

Education was made the responsibility of the provinces by the British North America Act and each province has developed a system to meet its needs. The Federal Government was left the responsibility for education of the Indians, Eskimos, all children in the territories outside of the provinces, the penitentiaries and the establishments of the Armed Forces.

Each province has developed its system independently but certain factors, such as proximity, interchange of personnel, conventions, etc., have resulted in greater similarities than differences among the systems. Because of this, a convenient method of explaining the structure of public education in Canada is to attempt a typical system of education for the Canadian provinces and then to show how each differs from this.

General Structure of Public Education

Provincial Departments of Education.—Education is administered by a Department of Education comprised of the following personnel: a Minister of Education, an elected member of the provincial legislature who is appointed as a cabinet minister and is responsible to the legislature for the satisfactory operation of the system; a Deputy Minister of Education, an expert in education employed as a civil servant, who administers the program set forth by the Minister, advises him on policy and to a great extent determines the continuing policy of the Department; a Chief Superintendent, or Chief Inspector of Schools, appointed as head of the inspectoral or supervisory staff who are liaison officials between the Department of Education and the teachers, principals and local education authorities.

On the program side of the Department, directors are appointed for special aspects of education as soon as they have reached the point where they should be encouraged and developed throughout the system. The number and variety of these are determined by the size and educational philosophy of the province. Typical fields include a selection of the following curriculum: vocational education, professional training, guidance, audio-visual education, school broadcasting, research, testing, auxiliary classes, correspondence courses, art, music, home economics, physical education and health, adult education and rural education.

In addition, the Department usually has a registrar, an accountant, a manager of a textbook branch, and necessary assistants and clerical personnel. In many provinces, public libraries are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education. The Department prescribes the curricula, authorizes textbooks or lists of books, prescribes teacher-training, inspects the schools, and determines the school year, hours of instruction and ages of compulsory attendance.

Local Education Authorities.—A majority of the boards of education or trustees are now elected by the resident ratepayers of the district. Formerly, the urban areas elected or appointed board members, and rural areas elected a board for each one-room rural school. While this is still generally the practice in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and for the parishes in Quebec, elsewhere the trend has been towards organizing the rural areas of the province into larger administrative units under a central board, although the local district boards may be retained to assist in the administration of individual schools that have not been centralized. Local school authorities have general responsibility for the employment of teachers, maintenance of local schools and related matters within the frame-work of the School Act.

Education is financed largely through local taxes on land and improvements, and from government grants. Methods of determining the grants vary from province to province but usually consist of a basic grant determined on the number of rooms or teachers, average daily attendance, level of instruction given, cost of transportation and possibly some equalization depending on need. Special grants may be given to assist in construction, for audio-visual equipment, for special classes, etc. Very little revenue is received from fees, and that usually from students living outside the district or those in upper high school grades.