

Taking Stock of Lifelong Learning in Canada: Progress or Complacency? 2005-2010

HIGHLIGHTS OF CCL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Early Childhood Education and Learning

- One-quarter of children enter school with a learning, behavioural or other challenge.
- Expenditures of early childhood development and learning compared with other OECD countries are very low.
- Private/public/home child care. *Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning* shows that Canadians want more support for whichever they choose.
- Free play is essential to young children's healthy physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.

K-12

- Canadians believe in overwhelming numbers that education and learning are the keys to collective prosperity.
- Expenditures in education are high in comparison with other OECD countries, and hold up relatively well even in recessionary periods.
- Canadian parents are prepared to make sacrifices to ensure, through education, their children's competitiveness and welfare.
- Parents generally satisfied with their children's schools, reminiscent of health care, in which most Canadians value their own doctor.
- Significant differences in learning outcomes depending on ethnicity, language and region.
- Relatively egalitarian system and one that integrates immigrant children well.
- High-school completion linked by overwhelming numbers to better social, economic outcomes.
- High-school completion is a protective factor against loss of literacy skills through the aging process.
- Non-Aboriginal youth in Canada are three times more likely to complete a high-school diploma than Aboriginal youth, and almost five times more likely than Inuit and First Nations living on-reserve.
- The cost of dropping out to individuals and society is higher than previously thought.
- The dilemma in boys schooling—consequences for human capital.

Post-secondary Education (PSE)

- PSE must be more broadly understood to include all types of formal education and training after high school, not just colleges and university.
- Canadian community colleges are generally considered to be a strong and responsive component of Canadian PSE.
- Canada's PSE educators are recognised internationally for their quality and for their record in research and peer-reviewed publications.
- Canada's PSE participation rates are among the highest in the OECD, but we are losing ground.
- Canada's expenditures on PSE remain high in comparison to other OECD countries.
- Canada is obliged to expend more per capita on PSE largely because the private sector in Canada fails to provide an appropriate share of research capacity. As a consequence, teaching and learning suffer on Canadian campuses.
- Participation rates in university in particular are not among the highest in the OECD.
- Canada has markedly improved postgraduate education at the Masters level but lags OECD countries at the doctoral level—postgraduate education is a key driver of research, development and innovation.
- Canada ranks low in the OECD for graduates in science and engineering; key drivers of productivity.
- Canada's poor performance in completion of apprenticeships is linked to underdeveloped industry/education/government partnerships. Specifically, securing apprenticeships is the principal bottleneck—not the image of the trades.

- The majority of Aboriginal people who participate in PSE attend either a college or trade school, rather than a university. Non-Aboriginal people in Canada are three times more likely to complete a university program than Aboriginal people.
- Immigrants admitted to Canada have over the last decades been disproportionately high on university qualifications and disproportionately low and decreasing in trade skills that are now in high demand in this country.
- Canada is unique in the developed world for having no national strategy for PSE, no acknowledged and accepted goals, no benchmarks, and no public reporting of results based on widely accepted indicators.
- Canada is also unusual for having no national quality assurance system, no qualifications framework and no system of accreditation. This makes it difficult for both Canadian and international students to navigate the sector to their advantage.
- Canada has the greatest deficiencies in acquisition and use of data on learning after high school of any OECD country. This renders the country incapable of matching labour-market demand to supply, providing adequate information on which students can base study and career decisions, establishing accountability for resources expended and determining how much and what progress is being made.

Taking these last three issues together, Canada is setting the conditions for failure in PSE, not for success.

Adult Learning and Skills Development

- Canada has a very poor record in workplace education and training, in comparison with OECD countries. Improvement has been small over the last two decades.
- Many Canadians have not participated in education and training activities in the last six years (2002–2008). Twice as many Canadians with less than high school were disengaged from education and training activities, compared to those with PSE.
- Individuals with low literacy skills often express no interest in pursuing training and see little reason to do so, regardless of the financial incentives available.
- Many workers with insufficient literacy skills were overly confident about their own abilities and felt that literacy skills had little impact on their job or on future employment prospects.
- Spending on employee training, learning and development has significantly declined over the past 15 years.
- CCL has developed and shared five principles that could guide government financial assistance to enterprises that would improve workplace education and training.
- Data collected over the past decade indicate little or no improvement in the literacy levels of Canadians. On the prose- and document-literacy scales, 42% of Canadian adults—about 9 million Canadians—performed below the internationally accepted minimum considered necessary to succeed in today's economy and society.
- Rates of adult literacy in Canada in the context of a knowledge society and economy are projected to stagnate until 2031.

