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School Psychology in Canada: An evolving profession

Abstract

This inquiry focuses on (a) the character of school psychology services that are provided in this culturally complex society by 10 education-autonomous provinces and two federally dependent territories, (b) problems of service delivery occasioned by unusual economic as well as diverse demographic and geographic conditions, (c) the diversity of training and accreditation standards that obtain across political jurisdictions, (d) aspects of the way this profession interacts with other psychology-based disciplines that serve public school systems, and (e) difficulties that face the practitioner that are generated by problems intrinsic to the profession as well as to the society in which it is taking shape.

Presuppositions of This Analysis

It is difficult to assess what is happening in the profession of school psychology in Canada. The reason, as it will become clear in the following pages, is that one gets widely differing reports on the subject depending on whether one asks for information from school administrators, teachers, officials in ministries of education, or parents. More serious, one cannot be quite sure that those who work in this profession are making fine distinctions between their perceptions of what their different clients expect school psychologists to do, what they personally would prefer to be doing, what the profession "officially" indicates that its practitioners should be doing, and what indeed they actually are doing.

There is a good deal of confusion about the roles and functions of members of this profession and of the structure and modalities of its interactions with the many other professions which serve the school

systems of the country. These difficulties are compounded by widely divergent standards of training and accreditation prevailing in different provinces, and the counterclaims of other, younger disciplines that are perceived as encroaching on the domain of school psychology. The magnitude of the task that faces those of us who wish to bring greater order and coherence into a profession from which so much is expected – and demanded – is intimidating. It requires, in any event, the attention of educators (and indeed legislators) from across the country, and increasing levels of communication between them.

An effort to assess the condition of school psychology in Canada is complicated by a number of problems which need to be acknowledged at the very outset. The first and most formidable is the issue of defining the profession (compare, e.g., Bardon, 1986; Monroe, 1979; and Silverman & O'Bryan, 1977). The fact that so many practitioners who provide psychological services in the school are not in agreement about what they should be doing is evidence that in practice there is insufficient consensus on what constitutes the profession of school psychology, and which disciplines underpin it. Despite the specialty guidelines for the delivery of services by school psychologists that were crafted by the APA Committee on Standards for Providers of Psychological Services (American Psychological Association, 1981) – guidelines frequently invoked even by those who are not Americans – controversy surrounds the issue.

A second problem is that when a specialty of psychology is partially defined in terms of the setting in which it is practiced (in this case, a school), dramatic changes in the character of the setting may necessitate a reconceptualization of that specialty. When the clientele being served in these settings (say, school personnel, and students and their parents) develop needs that are significantly different in kind as well as emphasis from those which were formerly presented, one needs to ask (a) whether the training which practitioners traditionally have received has equipped them to competently meet those needs, and (b) if the disciplines which are taught in university departments of educational psychology are truly the disciplines which are implicated in these tasks. If, as is alleged (Landers, 1987), schools are being transformed into rehabilitation centres for severely emotionally disturbed children (SEDs) one might ask if it is proper to refer such children for treatment to professionals with an educational psychology background simply because it is in a school that they have been identified as SEDs.

A third problem arises from the same considerations as the preceding one. As disciplinary specialties in psychology multiply, professionals trained in these disciplines go forth to carve out a market for their services. They are not respectful in all cases of traditional territorial markers. Should they find employment in a school system, they are brought face to face not

only with a clientele which they can serve, and very often serve well, but with other psychological specialists, some of whom may be resentful of encroachments in what they perceive to be their own domain. It is not uncommon to find in an urban school district in Canada not only accredited school psychologists, but also clinical psychologists, psycho-educators, psychiatric nurses, guidance counsellors, counselling psychologists, psychometricians, and other psychology-based professionals. The potential for role confusion and function overlap where they come face to face at work is easy to imagine.

The unstandardized manner in which school systems are organized across provincial jurisdictions makes it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to present a national perspective on the organization of school psychology. This article will consequently reflect a subjective cull of certain of the more salient and interesting developmental aspects of the profession in various parts of the country.

