

Canada: An Exploration of Educational Technology

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IDE 772: Educational Technology in International Settings

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June 25, 2021

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Introduction

Educational technology is viewed by many as an emerging subject amongst the world's educational environment, but educational technology has existed within developed nations for several decades. While the technology that evolves from the ICT industry emerges on a nearly constant pace, the theories revolving around, and the basis of, educational technology is as commonplace in the classroom of today as books, whiteboards, and desks. In no country of our world is this more evident or prevalent as it is in Canada. Canada's focus on education, and the evolution thereof, has elevated its relatively small population to the forefront of global educational advancement. Throughout this paper, this writer will explore and elaborate upon Canadian educational practices, including the history behind them and their potential futures. Canada is a diverse nation in countless ways including, culture, ethnicity, landscape, and economy, Canadian education is no different.

Context

To provide proper context for this book chapter, this writer will seek to explore the contextual factors that aggregate Canadian life. More specifically, this writer will elaborate on Canadian geography, demography, economy, society, culture, and the political aspects of Canadian life. Through the following sections, this writer intends to provide a foundational perspective from which readers can base their understanding of education and educational technology within the nation of Canada.

Geographic

The nation of Canada is the northernmost country within the continent of North America and shares its only land border with the United States of America, to its South. Canada is the second largest country on Earth, as it envelops over ten million square kilometers of land space

spread across three territories and ten provinces (Britannica, 2021). The Canadian province of Ontario is home to the national capital city of Ottawa and is Canada's most heavily populated province with a population in excess of 13 million people. While Canada is one of the world's largest countries, it is sparsely populated with nearly 20 million of its citizens living within the borders of 10 major cities (Government of Canada, 2021).

Due to Canada's encompassment of such a great swath of land space, it experiences a variety of climatic conditions and landscapes. Further, the fact that Canada maintains coastal regions on both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans results in differing levels of precipitation across the country (Britannica, 2021). The province of British Columbia, on Canada's West coast, has seen annual rainfall in excess of 100 inches in certain locations while provinces on the East coast have experienced over 50 inches of annual precipitation (Britannica, 2021). The Northern two-thirds of Canada maintain cool to extremely cold temperatures year round due to a close proximity to the Arctic Circle. The Southern third of the country shares a similar climate to that of the Northern United States (Britannica, 2021). Lastly, Canada possesses a wide range of landscape with seacoast, mountains, plains, and tundra providing a unique dynamic regarding a nearly all-encompassing geography.

Demographic

Canadian demographics closely align with those of its neighbor to the South, the United States of America. The province of Ontario hosts over 34% of the entire population of Canada, which as of the 2019 Canadian census is 37.59 million (Government of Canada, 2021). To provide perspective, the state of California's population is 39.53 million, according to the U.S. census Bureau (2020). Further, the population of Canada has seen a significant increase in the past decade with a nearly 6.5% increase since 2016 and a 5% increase from 2001 to 2016

(Government of Canada, 2021). Moreover, due to Canadian emphasis on inclusion and acceptance, immigration accounts for over 65% of these population increases (Government of Canada, 2021). These rates of immigration allow Canada to maintain one of the highest global rates regarding per-capita immigration.

One of the primary drivers of Canadian immigration and population growth is universal healthcare, facilitated through public funding (NCEE, 2021). The Canadian health care system is of particular importance due to the increasing age of its population. Canada is home to a significant retiree population and maintains an average citizen age of nearly 42.5 years. When coupled with a life expectancy of over 80 years, Canadian universal healthcare plays a vital role in the provision of healthcare to its population (Government of Canada, 2021). Additionally, Canadian healthcare consumes nearly 12% of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP), a figure of over 240 billion dollars annually according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (2017).

Social and Cultural

Canadian's pride themselves on their approach to multiculturalism, acceptance, inclusion, and fair and equal representation. Thus, these aspects play a pivotal role in Canadian society. Although Canada's foundation is rooted in European colonization, its indigenous population serves as a pivotal factor in modern Canadian society (Britannica, 2021). Canadian First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people account for almost 9% of Canada's population and maintain strong involvement and representation in Canadian governmental affairs (Government of Canada, 2021).

