

CHAPTER 4

EDUCATION

4.1 Education in Canada

4.1.1 Summary statistics

Reflecting a tendency for more students to stay in school longer, enrolment in postsecondary education grew modestly in the late 1970s and early 1980s while lower levels showed a decline of 12.5% from 1970-71 to 1980-81. Enrolment in both universities and community colleges continued to increase, rising 35% from 1970-71 to 1980-81. Enrolment in private schools advanced 47% from 1970 to 1981 while in public schools it continued to decline (Table 4.1).

Nearly 4.86 million children were enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in 1980-81, about 1.8% fewer than in 1979-80. Falling birth rates since 1960 have been the primary cause of the enrolment slump.

There were 273,700 full-time elementary-secondary teachers in 1980-81, down less than 1.0% from 1979-80. Because the number of teachers has not decreased as quickly as enrolment, every year there has been a smaller number of students in relation to teachers.

The number of full-time postsecondary teachers rose in both universities and community colleges, but more rapidly in the latter to keep pace with enrolment growth.

Spending for education from kindergarten through graduate studies was \$22.9 billion for 1980-81, an increase of 13% over the previous year. Elementary-secondary education absorbed \$15.3 billion of the 1980-81 total. Universities received \$4.4 billion; non-university institutions \$1.8 billion; and vocational training \$1.3 billion.

4.1.2 History of education

The earliest organized forms of education in the territory that was to become Canada were under church control. Quebec was founded as a colony of France in 1608 and the first school soon opened. But it was not until 1824 that Quebec passed an education act. Nova Scotia had done so in 1766, followed by New Brunswick in 1802 and Ontario in 1807. However, education at lower levels continued to be church-dominated until the mid-19th century.

During the 1840s and 1850s a public system of education was developed in Quebec (Canada East), supplemented by schools and colleges operated by Roman Catholic orders. At the same time, Ontario

(Canada West) also established a public system, as did the Maritimes (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island). Higher education before Confederation was conducted in private institutions, most controlled by religious authorities.

Constitutional responsibility. The Constitution Act, 1982, re-enacted the provisions of the Constitution Act, 1867, formerly called the British North America Act, 1867, which placed education "exclusively" under the control of each province, confirming variations in the systems that already existed in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. As other provinces were admitted (Manitoba 1870, British Columbia 1871, Prince Edward Island 1873, Saskatchewan and Alberta 1905 and Newfoundland 1949) the provisions of the section were reaffirmed.

Officially the act recognized no federal presence in education. However, the federal government assumed direct responsibility for the education of persons beyond the bounds of provincial jurisdiction — Indians and Inuit, armed forces personnel and their families, and inmates of federal penal institutions. As the education enterprise expanded, indirect federal participation in the form of financial aid became extensive.

Growth in education. Until the late 1940s, Canada, according to a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, was "one of the less educationally developed of the great democracies". Today Canada ranks among the world's educational leaders. This evolution was compelled by unprecedented population growth combined with the desire of students to continue to higher levels.

The population grew because of the post-war baby boom and sizable net immigration. Rising expectations and widespread belief in education as a means of upward mobility encouraged students to stay in school longer. In the post-war period Canada's enrolment increased faster than that of any other industrialized country. Between 1951 and 1971 elementary-secondary enrolment more than doubled. The 1960s were the decade of fastest growth, with the number of elementary-secondary students increasing