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**From "La Plume de Ma Tante" to "Parlez-Vous Français?"  
The Making of French Language Policy in  
British Columbia, 1945-1982**

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**Introduction**

During the first half of the twentieth century, French language instruction in British Columbia and the rest of the world focused primarily on reading and writing, with particular emphasis on developing students' skills in grammar and translation (Stern, 1986). Foreign languages, according to the logic of the time, were for reading and writing—not for communicating orally. Parisian French, rather than dialects used in Quebec and other parts of the country, provided the universal linguistic standard for instruction. Students learned by rote and, decades later, few could recall little else but hackneyed interrogatives such as "Où est la plume de ma tante?"

By 1981, when education minister Brian Smith, committed the British Columbia government to multicultural education, the study of French language had shifted decisively toward oral communication using Québécois as the linguistic benchmark. With this change, "Parlez-vous français?" was transformed from a formal schoolroom question to a cultural and linguistic imperative given life by a new generation of British Columbians who clamored for French language instruction on their children's behalf. In many instances, the public's interest in French was considerably less educational and more political and economic in nature. By the 1980s, fluency in French had become popularly accepted as a new employment credential that promised access to federal jobs, as well as opportunities for professional mobility historically beyond the reach of many British Columbians.

Prompted by the results of Smith's "one-man" 1980 educational tour de force across the province, the Social Credit(1) government of the day issued a comprehensive language policy(2) that specified the contents of "core" French, as well as programme-cadre de français and French immersion programs(3) (Province of B. C., 1981). Smith's report also prompted provincial authorities to produce assorted resource books for French instruction in secondary schools, as well as for programme-cadre and immersion programs.

Born in a decade otherwise marked by tremendous educational upheaval in Canada's westernmost province, this government initiative has proven over time to be enormously successful. A recent newspaper article proclaimed the continuing popularity of French instruction in British Columbia under the banner, "B. C. Leads the Country in French Immersion Programs." (Vancouver Sun, December 8, 2003). In reporting that the province had "bucked a national trend" which witnessed public school enrolments and enrolments in French immersion programs dropping or stagnating across the country, the article announced with more than a tinge of self-satisfaction that British Columbia had enjoyed "a fourth year of record enrolments," involving more than 33,000 youngsters in 43 of the province's 60 school districts.

The following historical discussion chronicles the story of this success from 1945, when language instruction was first modernized, to passage of the Constitution Act in 1982 that enshrined minority language educational rights(4). This discussion illustrates how a province that had "not quite relinquished its old aspiration to be an Empire," (Ormsby, 1958, p. 494) in fact a province "more English than the English" (Reksten, 1986) in many of its social affectations, came to embrace educational bilingualism in its public schools. Using government records, published reports, personal papers, as well as various secondary sources, this analysis will examine how disparate social, educational, and political forces coalesced to convince provincial authorities?never known for their ultramontanist sentiments?to advocate French language study in symbolic support for a federalist view of Canada then deemed to be at risk.

Beyond its value as an educational narrative, the reconstruction of French language policy in British Columbia should be of particular interest to educational administrators and policymakers because it illustrates how governments actually develop social and educational policies, how social environments act on institutions, and how the agenda for public education is sometimes transformed in places far from schools and even farther from the offices of those who govern and administer them.

**Revising Foreign Language Instruction**

The character of modern language instruction in Canada was conditioned considerably by the events of World War II and the "Cold War" that followed (Stevens, 1972). Hostilities in Europe and the Pacific greatly enlarged the international responsibilities of the United States and Canada and prompted new demands to train English-speaking armed forces personnel and diplomats, as well as professional and business people, in other languages. The exigencies of a politically turbulent postwar world, along with the challenges of rebuilding European and Asian economies, necessitated a day-to-day fluency in foreign languages rarely obtained through traditional teaching methods.

