



## On the Characteristics of Higher Education in Canada and Its Inspiration

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### Abstract

Higher education in Canada has rich features: the unique system of educational administration and policy; the distinct features of university management model; dynamic international education; and flexible and diverse in the school system and the financing system. Drawn from the four aspects, it could be used for reference in China's higher education reform: to strengthen macro-control; to expand university autonomy; to establish the credit system as the main content of teaching management system; to continue to strengthen international exchanges and cooperation; to ensure the government's main body of investment in higher education and to establish the systems of multi-channel financing.

**Keywords:** Canada, Higher education, Education characteristics, Inspiration

Canada is one of the world's seven major industrialized countries, and also is a country with developed technology and education. The strong economy support and the continued development of a century's history makes Canada have gradually developed a higher education with its own characteristics and advantages. The accumulated lots of valuable experience are worthwhile for us to learn.

### I. The Development History and its Characteristics of Higher Education in Canada

#### 1.1 Development history of higher education in Canada

There is 300-years-history of higher education in Canada. As the British and French colonies in the past, and influenced strongly by Europe at the beginning, the earliest university in Canada was founded by the Church. Canada's first private non-church university, McGill University, founded in 1821, evolved into the first comprehensive university in the 1950s, after that, the comprehensive universities were founded one by one, such as Dalhousie University, Queen's University, Toronto University and so on. Until the establishment of the Federation in 1867, there were 18 universities in the four provinces in Canada. Several universities named by the provinces were founded after western four provinces joined the Federation. After the end of World War II until the 1970s, it is Canada's booming period of higher education; the 1960 saw Canadian higher education into a golden period of development and the formation of institutionalizing the public universities as the main body; From the late of 20 Century to the beginning of the 21st century, Canada entered the stage of the popularization of higher education. <sup>[1]</sup> At present, in Canada with the only 30 million people, there are 92 Universities, 122 Colleges, more than 400 community colleges and technical colleges and a small number of practical and private vocational schools. Each year, nearly 1,300,000 full-time and part-time Students study in the College or University, the gross enrollment rate of higher education in Canada is about 50%, ranks higher in the world.

#### 1.2 Canada's characteristics of higher education

##### 1.2.1 Unique administrative system of higher education and policy

Canada is a multicultural country, there is no the Ministry of Education at the central level, it is mainly by the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) to coordinate the provincial education policy. The Federal Constitution in 1867 gives the provinces the legal education and management of legislative power, and until now it is unchanged. Provincial laws clearly stipulates that the provincial government is directly responsible for higher education, according to the provincial legislative, they can approve the establishment of public universities and other institutions of higher education, standardize the standards use of the name of university, approve the right of the granting degree, oversee the establishment of University Board of Trustees and the Senate of the University as the regulatory body based on the legal proceedings. Most of Canada's colleges and universities are provincial public, so most of the run fund of colleges and universities are supplied by the provincial government, but the provincial government does not directly interfere with

the university of academic activities, the universities have a high degree of autonomy and academic freedom, the autonomy of the universities also have been fully reflected, such as their own admission, setting up their own expertise and professional direction, setting their own courses and credits, developing their own personnel system and the distribution of the new teaching and administrative staff, jointing independent schools and independent international education exchanges and cooperation. It is the right kind of clear-cut system that promotes Canada's higher education strong, powerful and positive.

Although the federal government does not charge directly management of education, but it guide generally the development of education from the perspective of the national interest of. First, federal legislation and government departments through language, religion aboriginal, cultural heritage, human resources development, and immigration, etc, the related legislation and regulations departments guide for the development of Canada's education development, providing a legal guarantee for equality of opportunity in national education. Second, the federal government transfer payments to provinces to allocate funds, funding for education is not limited to the specific amount, but it has a direct impact on the size of the provincial education funding. And part of the federal government departments related to the human resources, economic development invests from the budget in education or education of foreign exchange. In addition, the federal government fund to "Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council", "Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council" and "Canadian Institutes of Health" and other agencies, which provide a large number of university research funds by tender.

### 1.2.2 Distinct Features of the University Management

Canada's universities have different characteristics and educational goals. Such as, University of Toronto, in Ontario, is a university which has right to award medical doctorate, its outstanding contribution to medicine, has been identified as Canada's most extensive research universities for many years. It is a well-known institution of Canada, the fifth university in North America and one of the world's leading universities. Department of Mathematics of the University of Waterloo is one of the world's largest mathematics and computer science education and research centers; its high standard of education and research win it world-class reputation. Although the different features, the Universities of Canada have the following basic common features on the whole:

