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Challenges of Canada's Decentralized Education System

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Abstract

Canada employs a decentralized model of leadership responsible for the development and delivery of education and training. When compared to other countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Canada ranks near the top in academic credentials earned, however performs near the bottom of the same list in numeracy and literacy skills. The goal of this paper is to examine the validity of describing education obtained in Canada as a 'Canadian' education. While a definitive response did not present itself, the investigation does reveal opportunity for

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further research involving curriculum development, educational standards, and funding related barriers to the delivery of post-secondary education.

Education and Training in Canada: An Investigation of the Decentralized

Approach

Overview of Education in Canada

“Canada does not have a federal department or national system of education” (Government of Canada, 2017). It would be irresponsible to suggest that this fact is the reason why Canada ranked near the bottom of the group of countries in the OECD in both numeracy and literacy (Cappon, 2014), but the fact that this correlation exists provides fodder for further discussion of the current state of education in Canada. To begin that discussion, an investigation into the makeup of education in Canada seems fitting.

In Canada’s early days, the population was made up of Indigenous people whose system of knowledge transfer and skill development was founded on storytelling and focused on skills and knowledge in preparation for adulthood. As the new settlers began to arrive in Canada they imposed their belief systems on the Indigenous peoples partly by way of the Residential School System in an effort to assimilate the Indigenous peoples to the ways of the new Canadian (Morgan, 2012). The Catholic church was responsible for education in what is now Quebec, as early as the mid - 1600s and the schools that were developed at that time became Canada’s first formal learning institutions. Following the arrival and establishment of the French community, the British soon

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followed and after a series of wars and rebellions, Canada saw the control of education shift primarily to the English. This began the shifts into the early stages of what we have come to know as education in Canada today (Morgan, 2012).

Today education in Canada is governed by provincial and territorial governments (Garcea, 2014; Morgan, 2011; Lessard & Brassard 2004). To fund this decentralized model of education delivery, the lion's share is collected by way of property taxes (58.4%), followed by local board (25%), and other provincial grants (14.6%). The final 2% are the contributions of the Federal government (Wallner, 2012). At the level of the school, students are often involved in fundraising efforts by way of selling a variety of items in order to raise money for their education. (Shaker, 2014). The only elements of education and training responsibilities that the Federal government have are centred around the provision of education to service personnel, children of members of the armed forces, prison inmates and Registered Indians (Morgan, 2012).

According to Wallner (2012), the reliance on property tax dollars lends itself to a wide range of funding dollars between boards. Nutrition, according to Shaw (2015), is a correlate of academic performance and according to Browne and Jenkins (2012), conversations at home around nutrition are less likely to occur in a household deemed to be in a lower socioeconomic status. While nutrition and socioeconomic status are not the focus of this paper, their presence is important as they, in concert with the current funding model for education help to demonstrate that the bar set for all Canadians in the realm of education cannot be the same. If one school

board is collecting fewer funds than a neighbouring board due to the property value of the homes from which students come, the focus can shift in the classroom from learning to ensuring nutritional requirements needed to learn are met. If some students are arriving to school without proper nutrition they may be ill prepared to engage in the learning process. Beginning a race behind the starting line therefore, may influence what determines a measurement of success in these underprivileged neighbourhoods.

Setting financial differences aside and moving to curriculum policy sees much similarity in the structure of curriculum across provinces. These similarities include an eight-grade elementary system followed by 4 – 5 years in secondary school before embarking upon post-secondary education by means of apprenticeship, college, or university (Wallner, 2012). When designing the curriculum however, provinces have every right to design the content with local and provincial needs at the forefront (Wallner 2012; Cappon 2014).

Each province and territory is led by a department or Ministry of Education and is led by a Minister of Education. These groups are responsible for planning, finance, curriculum development, as well as assessment of learned knowledge (Morgan, 2012). In addition to these responsibilities, the ministers of education also serve on the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). CMEC “provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education.” (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada 2017). In many ways CMEC connects each of the provinces and territories through an

educational lens. Some of the initiatives include skill and competency assessments, development of reports and education indicators, and providing representation of the provinces and territories for education-related international projects and activities.