The population of Canada consists of wide array of ethnicity, religious denomination, and national origin amongst its peoples. The Canadian minority population accounts for nearly 23%

of its total population with the majority of Canadian citizens identifying as Canadian. Freedom of religious practice is also a great contributor to Canadian immigration rates. While Christianity accounts for over 65% of Canadian religion, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, and Sikh faiths are well represented and maintain freedom of religious practice within Canada (Government of Canada, 2021). This proverbial melting pot of culture and religion gives way to countless languages that are used within Canadian borders, however, English and French are maintained as the national languages of Canada (Britannica, 2021).

Economic

With a GDP just shy of 2 trillion dollars, Canada maintains a significant global economic advantage. Canada's economy may be attributed to its heavy involvement in oil production and forestry services with petroleum and lumber serving as its two highest exports. 75% of Canada's workforce is focused on the service industry, while mining, timber, and oil production account for the remainder (Britannica, 2021). Ultimately, Canadian soil accounts for nearly 15% of the global oil reserves while nearly 30% of the world's timber is harvested from Canadian land (Government of Canada, 2021). This unique dynamic provides Canada with a strong economy that seeks to serve the global market while simultaneously providing for national interests and the population within its borders (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2021).

Political

A democratic and liberally focused majority dominates Canadian political views. Ultimately, Canada defines itself as a full democracy with a primarily bipartisan center. When compared with the politics of the United States, Canada's central political theme would be viewed as liberal, while its right winged Conservative Party of Canada and left winged New

Democratic Party balance the government. Canada's parliament is represented through a constitutional monarchy and foundationally serves judicial, executive, and legislative purposes for the Canadian federal government. The current Canadian monarch is Queen Elizabeth II while Justin Trudeau holds the seat of Prime Minister (Government of Canada, 2021).

Education

Canadian education is mandated by law across all of its territories and provinces. Compulsory education must be attended up to a minimum age of 16 years for all jurisdictions with 18 years of age being the minimum for select areas unless graduation from high school is achieved prior to these ages (Government of Canada, 2021). The Canadian education system is federally mandated with control over educational programs being retained by each territory and province, except for indigenous education, which is the responsibility of the Canadian government. Canadian school years typically run from the month of September through June and account for 190 days of classroom activities and in-seat instruction (Government of Canada, 2021). Through the rest of this section, this writer will elaborate on the history, reforms, and current situation of Canadian education.

History

The widely accepted writings of Charles Phillips categorize Canadian education into four periods. The first of these periods occurred from the onset of the 18th through the mid-19th century and was primarily characterized by religiously focused and church-controlled educational practices (MacKay & Firmin, 2008). The second period established by Phillips extended to the beginning of the 20th century and included centralization of educational governing and educational funding procured through taxation. This period birthed the creation of free education across Canadian territory (MacKay & Firmin, 2008).

During the early 20th century, the third of Phillips' four periods was marked by the transition from federal control to provincial and territorial management and funding. Finally, the fourth, and current, period's beginnings correlate with the onset of World War II and have witnessed the merging of federal support with provincial and territorial educational governing, along with the establishment of Ministers of Education within each province and territory (MacKay & Firmin, 2008). Historically, Canadian education has been primarily focused on ensuring the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of higher socioeconomic groups while others were primarily relegated to vocational education (MacKay & Firmin, 2008). As our world has evolved, as has Canada, and current educational practices and pathways are now accessible to the majority of Canadian citizens, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Major Reforms

One of the first, and most prominent educational reforms to occur within Canada, is centered on Regulation 17 (Brown & Cook, 1974). Issued in 1912, this regulation drastically limited the availability of French language based education and emphasized, encouraged, and nearly enforced the sole use of English within Canadian schools. Due to the high, and growing, number of the French-Canadian population, Regulation 17 was protested throughout Canada and met its end, by way of repeal, in 1927 giving way to provincial and territorial freedom to utilize English or French as primary languages within educational institutions (Brown & Cook, 1974).