Firstly, it is the flexible teaching and management system. In Canada's university education system, there exist system of credit course, the academic year with credit and the academic year, even in a university different teaching management system are used because of different majors, the University of Toronto is a combination of all three. As a result, students in schools have a larger degree of freedom in study. It can take into account the different levels of learning needs of students, and fully reflect the people-centered philosophy of education. After enrollment, students have not any classes, according to their personal interests, hobbies, talents, expertise, as well as future development need; they could have their own design, choice of courses, on-demand programs, teachers-on-demand, self-study, the formation of individual knowledge, skills and capacity system. Students can also determine the number of their own education according to the completion of their credit. Canadian students have a free course, but it is not easy to obtain credit. Failed courses must be rebuilt; there is no opportunity for make-up. Besides the free classes, students also have the option program; students must decide the teaching plans and all courses needed at the second year. In order to encourage the enthusiasm of students, the school also allows a small number of good students design their own teaching plan. Canada's post-graduate entry has no uniform requirements without entrance examinations. Entry requirements to a post-graduate are a 4-year bachelor's degree, the average level in above-B (the equivalent of 73 percentage points system) of the subject in the final year or the high grades. Entry requirements to a doctoral student are a master's degree, the average level in above-B (the equivalent of 78 percentage points system) of the subjects during the master stage.

Secondly, it is the use of heuristic teaching and interactive teaching methods in class, and the focus on innovation ability. First, paying attention to the students' hands-on practical ability and capacity, each course requires students to complete a task. This task requires students to have their own project based on the curriculum, after approved, it could be completed in the lab. Second, paying attention to students' plays the initiative and creativity training. When the teacher instruct, they encourage questions and discussion, students can ask questions and exchange ideas with teachers in order to stimulate creative thinking. The third is to create the atmosphere of learning and application of modern teaching methods. In addition to the needed big classrooms, generally small classrooms are used. Desks are placed to make more use of the U-shaped mainly for the sake of the discussion and exchange among students. Classrooms are equipped with modern teaching facilities and teachers use the modern means of teaching.

Thirdly, it is the student-centered service system for students. Students get a very good service as soon as they are enrolled. Even the work of student affairs is taken as the academic affairs. Schools generally set up special network for the freshmen, thus providing timely service and guidance from the Internet for all students. Students can get a card for photocopying, fax, food; borrow books, and so on as soon as they attend the school. School also hire consultants, and set up a learning center for students, any student in need of help can get counseling in person in the center. Meanwhile, the school also set up employment centers, and often gets in touch with employer. Each school set up different clubs for

students, in which students can show their interests and expertise. Through the network, schools offer special service and information for the future students.

Fourthly, it is the global appointment of teachers and the system of combing “full-time” with “part-time”. With the internationalization of education and diversity, the appointment of teachers has no national boundaries. School principals, the president of the department, are appointed from the world. For example, School of Business and Information Technology affiliated from Ontario University and Technology Institute own 14 professors, from 8 countries and they can speak 12 languages. Canada College also has a system both “full-time” and “part-time”. The latter occupies a large proportion of the teaching staff, mainly because of the appointment of “non-full-time” teachers spend less, to alleviate the financial pressure on schools. The ratio of “Full-time” and “part-time” faculty is about 6:4 in general.

### 1.2.3 Vibrant international education

Canada’s colleges and universities have a strong sense of internationalization, whether in the establishment of institutions or hiring teachers, the research subjects, students’ enrollment and employment, they can consider from the international point of view. For example, the recruited 3,200 international students of the University of York are from 50 countries; the enrolled 3,000 students in Seneca College are from 75 countries. They truly believe that the idea of internationalization is to allow students have access to international culture, so they require students to learn foreign languages and cultures. Canada’s international education includes the following six aspects: first, encouraging their students to learn a second language. Such as the University of York in recent years has increased the variety of European language courses, adding Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic and so on. Second, integrating the foreign language and courses. The third is the implementation of the cooperation with foreign institutions. The fourth is to send students abroad for short-term internships. The fifth is to attract international students to study in Canada. The sixth is to carry out scientific research cooperation with foreign colleges and universities.

### 1.2.4 Flexible and diverse in the school system and the financing system

Canada colleges and universities adopt flexible and diverse system on running school. It can be summed up in four combined systems<sup>[2]</sup>: First, universities and colleges directly joint. Take York University and Seneca College for example, one branch of Seneca College is established in York University campus, the two schools implement the sharing of resources, mutual recognition of credits. The second is setting up a new educational institution on the cooperation of the university and college. Take the University of Guelph and the Institute of Hanbo for example; the two universities jointly produce a new educational entity, that is, Cuelph-Humber branch. Funded by the government, the branch gains a separate legal entity and has its own board of directors and an independent intellectual property rights, teachers are from the two schools. Students can get the two schools diploma. Third, many universities form a new alliance together. For example, in Ontario, ten 10 universities work together to build a “Coalition of Nurses”. The League has its own budget, separate and independent board of directors, developing their own teaching plan and teaching quality standards. But students are still in various colleges and universities and get diplomas from them. The fourth is the formation of a new university based on the development of the Institute. Approved by the Ontario provincial government, on the basis of Ontario Institute of Technology and General Motors, Ontario University was established.