Research Question

As discussed above, Canada has had a decentralized model for education deployment since the inception of the country. Given this, as well as the economic diversity within boards and regions, curriculum development freedom, and focus on regional needs, the question that this literature review will investigate is as follows. Can Canada truly promote ‘Canadian’ education with a decentralized model of governance?

During the course of this review, education governance between the provinces and territories, assessment methods, curriculum development, and teacher training will be investigated. This will be followed by a review of higher education as well as an investigation of the pressures that post-secondary institutions face in Ontario and British Columbia.

Education Governance in Canada

It is noted by Lessard and Brassard (2004), that despite the advantages that having a federally governed education would have on globalization of the economy by way of workforce development, education in Canada is governed by the provinces and territories. Governance within the provinces is made up of three levels that include provincial authorities, the school boards, and the school. In this model, the province has jurisdiction over the curriculum design, training requirements for teachers, and establishing the norms for student progress

and the assessment methods used to measure that progress. Twelve markers are laid out in the assessment of the education systems of countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Within this group of twelve markers are educational attainment, labour market outcomes, financial resources invested, organization of learning environments, and adult literacy and numeracy (Minister of Industry 2017). It is important to note here that these are markers determined by the OECD and not by Canada or any one of its Ministers of Education. Instead, as Cappon (2014) states, in Canada there is no body charged with the task of setting consistent, measureable goals related to education. While the ministers collaborate with the OECD to share information related to annual education indicator reports, they are not the ones setting the goals. The structure of educational governance as laid out by Morgan (2012) and Lessard and Brassard (2004), suggests that unclear goal setting at the provincial level may have a negative impact on the ability of the school boards, to implement provincial strategies (Morgan, 2012). This in turn may have a ripple effect at the school level as they would be at a loss when making hiring decisions and establishing a compliment of supports for students. An example of the need for clear direction is illustrated by Huang (2014), as he describes the perceived math crisis in Canada that has resulted in part from Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing results that show a decline in performance of elementary school aged children in mathematics. The discussion around the external bodies being used as a measuring stick for performance in mathematics (or other topics for that matter) is that members of the country aren't as informed about what

bodies such as PISA represent. When there are shifts in the results based on new membership reporting to this body there is much more room for panic among Canadian citizens (Huang, 2014). If there was a clear expectation or definition of what success meant from an educational perspective, perhaps we as Canadian citizens would have a resource to refer to in order to help us understand the state of our academic progress.

Indicators of Success

Hauseman (2015) investigated the indicators of school system success that are publicly reported in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. Of note here is that under the Student Outcomes – Achievement Test Data, reporting, Alberta tests grades 3 ,6, and 9 in various subjects. British Columbia runs a skill assessment for grades 4 and 7 on numeracy, literacy, and reading comprehension. Ontario completes a reading and writing assessment as well as a math assessment at grades 3 and 6. A trait shared by the three provinces above is data reporting. Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario each collect data through criterion-referenced testing, and report their data at each level of educational governance. This shared trait lends itself to caution as standardized tests used to collect student performance data are subject to misinterpretation, (Hauseman 2015), thus making them a fragile tool for informing a large organization such as a Ministry of Education. Regardless of how the data is collected, it is then used to help inform how and what teachers teach. The need for training teachers has been approached differently over time (Whiteley, 2017; Unger, 2013; Young & Boyd, 2010), and across provinces (Walker & von Bergmann, 2013; Young & Boyd, 2010).