Signs of a new approach to language instruction first surfaced between 1941 and 1945 when American army language trainers pioneered "intensive study" programs that produced far higher fluency levels than conventional means of instruction commonly found in North American classrooms (Stevens, 1972). Emphasis on oral language fluency continued after the war,

spurred in large part by the efforts of western governments, particularly the United States and Great Britain, to manage massive refugee migration and resettlement in war-ravaged Europe. Greatly enlarged post-war opportunities for trade, travel, and cultural exchange, as well as the competition of "Cold War" politics, also underscored the need for English-speaking government and business representatives to learn new languages and to understand other cultures in far-flung corners of the world. In addition, colonialism's demise after 1945 produced an array of new independent nation states and led the newly-formed United Nations and its sub-organizations (such as UNESCO) to grant official status to a multitude of Asian and African languages (UNESCO, 1955). By the 1960s, such developments awakened public and academic interests in the prospect of applying new and sometimes revolutionary approaches to the way languages were taught in schools and universities (Stern, 1986).

### **The Official Languages Act**

This new movement in modern languages, however, was not fully felt in Canada until the early 1970s after passage of the 1969 *Official Languages Act*(5). Precedents for this bold kind of legislation--which represented a defining moment in Canadian history--could be traced back to the 1930s when the Dominion Government first embarked upon a more active role for the state in Canadian private life. Dominion Government initiatives to provide "social relief" in the depression marked the beginning of an increasing federal presence variously manifested in the 1940s through greater powers of taxation and, in the 1950s and 1960s, through provision of family allowance stipends, Canada pension programs, unemployment insurance, and universal medical coverage. Although the emergence of a federally-sponsored welfare state trespassed on constitutionally-protected provincial domains in health, welfare, culture, and education, some provinces--including British Columbia--mostly welcomed such incursions as long as Ottawa underwrote the programmatic costs(6). As UBC historian Jean Barman explained, movement toward a larger federal presence, especially after 1945, "reflected a growing public opinion that the state must provide for those unable to provide for themselves" (Barman, 1995, p. 297).

The language issue was somewhat more complicated than the federal sponsorship of social welfare provisions. After two centuries of settlement, Canada remained culturally and linguistically partitioned into French and English enclaves, or "the two solitudes," to borrow the title of Hugh McLellan's influential 1945 book. Premier Maurice Duplessis' death in 1959, however, signaled the end of the old order in Quebec and ignited a new and more explosive era in federal-provincial relations. Spurred on by André Laurendeau's editorials in the influential newspaper, *Le Devoir*, Quebec's intellectual elite began advocating for a royal commission inquiry to assess the "participation of French Canadians in the Confederation, and, in particular, in the federal civil service and related government agencies" (Granatstein et al. 1986; National Archives of Canada, 1999; Riendeau, 2000). Laurendeau's editorials galvanized nationalist sentiments in a province ripe for social change and persuaded Lester Pearson, then federal opposition leader, to reconsider Quebec's role in Canada(7).

When the Liberal Government came to power in 1963, Pearson, now prime minister, appointed a royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism popularly known as "the B and B Commission," and charged it with defining the steps that "should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races" (Government of Canada, 1967).. In its first report of 1967, the commission recommended that all Canadians should enjoy the right to communicate either in English or French when dealing with the federal civil service(8). The following year when Pierre Trudeau, Canada's bilingual, bicultural Justice Minister from Quebec, was elected prime minister, he introduced the Official Languages Act (1969) in parliament, which stipulated that English and French-speaking Canadians would enjoy equal status in the federal civil service, crown agencies, and federal courts.

### **"A Happy and Useful Experience"**

Long aggrieved over alleged trade and tariff inequities, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan refused at first to recognize the status of French as an "official language" (Victoria Daily Times, 1971; Vancouver Sun, 1971, 1983; The Province, 1974). In a celebrated case, the federal transport ministry advised its tenants at B.C.'s Victoria International Airport to comply with the Official Languages Act by providing services in French when requested. This directive provoked an enormous public outcry when it was discovered that many airport workers were unable to comply with new federal requirements. Despite "various amounts of high school French," staff had "no speaking ability" in what was now the country's second official language (The Province, 1974, p. 29).