Canadian universities are mainly funded out of the four channels: First, the federal government and provincial government funding; second is the university’s own income, mainly from tuition fees, and contract research fees; Third, the provision of public funds, including individual donations, corporate sponsorship, as well as charitable organizations; fourth, the turned in miscellaneous fees from students, including a library card, student card fees, the cost of student experiments and the graduation ceremony. In the establishment of the financing system, Canada’s thinking of running colleges and universities generally have a clear awareness of the industry, the concept of market and cost accounting concepts. A variety of educational resources has to be cost accounting, calculation of input-output ratio, and the individuals, families and society are turned over to the school as a basic input.<sup>[3]</sup> Tuition fee are formulated by classification methods. Majors controlled and regulated by the provincial government are developed criteria by the provincial government. Taking a donation as the school’s an important adding channel. Such as University of Toronto, annual contributions are about 1 billion Yuan.

## II. The Inspiration of Canada’s Higher Education on China’s Higher Education

### 2.1 strengthen the government’s macro regulation and control, expand college and university’s right of autonomous running.

The Ministry of Education in Canadian provinces only carries out macro-control for enrollment plan and standards of tuition fees. University has a high degree of autonomy in setting standards of enrollment, setting majors and courses and the financial and personnel.<sup>[4]</sup> In our country, on the one hand, it should strengthen the government’s macro-control, meantime, it should expand gradually the autonomy in the enrollment, major settings, the appointment of teachers, and

the distribution of income according to the *Law on Higher Education* distributed by our country. So that colleges and universities can become a real entity for construction and social development with independent legal personality. At the same time, according to the *Regulations in Colleges and Universities of CCP* and *Higher Education Act*, it should study further the operational implementation details under the leadership of colleges and universities in order to regulate branch of CCP in university, administrative and academic committees, trade union duties, powers limitations and operating mechanism, set up an effective mechanism of self-restraint and self-development.

### 2.2 *The establishment of the credit system as the main content of the teaching management system.*

Canadian colleges and universities implement fully the general credit system, and implement the people-centered education philosophy and application of emphasizing capacity-building mode of teaching so that students can design and learn by themselves based on personal interests, hobbies, strengths and future development needs. The first is to establish truly the management philosophy of student-centered. In terms of enrollment, student attendance, credit, employment guidance, community activities, or in the teacher-student interaction in teaching, learning and communication, living facilities, and other aspects management philosophy of people-oriented and student-centered should be reflected. Second, the powerful colleges and universities should promote fully the implementation of the credit system, in the emphasis on teaching students the practical ability and the spirit of innovation, initiative and creative ability. Third is the true implement of heuristic and interactive teaching. Teachers in the classroom should leave appropriate time for students to ask questions, and exchange with the teachers. Fourth is paying attention to the application of modern teaching methods, classrooms must be equipped with modern teaching facilities, teachers use modern means of teaching.

### 2.3 *Continue to strengthen international education cooperation and exchanges.*

Internationalization of higher education is both the objective requirement of economic and social, political, scientific, technological and cultural development on higher education, and the role that university can and should be able to play in the world economy, information, technology and markets of the historical trend of internationalization. Promoting colleges and universities' international exchanges can not only promote multi-country cultural exchange, upgrade university quality, but also increase revenue for colleges and universities. This is one of the trends in the development of higher education in the 21st century. With regards to these, Chinese universities are in the beginning stage. It should further strengthen the Government's guidance, coordination and services in colleges and universities' recruiting international students. Promote strongly international exchanges and cooperation, and increase in teacher training, student exchanges and cooperation with international research. It is necessary to formulate relevant policies to promote employment among university teachers, apparatus, equipment and library books, and other information resources, to establish co-production system.

### 2.4 *Ensure effective government investment in the dominant position of higher education, the establishment of multi-channel financing of the education system.*

Through various channels to ensure the supply of funds, meanwhile, establish dynamic and cost-sharing mechanism for compensation.<sup>[5]</sup> First, the government should continue to be major investment in education, and provide guarantee from policy about loans in colleges and universities. Second, like Canada, tuition fee could be different for different majors, for some high-cost, high rate of return and hot majors, fees should be open to take the dynamic way, thus solve the problem of inadequate investment from the government. Third, vigorously promote national student loan system to ensure the realization of the principle of equitable education. Fourth, it should provide policy support in increasing revenue and donations in colleges and universities, through donations, the financial pressure can be alleviated to improve teaching conditions.

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