "do not even seem to be talking about the same country! The English-speaking authors do their best to give an overall history of Canada, while the French authors … hardly talk about anything but the history of Quebec and its expansion beyond its borders."[6] The 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada examined elementary reading, social studies, mathematics and guidance texts, concluding: "This analysis of sex role imagery … clearly indicates that a woman's creative and intellectual potential is either underplayed or ignored in the education of children from their earliest years."[7]

There were a number of royal commissions on education in the late 1960s and early '70s. The two most prominent were the 1968 Hall-Dennis Report in Ontario and the 1972 Worth Report in Alberta; both of which called for change in a neo-progressive direction. The result was a de-emphasis on history and a movement toward a focus on contemporary issues. The Canadian Critical Issues Series (also known as the Public Issues Program), which was used predominantly in Ontario, but also elsewhere, published secondary school curriculum materials between 1972 and 1981.[8] Its purpose was: "to enable students to gain an understanding of the society in which they live through the active discussion of its major social conflicts [and] to enable students to acquire those skills necessary for the analysis, discussion, and resolution of such conflicts or issues."[9] *Native Survival, On Strike* and *The Right to Live and Die* were three 1973 publications in this series.[10] Other publications examined the roles of women in Canadian society, the issue of foreign ownership, and the challenges of cultural diversity.

The establishment of the Canada Studies Foundation in 1970 was a logical consequence of the report of the National History Project, which had investigated the quality of history and civics teaching in 850 classrooms in 247 schools in 20 cities across the country. This study, under the direction of A.B. Hodgetts, a teacher and textbook author, published its findings in *What Culture? What Heritage?* (1968). The study concluded that "we are teaching a bland, unrealistic consensus version of our past: a dry-as-dust chronological story of uninterrupted political and economic progress told without the controversy that is an inherent part of history."[11] Hodgetts called for a national Canada Studies Consortium which would be interprovincial, and free of political influence. Until its demise in 1986, the Foundation produced teaching materials developed by teachers for teachers. The irony is that, like the Public Issues Program, these materials neglected history in favour of a decidedly contemporary focus.

INCREASING CONCERNS

There were increasing concerns about history education during the 1980s and '90s.[12] These decades witnessed continued momentum away from history courses taught with a content focus, and an increasing emphasis on critical thinking and skill development.[13] This move was greeted by considerable opposition on the part of historians, history curriculum scholars, and some teachers.[14] In my 1998 article, "Clio in the Curriculum: The Jury is Out," I remarked that "I write this article amid a climate of grave concern over the fate of school history."[15] In an earlier issue, historian and history educator Ken Osborne lamented that, in Manitoba, "social studies, history, geography, and the arts and humanities in general, are ignored or downgraded."[16] He concluded that this was neither "an aberration nor an accident. It is part of a wider move to sweep the very idea of democratic citizenship aside."[17]

In 1997, the Dominion Institute, an organization with the mandate of promoting history and citizenship goals in curricula, was formed. It immediately began to administer tests of Canadian history knowledge to young Canadians and publicize the results. These results captured the attention of the media, and increased the concern of the public about inadequate history education.

By 1998, when York University historian, J.L. Granatstein, published his slim, provocatively titled, and polemical, volume, *Who Killed Canadian History?* he captured the attention of Canadians because many were already deeply worried that young people were not learning enough about their country to develop a sense of allegiance to it. Granatstein declared that Canadian history was dead and implicated various assassins in its demise. These included: academic historians, who had become fixated on specific questions and had lost sight of the "big picture"; interest groups who had lobbied to get themselves into the curriculum; and provincial departments of education that had implemented the interdisciplinary school subject of social studies. The little history that was being taught was "that of the grievers among us."[18]

A NEW TRAJECTORY AND REVITALIZED SUPPORT FOR HISTORY EDUCATION

As it happened, other developments had already begun to overtake the trends identified by Granatstein. Two ground breaking publications appeared in 1996. The "Lacoursière Report,"[19] the findings of a task force on the teaching of history in Québec, led to the development of a new history curriculum with an innovative inquiry-oriented approach.[20] The other event was the publication of "Conceptualizing Growth in Historical Understanding," a chapter written by Peter Seixas of the University of British Columbia and published in *The Handbook of Education and Human Development.*[21] In it, Seixas laid out a framework for the field of history education based on six historical thinking concepts: significance, epistemology and evidence, continuity and change, progress and decline, empathy (perspective taking) and moral judgment, and agency.

The "Giving the Past a Future" Conference, which took place in January, 1999, was another significant event. Sponsored by the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, this conference was significant in three ways. First, it brought together key stakeholders in history education, including historians, history education scholars, museum professionals, teachers, and representatives of organizations such as the National Film Board of Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada, and Canada's National History Society, publisher of the *Beaver Magazine* (now called *Canada's History*). Second, it provided a forum for discussion of the national standards debate. Third, it was the venue where businessman, Red Wilson, announced that he would contribute $500,000 of his personal funds to establish Historica. Until its 2009 merger with the Dominion-Institute this organization sponsored summer institutes for secondary teachers and Heritage Fairs for upper elementary and middle school students, and produced the Canadian *Encyclopedia Online*. It also produced the *Historica Minutes*, an iteration of the Bronfmann Foundation's popular *Heritage Minutes*, as well as lesson plans to accompany them.