To date, Canada has experienced several educational reforms, but the most impactful reform may very well have been the Victoria Declaration. In 1999, the Victoria Declaration was published in collaboration amongst the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2020). The Victoria Declaration utilized the collaborative efforts of provincial and territorial educational governments to develop educational goals to effect national

education (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2020). Through this collaboration and utilization of educational practices focused on affecting national education, the Victoria Declaration has resulted in Canadian educational results surpassing those of the United States in recent years (Haché, 2021).

Current Situation

Currently, Canadian education sits at the forefront of the global educational environment with a strong portfolio dedicated to enhancing the knowledge skills, and attitudes of Canadian students. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a global study coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), has displayed significantly prominent data regarding Canadian education (Government of Canada, 2021). According to PISA, Canadian educational programs maintain ratings of well performing, or higher, in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and reading literacy. Canada's current situation regarding educational performance may be attributed to the fact that Canada spends nearly 6% of its GDP on its educational programs. In contrast, the United States spends approximately 3.5% of its GDP on equivalent programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

Educational Technology in Canada

The emergence of Canadian educational technology did not occur through happenstance, nor specified intent. Canadian educational technology has, similar to the United States, been integrated over time as a requisite form of educational evolution. As the global technology enterprise has expanded, Canada has made every attempt to remain relevant and dedicated to the pursuit of technological incorporation within its society and educational programs. Throughout

this section, this writer will explore the history, standards, reforms, projects, current situation, trends, strengths, and challenges of Canada's educational technology industry.

History

Due the previously elaborated history of Canadian education, it is apparent that Canada's educational environment has been heavily influenced by both federal and provincial and territorial governing. While the relegation of educational program administration to provincial and territorial governments enhanced national educational progress, it took centuries to develop a cohesive and collaborative relationship amongst all governing parties. Further, with the recent emergence of educational technologies, it seems as though the Canadian educational environment is again experiencing some challenges due to the separate entities, which govern education across the nation.

Tracing the genesis of educational technology in Canada is actually quite difficult due to the separate territorial and provincial governing bodies involved. This writer's research has identified that during the 1970s through the 1980s most Canadian provinces began to legitimize educational technology but did little to incorporate it into mainstream classrooms (Haché, 2021). Through the decade of the 1980s, educational technologies had become quite prevalent in Canadian education, but budgetary restrictions on the provincial and territorial levels diminished its potential. By the beginning of the 1990s, Canadian classrooms began to experience a rapid uptick in the utilization of computers and other early technologies as prices slowly began to fall (Anderse, Duncan, & Pungente, 2005).

In concert with the reduction of cost, school administrators and educational ministries began to collaborate on methods for employing these technologies into the classroom.

Accredited to the progressive ideals of Canadian society, acceptance of educational technology

was not much of an issue and as the lifespan of technology has grown, so has the support for its use in Canadian classrooms (Andersen, Duncan, & Pungente, 2005). Today, Canada is one of the most prominent users and developers of educational technology in the world.

National Educational Technology Standards

While no national standards exist to govern the use of educational technology in Canada, Canadian provinces and territories work together, through collaboration, to identify the means and methods to best support the educational goals of Canadian learners. Further, with regard to the previously mentioned Victoria Declaration, Canadian Ministers of Education maintain strong relationships focused on the advancement of Canada's educational programs (Government of Canada, 2021). Today, Canadian institutions benefit from the same levels of technological incorporation as their allies to the South, the United States. Additionally, technological immersion begins in the first years of compulsory education and persists through all levels, including university (Parchoma, Power, & Lock, 2020).

The only factor that limits the implementation of educational technologies in Canadian classrooms remains to be of financial nature. To combat the financial restrictions that many areas of Canada face, national programs have been established to aid in funding, establishment, and preservation of educational technologies across Canada (Government of Canada, 2021). Ultimately, Canadian educational technology standards have achieved, if not exceeded, parity with that of the rest of the developed world, as Canada has emerged as one of the world's top performers regarding educational technology implementation and development.