This report summarizes the responses made to a 7-page questionnaire (in English and French) which sought answers to questions bearing on (a) general descriptors of an educational system, (b) the scope and nature of school psychology services, (c) training and accreditation of school psychologists, and (d) special problems facing the profession. Because matters bearing on the formal education of Canadians fall under provincial jurisdiction, the questionnaires were sent to each of the ten provinces, and to the two territories as well. Complete responses were received from both the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Complete responses were received from all the provinces with the exception of three sparsely populated ones.

Descriptors of the Educational System

Cultural mosaic

In language, culture, socio-economic patterns, and distinctive national lifestyles, provinces and territories differ dramatically from one another. Canada is constituted in part by Amerindian nations and Inuit peoples, each with its distinctive language and culture. To respect and indeed foster these cultures is national policy. In addition to the large number of Caucasians of French, British, Scottish, and Irish extraction who long ago established their respective language and culture in various parts of the land, later immigrants from Europe, the Middle East, the Caribbean islands, and the Far East have continued to add to the complexity and random pattern of our cultural mosaic. These historical movements have had an influence on the various regional school systems and the configuration of psychological services that they provide to their constituents.

The heterogeneity of Canadian society is prized by its citizens. A price, of course, has to be paid for this in terms of specialization of services that correspond to the characteristics of the different populations being served. If the development of adequate school systems in such a vast and sparsely inhabited yet culturally diverse country has been difficult, providing specialized psychological services in all regions is proving to be a challenge of epic proportions.

Some commonalities

In all this diversity there are nevertheless some commonalities cutting across jurisdictions governing the services which are provided to school children. For example, ministry of education respondents unanimously indicated, when replying to a question bearing on services provided to children with special educational needs, that such children are mainstreamed, if it is at all possible. They revealed a philosophical and applied concern for the normalization of the school environment for those with handicaps as well as those who function "normally". The principle of "least restrictive alternative mode" is accepted and operative. If, for example, a child has an IQ which is in the range extending below 70 or so, or has a sensory handicap which severely compromises participation in the normal classroom, separate classrooms are provided. But even in these cases partial integration, say, for 40 minutes per day, is often attempted. "Separate but equal" is not an acceptable environmental formula for children with exceptional needs, unless this arrangement is professionally advised.

Professional diversity

Psychological services are provided to students and to school personnel by a broad array of specialists. Foremost among them in most provinces are school psychologists. The term, *school psychology*, was stated in the questionnaire to be constituted by the various branches of educational psychology as they are applied in the school setting by a professional person regarded within the school system as a school psychologist. In addition there are vocational guidance specialists, social workers, guidance counsellors, counselling psychologists, social workers, psychometricians, student affairs animators, psycho-educators, special education teachers, reading consultants, psychiatric nurses, and, indeed, until quite recently, criminologists.

In several jurisdictions, all persons designated as school psychologists are simply provincially accredited psychologists who have been employed to help teachers better understand cognitive processes in, say, mathematics or reading, to conduct in-service workshops in techniques to increase text comprehension and recall, to counsel in the area of inferential processes or proportional thinking, and to help teachers in other

domains of teaching and learning. However, they may have been employed to deal directly with pupils who have problems of a socio-affective nature, to conduct workshops in identifying children with depressive symptomatology, or to combat increasing levels of vandalism and interpersonal violence. Yet again, it may be that they have been employed principally to work as psychometricians.

Although all of these competencies and functions fall within the purview of school psychology, they are usually not reserved by law to this psychological specialty. One of the more populous provinces indicated that confusion arises in that clear exclusionary criteria do not exist for determining which professions are implicated in the provision of which services. Frequently, several psychology-based professions in the same school district perform overlapping if not identical tasks. In certain provinces counsellors are mandated to do intelligence and personality assessment, work which in other provinces would be restricted to clinical psychologists or school psychologists with a psychometric specialization.