The "Future" conference was followed two years later by the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness at UBC by historian and educator Peter Seixas, and then the establishment, in 2006, of The Historical Thinking Project.[22] The conceptual framework which is being disseminated through the Historical Thinking Project is beginning to be evident in provincial curricula, school textbooks and other resources, as well as in the textbooks used in teacher education programs.[23] Two other thriving research centres are exploring new possibilities for the use of technology in history education. These are *Virtual Historian*, under the direction of Stéphane Lévesque at the University of Ottawa and the *Simulating History* project, directed by Kevin Kee at Brock University.[24]

There has been a proliferation of organizations in the public domain with a mandate to enrich history education in schools. The Association for Canadian Studies is one of these. It has offered annual conferences on history education, often partnering with provincial teacher associations. Canada's History Society, formed in 1993, offers annual awards to exemplary teachers, and makes their instructional plans available to other educators. Historica and the Dominion Institute merged in 2009. The new organization offers a range of popular educational programs, including Encounters with Canada, which brings over 100 students to Ottawa each week to engage in activities related to Canadian history and identity. Unfortunately, Historica's Fairs were discontinued, but others have stepped into the breach, and they have been maintained in many provinces. *Canada: A People's History*, a 17-episode, 30 hour television production by the CBC and Radio-Canada, traces Canadian history from pre-history to 1990. It has been widely used in schools.

The final event I will discuss was the establishment of The History Education Network/Histoire et éducation en réseau (THEN/HiER), with Penney Clark as Director.[25] This pan-Canadian endeavour has been in place since 2005, but received a major impetus in 2008 with a generous grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The network is intended to provide opportunities for school history and social studies teachers; academic historians; history education scholars; public historians, including those in museums, archives, and historic sites; provincial curriculum developers; textbook authors and publishers; and members of the public to engage in ways that will promote research-informed teaching, and pedagogically informed historical practice in various venues. It has an ambitious scholarly publishing program in process. Its first book, *New Possibilities for the Past: Shaping History Education in Canada* (UBC Press, 2011), reviews the current state of history education research and addresses the ways in which history is taught at all levels. This book also examines aboriginal perspectives on history education, how students' ethnic identities affect the ways they interact with history; the relationship between history education and citizenship education; and the state of the new history and citizenship curriculum in Québec. Contributors also look at how history is represented in museum settings, in virtual environments, and public institutional settings. The other five books in the THEN/HiER series will examine the use of technology in history education, the preparation and ongoing professional development of history teachers, museums as sites of historical consciousness, the assessment of students' historical thinking, and relationships between history education and the arts.

A 2013 SNAPSHOT OF HISTORY EDUCATION

History education in Canada, which seemed on its way out in 1973, has been revitalized. One might even say that it has risen from the grave. I will identify key ways in which it is different in 2013. The first is the availability of a coherent conceptual framework which is being taken up by provincial curriculum developers, textbook publishers, classroom teachers, and researchers. Second, The History Education Network and The Historical Thinking Project are working, not only to find out how students learn history, and how their progress can be assessed, but also how this new research information can find its way into classrooms and influence the way history is taught, as well as the resources used to teach it. These pan-Canadian initiatives disseminate research findings; provide opportunities for researchers and practitioners to collaborate, including interactive websites, workshops, symposia, larger conferences; and develop both published teacher materials and scholarly books. The third is the availability of new resources, including the vast number of digitized artifacts and documents available to students which enable them to do their own historical investigations. The fourth is the involvement of historians in Kindergarten to Grade 12 history education. Jocelyn Létourneau at Laval, John Lutz at the University of Victoria, Kevin Kee at Brock, and Margaret Conrad, who is retired from the University of New Brunswick, are examples of historians who work tirelessly on behalf of history education at all levels. The fifth is the array of public history organizations which bridge the public and education realms. It is striking how diverse the array of forces, people, and events is that has come together to create this renewed vitality It seems that history education's time has arrived.

NOTES

1 Penney Clark, "Clio in the Curriculum: The Jury is Out," *Canadian Social Studies* 32(2) (Winter 1998): 45-48, 60.

2 David Pratt, "History in Schools: Reflections on Curriculum Priorities." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, 1983.

3 I note that Canada has never had a national history curriculum. Education is under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, a responsibility which has been guarded jealously since the Constitution Act of 1867. Nonetheless, it is possible to make some generalizations about the history curriculum in Canada, while also acknowledging exceptions. There have been calls for one national history curriculum from time to time.

4 Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing, *Canadian Publishers and Canadian Publishing* (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1973).