National Educational Technology Reforms

Canada's current situation was not born without struggle. Although the Canadian values of acceptance and inclusion run deep, the initial implementation of educational technologies

within Canadian classrooms was met with some resistance. Proponents of traditional teaching methods, rooted in Canadian religion-based instructional practices, argued that educational technologies would limit a student's ability to perform as they may become dependent on resources that may not always be available (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2020). Further, arguments focused on the reduction of teacher to student interaction became prevalent and posed the idea that Canadian students may lose their ability to interact with others in professional working environments.

The Victoria Declaration has since been expanded to include verbiage and methodologies for the incorporation of educational technologies across the nation with efforts to standardize educational technology education for Canadian students (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2020). It is the opinion of this writer that much like any other environment, Canada experienced resistance to change, but has since worked to address these concerns and dispel false narratives to ensure that Canadian students remain on par with the rest of the world.

Major Projects

Many educational professionals have identified the World-Wide-Web Course Tool (WebCT) as the most prolific educational technology project in Canadian history. Originally developed by Murray Goldberg while serving as computer science professor at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in 1995, WebCT was designed to serve as a learning management system (LMS) that would allow UBC students to access course material through the internet (Goldberg, M. & Salari, S., 2020). Goldberg's research displayed that through the implementation of web-based resources, students would be able to improve academic performance and enhance the learning environment through user contributions, interactivity, and collaboration. By 1999, WebCT was being utilized by millions of students across the globe as

their primary LMS, cementing WebCT as the first broadly accepted and utilized LMS in global education (Goldberg, M. & Salari, S., 2020). WebCT was purchased by Blackboard Incorporated in 2006 and has since been rebranded to Blackboard Learning System (Gibson, S. & Oberg, D., 2008).

Current Situation

The current situation of educational technology in Canada is that it serves as an example, by which many other nations model their own educational technology industries. Educational technology is heavily integrated throughout Canadian educational institutions from primary levels through vocational schools to all levels of university. While the aforementioned predecessor to Blackboard, WebCT no longer exists, Canadian institutions have continued to pursue educational technologies through open sources such as Canvas and Moodle while also retaining a respectable amount of Blackboard users (Gibson, S. & Oberg, D., 2008). Ultimately, Canadian educational technology is a diverse and dynamic environment, which seeks to capitalize on emerging technologies while simultaneously utilizing existing technologies to the greatest extent possible. In summary, the Canadian educational technology industry is amongst the most respected and productive in the world and is continually seeking to advance the development and implementation of educational technologies across the globe.

Future Trends

As the world has struggled during the years preceding this writing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so has the nation of Canada. Educational practices have been forced to evolve in ways that were previously unexplored. The emphasis placed on distance learning during the pandemic has given birth to countless adaptations to preexisting educational technology platforms. Canada has sought to not only move through this time of tumult, but to emerge better

and stronger than before. Canadian educational technology has boomed as of late with great advancements in distance learning capabilities.

Companies such as Skyprep, Fresh Grade, Fair Chance Learning, and Peekapak have all seen rapid growth and development to answer the call for alternatives to traditional face-to-face learning (MindShare Learning Technology, 2016). Through the development, implementation, utilization, and constant evaluation of these platforms and so many others like them, Canada is trending towards full autonomous learning capability, in concert with retained traditional instruction methods, and every mix in between. Maintaining an annual value of over 1 billion dollars and growing, the Canadian educational technology industry is leading the charge regarding global implementation of educational technology (ItBusiness, 2020).

Strengths and Challenges

The strengths of Canada's educational technology industry lie within its nation's societal perspectives, national values, and core beliefs. The ideals of inclusion, parity, advancement, and acceptance allow Canada to venture into the future of educational technology with a determined focus on improving the education of its citizens. Further, these values offer Canada a unique perspective, which accounts for the individuality of each learner, allowing inclusivity in future technological development. Lastly, Canadian governmental support enables purposeful, meaningful, and resolute reinforcement of educational programs through the dedication of nearly 6% of the Canadian GDP to education across its territories and provinces (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2021).

