

The distinction between basic and applied studies points to a theory-practice gap that worried the research community from its beginnings.¹⁵ Educational research to the mid-1980s was approached primarily through quantitative investigation. This does not imply that qualitative studies lacked legitimacy, but that their various methodologies did not readily measure up to "scientific and objective" quantitative traditions.¹⁶ There is little evidence of a shift from one approach to the other. Educational research retained quantitative and qualitative characteristics, as if these were necessarily complementary perspectives.

IMPLICATIONS

Did the gradual decline in the number of non-university authors signify a narrowing of the *Journal's* and the community's interests, or was the continuing high participation of university scholars a "circling of the wagons" as individual interests and power played out against competing groups in times of academic restructuring and financial constraint? And does the growth of the *Journal* show that educational research has become a cooperative endeavour among local, provincial, federal and international institutions? Does research depend not only on their financial assistance, but, also on the character of their political interests in educational research and editorial policy?

CONCLUSION

We could do with more work on the differential evolution of Canada's decentralized research communities. One way to begin that work might involve comparisons of the *Journal* with other periodicals, such as *Interchange* (which first appeared in 1970) or the *Canadian Journal of Education* (which made its debut in 1976). These publications, analyzed under systematic and logically consistent standards, may suggest markers for deciding how educational research moves forward (or sideways) in Canada. It may not be entirely far-fetched to say that in the Canadian educational community the periodical has served not only as the messenger but the message.

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¹⁵Compare H. Baker, "Editorial," *Journal* 2, 3 (1956): 133; W. Worth, "The Editor's Page," *Journal* 1, 1 (1985): 1.

¹⁶Compare John K. Smith, *After the Demise of Empiricism: The Problem of Judging Social and Educational Inquiry* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1993): 9-12.

Towards a History of Educational Research in Canada: Content Analysis of the *AJER*

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Since its inception in 1955, *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research* (hereafter, the *Journal*) has acquired a wide circulation, notably publishing research from outside the scholarly community in the Canadian west. Whether this eclectically-minded *Journal* was or is on the "cutting edge" of educational research is a matter for debate. But recognition by independent and anonymous assessors as a journal of high quality makes it a worthy candidate for study and analysis.

FOUNDING IMAGES

The cultural climate in education in the mid-1950s accounts in part for the formation of what eventually became known as the Alberta Advisory Committee on Educational Research,¹ along with institutional support from the University of Alberta's Dean H. Smith of the Faculty of Education, Gordon Dunlop, head of the Division of Educational Psychology, and others. Besides fostering educational inquiry, the Committee was to "encourage the publication of research findings" and to promote cooperation among researchers—hence the founding of the *Journal*.² In the view of University President Andrew Stewart, the notion of research as "the application of disciplined intellectual curiosity" was directly pertinent to the teaching profession.³ Of 20 manuscripts about research in the *Journal's* inaugural volume, all but one (an historical piece) were grounded in psychology and sociology. Subjects ranged from teaching of school children to adult education and the teaching profession itself. Methodology leaned heavily on empirical and quantitative devices, coloured by utilitarian themes and the theoretical work of American scholars.

¹S. Clarke, *The Development of the Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies, 1954–1984* (Edmonton: Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies, 1986), 5–6.

²*Ibid.*, 66.

³"Research in the University," *Journal* 1, 1 (1955): 3–4. Compare G. Buck, "Herbert T. Coultts and the Origins, Early Development, and Possible Future Directions of *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*," *Journal* 40, 1 (1994): 3–6, and N. Hersom, "Twenty-five Years of Research in Education: *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 1955–1979*," *Journal* 26, 4 (1980): 262–75.

THE PURSUIT OF COMMITMENT

By 1965 editor G. Eastwood, noting the *Journal's* continuing emphasis on empirical studies, appealed for more philosophical, historical, and other forms of "systematic enquiry," theoretical and practical.⁴ Still, research reporting continued as before, following the standard sequence of "organization of problem," "literature review," "findings," and "interpretation." University professors and recent graduates were the usual authors, and their writings inclined to the empiricism then prevalent. Although most manuscripts tackled education in Alberta, writers were no longer exclusively from the province, echoing Smith's earlier call for contributions from outside its borders.⁵

Two editorial policy developments at this time are of particular interest. The first was the formal designation of an Editorial Board, comprising reviewers from the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta—a major step in professionalization of the *Journal*.⁶ The second, under the aegis of Dean Coutts, was a policy of appointing editors from different academic departments in the Faculty on a rotational basis.⁷ In principle the continual infusion of fresh ideas into the *Journal* recognized a variety of disciplinary orientations.

