

My Acquaintance with the *CJE/RCE*, 1988–1992

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In 1972, Canada’s academic societies in the humanities and social sciences met at Queen’s University. That year, Canadian education researchers organized the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE). They created a single, federated body, hoping it would play a vigorous role in the university. If all went well, the new organization would have an impact on the country and the wider worlds of educational thought and practice.

Most of us thought that Canadian education researcher-writers were not being heard or seen as much as they should. We did not *mean* to hide our collective light under a bushel, yet European and American colleagues weren’t aware of our work. We wanted a new Canadian organizational base from which to operate. We hoped the CSSE would be that base.

There was already discussion in the early 1970s of a new journal. After all, if the CSSE were to attract national and international attention, proponents thought the Society must have effective ways of communicating with the whole academic community. The CSSE had bilingual and bicultural origins and ambitions. It claimed to be committed to basic and applied research both. It had a marked desire to influence educational theory

and practice across the country. Could a journal advance the CSSE's intellectual, cultural, social, and pedagogical ambitions?

As one might expect, CSSE members needed persuading. There were already complaints that too many education journals were working in education and in the humanities and social sciences more generally. The *McGill Journal of Education* had started in 1966; the *Revue des sciences de l'éducation* in 1975. Some Canadian quarterlies and journals had been publishing (spasmodically) on educational questions since the late 19th century.

But the CSSE saw recent and more elderly journals as proof that the field was flourishing. There was indeed room for another journal. Leaders among the CSSE's specialist academic associations (including Deans of Education), were convinced the time was right (Fisher & Edwards, 1999). The *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation (CJE/RCE)* first appeared in 1976.

The *Journal's* collaborative character was obvious on the masthead, as participating CSSE associations had representatives on the *CJE/RCE* board. The bilingual feel of the *Journal* was noticeable from the start. And the peer-review system on which it relied was as vigorous and rigorous as any. By the mid-1980s, the *CJE/RCE* regularly attracted funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and other public support, along with a growing readership in Canada and abroad.

Here the CSSE's history and my own academic narrative joined.

Well before 1988, I had talked with colleagues who agreed on the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian education research and writing. I had heard and sometimes enjoyed the debate about whether to publish a new journal. The idea of editing the *CJE/RCE* began to come up in informal conversations among colleagues at the annual Learned Societies meetings, particularly those held in Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies, and the Maritimes. In a word, I was tempted.

All along, I had myself been lucky to publish articles and essays with the help of excellent editors on both sides of the Atlantic. Those experiences showed me how desirable it is to write good social science research that occasionally reveals a little literary *savoir-faire*, or that reminds people how closely theory and practice are intertwined in education. Editing could and sometimes did make such things possible.

In conversations that help to account for my decision to apply for the editorship, Michael Jackson, then editor-in-chief, made the argument that the best crash course in

writing, if that was what one wanted, was to edit a journal. And why not the *CJE/RCE*? He had done it and seemed no worse for wear. The question remained, of course, would the CSSE like to appoint somebody who would be learning on the job?

A further and important factor was the prospect of working with an able francophone editor, Geneviève Racette. The francophone side of the *CJE/RCE* operation was vital. The idea of sharing editorial duties was at the very least promising. Geneviève had been a francophone editor since early 1986 and might be persuaded to stay (which she did).

Several practical developments conspired to make possible the *Journal's* move to UBC. The UBC Dean of Education of the day (Nancy Sheehan) thought it was a good idea. Several considerations may have weighed in her decision making. By 1988, the *CJE/RCE* had come to be widely known and respected in Canada. In UBC's faculties and departments, it was thought a good thing to sponsor a journal. In 1988, UBC was "home" to no fewer than 213 journals and newsletters in its 12 faculties. Besides, there was a sense that it was UBC's "turn" to take on the responsibility of housing a major education journal. There may have been still other reasons of which I was unaware, but at all events, the dean thought the *CJE/RCE* should be welcomed.

From my own standpoint, it was helpful that the UBC administration was prepared to release me from teaching for a time, and to let me use part of a sabbatical to maintain the *Journal*. UBC and SSHRC proved generous over the five-year period of my editorship, offering funds for a combined office manager/copy editor, support for the full computerization of the *CJE/RCE*, and assistance with production costs. The CSSE continued to make its regular financial contribution to the journal, but the whole idea would have seemed unwise (and unlikely) without the participation of the university, the granting council, and the CSSE.

Once the CSSE's search committee had done its work and agreed to recommend my appointment as editor, one last consideration led me to say "yes" to the Society's search committee's invitation to serve.

I was increasingly aware of and interested in the growth of "Canadian Studies" and of "interdisciplinary studies" across the country. In rough parallel, the women's movement had become a strong force in Canadian post-secondary education, and with it there often came new writing, frequently about education. Women's Studies had a wide variety of disciplinary orientations—sociological, literary, philosophical, historical—thus

crossing many disciplinary boundaries and bridging the gulf between qualitative and quantitative investigation.