Historically, French study in British Columbia schools could be traced back to 1876 when the province's first high school, Victoria High, the only institution for "higher learning" west of the Ontario border, opened its doors. Along with Greek language and Greek history, aspiring scholars in the newly-confederated province could choose French as an "optional" subject of study (Johnson, 1964, pp. 60-61). By 1906, when pressures mounted to modernize the imprint of the classical "Ontario version of the English grammar school," commercially-minded students were excused from completing language courses in Latin, Greek or French. Nevertheless, during the first half of the twentieth century, French study remained a fixture for the small band of university-bound students in British Columbia's elite secondary schools. In support of these high school courses, revisions to French-language curricula were made in the early 1930s and, again, in the years immediately after World War II under the direction of Edith Lucas, a former Prince Rupert high school principal and long-time director of the province's correspondence education branch, who had earned a Ph. D. in French language and literature at the Sorbonne in Paris. By 1960, when Sperrin Chant published his royal commission report on the state of provincial schooling, French language instruction continued to hold its age-old position in the curriculum as the preferred "foreign" language for high school students intending to enter university (Government of British Columbia, 1960).

It was within this educational context that British Columbia enthusiastically agreed in 1964 to the federal Secretary of State's

cultural exchange program, the "Young Voyageur Program," as a means of enhancing Canadian unity<sup>(9)</sup>. British Columbia likewise agreed in 1971 to become "a participating province" in the federal government's summer bursary program "for immersion study of the Second Official Language" (Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1971-72, D53). However, there were limits to the province's willingness to cooperate with the federal government in language matters. When the Secretary of State offered funds for "minority language education or second language education" to the province's public schools in 1971, W. A. C. Bennett's Social Credit government, a government known for its advocacy of fiscal prudence and social conservatism, proved less accommodating. Acting in response to an application by the Coquitlam Parent-Teacher Association for a \$600,000 grant to support French language programs, the provincial Department of Education refused to support the application, claiming it would extend federal influence into what was properly a provincial realm<sup>(10)</sup>. The British Columbia government's logic was consistent in this regard. Both the "Young Voyageur" and bursary programs were offered in the summer months and outside the jurisdiction of public schooling. As such, they did not represent an encroachment upon British Columbia's constitutional jurisdiction over public education. Funding for language instruction inside the public schools, however, was quite another matter and was refused by provincial authorities on the basis that it trespassed into what was historically a provincial domain.

But governments and official positions change. Election of Dave Barrett's socially-progressive New Democratic Party (NDP) <sup>(11)</sup> in British Columbia in 1972 brought a new government and a new view of language policy. Barrett's education minister, Eileen Dailly, a former Burnaby teacher, school board member, and outspoken opponent of the educational status quo, quickly endorsed federal funding for French instruction, thereby opening the doors to greater federal involvement in British Columbia's schools in the decade that lay ahead. In the legislature's first sitting, Dailly castigated the defeated Social Credit government for their reluctance to accept federal funding for French, describing such actions as "shameful." "I'm sure that everyone in this room," she observed, "particularly those who are parents and have seen their children struggle through some of our language programs, would want to see all our children develop facility in languages—particularly in our second official language" (Debates of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, 14 February, 1973, p. 427).

Under Dailly's close direction, the provincial education department hastened its efforts to teach French in 1973 with "emphasis on its conversational aspect" (Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1972-73, p. E10) by allocating money for the purchase of audio-visual materials, workshops, and an exchange program involving 25 French-speaking teachers from British Columbia and 25 English-speaking teachers from Quebec. The newly-reconstituted and renamed British Columbia Ministry of Education increased its support in 1974 for French language programs, workshops, and conferences. The Ministry's Annual Report of the Public Schools, 1974-1975 noted that "a remarkable 100 per cent increase occurred in this area of Special Projects Grants with the amount of \$900,000 being awarded in this [French] Program" (p. 21). By 1975, Canada's Pacific province was distributing \$1,048,700 for French language grants to 62 school districts and, by 1976, this figure had climbed to \$1,670,000 for 69 of the province's 75 districts.