Teacher Training

As Young and Boyd (2010) report, the design of teacher preparation curriculum varies across the provinces of Quebec, Manitoba, and British Columbia in terms of how prescriptive they are to those involved with the institutions responsible for administering the training. In the mid-1990s, Quebec's shift in focus to 7 key areas led the Ministry of Education to alter the curriculum for teacher training in order to meet the call to action that appropriately trained teachers are critical to the delivery of the updated goals. Quebec, and other provinces and territories have made changes to their teacher training curriculum in response to a variety of factors including globalization, technological changes, and an increased emphasis on remaining competitive from an economical standpoint. Specific to British Columbia writes Whiteley (2017), a history of political strife dating back to the 1970s provided the province with very little in the way of leadership around the ideas of curriculum development and delivery. An example of this comes from the 1974 White Paper produced by the then Minister of Education that called for a core curriculum to be offered to students that included elements such as family life, Canadian studies, employment, legal, and economic studies, as well as the understanding of art. Unfortunately, this report led to no changes in the curriculum for students and therefore no perceived need for a change in the curriculum for teacher training. A 1976 provincial assessment garnered results that indicated the students of British Columbia schools performed inadequately. In response to this finding, provincial exams were reinstated for most 12th grade students in the province.

Fast forward to the late 1980s, with the New Democratic Party (NDP) in power in British Columbia and the

opinion of the private sector was that graduating students were not entering the workforce with the desired skills (Whiteley, 2017). The provincial government acted on this feedback by altering the curriculum without making changes to the training of teachers.

Provincial Governance Strategies

The educational shifts briefly discussed above highlight the tri-partner collaboration between provincial governments, postsecondary institutions, and teaching associations as described by Young and Boyd (2010). In addition to identifying this partnership, the authors also point out that the balance of power often shifts between the three parties. In the case of the British Columbia examples, there is a clear imbalance favouring the provincial government as there was no consultation done with the other two members of the partnership prior to making these changes. This is a relevant point because without the input or consideration of the institutions and teaching associations, it is impossible for these bodies to adequately prepare in order to respond to these changes.

Referring again to the tri-directional influence on education in each of the provinces and territories, Unger (2013) discusses the perceived primary role of education in Quebec as the main influence in maintaining French culture in Quebec. A political campaign spearheaded by Pierre Trudeau in the 1960s called for a prioritization around French-language higher education. Perhaps more apparent in Quebec than any other province or territory, the decentralized model of educational governance clearly was leveraged to promote the identified needs of the province and not the country per se.

Walker and von Bergmann (2013), add some stability to the demonstrated differences in teacher education over time and across provinces in their investigation of teacher education governance as a comparison to the same variable in the United States. They note that the unifying body across Canada is the professional organizations. Walker and von Bergmann (2013) point out that it is the professional organizations that have begun the conversation around best practices and the identification of priorities. Using the duality of professionalization and deregulation, educational governance of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario, it was discovered that teacher education began as training subjected to very little government control between 1960-1980 and has since evolved into a practice that is guided by policy and regulated more closely by the government. One driving force for this evolution was a spike in retirements of teachers thus providing an opportunity to train a significant number of new teachers using the more strictly enforced standards (Walker & von Bergmann, 2013).

Even with these generally accepted shifts in policy enforcement, Walker and von Bergmann (2013) point out that in Manitoba the provincial government typically approaches teacher education policy with a hands off approach except for when issues concerning Indigenous peoples exist. Alberta, on the other hand, is more involved with teacher education standards. This involvement is highlighted by K-12 student assessment tests. These standardized tests directly impact the “what and how” of teacher’s teachings. In British Columbia, the British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT) is the body that develops the expectations of teachers. They monitor their standards through university reviews, surveys, and

by participating in all hearings involving misconduct and discipline. Ontario follows a similar model to British Columbia as the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) is in charge of developing the standards around the teaching in the province. They monitor the effectiveness of training for new teachers through accreditation reviews. The province is a leader in quality assurance at the post-secondary level as the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) was established in 2005 and aids in the evaluation, access, quality, and accountability of post-secondary institutions in Ontario. As the literature has shown there is a wide variety of involvement and expectation between provinces within the scope of preparing teachers to teach the citizens of Canada. While much of the preceding sections focused on an overview of education and the governance behind all levels of education, the focus will now shift to higher education. As the highest level of education attainable, it could be argued that post-secondary education can become an arena for the culmination of the previously discussed inconsistencies between provinces. On the other hand, post-secondary education may be the equalizing body that connects each province.