Qualitative research was by then consolidating a position in the social sciences. Articles on “action research” had begun to appear in the journal, as did pieces on the social and cultural problems that are raised by education of, by, or for First Nations peoples and ethnic groups in Canada. I took the view that “qualitative” studies should be understood to have a broad catchment, and thus include work on the teaching and uses of critical thinking and of classical conceptual analysis in education. There should be room, too, for well-informed historical and political studies. I suppose qualitative research in the *CJE/RCE* was an overly inclusive category, in which all but narrowly empirical-quantitative study would count. It is open to discussion and dispute, of course, whether that broad a definition is helpful. But it was convenient at the time.

Some Canadian research ventured outside traditional pathways, especially during the so-called linguistic turn of the late 1980s and the 1990s. The way gender is interpreted and understood in schools and in society raised fundamental questions about power and about language, and research of the 1980s and 1990s promised to use novel procedures to unpack these large social problems.

I thought it would be an intriguing and valuable thing to publish articles in the course of a single year that reported empirical research cheek by jowl with essentially political pieces about the negative impact of the accountability movement. Such unlikely pairings are, after all, the stuff of a lively journal. As it happened, my first *CJE/RCE* issue included articles on the quantitative-qualitative distinction, conveniently edited and prepared by Michael Jackson, who handed on nearly a half-a-year of print to help get the *Journal* on a good footing.¹ I was off to a good start on problem(s) that struck many of us as important and interesting. The *Journal* was on the way to becoming a barometer of the state of Canadian educational studies.

There was, at the *CJE/RCE*, a strong sense of collegiality and teamwork, a circumstance for which one pines but which is never a sure thing. Early in my time as editor, Robin Van Heck joined as copy editor and office manager. She stayed on in this role

1 Michael Jackson sent me edited articles, already peer-reviewed and revised, ready for the press—enough to fill most of the first two issues of the *Journal*. I did the same for the person who succeeded me as editor of the *CJE/RCE*. This was a good thing as there is no way a new editor could produce his or her first issue or issues from scratch and still meet the quarterly deadlines. By “on a good footing” I refer to this gift of prepared articles, handed to me by my predecessor.

after my replacement as Anglophone Editor (by Michael Manley-Casimir, then of SFU). I and my successor editors were delighted to have her help.

Then, as before and after, the *CJE/RCE* was well served by a series of devoted Book Review Editors in English and in French. That department of the *Journal* was as popular as any other. One day a historian will perhaps consider the intellectual history of Canadian education as seen through book reviews. They mattered in 18th-century Europe, 19th-century Britain, and 20th-century North America. They matter at least as much in the 21st century.

Among the *CJE/RCE*'s unsung heroes were our peer reviewers. I frequently called on the Association Editors for help in finding peer reviewers for manuscripts in specialized fields. These Association Editors were the representatives of CSSE member associations, appointed annually to the *Journal*'s editorial board. I could, and did, turn to them for advice about the best reviewers for this or that manuscript (but also for ideas about the overall policy and orientation of the journal). Colleagues across Canada, the United States, and much of the rest of the world were unlikely to turn down a request to review a manuscript. Editorial decisions whether to publish were made easier by the peer reviews we received.

Then there was the technical matter of publishing a large number of pages four times a year and getting them out in the mail. We had the services of the University of Toronto Press. From them, I learned many things about printing test-beds and pre-publication "blues" (the second-last version of printed pages, created on strangely pliable chemically treated paper in those pre-computing days).

My time as editor-in-chief coincided with the last push to computerize the *CJE/RCE*. The *CJE/RCE* joined the Canadian Association of Learned Journals. I made sure to attend its meetings (and the meetings of the American equivalent when they were nearby). We editors were deciding how to "talk" to typesetting machines, and beginning to make email an integral feature of our reviewing and editorial procedures. We experimented with mark-up techniques, text processing software, and new approaches to the delicate business of getting people to revise, revise, and revise again before publication. By 1992, the *CJE/RCE* was prepared entirely on desktop computers in Montreal and in Vancouver.

Daily life in the office featured everything from statistical requests from rating agencies (page-counting was becoming more and more popular in promotion committees), to congratulations and brickbats from authors, sometimes received on the same day.

Throughout the years, the CSSE and its presidents were solidly behind us, as were colleagues in and outside the country. The 40 years of the *CJE/RCE* coincide with the rise of new ways of asking and answering research questions in education. It would be wrong to confuse correlation with cause, so I will not claim the *CJE/RCE* accounts for these changes. But I can safely say that life as the Anglophone Editor of the *CJE/RCE* changed me.

References

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