The primary weakness of Canada's educational technology industry is the separation of educational ministries amongst its provincial and territorial governments. While every attempt at collaboration and cohesion is made, it is still not a standardized educational program. Many

believe that standardization across all municipalities within Canada would allow a stronger and more inclusive educational environment, which would allow the disenfranchised rural communities to gain ground on the urban city centers regarding educational equity.

Educational Technology Resources

Due to the high level of educational technology value within Canada's borders, it serves as a wealth of resource for the global educational technology industry. In the following section, this writer will expound upon some of the key figures, organizations, and associations in Canadian educational technology. Further, this writer will provide both academic and organizational points of contact for readers to engage with for further discussion regarding Canadian educational technology.

Key People in Educational Technology

Canada is home to countless educational technology pioneers, many of which have been previously sourced or cited throughout this writing. The following individuals are emerging educational technology professionals that hold the potential to greatly affect Canadian education in the future (MindShare Learning Technology, 2020).

- Dr. George J. Haché, Professor of Educational, Memorial University, Newfoundland
 - Prolific and esteemed researcher, designer, developer, and writer focused on educational technology
- Dr. Steve Joordens, Professor of Psychology, University of Toronto, Ontario
 - Prominent researcher on the impacts of educational technology regarding the psychological well-being of students

- Dr. Jordan Tinney, Superintendent/CEO, Surrey School District, British Columbia
 - Has been identified as a trailblazer regarding the implementation of educational technologies with the Surrey School District.
- Dwayne Matthews, Chief Innovation Evangelist, Future of Education Strategist, Ontario
 - Aids instructional professionals across Canada in gaining understanding on emerging technologies.
- Dr. Thierry Karsenti, Research Chairperson on Canadian Technologies in Education, Quebec
 - Serves as a major supporter of classroom integration and support of educational technology development in Canada

Key Organizations and Associations in Educational Technology

In keeping with the emerging theme presented in the previous section, this writer will elaborate below on a few emerging organizations focused on Canadian educational technology (Tracxn, 2021). While these organizations and associations may not serve a key role currently, current key organizations have been identified, sourced, and cited throughout this writing.

- D2L

D2L provides cloud-based LMS activity platforms focused on testing, reporting, conferencing, and the gamification of instructional material. D2L is based in Kitchener, Ontario, was established in 1999, and is Canada's first-known platform capable of sharing, storing, and organizing content across multiple educational institutions.

- Top Hat

Top Hat is an educational application developer, based in Toronto, Ontario since 2009. Top Hat allows full student interactivity with all aspects of the classroom including, but not limited to attendance, discussion, text resources, assignments, study materials, and testing.

- GradeSlam

Founded in 2014 in Montreal, Quebec, GradeSlam allows users to access live tutoring through a chat-based platform. Users can share documents, and files with tutors to enhance studying and remediation efforts in areas of academic difficulty.

- Classcraft

Classcraft, located in Quebec City, Quebec, was founded in 2013 with the focus of creating entertaining educational environments designed to engage learners in collaborative and cooperative interactive classroom environments. Classcraft was awarded EdTech Digest's Academic Gaming Solution of the Year award in 2015.

- Corporate Finance Institute

Corporate Finance Institute focuses on the design and development of financial training software. Based in Vancouver, British Columbia Corporate Finance Institute was founded in 2016 and has since become one of the leading educational technology companies in Canada.

Points of Contact

Academic

- University of Calgary, Faculty of Education, Graduate Division of Educational Research.

Located at <https://werkund.ucalgary.ca/graduate-programs/future-students/programs/masters/master-arts-ma>

- University of British Columbia, Vancouver Campus, Master of Educational Technology.

Located at <https://met.ubc.ca/>

- Concordia University, Sir George Williams Campus, Master of Educational Technology.

Located at <https://www.concordia.ca/artsci/education/programs/graduate/educational-technology.html>

Organizational

- EdCan Network

The EdCan Network's mission is to ensure that all students thrive in Canadian schools through service as an intermediary across all Canadian educational institutions. EdCan produces and disseminates evidence-based educational content to educators, parents, students, and policy makers within Canada to ensure maintenance of equitability in Canadian education. EdCan Network can be located at <https://www.edcan.ca/>.

