

Canadian intergovernmental health experience

Several strands of recent Canadian policy history need to be kept in mind.

1. The Canadian federation faces challenges that are similar to those of comparable federations but at the same time has its own version of those issues.
2. Most players think that the federation is very decentralized because of the significant constitutional powers provinces have, because they raise ___% of revenues before transfers and spend ___% of total government spending. Transfers in Canada are ___% of provincial revenues, compared to ___ for Australia, and ___% for ...
3. Conventional thinking in Quebec however is that the federation is centralized, and increasingly so. This is because...
 - a. Provinces are essentially not represented in central or federal institutions.
 - b. Natural resources are unevenly distributed; most resource taxation proceeds go to provinces and the unevenness makes it very difficult to achieve federal equalization goals
 - c. Provinces, with a few exceptions, have the constitutional responsibility for social programs. But the federal government has used its (controversial) spending power to influence provinces until recently. Inevitably there have been many debates and court cases over the interpretation of the 1867 Constitution especially in areas not provided for originally. Review the “watertight compartments” debate.
4. As in many countries, social policy as we know it started after WWII and has been heavily influenced by British experience.
5. Intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms are available but not used as much as in the past.
6. Neglected issues : cities and First Nations

Against that background, the health and health care story can be told as follows.

1. The constitution provides that provinces are responsible for health care (not actually the language and the federal government has many relevant heads of power (e.g., the criminal law, quarantine)
2. Most of the intergovernmental health activity started after the war. First universal health insurance happened in province of Saskatchewan.
3. Dominance of shared cost programs i.e. lots of conditions. Over time problem of cost escalation and concerns over deficits in the 70s.
4. Major move away from shared-cost programs in 1977 with move to block funding which removed much federal oversight. This was the most important step of disentanglement.
5. Next major event: the Canada Health Act in 1984, now a Canadian icon, with its five conditions including universality and accessibility.
6. Cuts and more cuts in transfers, federal concerns over lower visibility as a result of move to block grants and tax transfers
7. Return of major public health issues: tainted blood, international health, tobacco...
8. Significance of determinants of health for which there are several federal levers and responsibilities.

Where are we today?

1. The subject of health care reform is very topical although experts generally agree that intergovernmental relations is a small factor in determining the success or failure of reform initiatives.

2. The current federal government takes the strong view that health is a provincial responsibility, unfortunately ignoring in my view the many potential federal contributions to health improvements and to health care cost control (through its role in approving drugs)
3. Most of the intergovernmental action in health is through the interprovincial and territorial Council of the Federation. There is however good cooperation on Ebola among public health authorities.
4. How much duplication is there? Drug approvals are in effect conducted twice: once by the federal government for safety and effectiveness and once by provinces for reimbursement by their insurance schemes. Some duplication in prevention programs.
5. How achievable is clarity of roles? Probably is, but that does not mean that governments can or should eliminate points of contact because of the ongoing need for collaboration. The health of First Nations is a major case in point.
6. There are also jurisdiction clashes often involving the federal power over criminal law and the provincial health care jurisdiction. Two recent examples are drug injection sites for addicts and assisted suicide.

Canadian intergovernmental health experience

In Canada, there is no federal department of education and no integrated national system of education. Within the federal system of shared powers, Canada's Constitution Act of 1867 provides that "[I]n and for each province, the legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education." In the 13 jurisdictions — 10 provinces and 3 territories, departments or ministries of education are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels, for technical and vocational education, and for postsecondary education. Some jurisdictions have separate departments or ministries, one having responsibility for elementary-secondary education and another for postsecondary education and skills training.

Regional Differences

While there are a great many similarities in the provincial and territorial education systems across Canada, there are significant differences in curriculum, assessment, and accountability policies among the jurisdictions that express the geography, history, language, culture, and corresponding specialized needs of the populations served.

The mandates of ministries responsible for post-secondary education vary considerably among the provinces. For example, Ontario has a Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, while Alberta has a Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology. Quebec and Newfoundland have maintained a single Ministry of Education. Nova Scotia has a Ministry of Labour and Advanced Education.

The comprehensive, diversified, and widely accessible nature of the education systems in Canada reflects the societal belief in the importance of education.

Educational Funding

In 2005-06, public expenditure on education from provincial, territorial, federal, and local governments amounted to \$75.7 billion spent on all levels of education, which represented 16.1 per cent of total public expenditures. Of this total:

- \$40.4 billion was for elementary and secondary education
- \$30.6 billion for postsecondary education

- \$4.6 billion for other types of education such as special retraining and language training for newcomers

Elementary and Secondary Education

Public education is provided free to all Canadians who meet various age and residence requirements. Local governance of education is usually entrusted to school boards, school districts, school divisions, or district education councils. Their members are elected by public ballot. The power delegated to the local authorities is at the discretion of the provincial and territorial governments and generally consists of the operation and administration (including financial) of the group of schools within their board or division, curriculum implementation, responsibility for personnel, enrolment of students, and initiation of proposals for new construction or other major capital expenditures.