Behavioural Influencers of Post-Secondary Institutions

In this section post-secondary institutions in Ontario and British Columbia will be examined with specific focus placed on the motivation propelling post-secondary institutions (Dziwak, 2014; Pringle & Huisman, 2011), its relevance (Murphy, 2016), provision of support for students (Veres, 2015), and the assessment of quality (Klassen, 2012).

Competency Mismatch

As discussed earlier in this paper, there are some inconsistencies within the governance of education in Canada. These inconsistencies, when considering the delivery of primary and secondary education, beg the question, 'How do post-secondary institutions identify their role in the education and training of Canadian citizens?' Dziwak (2014), identifies one of the significant challenges faced by colleges in Ontario to be balancing the need for colleges to grow continually in order to maintain their operating budget due in part to enrolment-based funding, and the increased costs associated with providing remediation supports for students that do not have the appropriate literacy and numeracy skills. While it is understood that the public perspective of numeracy skills is an unclear one (Huang, 2014), colleges in Ontario are identifying that numeracy skills are a challenge that students are bringing to post-secondary institutions more than ever now with an increased focus on access to enrolment.

Dziwak (2014), defends the challenge of both the institutions and students through her analysis of the differences between the required level of literacy for successful completion of college level courses and the actual level that a portion of students selecting college education possess. In addition to their pre-admission scores, students are demonstrating the need for remediation through post-admission scores as well. Of interest here is the apparent inconsistency between admission requirements from Ontario Colleges and academic credentials being granted by secondary schools. This topic alone is worthy of much more research and to consider it fully would require more time and space than this paper will allow.

The Business Argument

With this in mind however, one way to look at how this type of challenge faced by post-secondary institutions is through the lens provided by Pringle and Huisman (2011), through their research applying Michael Porter's Five Forces Analysis to the business of post-secondary education. The five forces include: the threat of new entrants; supplier power; buyer power; the threat of substitutes; and industry rivalry.

Relevant to the discussion of under preparedness, the forces of buyer power and supplier power are most relevant. If one considers that in Ontario alone there are 40 post-secondary institutions providing education and training, at first glance it would appear that their power is very high given the number of potential 'customers' or students as they are often referred to. However, if the supplier power was so great, then why are institutions accepting students into their community that are demonstrating that they are unable to meet the numeracy and literacy skills necessary to be successful? Perhaps the power is actually in the hands of the buyer; or student.

This certainly would seem to be the case in Ontario as the 1967 Ontario college mandate of access demanded that colleges serve an increasing number of students despite their need for additional supports (Dziwak, 2014). This mandate delivered by the provincial government requires colleges to allocate additional funding to allow for the provision of additional supports necessary for ill-prepared students that are now entering post-secondary institutions across Canada. This challenge is showing no signs of diminishing, as projections suggest that enrolment rates will increase at both colleges and

universities and the trend between 1994 and 2008 provides evidence that 42% of Canadians literacy skills are one level below what the OECD suggests is the necessary proficiency for success at the college level (Dziwak, 2014).

The Growth of Student Services

Due in no small part to the observed lack of literacy and numeracy skills in today's student body, students today are presented with a variety of student services to support the development of their deficiencies such as tutoring services, academic advising, counselling, and resources centres (Veres, 2015). Unfortunately, as shown by Veres, (2015), the majority of students do not use these services, and therefore the investments that colleges in Ontario make in student services are to support less than half of the college population in most cases. Only academic advising (80%) and library services (86%) were shown to be valued by the majority of students.