Allen-Meares, Washington, and Welsh (1986, e.g., pp. 236-249) ably describe the broad array of interventive strategies with individuals, groups, families, and schools for which school social workers are equipped. They overlap in a (disconcertingly) broad way with the tasks which school psychologists and school counsellors have traditionally affirmed to be "theirs". These assertions were made with full recognition that the professional role confusion endemic to school systems compromises interdisciplinary communication and professional effectiveness (p. 223).

In any event, determination of the relative equality of the school services provided to children in the various provinces and territories of the country is further complicated by consideration of such variables as: public funding formulas, licensure and accreditation standards for teachers and other school professionals, salary structures for school employees, levels of unemployment (and other social pathogens), and population densities. That task is clearly beyond the scope of this chapter.

What Are School Psychologists Hired to Do?

"School psychology was born in the prison of a test, and although the cell has been enlarged somewhat, it is still a prison" (Sarason, 1977, p. 27). This sentiment may or may not be true. It would seem unfair, however, to blame school psychologists for having imposed a narrow and suffocating role upon themselves without consideration of the pressures which the school and the general public have applied to that same end. The genuine need for quantification as well as the lure of a technology-textured learning environment long ago pushed Canada (and other parts of the Western world) in a psychometric direction. School psychologists as well as other science-based professionals have been swept along in that tide.

The job descriptions for psychologists which are published by various ministries of education in Canada always include assessment and diagnosis. They also include such clinical responsibilities as direct intervention with emotionally troubled, conduct-disordered children, or, on the other hand, consultative work among teachers developing individualized or group treatment programs for children with cognitive or behavioural deficits. Their responsibilities may include personal psychotherapeutic counselling of students, modification of inappropriate teacher behaviours (vis-à-vis particular pupils) through classroom observation and private consultation, development of preventive programs in domains treating, say, psychosexual development in adolescents. Other duties of a less direct character can lead them to consult with parents, community agencies, and those professionals who collaborate with them within the school district to adapt remedial programs for application to particular elementary school classrooms and develop for school administrators programs to improve the psycho-emotional climate of the school (see pp. 2-6 of Ministère de l'Éducation du Nouveau-Brunswick, 1982, as an example).

If the actual work of school psychologists does not seem to reflect this rich array of tasks and problem-solving approaches, the reason is less what they have chosen to do than what they have been forced by circumstances to do. Their caseloads are often so excessive that, in spite of themselves, they are reduced to ceaselessly testing, appraising, diagnosing, and recommending placement – particularly when there is not an adequate number of psychometricians or guidance counsellors available who are qualified to help them in this aspect of their work.

An official conceptualization of the psychological services which are provided in a school milieu was published by the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (1986). In a description of 41 discrete psychological services, it groups them into (a) those which are specifically provided by psychologists and (b) those which, though psychological in character, are of a generality that allows them to be performed by specialists in different disciplines. Within each of these two groups, the tasks are subdivided into those which are addressed to (a) students, (b) parents, and (c) teachers, administrators, and other school personnel.

Among those activities restricted to psychologists are, for example, distinct group activities for students, of which one is the sexual education workshop; this latter is characterized (a) by the added participation of health and social welfare personnel and (b) by an emphasis on the emotional and relational aspects of healthful sexual development. (This activity is scheduled for the second cycle of elementary school as well as for the secondary school). Among these psychological services which do not have to be conducted by a specific category of specialist are, as examples, preventative interventions directed at potential school leavers, sensitivity

sessions dealing with the social integration of handicapped persons, violence in the school, the abuse of drugs, the social integration of ethnically diverse members of the school community, and so forth.

A principal virtue of this schema is that it addresses the issue that not all psychological services either must or can be delivered by an accredited psychologist, still less one who has a doctorate. The cost of employing adequate numbers of staff equipped with doctorates of one sort or another to deal with the variety of psychological problems which require attention in the school would be prohibitive. It simply cannot be done. And as specialization in scholarship and research in our advanced degree programs takes on increasingly narrow parameters, one cannot expect the professional mirror-images of these basic science specialties to follow space in our schools. When one looks at the student-psychologist ratios prevailing in the various school districts of the country (ranging from 1:2000 to 1:13,747) it is understandable that ministries of education as well as universities are looking at ways of more finely attuning education and training to the psychological responsibilities to be assumed.