THE JOURNAL IN TRANSITION

By the mid-seventies the *Journal* was established as a national and international forum for educational research whose editors encouraged submissions from a growing research community in faculties and institutes of education from Canada and abroad. The manuscripts embraced not only the quantitative orientation of most investigations, but qualitative studies (which, to a lesser degree, had appeared in the *Journal* since its inception). This development illustrated the persistent influence of American practice in educational research.

This observation—derived from a bibliographic count of the place of publication of all references cited in manuscripts published in every decennial volume—does not mean Canadian input was restricted to authorship, as many articles had Canadian subjects and illustrations. An international advisory panel of editors was established, also on a rotating basis, to encourage new interpretations of educational research.⁸ With scholars from the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, Australia, and Canada, the panel greatly enhanced the *Journal's* influence as a

⁴G. Eastwood, "Editorial Comment," *Journal* 12, 1 (1966): 3-5.; Minutes of the Editorial Subcommittee, 11 February 1966.

⁵"The Editorial Committee for the Alberta Journal of Educational Research," *Journal*, A7:1 (1965): 67.

⁶"Editorial Board," *Journal* 12, 3 (1966): inside cover.

⁷Letter of Coutts to McLeish, 12 January 1972.

⁸Letter of Hodysh to Worth, 9 March 1978.

refereed periodical.⁹ This development, supplemented by the introduction of "Perspectives" and "Essay Reviews," and later with "Research Notes" and "Rejoinders," encouraged an exchange of views among members of the community. During the 1990s the *Journal's* eclecticism helped ensure diversity of perspective,¹⁰ as qualitative research growing out of new work in the social sciences and humanities¹¹ reinforced a shift of emphasis that dated back to the early 1980s.

PATTERNS

Over the *Journal's* four decades of development, intellectual traditions and images of research were increasingly representative of work done in universities. In its first (1955) volume, only 37% (10 of 27) of *Journal* authors were affiliated with a university; by 1997, the figure was 87% (24 of 27). The participation of teachers, principals, and superintendents diminished over the next three decades. Although most researchers resided in Alberta, by 1975 the foundation of new education faculties and institutes offered a wider pool of authors (see figure 1).

Only about 13% of authors were female in 1955. After 1965 the proportion of female authors rose by 1995 to 36%. Of 16 individuals who rotated to the editorship from faculty departments, three of four females took office only after 1994.

The categories of research articles accepted for publication deserve remark, including as they do basic and applied research, and quantitative and qualitative research. Although there can be no clear-cut distinction between the latter categories, a general pattern appears (see figure 2).

The number of applied research papers always surpassed the number of "basic" research manuscripts published in any given volume, with the single exception of a special 1995 issue including generally theoretical papers on the "bell curve." Before 1986, quantitative research dominated; by 1997 the majority of papers offered qualitative research.

The *Journal's* research can be analysed according to psychological, sociological, historical, philosophical, administrative and curriculum, and instruction areas of inquiry. In the *Journal's* five decennial volumes, psychological investigations prevailed with 55 published manuscripts, followed by 41 in curriculum and instruction, 24 in the sociological domain, 18 in administration, and 5 each in the historical and philosophical areas. (Again, these distinctions are rarely absolute, as papers may span more than one area of study.¹²)

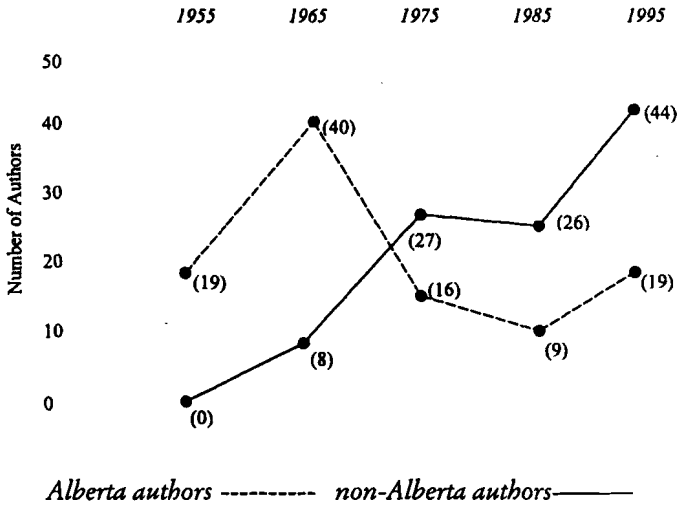
⁹Henry W. Hodysh, "The Alberta Journal of Education Research and Consulting Editors," *Journal* 24 (1978): 221-2.

¹⁰See J. Cameron, "Editorial: AJER Forty Years," *Journal* 40:1 (1994): 1-2.