On the national stage, federal authorities sought to promote the ambitious two-language policy with an open chequebook. In 1971, the Secretary of State's office moved to secure provincial collaboration in language matters by making increased levels of funding available to the provinces for language instruction. In 1972, Secretary of State Gerard Pelletier proposed that the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) co-ordinate a federal-provincial committee on language research. Two years later, in 1974, the CMEC announced that two series of 10 radio programs would be produced, one in particular promoting the cultural life of French Canada<sup>(12)</sup>. By March 1974, a new federal-provincial agreement on funding minority language programs in elementary and secondary schools had been negotiated for the next five years. Under this agreement, the federal government agreed to pay \$80 million for an instructional program aimed at increasing numbers of francophone youngsters learning English and anglophone students learning French (B.C. Archives, 1561)<sup>(13)</sup>.

In March 1975, the Secretary of State's office also moved to involve Canada's academic community in promoting the nation's "two-language" policy by underwriting a "Federal-Provincial Conference on Bilingualism in Education" at Victoria's stately Empress Hotel, a stone's throw from British Columbia's provincial legislature<sup>(14)</sup>. In his opening remarks, Peter Roberts, Assistant Under-Secretary of State, outlined a constellation of supports the federal government were prepared to offer provincial institutions and those who worked in them, including funding for special projects, support for training centres, along with bursaries and language-study fellowships (B.C. Archives, 1561). Nine months later, on December 17, 1975, Official Languages Commissioner, Keith Spicer, followed up the conference's agenda by presenting the provinces with a teaching kit called "Oh! Canada" which was intended to "help make second language learning a happy and useful experience" (B.C. Archives, G81-056). Spicer went even further in promoting French instruction the following year. He urged Social Credit education minister Pat McGeer, a provincial Liberal who had crossed the floor of the legislature to join the Social Credit Party when the Liberal Party collapsed in 1975, to "create a climate in Canada for viewing languages as a resource and as an opportunity rather than an obstacle to understanding." (B. C. Archives, G81-056). Such an initiative, Spicer surmised, "could prove of crucial timeliness and of fundamental advantage to our youth and our country." (B.C. Archives G81-056)

Buoyed by federal assistance, funding to the province for French language instruction rose from just over \$1.5 million to \$2,193,528 in 1977. Along with this increase, bursaries totaling \$321,224 were also awarded to second-language teachers and a further \$1,395,733 was targeted for 35 different projects to be carried out in British Columbia 75 school districts. These projects included the "continuation of the pilot project of two four-week French Immersion programmes for 80 grade 10 and 11 students." (Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1977-78, p. 21). Although the province had offered limited facilities for immersion classes—enrolling 83 students at the primary level—since 1971, it had yet to provide immersion programs at the secondary level and had made little effort to offer French instruction to students whose mother tongue was French (Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1972-73, p. E10).

But political events outside British Columbia soon intensified the national landscape of bilingual discussion and made the province considerably more receptive toward enlarging its provisions for educational opportunities in French. Chief among

these events was the November 1976 Quebec election of René Levesque and the separatist-minded Parti Québécois (PQ). Levesque, a long-time advocate of political and cultural autonomy for Quebec, advocated a policy of "sovereignty association" that would grant the province political sovereignty over domestic and foreign affairs but that would still enable it to maintain its economic association with Canada. More than any other event, Levesque's election in Quebec symbolically underscored the urgency associated with resolving the place of French language instruction in the rest of Canada and, particularly, in British Columbia where French-speaking Canadians were fewest in number.

In the provincial legislature, Liberal MLA and federalist advocate Gordon Gibson strenuously expressed his concern over Levesque's election and urged the recently-elected Premier Bill Bennett, along with the new Social Credit government, to act decisively in the cause of Canadian unity. In his January 1977 legislative address, Gibson cautioned "if it is possible for anyone to convince the citizens [of Quebec] they should leave Confederation, it is this man, René Levesque." Moreover, Gibson advised: "I hope the Premier's mind has come around to this way of thinking now, and that he will tell this House that separatism is an important problem and propose what British Columbia can do to help keep our country together." (Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 18 January, 1977, p. 80).

