

## An organisational framework of Masters of Education in universities in Canada

M. Stepanets

Sumy State Pedagogical University named after A.S. Makarenko, Sumy, Ukraine  
Corresponding author. E-mail: tairos409017@gmail.com, ORCID ID 0000-0001-8728-6387

Paper received 29.07.21; Accepted for publication 18.08.21.

<https://doi.org/10.31174/SEND-PP2021-256IX100-06>

**Abstract.** The paper considers the organisation of Masters programs in leading Canadian universities (Ottawa, McGill and Alberta Universities). Four options for completing a Master's program are clarified. To complete a Master's program you must complete 10-12 courses lasting from 12 months to 2-4 years. Asynchronous, hybrid as well as face-to-face courses are used during the course. The Canadian Qualifications Framework states that any Masters program builds on the knowledge and competence acquired during the relevant Bachelor program and requires more specialised knowledge and intellectual thinking. It is discovered that the academic process in Canadian Universities of teacher education, as well as in other higher education institutions in Canada, is individually regulated.

**Keywords:** *Masters of Education, higher teacher education, education programs, organisational framework, Canadian universities.*

**Introduction.** Teacher education in Canada is subject to provincial/territorial jurisdiction. Canada is the only developed country without a national education department or mechanism to regulate national education policy. Accordingly, there are 13 governments that oversee teacher training. Until recently, this was done without regard to what was happening in other jurisdictions. However, with the commitment to the labour mobility chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade, governments, professional organisations and universities have been forced to reconsider their programs and requirements in the light of other provincial and territorial expectations. "The master's degree in education is one of seven master's programs with an average return of 86 per cent [1].

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Analysis of scientific literature shows that significant contribution regarding to the leading areas of current higher teacher education in Canada have been made by both Ukrainian V. Kovalenko, I. Gushlevska, N. Mukan and international scientists B. McKay, J. Deis, Robin S. Harris, D. Hammond.

As for the issue of consideration of educational programs, we consider the works of Helen Raptis [6] important, who highlights some of the most compelling arguments for future teachers in favor of learning the social foundations. A powerful teacher education program should therefore include such a component.

Also, T. Russell & A. Martin identify the conceptual framework that underpins Canadian teacher education programs. They point out some of the limitations of the framework as a basis for teacher education programs and formulate an alternative conceptual framework of "practice and theory" [8].

**This article aims** to identify the organisational foundations of Masters teacher education in universities in Canada.

A comprehensive analysis of Master's education in universities in Canada required the processing of legal and regulatory documentation. These include, for example, master's education in the documents of Canadian professional organisations and associations, public authorities: Council of Ministers of Education, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, departments and

ministries of education of provinces and territories of Canada.

The organizational framework has been implemented in compliance with the scientific, systematic, integrative and holistic principles. In particular, the implementation of the principle of integrative pedagogical knowledge allows us to highlight the specifics of the organizational framework of Master's in Teacher Education training, its general philosophical, general scientific and partially scientific aspects. The following methods were used: general scientific (analysis, synthesis, abstraction, comparison and generalization) that provided identification of organizational foundations of the studied educational phenomenon. Specifically-scientific: the method of content analysis allowed to find out the features of pedagogical, social and organisational processes necessary for Master's education in Canada.

**Results and discussion.** At the present stage of society's development, education occupies an important place. Namely, the training of a qualified education worker engaged not only in the education of others, but also in self-education. Studying the organisational foundations of Master's education in Canada provides an opportunity to understand how educational programs should be used to prepare such a specialist. After all, Canadian education is considered one of the best in the world.

Applicants to a master's degree in pedagogical education must already have a bachelor's degree. The Education Policy Institute, in the 2008 report by the Ontario Council for Higher Education Quality entitled Access, Retention and Barriers in Postsecondary Education: A Literature Review and Outline for Future Research, identified factors such as teacher status in various communities that may influence who applies to teacher education programs.

The most obvious differences between teacher education programs may be between two types of structures: parallel (or integrated) and sequential [2]. According to the typology presented by Gambhir et al., in a parallel structure, the two types of education, referred to as 'disciplinary' and 'professional', are delivered in tandem throughout the program [3].

In the sequential structure, students enter the teaching program after completing a degree in another discipline,

to study for two to three terms or two years, depending on the university in the teacher education program. In the master's degree program, teachers are awarded a master's degree in education after completing a bachelor's degree.

In examining the organization of master's programs, we looked at leading Canadian higher education institutions.

There are four master's degree options available at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education [7]:

1. Master of Education (MEd) Coursework option (10-12 courses to complete, duration: full time - 12 months; part-time - 2-4 years, no research component). Concentration offered: Counselling Psychology, Health Professions Education, Leadership, Evaluation, Curriculum and Policy Studies, Societies, Cultures and Languages, Studies in Teaching and Learning, Second Language Education.

2. Master of Education (MEd) Major Research Project option (8-10 courses to complete, duration - 20 months full-time; 2-4 years part-time, Major Research Paper to submit). Concentration offered: Counselling Psychology, Health Professions Education, Leadership, Evaluation, Curriculum and Policy Studies, Societies, Cultures and Languages, Studies in Teaching and Learning, Second Language Education.

3. Master of Education (MEd) Online option (10 courses to complete, duration: full time - 12 months; part-time - 2-4 years, no research component). Concentration offered: Health Professions Education, Studies in Teaching and Learning, Second Language Education.