- International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

ISTE is a nonprofit organization seeking to provide support and resourcing to facilitators of educational technology-focused classrooms. As an international organization, ISTE holds wide-reaching capability and is known to be a strong supporter of the Canadian educational technology industry. David Moursund founded ISTE in 1979.

Factors to be Considered When Working in Canada

The following section was extracted from this writer's previous writing, *Educational Technology: Mapping the Uncharted* (2021). Many factors must be considered when planning and implementing educational technology initiatives in new and unfamiliar settings. The diversity of the nations that span our planet regarding society, culture, religion, and economy is extensive, broad, and ranging. This diversity becomes of critical consideration when one begins to design, develop, and implement any program in a specified area of human population, especially educational programs. The following factors have been identified by this writer through focused research pertaining to the nation of Canada. Further, this writer has divided the identified factors into national and cultural categories to differentiate these factors and the environments that influence them (Petrie, 2021).

National

National, or federal government, factors pertain directly to the policies, legislature, and governing documents of the identified nation. Canada is a democratic nation that prides itself upon its liberal focus and emphasis on equality, social justice, and a humanistic approach to government. Moreover, Canadian policies directed at maintaining a just and fair society are protected by the Canadian constitution (Dyck, 2011) (Petrie, 2021).

One key national factor, identified by this writer, is linguistic consideration as Canada recognizes both the English and French languages as national languages. This factor must be carefully considered due to the criticality of translation of educational technology products (Chen, 2017). Due to the bilingual nature of Canada, it is imperative that educational technologies are designed to reach and influence the majority of the nation's population not only in word, but in meaning as well. Meaningful instruction should always be designed from a learner-centric perspective and the incorporation of both Canadian national languages is imperative to the success of any project focused on Canada (Petrie, 2021).

Societal

From a societal perspective, Canadian citizens foster and encourage an environment focused on multiculturalism (Sikka, 2014). With the historical influences of British, French, and indigenous peoples, Canada has grown into a society that embraces acceptance, tolerance, and inclusion (Sikka, 2014). Due to the collective acceptance of the majority of Canadian citizens, educational technologies designed and implemented within Canada must be done so with modification and flexibility as a primary consideration (Petrie, 2021).

To achieve success, educational technologies must be able to be rapidly adapted to account for previously unrecognized societal factors. Ultimately, educational technologies in

Canada, and across the world, must be reflective of the society they intend to serve. Through purposeful design and development, instructional designers can identify societal differences and changes, and best adjust technologies to serve the target audiences (Petrie, 2021).

Cultural

Culturally, Canadian selective immigration policies have given way to a true melting pot of cultural influence. As previously mentioned, the historic roots of Canadian culture reach to British and French influence and run parallel to a deeply respected native culture regarding Canada's indigenous populations (Gibson & Oberg, 2008). The nation of Canada recognizes approximately 600 indigenous, or First Nation, populations composed of over 1.5 million people (StatCan, 2006) (Petrie, 2021).

Gaining a true and clear understanding of the cultural differences within the country of concern must remain a top priority of an instructional designer. The countless cultures that compose Canada, coupled with the Canadian value of broad inclusion, present a true challenge regarding the successful implementation of educational technology within Canada. One must work diligently to account for the varying, and often distinct, differences of target population cultural aspects such as ethics, values, morals, priorities, and principles to design effective instructional technologies (Petrie, 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the nation of Canada is posed as one of the world's leading developers and implementers of educational technology. While bearing countless similarities to its closest ally, the United States of America, Canadian culture and society are far different from that of most other countries. It is the opinion of this writer that these differences, regarding values, ethics, morals, and political focus are what enable the nation of Canada to flourish in educational

technology while many other nations struggle. Ultimately, Canada serves as an excellent example of how other countries should embrace educational technology while constantly moving forward to maintain relevancy, purpose, and a focus on the future of educating our world.

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