Student services is an increasingly costly offering. It is estimated that for Ontario colleges to deliver on the provincial government's objective of having 60000 additional students in colleges, these institutions will have to invest upwards of $37 million each year in additional support based programs (Dziwak, 2014). At this time, the research on the effectiveness of a wide range of student services is not conclusive. This is challenging from a funding request standpoint as it is unlikely that additional funds will be allocated to institutions to support the mandate to expand access without conclusive data to support the effectiveness of student services at Ontario college campuses.

What the above example demonstrates is a clear lack of communication and continuity between the three levels of education and a mandate delivered by the province of Ontario to its colleges that is adding stress to its institutions. Ontario has essentially tasked the colleges with the responsibility of preparing an unprepared population to become contributing members of the workforce.

Academic Freedom

The resources that colleges have to fulfill this task are the provision of student services and academic resources made up primarily of faculty members. Hogan and Trotter (2013), investigated the role that academic freedom may have on the evolution of colleges and universities in British Columbia and Ontario. Until as recently as 2009, for faculty members at colleges, academic freedom was not even a discussion point. Academic freedom was a concept enjoyed only by university professors. Hogan and Trotter (2013) draw upon Horn's 1999 explanation of academic freedom that is made up of 5 key elements. These are:

> "(a) The freedom to pursue truth wherever that may lead, (b) tenure so that the truth-seeker is not subject to loss of job when the research is controversial, (c) the ability of the scholar to be critical of the university, (d) the ability of the scholar to participate in public life, and (e) co-governance within the university." (Horn & Trotter, 2013 p 70)

Muddying the waters in the discussion of academic freedom and college faculty members is the Ontario

Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act of 2002. This act provided colleges in Ontario the right to provide a limited amount of degree-granting freedom, which expanded their original credential granting ability of certificates and diplomas. This also led to the discussion of academic freedom and its applicability to college faculty members. Should college faculty members be granted academic freedom similar to that found in universities, it would introduce another layer of governance into post-secondary education at the college level, specifically within each of the provinces 24 colleges. This would empower another population to influence the decisions of what is taught and perhaps more significant, the standard to which it must be taught. Additionally, Bieler and McKenzie (2017) note that institutional sustainability strategies can also be impacted in environments where faculty have power to make decisions on priorities and direction of their departments. If the academic area in question does not feel that sustainability initiatives fit within their priorities, it is conceivable that no such planning will take place. Alternatively, it is possible that the sustainability planning would be targeted only for the department.

Funding for Post-Secondary Institutions

The current funding model for post-secondary education has been investigated recently by Brophy and McKenzie (2012). Broadly speaking, post-secondary education is funded through a combination of public resources in the form of funds allocated by the provincial government and funds curated by the institution. The latter half of the financial equation may be made up of a variety of economic sources including, but not limited to, corporate

donations, increased tuition, or specialized fee programs. Due to the demands associated with increased enrolment access, some institutions have been forced to operate under the principles of lean methodology in order to provide the services required to accommodate the enrolment mandate (Francis, 2014). In British Columbia for example, between 2004 and 2010 the provincial government made cutbacks to the tune of over $86 million dollars. Now, more than ever before, government funds are released only to those institutions and initiatives that can justify the need for funds through performance measures (Brophy & McKenzie, 2012). Simon Fraser University (SFU) was given a mandate by the provincial government in 2008 that removed $5 million dollars of government funding and at the same time called for an expansion of programming and an increase in enrolment. Following this change it was reported that the provincial government made $700,000 more in student tuition fees than they did in fees from corporate taxes. Students paid more money to the government than did established businesses that are relying on these students to pursue training in order to help improve financial productivity of said businesses.