"Triage": Who Does the Referring?

Teachers, in the normal course of their work, are confronted with innumerable disorders of a behavioural, emotional, or educational character. Often some of them are woven together in the same child in varying proportions of subtlety and clarity, and the intrinsic complexity of these human problems can make diagnosis extremely difficult. Determining who should be referred to whom is often a task beyond the competence of any but skilled school or clinical psychologists. In some schools there is a multidisciplinary service which provides this expertise. In many there is not. The manner in which the referral process is negotiated is a function of a number of variables. Among them are: (a) the specialties existing among the psychologists available to the school system, (b) the way in which their job descriptions, on the one hand, have been written, and how they, on the other hand, are construed by school board officials, (c) the presence in the community of agencies that can provide clinical services of a mental health character, and (d) deeply entrenched custom, maintained by local school officials, that may or may not be highly effective.

An analysis of this question is complicated if there are several different kinds of professionals who deem themselves qualified to care for a child in difficulty. For example, speech and language pathologists are competent to do many of the remedial tasks that special education teachers or school psychologists are trained to do. The fact that there usually is more work for these professionals to do than they can manage, and that they consequently are pleased when others pick up the slack in their case load does not dissipate the problem. It simply delays it and obscures the need to

rationalize the manner in which the various psychological professions are defined, and their services are organized in the school systems.

It may happen that children are sent to professionals who cannot help them. The reason for this may be that the children do not have the disability they were thought to have by the administrators and teachers in the school. It is not unknown for children to have been placed in special classes or given treatment which they did not need because they were improperly assessed. The importance of initial competent assessment has long been recognized. It may be precisely this that has generated the imperative that has thrust on school psychologists in Canada the burden of ceaseless testing and diagnosis. Good interdisciplinary collaboration obviates some referral and placement problems. When, however, there exist tensions between professions that are trying to establish their authority in vaguely defined areas of competence, the school system and ultimately the children are not well served.

In some school districts there is a school-based coordinator of student services who, in collaboration with the teacher and the principal, determines the best referral. The coordinator of student services may be a guidance counsellor or special education supervisor. In other school districts, those of Ontario, for example, an "identification, placement, and review committee" exists which receives requests from teachers, principals of schools, or parents to deal with an individual or collective problem. Something comparable exists in other provinces. It may only be after some consultation at these levels that the services of a school psychologist are sought for an individual child, and then only after the school has received the signed consent of a parent.

This question is a purely theoretical one in many school districts of the country because of budget-engendered staff shortages. Several ministries of education indicated that referrals are directed to the professional with a psychological specialization who happens to be available. When the problem clearly goes beyond that person's competence, services are purchased from a community-based agency normally under the jurisdiction of a social affairs ministry.

What Training is Required?

As one might expect, requirements for accreditation as school psychologist differ significantly across the country in terms of level of education (the master's degree suffices in most provinces), program content, and length, intensity, and setting of field practice or internship. This diversity could lead one to make erroneous inferences about the competencies expected and demanded of practitioners in various parts of the country.

Since widely divergent demands are placed on school psychologists (both within and across school districts, not to mention provinces) it is not unreasonable to permit school boards flexibility in judging the particular competencies they deem necessary for adequate performance in the tasks for which they are hiring. If, for example, a school district seeks a psychologist for a position that requires neither doctoral level competencies in research design and statistical methods, nor the highly specialized expertise that constitutes the basis for the dissertation, the major component of most Ed.D. or Ph.D. programs, it would seem appropriate to hire a psychologist with simply a master's degree. This is all the more acceptable when first- and second-cycle degree programs provide training in research (as most do) as well as a strong clinical formation.

