

## UNE REVUE À LIRE? WOULD YOU READ THIS JOURNAL?

*This review is the first in a series which will examine periodicals in the field of the history of education.*

### **The *Histoire de l'éducation* and Canadian Historians**

*Patrick J. Harrigan*

Most Canadian historians of education are primarily interested in topics of Canadian educational history, but a number have focused on European education. Moreover, as the field has matured increasing numbers of them have become interested in a comparative history of education, primarily with that of Australia, England, or the United States but also with that of Europe. Certainly for historians of Quebec the French experience is illuminating. In 1979 a French journal appeared, the *Histoire de l'éducation*, devoted to research in French educational history but paying attention as well in its bibliography and book reviews to the educational history of other western countries as seen from a French perspective. Interest in education has burgeoned so much that most large western countries now publish a journal devoted to the history of education—*History of Education* (England), *Studi de storia dell'educazione* (Italy), *Historical Studies in Education* (Canada), *History of Education Quarterly* (U.S.), *Paedagogica Historica* (Holland), *Journal of International and Comparative Education* (Spain), and *History of Education Review* (Australia). *Histoire de l'éducation*, like the first two above, confines its articles to national history, while the others contain articles concerning a variety of countries. Although the *Histoire de l'éducation* has become a major journal within France, it is not widely known in North America (only nine institution subscriptions in the United States and seven in Canada—the National Library and the Universities of British Columbia, Montreal, Ottawa, Sherbrooke, and Waterloo, and the Collège de St. Boniface). Thus, a review of its history, format, and quality is appropriate.

Although the journal is editorially independent, it is funded by the French Ministry of Education through its *Service d'histoire de l'éducation*, founded in 1879 and now housed in the Institut national de recherche pédagogique (INRP) in Paris. This governmental aura is in contrast to the other educational journals cited which grew out of academic or professional organizations and has given

the publication a bureaucratic flavour, with many early articles treating administrative history or heralding the legislative initiatives of past governments—the 1982 issue celebrating the centennial of the Ferry Laws which abolished tuition in primary schools, made primary schooling compulsory, and removed all religion from the schools (*gratuité, égalité, laïcité*), is an unfortunate example of that bias. None of the authors mentioned, if they indeed recognized, that compulsory and free schooling was almost universal before the laws were passed. Pierre Caspard is the editor and administrative chief of *Histoire de l'éducation*, and a regular contributor of both articles and book reviews. Editorial board members are regular reviewers—nine of twenty of the book reviews in one issue in 1987 were written by three editorial consultants; such consultants wrote two dozen of the book reviews over two years—about one-third of the total reviews in those years. The selection of both the articles to publish and of the books to review seems to reflect the predilections of a few. Still, the quality of the research is good and the scope of the journal is widening along with its audience.

At its inception the journal had 237 individual subscriptions, 219 of those in France. Many subscribers were employed at lycées or in government rather than in academic or research posts. Of the eighteen foreign subscribers, five were from Britain, four from Germany, four from the United States, and three from Canada. Six years later, in 1984, its subscribers numbered 712. The number of individual subscriptions in France had remained about the same (233), and foreign ones had increased to 56; the large gain had been the 423 institutional subscriptions. Of the last, 290 were in France, 133 from ten different countries, Italy having the highest at 27 but even Japan and Switzerland with more than either Canada or the United States. These subscriptions compare favourably with most historical journals in France, excepting the giants like *Annales—économies, sociétés, civilisations*, *Revue d'histoire*, or *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*.