Minority-Language Education:

Canada is a bilingual country, and the constitution recognizes French and English as its two official languages. According to the 2006 Census, more than 85 per cent of French-mother-tongue Canadians live in the province of Quebec: the minority language rights of French-speaking students living outside the province of Quebec and English-speaking students living in the province of Quebec are protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter defines the conditions under which Canadians have the right to access publicly funded education in either minority language. Each province and territory has established French-language school boards to manage the French-first-language schools. In the province of Quebec, the same structure applies to education in English-first-language schools.

Funding Sources

Public funding for education comes either directly from the provincial or territorial government or through a mix of provincial transfers and local taxes collected either by the local government or by the boards with taxing powers. Provincial and territorial regulations, revised yearly, provide the grant structure that sets the level of funding for each school board based on factors such as the number of students, special needs, and location.

The Federal Contribution

The federal government of Canada provides financial support for postsecondary education and the teaching of the two official languages. In addition, the federal government is responsible for the education of Registered Indian people on reserve, personnel in the armed forces and the coast guard, and inmates in federal correctional facilities.

The main instrument of recent federal financial support has been through the exercise of the spending power, which has taken many forms over the past 60 years. In addition, the personal income tax system has also provided another vehicle for federal support of students and their families through provisions such as Education and Textbook Tax Credits, Tuition Tax Credit, student financial assistance and Registered Education Savings Plans. Every year, the Canada Student Loans Program and related provincial and territorial programs provide loans, grants, and interest forgiveness to over 350,000 postsecondary students. The Canada Student Grant Program provides income-based grants to postsecondary students.

Other policy areas include foreign student recruitment, immigration including credential recognition for immigrants, fulfilling treaty obligations for First Nations

Aboriginal Education at the Elementary and Secondary Levels

The federal government shares responsibility with First Nations for the provision of education to children ordinarily resident on reserve and attending provincial, federal, or band-operated schools. In 2006-07, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada supported the education of 120,000 First Nations K-12 students living on reserves across Canada. Band-operated schools located on reserves educate approximately 60 per cent of the students living on reserves, while 40 per cent go off reserve to schools under provincial

authority, usually for secondary school. First Nations children living off reserve are educated in the public elementary and secondary schools in their cities, towns, and communities, with the provinces and territories providing the majority of educational services for Aboriginal students.

Aboriginal Postsecondary Education

Funding is also provided for postsecondary assistance and programs for Status Indian students residing on or off reserve, as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada supports approximately 23,000 students annually for tuition, books, and living allowances. The department also provides support to some postsecondary institutions for the development and delivery of college- and university-level courses designed to enhance the postsecondary educational achievement of Status Indians and Inuit students.

Federal Funding Support for Postsecondary Education

In addition to providing revenue for universities and colleges through transfer payments, the federal government offers direct student support. These programs, and many similar ones offered by the provinces and territories, are designed to make postsecondary education more widely accessible and to reduce student debt:

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

Role of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) was formed in 1967 by the provincial and territorial ministers responsible for education to provide a forum in which they could discuss matters of mutual interest, undertake educational initiatives cooperatively, and represent the interests of the provinces and territories with national educational organizations, the federal government, foreign governments, and international organizations. CMEC is the national voice for education in Canada and, through CMEC, the provinces and territories work collectively on common objectives in a broad range of activities at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels.

Activity Areas and Objectives

Within the four pillars of lifelong learning, ministers have identified eight specific activity areas and accompanying objectives:

- Literacy: Raise the literacy levels of Canadians.
- Aboriginal Education: Eliminate the gap in academic achievement and graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.
- Postsecondary Capacity: Enhance and stabilize the long-term capacity of postsecondary systems to meet the training and learning needs of all Canadians seeking higher education learning opportunities.
- Education for Sustainable Development: Raise students' awareness and encourage them to become actively engaged in working for a sustainable society.
- International and National Representation: Speak effectively and consistently for education and learning in Canada in both pan-Canadian and international settings.
- Official Languages: Promote and implement support programs for minority-language education and second-language programs that are among the most comprehensive in the world.
- Learning Assessment Programs and Performance Indicators: Support the implementation of national and international learning assessment programs and performance indicators for education systems.
- Education Data and Research Strategy: Create comprehensive, long-term strategies to collect, analyze, and disseminate nationally and internationally comparable data and research.