The matter is all the more problematical in that most provinces do not insist specifically on accreditation as *school psychologist* for those they intend to hire in a school psychology position. They do insist that such recruits be certified as *psychologist* by a government-legislated provincial body. This leaves school districts the freedom to match the demand characteristics of the positions they wish to fill with candidates equipped with particular configurations of courses, practica, and job experiences. This is particularly adaptive since, even within the specialized psychology labeled *educational*, one can be further specialized in special education, developmental psychology, tests and measurements, instructional design, or cognitive science, to mention several. The internship experience favoured, if not required, by school boards is one that has been done, of course, in an educational setting – and one, it is hoped, which presented learning experiences that correspond closely to the challenges of the position being recruited for. It should be noted, further, that in certain provinces the internship (or *stage*) remains the principal training component in the specialization of the psychologist who is school bound.

Finally, it should be noted that there are provinces in which tasks that are psychology-based are performed by professionals who were trained not as school psychologists, but as school counsellors or clinical psychologists or psychometrists. All may be registered psychologists. The highly permeable professional boundaries that separate them do not always prevent conflict over who has the right to practice in one domain or another.

Difficulties Facing the Practitioner

There are innumerable problems facing educational psychologists who work in the field that are peculiar to one or another school district, or are due, say, to community needs that derive from their location in regions that are climatically harsh or isolated, or from their special demographic features. There are other problems which are attributable more to the very

nature of the profession and its interactions with the different clientele which it serves than to the geographic and social context in which school psychologists practice. It is on this latter category of problems that it may be most useful to focus in a paper of this length.

The education ministry of one of the more populous provinces traced many difficulties to a lack of clarity in the law which governs the delivery of psychological services to schools. That report stated that "hiring practices for boards are in confusion" and that "(interference by the) outside licensing agency with school procedures is becoming an issue". Other complications that were stated to flow from this socio-legal matrix are widespread dissent concerning the university degree level that should be required for professional practice, "lack of networking (and) professional development activities mainly because of confusion re jurisdiction", and the great disparities that prevail in defining the roles of those who provide psychological services to school boards. Although most provincial ministries may not be readily prepared to concede that they labour within these disabling legal structures, the theoretical issues that are raised therein are widely debated outside of Canada (American Psychological Association, 1987) as well as within.

Loose role definitions of *school psychologist* take a heavy toll. Teachers cannot reasonably be expected to make fine distinctions among the tasks that a school psychologist should undertake, especially when administrators and other school board personnel are themselves uncertain of the various disciplinary parameters that constrain their support staff. When teachers have detected a problem in one or more of their pupils that can be characterized in any way as *psychological*, they initially tend to expect the school psychologist (should one be available) to be professionally equipped to treat it. This view is a naive one, of course, and often leads to disillusionment among teachers, a deterioration in the latter's professional relations with psychologists, and a sense of inadequacy and diminished self-esteem among those called in to provide psychological expertise.

Those who practice school psychology often enough feel a teacher-distrust of their services that derives from at least two sources: in the first instance, the teachers have received advice and in-service training from psychologists who often enough have never been teachers themselves and have had little experience of the classroom except, in an earlier life, as a pupil; in the second, psychologists have (unfairly) been expected to provide schools and the community institutions with which schools interface (not least among which is the family) with a breadth of psychological services in which they could not possibly become experts within one lifetime.

Relative to the first source of misunderstanding, the suspicion is widespread among teachers that psychologists and other professionals do not

know what they, the teachers, are up against. Their professional contributions are assessed, in most cases unjustly, as unrealistic and patronizing. Many school psychologists feel they have to counteract such preconceptions before a consultation even begins. In the words of one school psychologist who had worked years in the prairie provinces, "Within every teacher who was new to me, I began the consultation by recounting an incident from my own teaching experience."