*Histoire de l'éducation's* four annual numbers are divided into bibliography (44% of the space), articles (27%), notes ("informations" or "actualités scientifiques": 9%), and book reviews (20%).<sup>1</sup> The most valuable feature of the journal is its meticulous annual bibliography which appears in a September double-number. In 1979 it listed 1,134 citations for the year 1976; in 1989 it offered 1,383 citations for 1986. This comprehensive and invaluable bibliography includes not just works concerning French education but related topics such as the family and religion. Under the sections "Aspects théoriques et généraux," and "L'Éducation Générale," which comprise about 25% of the total citations, it lists general works on education that could be relevant to research in French educational history. Indicative of the strength of research by North American scholars into French education, 10-15% of the cited works were published on this side of the Atlantic. In the two aforementioned general sections, foreign citations constitute about 25% of the total. Other sections and their recent percentage of citations are the following: sources (7%), related [literacy, childhood] (12%), particular schools (9%), teachers (13%), curriculum (9%), students [*vie scolaire*] (20%), and social

aspects (5%). The bibliography also includes indices of authors, proper names, and places. Naturally, it is not annotated but it is exhaustive, even uncovering material available only on microfiche.

Research into French educational history exploded during the 1960s. Then, the historiography concentrated on official attitudes to education, the development of schools, political conflicts related to them, and teaching within them. Its research defined the intellectual dimensions and political ramifications of educational development. During the 1970s attention shifted to education from below and the application of social scientific methods to the study of the past. Insights drawn from sociology, statistics, and the *Annales* school defined new issues concerning who attended schools and what careers they pursued afterward, the extent of mobility, the role of the church, literacy, and serial history generally. Partly as a reaction to social scientific methodology in history, partly as a result of the general social and political conservatism in the 1980s, there has been some criticism of this preoccupation, particularly that of North American historians, with elites, mobility, and classes.<sup>2</sup> This reaction is apparent in the articles in *Histoire de l'éducation*, which are rarely interdisciplinary, but the bibliography indicates the continuance of themes of the 1960s and 1970s as well as new ones of the 1980s.

The great contribution of the 1980s has been the extension of research into women's education. In a historiographical article in 1980 I wrote that "the entire subject of women's education has received little attention until lately."<sup>3</sup> Both in quantity and quality this subject dominates recent research. Curriculum has received new life. Theoretical discussion of the process of learning has continued to preoccupy scholars in France, with a greater historic awareness than before. In sheer numbers, histories of particular schools or schooling in a town or region dominate. No one could possibly read all of the last. Nor should one, for their quality is uneven and most fill gaps in information rather than opening new horizons. Although calls for comparative history still abound, attempts are few and found mainly in collections, with different authors treating different countries within a common theme. The volume of work on French educational history remains enormous, but some of the excitement of the 1970s has dissipated. Except in the area of women's history, the 1980s has not broken as much new ground as did the 1970s. The new structures are being built on existing foundations.

Although the review originally indicated a desire to publish works on both French and comparative history of education, articles thus far—four or five in each of the first two issues each year, only 1% of the selections in its own bibliographic section—have concentrated on French subjects. The range has constantly expanded, however, and has shifted from political/administrative topics to social and cultural ones. Many issues emphasize a particular theme. As with most other French journals, 1989 was a year for remembering the Revolutionary years and the quality of articles, which covered social history, curriculum, and science and medicine, was especially high. In 1988 three articles appeared

on "disciplines scolaires," or approaches to teaching, two concerned professional schooling, and another adult instruction. The 1987 edition concerned objects of teaching—one on history, two on literary topics, one on curriculum, and one on religion. In 1985 painting and popular culture was the subject of three articles, while childhood and Italian education also received attention. In both 1984 and 1985 the majority of articles dealt with curriculum—three concerned educational theory while others treated administration and teaching. Unlike *Historical Studies in Education*, *Histoire de l'éducation* deals exclusively with the past.