Financial impact of a unionized environment

This funding crisis at post-secondary institutions is not entirely driven by the government. Within institutions in Canada, the activities and demands of union membership have also driven up the labour costs of running a post-secondary institution. Strikes over wage increases have taken place in Ontario, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia and ultimately concluded with the union members going back to work with increases in pay (Brophy & McKenzie, 2012). While it is not the goal of

this paper to critique the place of a union within an educational setting, further understanding of the intricacies that the presence of a union brings to the operation of a post-secondary institution would be advantageous. It has also been documented in this paper that institutions in multiple provinces have been tasked with increasing enrolment under the duress of reduced funding. With that goal in mind, what do potential students feel about investing their money and time in higher education?

Murphy (2016) reminds us that during the earlier years of post-secondary education that affordability was the primary reason for students not attending. She also reports that over time, research has shown that financial barriers are no longer the primary concern for students. This is in part due to the increase of initiatives designed to alleviate the financial stress of getting to post-secondary education. Now, suggests Murphy (2016), the most significant challenge is convincing potential students that there is benefit to completing post-secondary studies. From the perspective of the institution being mandated to increase enrolment, this passivity towards post-secondary education is also a barrier to the institution's success of meeting such a mandate.

Murphy (2016) turned to Stuart Hill's 1960 article. The Supply of Demand in order to understand better how to attract students to campuses across Canada. Students shop post-secondary institutions (PSIs) and PSIs market to students at the same time using tag lines, fairs, and commercials. While Murphy's context is based on her experiences at Carleton University, those that have experience working in a PSI know that the strategy is not

uncommon. This strategy is to focus on the desire that individuals have to create a better life for themselves. The basic formula to the marketing strategy to potential students is as follows: 'Not happy with your life? Come to institution X. We will give you the skills you need to have a better life.' (Murphy, 2016). While this is simple enough to accept, a closer look reveals that the life they will have after completing post-secondary education will be better than a life without. 'Better' is the operative word here and while it may be understood that post-secondary graduates will earn more money than those that do not attend, the subjectivity of what is 'better' is a challenge.

Murphy's use of Hill's supply of demand suggests that universities (and colleges) pride themselves on fostering human development, thus supporting the individual's transition into a contributing member of society. It also cautions that unlike most client-business interactions, students are not provided with a 'good' per se, and in fact students can actually be perceived as a 'good' being prepared by the institution for society. Specifically, a capitalist society that relies on its members to perpetuate the growth of an economy that more often than not provides the very few with the greatest of financial rewards. Perhaps evidence that the quality of education provided by PSI would help to reassure potential students that an investment in post-secondary education would be a sound choice.

Anecdotally, Canada receives international praise for providing a quality education to those that attend post-secondary institutions in this country. Unfortunately, as Klassen (2012) states, there is no national framework in place that allows for a clear understanding or definition

of quality in post-secondary education. In Ontario however, the Credentials Validation Service (CVS) began operating in 2005 with the purpose of providing 'reasonable' assurance that programs within a post-secondary institution meet the standards set out by the Credentials Framework. This policy directive developed by the Minister ensures that programs adhere to the principles around titling. While the CVS ensures that the colleges are playing within the rules set out by the province, the Program Quality Assurance Process Audit (PQAPA) ensures quality assurance within each institution.

Klassen (2012) makes the important distinction around this point by acknowledging the difference between quality assurance and quality assessment. Quality assessment is founded on the premise that quality systems are not yet in place and that assessment is needed to determine what quality is. Quality assurance assumes that quality systems are already in place. As such, the quality assurance process seeks further evidence to support the assumption that quality is already in existence. The focus of the quality measure is worth further consideration. This process for evaluating quality appears to allow for a considerable variance around the definition of quality considering that (in this specific example), all 24 colleges in Ontario had established what quality meant to them in their operating structure prior to the creation of the PQAPA and that those established quality measures were accepted as such (Klassen, 2012). As no assessment of quality has taken place, the potential, current, and former students have no reliable way of evaluating the education that they received. This problem is quickly multiplied across the country when one takes the time to

remember that each province and territory governs education using their own established set of criteria.