4. Master of Arts in Education (MA) (6-10 courses to complete, duration: full time - 20 months; part-time - 2-4 years, thesis required). Concentration offered: General path, Counselling Psychology, Health Professions Education, Women's studies.

It is important to emphasise that teacher education programs have been aware of the problem of the gap between theory and practice for some time and have taken steps to try to bridge this gap. One of the main ways to close this gap has been to include reflection on teacher candidates' experience in studying programs. In fact, today it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a teacher education program that makes frequent reference to the word 'reflection'.

At the University of Alberta the Master of Education in Educational Studies is studied individually or in groups on assignments. The first year of the curriculum begins with a 3-week summer residential placement in which students complete two core courses [4].

During each of the following autumn-winter semesters students complete the core course online, which is given asynchronously, giving them the opportunity to work from home without having to leave their hometown. The second year has the same structure as the first.

The courses are graded as 30 credits, of which 24 are credits for pedagogical courses (curriculum development, instructional management, educational psychology and pedagogical practice, and others) and 6 for non-pedagogical courses (ethics and law in pedagogical practice). The aim of psycho-pedagogical education is to make it easier for students to know themselves and their capabilities, to be aware of their goals, characteristics and the creative nature of the teaching profession [4].

McGill recently received permission from the Quebec

government to offer a Master's of Arts in Teaching and Learning leading to secondary certification. This is a 60-credit program divided into 45 credits of course work, mostly front-end loaded, and 15 credits of field experience, mostly back-end loaded. In other words, the McGill programs seem to be clear examples of a technical-rationality, or theory-into-practice, conceptual framework in which theory is largely presented first as guidance for subsequent student teaching, which tends to come later and to be of a lesser scale than the course work.

Also, the four-year competency-based teacher education program has been in place in Quebec universities for 18 years, and there are no plans to return to the one year post degree diploma still common elsewhere in Canada. There are now, however, programs at several different universities for students with undergraduate degrees who wish to pursue teaching qualifications without returning to university for a second, four year undergraduate degree.

These recent programs had first been certified on a temporary basis to permit students with degrees in subject areas where there are shortages of teachers, such as math, science and second languages, to complete a 60 credit Master's of Education that includes secondary school teaching qualifications. Recently, the Minister of Education has recognised that these programs fill a real need and has authorised a permanent status for them. There is no possibility to gain credentials for teaching at the elementary level in this way.

Note that, the Canadian Qualifications Framework states that any master's program builds on the knowledge and competencies acquired during the relevant undergraduate degree and requires more specialised knowledge and intellectual thinking. Much of the learning undertaken at Master's level will take place at the 'forefront' of an academic or professional discipline. Students must demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the frontiers of knowledge are extended through research. They will be able to tackle complex issues both systematically and creatively, and will show an independent ability to address current challenges.

The curricula for teacher education in Canada combine an academic and professional focus, based on a balanced combination of instructional time required for in-depth understanding of general and vocational subjects, and practical training to develop professional skills.

Crucially, teacher education in Canadian universities is individually regulated: students are given the right to choose their individual study programs based on the selection of professional modular courses offered according to their personal professional needs.

Master's students must have studied at least one research methods course at Master's level in order to obtain their degree. The purpose of this course, as well as its content and paradigmatic focus, can vary considerably between instructors, students and the specific educational discipline. For students who are doing a project or dissertation the experience is a potential opportunity to choose one of the different approaches to research and to gain insight into how the ontological and epistemological positioning of the researcher and the formulation of the question can influence the research results.

It should be noted that the importance of interpersonal relationships in graduate education has been stated more directly: Successful graduate leadership always involves a combination of academic expertise and skilful management of personal and professional relationships. Supervisors are expected to be knowledgeable and skilled in their disciplinary specialisms, and they are expected to take the lead in establishing the quality of relationships that will give their students access to the knowledge and skills they possess. This second expectation takes on both a new dimension and a greater intensity in the leadership of international or foreign students.

Also, in studies of supervision practices in three universities, researchers pointed out significant differences between the attention given by individual supervisors to supervision and independence.

Furthermore, Hockey found that most supervisors showed some flexibility in their approach to meet the needs of individual students' [5].

The inclusion of a capstone project in the program is intended to serve as an integrating piece throughout the program and also adds a component more in keeping with graduate studies. Students identify an area of professional interest either in the broad landscape of teaching and learning or directly related to their subject speciality [9],

and develop a project around that interest. Providing the support for students, and understanding by students, for this inquiry-focused initiative has proven to be a challenge, partly in encouraging students to take ownership and appreciate the importance and value of such a requirement, and also in terms of resources. While we situated the supervisory responsibility for the capstone in the professional seminars, we are well aware that assigning individual supervisors might serve students better.

The organisation of teacher training programs is often violated in various Canadian acts, at conferences with pedagogical issues and the like.

**Conclusions.** Having done the research, we can say that Canadian Master's in teacher education has different options for the organisation of teacher education programs. Different options are available in teacher education faculties: course-based, thesis-based, and online. With this in mind, we can add that it is possible for every student to study for a Master's degree. The curricula combine academic and professional focus for an in-depth understanding of general and vocational subjects.

Thus, when looking at approaches, structure and content of teacher education at the institutional level in Canada, we find important differences in structure (parallel, sequential individual models), organisation and training.

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