### **No Longer "A World in Itself"**

Despite British Columbia's historical inclination to remain "a world in itself" (Ormsby, 1958, p. 494), provincial support for the federalist cause in general and for French language, in particular, quickly gathered. British Columbia parents were especially enthusiastic in their advocacy of French instruction, chiefly for their own special reasons. Newspaper editorials screamed that parents were "wild about French" and fearful their children would be "left behind in a modern world with only one language." (The Province, 5 May 1977, p. 2). Some parents went so far as to recommend that the province include French as a mandatory subject in the province's newly-established and hotly-debated "core curriculum." Even Prime Minister Trudeau joined the provincial debate by reportedly claiming that, without instruction in the French language, British Columbia would deny its citizens the opportunity to work in the federal civil service or in crown corporations where bilingualism was entrenched as a condition of employment. More than this, Trudeau proclaimed that in learning a second language Canadians honoured their "obligation to make a contribution to the preservation of a united Canada." (The Province, 5 May, 1977, p. 2).

Support for French language instruction was also manifest inside British Columbia's influential educational civil service<sup>(15)</sup>. Deputy minister of education Walter Hardwick informed education minister Pat McGeer in May, 1977 that "the chemistry of the debate with respect to French language appears to have changed" (B.C. Archives, G81-056). Hardwick thereupon recommended that the provincial government formally draft a French language policy and, then, submit it to the Secretary of State for financial assistance—regardless of the fact that in British Columbia "only 1.7% of the population [spoke] French as a mother tongue and only .5% [used] it as the language of the home" (B.C. Archives, G81-056).

Cognizant of this positive public sentiment, and struck by the importance of the larger national unity issue, McGeer issued a press release on July 19, 1977, inviting British Columbia's largest school districts to establish French immersion programs for "secondary school students wishing to become fluently bilingual" (B.C. Archives, G81-056). Such programs, McGeer reasoned, would help "B. C. residents find their place on the national scene and be linguistically equipped to make that great federal contribution" required of them "in the future." (Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 20 July, 1977, p. 3859). On July 28, 1977, McGeer instructed Hardwick to craft a background paper outlining a French language policy that would address, at least in British Columbia, Levesque's demand for guaranteed access to French language education for Francophones across the country. (New Westminster Columbian, 30 July, 1977, p. 1).

And, so, bolstered by public support—and the advice of its own civil service—the British Columbia government signed on to promote national unity through French language instruction. On August 4, 1977, McGeer presented cabinet with a three-page "French Language Policy" which recommended "British Columbia declare that French language instruction is prescribed as part of the provincial education curriculum" (B.C. Archives, G81-056). Nine days later, Premier Bennett outlined a new "core curriculum" offering French instruction in grades 1 to 12 wherever requested by "more than 10 and up to 25 students in a class in any school district" (The Vancouver Sun, 13 August, 1977, p. 2; B.C. Archives, G81-056; Education Today, 1977, p. 1). Bennett brought this proposal to the Annual Premiers' Conference in St. Andrews, New Brunswick where, on August 18th, the provincial premiers jointly issued a "Statement of Language" which declared policies and programs adopted by each province and promised to provide educational instruction in English or French where numbers warranted, as well as to review the state of minority education in each province (B.C. Archives, G81-056). Three days later, on August 21, 1977, Les Canty, a senior advisor in British Columbia's educational civil service, informed McGeer that Vancouver's French language channel was televising a series of programs that could be used in French immersion classes. (B.C. Archives, G81-056; Education Today, December, 1977, p. 2). To publicize ministry support for the project, the CMEC requested McGeer to sign an introductory letter in the teachers' kits prepared by the Provincial Educational Media Centre (PEMC). Despite British Columbia's across-the-board compliance with federal requests, and the province's obvious willingness to embrace French language instruction, Quebec was not deterred from passing its controversial "Charter of the French Language"—Bill 101—on August 26, 1977 (Granatstein et al., 1986, p.403; Riendeau, 2000, p. 274). Its passage into law meant all Quebec children were obliged to attend a French school, except for those with one or more parents who had attended an English primary school in the province. However, even Quebec's controversial language law failed to deter British Columbia's educational authorities from advancing their French language initiatives. On January 13, 1978, the ministry's John Ewing announced a study "to evaluate the demand for elementary school education in French" (B.C. Archives, G81-056). Three days later, the CEMC met in Victoria and agreed to compile a report on the state of French and English minority language education by February 1, that year. At the same time, the provincial government also vouchsafed its willingness to fund the preparation of teaching materials for the 500 students in 14 districts who were expected to enroll in the programme-cadre de français (Education Today, January 1978, p. 1). In addition to funding and preparing materials for the programme-cadre, the

provincial ministry increased French language funding over the year, distributing \$1,247,310 for French language support among 72 school districts. An extra \$1,732,816 was budgeted for 42 special projects involving districts and colleges. French immersion participation jumped by more than 50 percent from 1,256 students in 1977-78, to 1,978 the following year. (Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1978-79, p. 27).