Relative to the second source of misunderstanding, the difficulty has a two-fold root. On the one hand, it is not uncommon for school systems in many parts of Canada, when recruiting for school psychologists, to advertise simply for certified psychologists. There are several reasons for this. In some cases they want to cast their net over as large a pool of prospective employees as possible since they know from experience that professionals, particularly those with doctoral level training, have not been interested in coming to their region in great numbers. One department of special services reported that in the '70s it had tried to provide psychological services to several sparsely populated regions within its jurisdiction. "The plan fell through because there was an insufficient number of qualified applicants... (we have) not been able to attract highly qualified and specialized psychologists." Although this view comes from a region with a number of geographic and demographic peculiarities, it is common to a more or less severe degree in all the vast regions of the country that are remote from the large population centres. In other cases, school psychology is not considered a distinct psychological specialization such that certain school psychology services are normally provided only by accredited school psychologists.

On the other hand, those who qualify in every sense as school psychologists construe their professional roles in ways that frequently are not fully consistent with the roles imposed on them by their employers. Moreover, among school psychologists, there is a great deal of diversity in the kinds of postgraduate professional programs in which they have been trained. In one Canadian educational psychology department (a graduate department which has a strong professional as well as research orientation) there are academic programs of cognitive science, developmental psychology, tests and measurement, educational technology, computer applications in education, special education, adult education, instructional design, and others. Future school psychologists must specialize in one of these areas – the more advanced the degree, the greater the level of specialization – and their school-based internships cannot, moreover, adequately focus on more than a narrow segment of the total spectrum of specialties. Needless to say, they may not be truly qualified to be hired for professional work in more than one, at most two, of these areas.

Role conflicts exist within professions as well as between them. The former occur among school psychologists when tasks are imposed on them which can more properly be addressed by other professions. It is not infrequent for children, for example, who have been diagnosed as school phobic to be referred by school psychologists to a community mental health clinic – only to have them referred back to the school for treatment by the school psychologist.

Tensions between different kinds of professionals is a beast of a different colour and is widely reported from across Canada. It must seem ironic to the layperson that psychologists could be engaged among themselves in interpersonal, profession-based conflicts to the extent of significantly compromising the quality of the service they give to school children – after all, interpersonal conflict is a disorder they are presumed to have consummate skills in rectifying. The seriousness with which this problem is regarded varies highly – and can do so, of course, as a function of either the reality of the problem *in se* or the subjective ranking of the concern among many concerns with which ministries of education have to concern themselves. Certain provinces report territorial tensions among multidisciplinary school staff to be pronounced. One province qualified these tensions as less accentuated than in the past, although they seem to be more acute at the association, order, or corporation level than at the level of individuals working together in the same milieu. Others, it must be noted, replied with either a categorical "no" or with an "occasionally at the school board level."

The problem of overlapping mandates can be partially addressed by the strategy of restricting services that can be described by the use of the words "psychological", "psychologist" or "psychology" to those who are "duly registered psychologists". A knotty question is how one distinguishes psychological assessments from educational ones except, in many instances, in the most arbitrary way – not a suitable approach to relieving tensions.

Anomolously, in view of the foregoing consideration, it was widely reported that there were heavy testing, diagnostic, and referral burdens placed on school psychologists. Indeed, in response to the question, "what are generally considered the most important contributions that school psychologists make within and outside the school context?" one province reported only one task: "intellectual assessment". In other parts of the country where the school psychologist is mandated to provide a broader spectrum of psychological services, the more isolated, less adequately staffed school districts required so much direct assessment work that it squeezed out opportunity for indirect, consultative work with teachers and other school personnel.

Reflections on Some of These Problems

Our ability to name things provides incalculable potential for mischief as well as order and harmony. And if learning names is a surprisingly complicated matter even for cognitive psychologists (Macnamara, 1984), giving names to things would seem even more complex in its consequences.