Discussion

The goal of this paper was to investigate the question of whether or not Canada provides a Canadian education. There is a generally accepted view suggesting that in Canada it is not possible to develop and implement a national strategy for education (Cappon, 2014). In addition to that view is the current uncertainty that a national strategy is in fact the best route to take with respect to an overhaul of what is the current decentralized model for education and training in Canada. In order to better understand the current state of education in Canada, a brief investigation of the history of education in Canada was conducted. Education, for the Indigenous peoples of Canada was a much less formalized construct consisting primarily of knowledge transfer through story telling and information sharing between generations. The first formalized education was tied closely to the Catholic church. During this time, the Catholic church was seen as a significant authority figure in what was to become Canada and given the scope of responsibility, the church was adequately equipped to regulate what was being learned in the classroom (Morgan, 2012). Following a takeover by the English, and much time, Canada has moved into a decentralized model of education that consists of 13 Ministers overseeing education in each of Canada's provinces and territories.

Reflecting on the deficiencies and recommendations put forth by Cappon (2014), further investigation into the current system and how it operates appeared relevant in order to make an informed decision on the merits of

Cappon's suggestion.

Research on the governance of education in Canada revealed that there are different motivating factors (Galway & Sheppard, 2015), expectations, and methods when training teachers (Lessard & Brassard, 2005), and that it is a possibility that different expectations for teachers in different provinces could produce teachers with a variety of skill sets and priorities. This hypothesis receives some support from Walker and von Bergmann (2013), who report that priorities are established by a trifecta composed of the provincial government, a professional body that has some level of regulatory function over the training of teachers, and the institutions that are responsible for training the teachers. Meanwhile, Hauseman (2015), identified that across 3 provinces, educational performance markers are captured at different times in the areas of numeracy and literacy during the primary education delivery. The collection of these performance markers in these provinces is by way of standardized tests.

The knowledge obtained by Canada's citizens in post-secondary school is a marker used to compare countries around the world, and while Canada boasts a high percentage of individuals that have obtained a post-secondary credential, they rank near the bottom of developed countries in skills demonstrated (Cappon, 2014). This paper outlined some of the challenges facing our post-secondary institutions including an increased need for support for a mandated expansion of attendees at our PSIs, challenges related to motivating a section of the population to understand the value in post-secondary education, and institutional priorities that often put revenue sourcing at the top of the priority list.

Future Research

While this investigation into the education system in Canada was inconclusive as to whether or not Canada can boast a Canadian education given its decentralized approach to governance, it has provided several other questions that may benefit from further research. For example, learning more about the impacts of having a variety of standards with regards to teacher training and education would provide greater insight into the importance of that variable as it relates to the overall performance of Canadian students.

Another point of interest that could benefit from further investigation is the priority of post-secondary education. Currently it has been to support local and provincial productivity goals (Unger, 2013; Walker & von Bergmann, 2013). For Cappon (2014) this is an approach that limits Canada's ability to be a significant player in the international market. While research suggests that post-secondary institutions can play a larger role in innovation on a national level (Belanger, Mount, Madgett, & Filion, 2005), there is still no framework unifying this potential strategy. In fact, the rise of performance based funding (Lang, 2015) may make it more difficult to develop a unified approach to delivering education. The challenge with performance-based funding and the development of a national strategy writes Lang (2015) is that the performance-based model may not provide the funding necessary to cover the costs of the programming used in order to meet the performance measures.

Research to further understand what it would mean for Canada to be able to create, and deliver a national

strategy around education may be a valuable resource for institutions that are interested in promoting their service to International students. Having a solid grasp on how the geographic location of their institution impacts the decision-making process of a potential student could help them better promote their school. I would speculate that depending on what province or territory the PSI in question is situated in, it may prompt them to want to promote studying in Canada or in their home province based on the understanding of comparable performance markers. Given also that immigration is federally regulated, consistent educational priorities may help to level the field for immigrant learners and help position them to be significant contributors to Canada, regardless of the province that they choose to call home (Volante, Klinger, Bilgili, & Seigel, 2017).

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