Programme-cadre soon became the focus of the British Columbia education ministry's efforts. Responsibility for the development of curricular materials was contracted to Nick Ardanaz, formerly a second language programme co-ordinator for the Baldwin-Cartier School Board in Quebec (16). By September 1978, Ardanaz was appointed director of the newly-formed French Language Services Branch (B.C. Archives, G81-056). In September 1979, approximately 230 students enrolled in the programme-cadre de français. That same year, enrollment in early immersion programs jumped to 3,088—an increase of 1,100 students over the previous year—and 103 students in four other districts enrolled in "late immersion" programs that catered to students in grade 6 (Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1979-80, p. 28). Ministerial resource teams produced resource books for elementary French as a second language (FSL) teachers, as well as reading and literature guides. Additional resources were developed with the French "Idea Box" produced in October 1979 and distributed to all district FSL co-ordinators. (Education Today, October, 1979, p. 3). By the time education minister Brian Smith finalized B.C.'s French language policy in June 1981 (17), programme-cadre enrollment had climbed to 659, registration in immersion programs was nearly 5,000 students, and more than 200,000 British Columbia youngsters were studying French as part of their regular school program (Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1980-81, p. 29).

Despite such apparent gains, French language promoters continued to lobby for the further expansion of programs and services. They did this in several ways. One was writing to government ministers or to ministries directly. McGeer's files, for example, contain approximately 40 letters from organizations and individuals requesting money and services, or offering expertise to draft language curricula during the 1976-1979 period. Another strategy was to involve government officials in community meetings or other activities. La société francophone de Victoria, for instance, convened a public meeting in October 1978 on implementing French language instruction in schools, inviting McGeer along with French program co-ordinators in the Victoria, Sooke and Saanich districts, University of Victoria and Camosun College instructors, as well as the Directrice of Victoria's French language Ecole Brodeur and Victoria School Trustees (B.C. Archives, G81-056) (18). Such events were planned to keep the ministry's "feet to the fire" by ensuring that key educational figures continued to commit themselves publicly to the French language cause. La société francophone, incidentally, had received federal support from both the Secretary of State's office and the Arts Council.

But McGeer and the government's support of French did not go entirely unchallenged even within Social Credit party ranks. Backbencher Jack Heinrich, Social Credit MLA for the rural community of Prince George North and, later, education minister, informed McGeer in 1979 of his opposition to French language instruction. Although some parents in Heinrich's riding were "desirous of taking advantage of a program permitting instruction in the French Language" (B.C. Archives, G81-056), Heinrich obstructed the process by refusing to convey the parent group's request to the education ministry on the grounds that existing provincial funding failed to cover basic transportation costs for regular English-speaking students. Never afraid to court publicity, Heinrich added that government's policy regarding French was "questionable." Programs designed to appeal to special-interest groups, although politically understandable, "obviously cause[d] a great deal of grief for rural MLA's," he explained (B.C. Archives, G81-056). Such sparse opposition did little, however, to slow the rapid expansion of French-language instruction province wide, or to temper the province's strong commitment to a bilingual policy.

### Stories Within Stories

The history of British Columbia's French language policy is important for what it reveals in several respects. First and foremost, it illustrates the overall effectiveness of a well-funded federal campaign to persuade British Columbians about the economic advantages and political necessity of bilingualism. The "fear factor" generated by Levesque's actions and utterances no doubt assisted greatly in this regard after 1976. But even more than this, the idea of French language instruction had won the hearts and minds of provincial parents whose hopes of upward mobility for their children made them receptive to a broader platform for learning French in provincial schools. Additionally, the promise of "French language for all" satisfied the highest historical dreams of equity espoused by nineteenth-century advocates of common schooling. Even the most elite of school subjects was finally within the grasp of everyman's child.