The profession called *school psychology* provides an example of the mischief that infelicitously naming psychologies of whatever character can cause. This professional specialty has been bedeviled from its origins by a name which has made it virtually impossible to define in a way that delineates it from many other professions which are practiced within a school system. One does not have to be an obsessive Linnaean to understand that if one defines certain professions by the formal object of their inquiry and practice, or more broadly, by their universe of discourse, and other professions by the settings in which they are practiced, then members of all these professions may become confused about what professional acts belong to them rather than to others.

I am not suggesting that we begin at this late date to rename professions according to a more logically ordered taxonomy, although some may be convinced that this is necessary. What is needed at a minimum, in any event, is a collective rethinking of this problem by certain of the psychological professions that practice in school systems, in view of disentangling their roles and functions. The solutions to this problem involve much more than a serious consideration of labels. They need to be predicated, to begin with, on an analysis of those psychological services which are intrinsically elicited by the very nature of an educational institution. There are innumerable psychological services of a professional character that students of any age (or in any developmental stage) may require. It would be useful to reflect on the question whether their status, *student*, and their some-time presence in an educational milieu indicate that it is a school psychologist who should be charged with their treatment. Because a psychological need has been identified in a school may not be sufficient reason, as it is recognized in many educational jurisdictions, to refer the student to a school-based professional.

Even among the psychological needs presented to teachers and personnel within a school which seem intrinsically tied to the mission of the school, there are many more species of need than it would seem could possibly be provided for by any single profession, no matter how protean in nature or how loosely defined. That is a problem that confronts us with an old but unresolved challenge: how can we conceptualize school psychology in such ways that it will have the unity and coherence that characterize other

psychological professions? If, then, one asks the question, "Should the field be conceptualized as a professional *genus* subsuming a number of professional *species*, among which some territorial rivals such as school guidance counsellors, orthopedagogues, school social workers, psychiatric nurses, and clinical psychologists?", the possibility of developing some exclusionary criteria that are mutually acceptable glimmers on the horizon.

A continued failure to resolve this fundamental question will have some foreseeable consequences, among others: (a) regional legislatures will impose solutions which in all probability will be less satisfactory to the professions involved and consequently to their clients than would eventuate from a concerted consultation on a national scale, (b) there will develop an increasing disparity, if that is possible, from province to province on the standards for accreditation as well as for praxis in each of the psychological professions involved, and (c) new professions will emerge to meet needs that could easily have been encompassed within the professional domains that already exist. The loss to students, school personnel, and the professionals employed in their service will be worse than it has proven to be.

Conclusions

"There are . . . many (most would argue too many) *opinions about, or accounts of perceptions of, the role and function of the school psychologist*" (Ysseldyke, 1986). Opinions exist, of course, in the absence of certitude, and it is this that makes it so difficult to assess what is happening in the profession of school psychology in Canada. An analysis of this field is complicated by the fact that it is hardly less true today in Canada than it was a generation ago in the United States that "the role of the school psychologist varies in scope and character with the philosophy that prevails in specific schools" (Gottsegen, 1960, p.2). Perceptual bias and doctrinal distortions are present in every source of information, whether it is a ministry of education or the parent of a school phobic child being helped by a school psychologist. Cross validating even the most significant classes of perceptions available to us would be an enormous research task that one could easily suspect would only lead to the conclusion that there is no consensus on major issues.

Forecasting the future of any profession is always a temerarious enterprise. It is all the more so when, given the diversity and fluidity that characterizes the field, we are not quite certain where we are in the present. Janzen (1987), speaking of the evolution of school psychology in Canada, indicates that many of the growing pains of this profession which may only be remembered in the United States as history are the daily fare of Canadian school psychologists: role confusion, identity diffusion with related disciplines, the struggle for "recognition and academic respect" in

psychology departments. For the profession there still remain major tasks: standardization of training and accreditation norms, development of school psychology organizations, journals, and the cultivation of formal and informal international linkages.

The status of the profession in any province or region will not be improved by the articulation of pious hopes for the future. It will be improved by adding to the already substantial number of competent and dedicated scholars, researchers, and practitioners in this field who are talking to each other about matters that bear on the health and welfare of a society's children.

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