Historiographical articles have been a welcome recent addition. In the January 1990 issue, Dominique Julia, the leading scholar in the field of schooling during the ancien régime, wrote a lengthy survey of the past twenty years' historiography of French education during the Revolution. His article fairly treated works that appeared in North America as well as in France. Two years earlier, Michel Ostenc, who regularly appears as a reviewer of books concerning Italian educational history, surveyed that field. In January 1987 a similar analysis of German educational history appeared. These articles, all thorough and imaginative, are important sources for anyone interested in comparative history. They both review the field and call attention to publications in European journals, especially regional ones, that are simply not available in North American libraries. Occasionally important articles do appear in minor journals and can be ordered. The other advantage of these articles is that they open the world of German and Italian scholarship to those of us who are not proficient in those languages. An unfortunate inclusion in 1987 among these was Jean-Noël-Luc's ill-conceived attack on quantitative history. The substance of his remarks appeared elsewhere and reveals mainly his ignorance of the simplest of statistical techniques. The only apparent reason for inclusion of this tirade was his membership on the editorial board.

The book review section, which contains on average both ten *comptes rendus* (three to four-page book review essays) and ten *notes critiques* (book reviews of a few hundred words), is of particular interest to historians outside France who cannot read all European publications. The selection process is unclear, seeming to reflect what books are made available to the journal or what ones interest potential reviewers rather than systematic reliance on certain publishers or topics, but it offers a flavour of what is being published in France. German and Italian publications appear regularly (the latter apparently due to the energy of Michel Ostenc) but rarely anything from other European countries, North America, or other areas of the world. The only English-language book on a French topic studied Hungarian students at the University of Paris—an interesting topic but not on my list of major works; none of the works mentioned in Dominique Julia's indispensable article was reviewed.

The short book reviews have been devoted exclusively to French topics, but in recent years the journal has attempted to devote some of its longer essays to educational topics outside France, almost all dealing with compilations of some kind. Thus, volumes of the *Oxford History of Universities*, B.E. McClelland and

W.J. Reese's edited *The Social History of American Education*, and Daniel Resnick's *Literacy in Historical Perspective* have been reviewed. One might expect some attention to Quebec's educational history if only because of the commonality of language. Nadia Fahmy-Eid and Micheline Dumont's *Maîtresses de maison, maîtresses d'école: Femmes, famille et éducation dans l'histoire du Québec* has received unique attention. Authors might consider contacting the editor, M. Caspard, about his interest in arranging for reviews of their books, but I would not recommend sending books on speculation.

From small beginnings *Histoire de l'éducation* has become an essential journal for the history of French education. If it remains conceived as an organ for French historians and has not reached its objective of encompassing comparative history except in its bibliography, which is the best of its kind, its quality has steadily improved and its horizons widened. The bibliography reflects an interest in related topics like the family, childhood, religion, and popular culture. However, North American historians generally relate these topics to education better than the French have, save for interdisciplinary scholars like Dominique Julia. *Histoire de l'éducation* has yet to publish an article that employs quantitative techniques. Some of the Positivist aura of traditional French historiography still surrounds the journal. Subscriptions and past issues are available for 118 francs annually from the Institut national de recherche pédagogique (INRP), 29, rue d'Ulm, 75230 Paris, France, Cedex 05.

## NOTES

1. This information is compiled from figures given in the first issue of January (1979), a report in the May 1984 issue, a note by the editor of *Histoire de l'éducation* in *French Historical Studies* (Spring 1989), and a computer search of serial titles in North American libraries. *Histoire de l'éducation* claimed sixteen subscriptions to Canada in 1984 but a CUSS search reveals only seven holdings in 1990.
2. See Francoise Mayeur, "Recent Views on the History of Education in France," *European History Quarterly* 14 (Jan. 1984): 93-101. Mayeur is an expert on women's education and author of the volume concerning the nineteenth century in the multi-volume *L'éducation en France* (Paris, 1984).
3. Patrick J. Harrigan, "Historians and Compilers Joined: The Historiography of the 1970s and French Enquêtes of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Making of Frenchmen: Current Directions in the History of Education in France, 1679-1979*, ed. Donald N. Baker and Patrick J. Harrigan (Waterloo, Ontario, 1980), 3-22.