Good organization on the part of lobby groups, too, played an instrumental role both in the beginning and in the continuing success of French language programs in British Columbia. As Stanford historians David Tyack and Larry Cuban argue, several conditions are essential for educational reforms to "stick." One is that new programs produce "influential constituencies interested in seeing them continue" (Tyack & Cuban, p. 57). Certainly this was the case in British Columbia where the federally-sponsored "Canadian Parents for French" has proven to be enormously effective in mobilizing likeminded advocates for French (O'Reilly, 1995).

Success, of course, breeds success. Since the 1980s, research and test results have demonstrated that youngsters registered in French immersion programs tend to outperform or fare at least as well as those who are not (Mannavarayan, 2001). In British Columbia, the education ministry reports test results according to enrolment categories such as English as a Second Language, aboriginal education and immersion programs. Not surprisingly, parents continue to be drawn to immersion classes partly because their academic performance outshines other programs (19). Vancouver Sun columnist Janet Steffenhagen suggests that British Columbia now leads the country in French immersion enrolment because provincial parents, in large part, want a competitive advantage for their children (Vancouver Sun, December 8, 2003).

The organizational architecture of educational change has also played a part in the success of this policy. Because developments such as French language programs merely constitute "structural add-ons," again to borrow from Tyack and Cuban, they do not challenge or disturb regular school operations or what these historians term "the grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 57). This means that policy makers at federal or provincial levels can occasionally bypass consultations with teachers, principals or other local educational officials by implementing "top-down" strategies for reform. As long as these reforms or changes leave the cellular character of classroom instruction and school organization untouched, the existing system will either embrace the new program, or at least accept it, because the changes or reforms do not interfere with the structural or operational status quo. In the case of British Columbia, the new language policy was added to provincial schools without direct systemic consequences.

To be sure, the French story in British Columbia sharply questions the view that policy development represents a response to forces inside systems (cf. Taylor et al., 1997) while supporting Berkhout and Wieleman's notion that formulating policy appears to be a broader, more complex, and more integrative process often involving economic, political and social forces outside of organizations (Berkhout and Wielemans, 1999, p. 408). French language development in British Columbia indicates that policy making had little to do with actors inside the system and everything to do with the way larger social considerations outside public education came to bear on schools. Since the birth of public schooling nearly a century and a half ago, various special interests have looked to the schools for resolution of particular social problems (Delaney, 2003; Province of British Columbia, 1988). Not surprisingly, the public school's ever-expanding social mandate has resulted in the production of "policy manuals large enough to act as door stoppers" (Delaney, 2003).

Furthermore, findings from this British Columbia historical case study also challenge parts of policy literature which conceive of policy development as a "rational" process comprised of linear stages where problems are identified, where values, goals, options and objectives are defined, and where benefits, costs, and strategies are analyzed before actions are determined (Downey, 1988; Pal, 1992). Results from this historical analysis suggest that different kinds of policies, born in particular sets of historical or other circumstances, are not always rational and require different kinds of explanations. In this respect, Clemmer's analysis (1991) is useful. Clemmer has suggested that policies may be described in four ways: consequential, de facto, delegated and formal (20). From this study, it appears that development of British Columbia's language policy from 1945 to 1982 corresponds most closely with a "consequential" view of policy formulation in that it originated in forces outside schools and was influenced principally at the political level by such figures as Trudeau, Levesque, Gibson, Spicer, Dailly and McGeer. "Not all reforms are born equal," Tyack and Cuban remind us, "some enjoy strong political sponsors while others are political orphans." (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 7). In British Columbia, French language policy had several parents.

#### Endnotes

(1) British Columbia's Social Credit party is right of centre.

(2) There are many definitions of policy in the literature. For the purposes of this paper, policy is defined as "an authoritative determination, by a governing authority, of a society's intents and priorities and an authoritative allocation of resources to those intents and priorities." See John Downey, *Policy Analysis in Education*, (Calgary, AB: Detselig), 1988.