¹¹See Tony Becher, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines* (Bristol, PA: Society for Research into Higher Education, Open University Press, 1989).

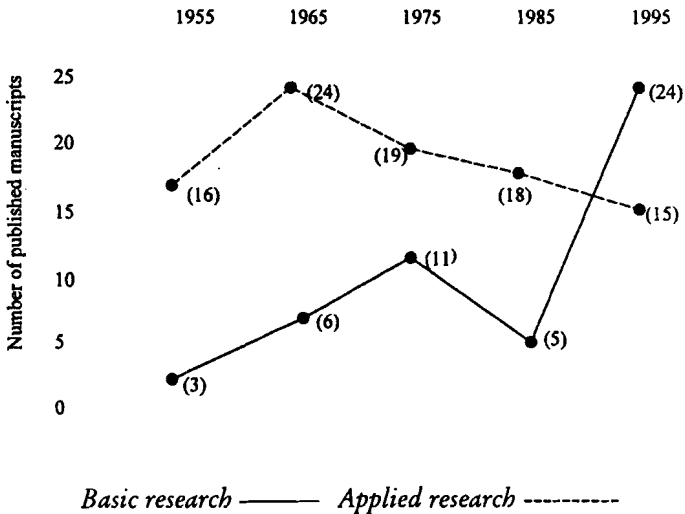
¹²Compare W. Russell, "Educational R & D and the 1980's," *Educational Researcher* 9, 1 (1980): 6.

FIGURE 1
NUMBER OF ALBERTA AND NON-ALBERTA AUTHORS
IN EACH DECENNIAL VOLUME



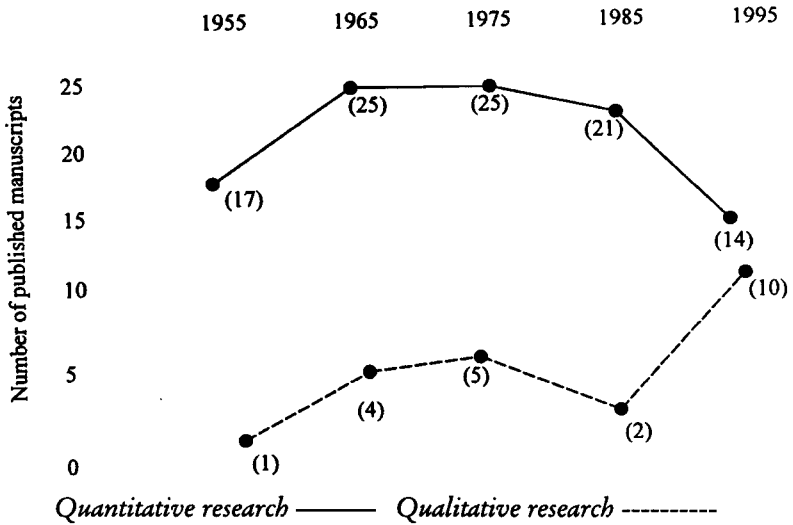
Alberta authors ----- non-Alberta authors——
The representation of authors or manuscripts in all graphs is expressed in numbers in lieu of percentages in order to identify their actual total.

FIGURE 2
BASIC AND APPLIED RESEARCH



Basic research —— Applied research -----

FIGURE 3
QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE STUDIES



Bibliographic counts by place of publication of references cited by researchers suggests the changing profile of the *Journal's* research community. In 1955, for example, 64% of references were to work published in the United States. This percentage rose over the next three decades, from 71% in 1965 to 78% in 1975, dropping slightly to 77% in 1985 and 73% in 1995. By comparison, the percentage of Canadian-referenced publications in all manuscripts was 31% in 1955, 16% in 1965, 11% in 1975, 15% in 1985, and 17% in 1995.

In 1955-75, most Canadian references were to documents published in Alberta. By 1985, references to British Columbia and Ontario were common.

Over all four decades, citations from Great Britain, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand remained less frequent than those from Canada. Although these numbers do not show the *source* of ideas, they suggest an important influence on their dissemination and control by publishers and editors in the United States¹³—an outcome of Canada's geographic and intellectual proximity to the United States and its all-pervading cultural and educational influence.¹⁴ Although Canadian researchers interacted with counterparts in Australia, Europe and Great Britain, Americans figured as primary authorities. American influence was tempered by Canada's rapid economic growth and urbanization, and consequent educational demand for applied, rather than "basic" educational research.

¹³See Gillian Page, Robert Campbell & Jack Meadows, *Journal Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 9-11.

¹⁴S. Clarke, "Report on Carnegie Travel Grant. Educational research." Edmonton: Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, 1957 (unpublished).