5 For a discussion of textbook controversies in Canada, see Penney Clark, "'The Most Fundamental of All Learning Tools': An Historical Investigation of Textbook Controversies in English Canada," in *Auf der Suche nach der wahren Art von Textbüchern*, ed. Angelo van Gorp and Marc Depaepe (Bad Heilbrunn, Germany: Klinkhardt, 2009): 123-42.

6 Marcel Trudel and Genevieve Jain, *Canadian History Textbooks: A Comparative Study*, Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Staff Study (5) (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970): 124.

7 Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970): 175.

8 John Eisenberg and Malcolm Levin, eds., *Canadian Critical Issues Series* (Toronto: OISE, 1972-1981).

[9] Paula Bourne and John Eisenberg, "The Canadian Public Issues Program: Learning to Deal with Social Controversy," *Orbit 6* (December 1975): 16-18.

[10] John Eisenberg and Harold Troper, *Native Survival* (Toronto: OISE, 1973); Christine Sylvester and Marion Harris, *On Strike!* (Toronto: OISE, 1973); John Eisenberg and Paula Bourne, *The Right to Live and Die* (Toronto: OISE, 1973).

[11] A.B. Hodgetts, *What Culture? What Heritage? A Study of Civic Education in Canada* (Toronto: OISE, 1968): 24.

[12] Curriculum offerings vary from one province to another. Ontario and Québec have history curricula. Other provinces and territories tend to offer social studies, with additional courses in social sciences, history, geography, and Canadian Studies. Social studies is an interdisciplinary subject which includes history, geography, and civics education, and to a lesser extent, other social sciences. In British Columbia, for example, there is a mandatory social studies curriculum from Kindergarten to grade eleven, followed by elective courses in history and geography in grade twelve. Click on www.thenhier.ca/en/content/curriculum-documents for provincial and territorial history and social studies curriculum documents.

[13] Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Social Studies: Survey of Provincial Curricula at the Elementary and Secondary Levels* (Toronto: Author, 1982).

[14] See Bob Davis, *Whatever Happened to High School History: Burying the Political Memory of Youth, Ontario: 1945-1995* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1995); and Davis, *Skills Mania: Snake Oil in Our Schools* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000).

[15] "Clio,": 45.

[16] Ken Osborne, "The Changing Status of Canadian History in Manitoba," *Canadian Social Studies* 31(1) (Fall 1996): 28.

[17] Ibid.: 30.

[18] J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998).

[19] *Learning from the Past: Report of the Task Force on the Teaching of History* (Québec: Ministry of Education, 1996).

[20] See Jean François Cardin, "Pour un enseignement intellectuellement 'riche' de l'histoire ; un discours de longue date," *Canadian Diversity* 7(1) (Winter 2009): 31-36. See Christian Laville and Michelle Dagenais, "Le naufrage du projet de programme d'histoire 'nationale' : retour sur une occasion manquée," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 60(4) (2007) : 517-550 for a discussion of the impact of the reform on Québec nationalists and the traditional master-narrative of 'la survivance' in Québec.

[21] Peter Seixas, "Conceptualizing the Growth of Historical Understanding," in *Handbook of Education and Human Development: New Models of Learning, Teaching, and Schooling*, ed. David Olson and Nancy Torrance, 765-83 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

[22] It was called Benchmarks of Historical Thinking Project until 2011.

[23] The framework was modified in 2006 to: significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspectives, ethical dimension. At present, aspects of historical thinking have been incorporated into provincial curricula: Manitoba, Grade 11, Canadian History; Nova Scotia, Grade 6, World History; Northwest Territories, Grade 5, Canadian History; New Brunswick, Grade 11, Modern History; and Ontario, Grades 1-8, History, Geography and Social Studies; and Ontario, Grades 9-12, Canadian and World Studies (DRAFT); and Newfoundland and Labrador Studies. A wide array of textbooks and other teaching resources have also incorporated historical thinking concepts and language. See Peter Seixas and Jill Colyer, *Assessment of Historical Thinking: A Report on the National Meeting of The Historical Thinking Project, January 18-20, 2012, February 2012*: 6. They are also found in the teacher education program textbooks, Roland Case and Penney Clark, eds., *The Anthology of Social Studies: Issues and Strategies for Elementary Teachers* (Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press, 2012) and *The Anthology of Social Studies: Issues and Strategies for Secondary Teachers* (2008).

[24] For other recent discussions of history curriculum in Canada, see: Penney Clark, Ruth Sandwell, and Stéphane Lévesque, "Dialogue Across Chasms: History and History Education in Canada," in *Studying History Teaching – Experiences and Impulses of the Discourse Around the Innovation. History Education International* Series, eds., Elisabeth Erdmann and W. Hasberg (Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag, in press) and Penney Clark, "Introduction," in *New Possibilities for the Past: Shaping History Education in Canada*, ed., Penney Clark (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2011): 1(30).

[25] See www.thenhier.ca.