(3) "Core" French refers to the 45-60 minutes of instruction about French language that English-speaking students in B.C. receive approximately three times weekly. "Programme-cadre de français" refers to the subject area instruction in French that francophone students in B.C. receive for all subject areas five hours per day, five days per week. French immersion programmes are offered to anglophone students in B.C. beginning in kindergarten (early immersion) or grade six (late immersion). In French Immersion, anglophone students receive all of their subject area instruction in French from grades one to three, at which time English Language Arts is introduced. In each successive year, students receive more and more English language instruction until grade 12.

(4) Under the Constitution Act 1982, Citizens of Canada (a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or (b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province, have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

(5) The 1969 Official Languages Act recognized English and French as the official languages of all federal institutions in Canada. Cognizant that education fell under provincial jurisdiction, the federal government of the day stopped short of prescribing English or French language instruction in public schools.

(6) The most vocal opposition to the expansion of federal influence came from the province of Quebec. Under Premier Maurice Duplessis' leadership and that of his Union Nationale party, Quebecers insisted on maintaining strict federal and provincial divisions established under constitutional legislation, even if it meant parsimonious levels of federal government spending and reduced opportunities for economic development.

(7) Speaking before Parliament in December 1962, Pearson called for a comprehensive inquiry into equality of the French and English languages.

(8) The commission's work continued until 1971.

(9) This exchange program allowed children from one province to billet with a family in another province for approximately seven days during the summer. Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia, 1964-65, D60.

(10) News release by the Secretary of State: 9 September 1970 and Correspondence: 7 February 1972. Neither the news release nor newspaper articles regarding the story indicate whether or not the PTA consisted primarily of French parents. It is likely that some of them were, given that the francophone settlement of Maillardville was within the Coquitlam district. British Columbia Archives (BCA) Add.MSS. #1928, Box I, File 1. Files of David Barrett, NDP, leader of the opposition.

(11) British Columbia's New Democratic Party is considered left of centre.

(12) News release, 28 May, 1974. BCA G81-056. Minister of Education, 1975-1979: Files of Eileen Dailly. It seems that the files of Eileen Dailly were combined with those of McGeer. However, Dailly's files were not well labeled and were not in any apparent order. They appear randomly throughout McGeer's files.

(13) Immigrant children, who spoke neither English nor French, were deemed ineligible for federal funding if they were learning an official language for the first time.

(14) At the conference, Laval University's André Boudreau and the University of Western Ontario's Robert Gardner spoke in support of these federal language initiatives.

(15) The influence of British Columbia's educational civil service at this time is described in Thomas Fleming, "From Educational Government to the Government of Education: The Decline and Fall of the British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1972 to 1996," in *Historical Studies in Education*, Volume 15 (Autumn, 2003).

(16) Ardanaz had been a second language consultant for the Vancouver School Board from 1975 to 1976.

(17) In Smith's policy statement, early and late French immersion would be offered in districts where requested by parents of 20 or more students. The ministry of education also agreed to pay salaries, transportation, physical space, administration, library and supplementary resources for all programmes. However, the ministry stopped short of agreeing to produce curricula specifically tailored to programme-cadre and French Immersion. This initiative would not be fulfilled until the mid-1980s after the enactment of the Charter of Rights and changes to the Constitution Act, 1982, enshrined minority language educational rights in public education across the country.

(18) In 1976 alone, La société had received \$5,814 from the Secretary of State and 200 French books from the Arts Council of Canada. It held a library of over 1200 books and newspapers and claimed to sponsor social activities and festivals to promote French in Victoria. (B.C. Archives, Add. MSS. 2714).

(19) For test results see B.C. Ministry of Education website [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment).

(20) According to Clemmer, consequential policies often arise from outside forces such as provincial or state legislation. De Facto policies are often "unofficial" procedures by which employees conduct institutional procedures. Delegated policies are those that are passed "upward" through the system when administrators do not know how to proceed on a particular issue. Formal policies are those that pass through a formal process of policy formation, including public involvement, consultation of administrative recommendations and school board review.

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