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**POST-SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION
OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA:
HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL,
FAMILY-RELATED, AND INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS**

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The article deals with the issues of post-secondary and higher education of indigenous peoples in Canada. The main objectives are defined as the theoretical analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature highlighting different aspects of the problem under research and identifies of the barriers to obtaining post-secondary and higher education by indigenous peoples. The post-secondary and higher education have been studied by foreign and Ukrainian scientists (T. Andryushchenko, O. Barabash, N. Bidyuk, B. Burtch, M. Busko, J. Friesen, V. Friesen, S. Honcharenko, V. Kirkness, D. Klyne, O. Kotlyakova, T. Kuchai, L. Lukyanova, H. McCue, M. Mendelson, N. Nychkalo, O. Ogiyenko, J. Peters, R. Price, L. Pukhovska, J. Silver, F. Simard, S. Sysoyeva, J. White, I. Zyazyun). The legislative and normative framework of post-secondary and higher education of indigenous peoples in Canada is considered; the statistical data which characterise the indigenous peoples' participation in post-secondary and higher education programs are presented; the existing barriers to getting post-secondary and higher education by indigenous peoples are analysed and identified as historical, social, economic, cultural, family-related and individual ones. The research methodology comprises theoretical (logical, induction and deduction, comparison, structural and functional, systematic, analysis and synthesis), and applied (discussion, questioning and interviewing) methods. The research results are presented.

Key words: Canada, higher education, post-secondary education, indigenous peoples, historical, social, economic, cultural, family-related and individual barriers.

Introduction

In the document "Learn Canada 2020" adopted by the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education the post-secondary education is defined as an integral part of lifelong learning (Mukan, Barabash & Busko, 2016). The governments of provinces and territories direct their efforts towards raising the quality of post-secondary education and increasing its accessibility with the aim to

enhance the number of students involved into professional educational programs. Post-secondary education contributes not only to the increase of wages of particular individuals but also to the improvement of the overall welfare of the country. It is also a factor that affects the decrease in crime rate, an increase in GDP and reduction in social payments. "Education policy goals articulated by Canada and other organizations have been

to encourage youth to attend university and higher education programs in greater numbers than in the past in order to engage and reap benefits in an increasingly competitive and global knowledge-based economy” (Clement, 2009, p. 70). Post-secondary education of indigenous peoples in Canada is one of the key aspects of post-secondary education development at the beginning of the new century, together with the increase in available places, unification of quality standards of post-secondary education at the government level, accessibility and credits transfers while moving from one higher education establishment to another (Learn Canada 2020, 2009).

The aim of the study

The aim of the article is to explore the problem of post-secondary education of indigenous peoples in Canada. The authors have defined the following objectives: to analyse the scientific and pedagogical literature, which highlights different aspects of the problem under research, to study the obstacles for higher and post-secondary education of indigenous peoples.

Theoretical framework and research methods

The theoretical and methodological framework of our research is as following: philosophical theses of phenomena interconnection and interdependence, the principles of unity of theory and practice of post-secondary and higher education; conceptual theses of comparative education (M. Leshchenko, O. Lokshyna, N. Mukan, L. Pukhovska, A. Sbruyeva); fundamentals of lifelong education (O. Barabash, M. Busko, I. Leshchenko), theory and practice of adult education (M. Knowles, L. Lukyanova); structural and functional, systemic approaches (N. Alboim, A. Verbytskyi); multicultural approach (O. Ivashko, M. Lee); psychological, pedagogical, sociological research of post-secondary and higher education of indigenous peoples (F. Abele, S. Childs, J. Clement, C. Dittubner, R. Finnie, K. Graham, M. Kramer).

Post-secondary and higher education is the subject of scientific interest of such Ukrainian researchers as T. Andryushchenko, N. Bidyuk, S. Honcharenko, T. Desyatov, I. Zyazyun, L. Lukyanova, N. Nychkalo, L. Pukhovska, S. Sysoyeva. Post-secondary and higher education in Canada have been studied by O. Barabash, M. Busko, M. Borysova, O. Kotlyakova, T. Kuchai, O. Ogiyenko. Among foreign scientists, we would like to emphasize the works of B. Burtch, J. Friesen, V. Friesen, H. McCue, V. Kirkness, D. Klyne, M. Mendelson, J. Peters, R. Price, J. Silver, F. Simard, J. White.

The methodology of our research comprises different theoretical and applied methods. We have used the comparative-historical method that allowed studying

the scientific and pedagogical literature on the issues under discussion; logical and comparative methods that have been used to study educational documents, post-secondary and higher education establishments’ academic programmes for indigenous peoples in different provinces and territories of Canada. In our research the logical method has been used to define the obstacles to higher education of indigenous peoples; methods of induction and deduction have been used for gathering theoretical and factual material, synthesizing and analysing information from available resources. We have used content analysis to study statistical data about indigenous peoples’ participation in educational programs. The discussion with the staff of the University of Saskatchewan in Canada was held during the research.

Results

The results of the research into post-secondary education of indigenous peoples in Canada done by the scientists of Queen’s University in 2010 show that about 30 % of indigenous peoples finish only the first or the second year of post-secondary education while this percentage among non-indigenous people is much lower – only 13 %; indigenous peoples have much less savings for education in comparison with non-indigenous people (33 % and 42 %, respectively); indigenous peoples receive more financing for post-secondary educational programs (government grants and scholarships) than residents of non-indigenous origin (Finnie, Childs & Kramer, 2010).

In their research, the Canadian scientists repeatedly pay attention to the lower percentage of people who completed post-secondary education among indigenous peoples in comparison with non-indigenous peoples. The same tendency is also characteristic for the beginning of the XXI century. For instance, in 2005 in the province of British Columbia only 4 of 10 indigenous people completed post-secondary education. The critical situation is predominantly observed in higher education. In particular, the scientists of British Columbia inform about the increase in the number of indigenous students during 2001–2006 from 6 % to 8 %, however, these indicators are much lower than the representativeness indexes of non-indigenous peoples in higher education (23 %) (Silver, Klyne & Simard, 2003). This tendency is characteristic to all provinces of Canada.

For many years post-secondary education has been used as a means of differentiation of indigenous peoples from non-Aboriginal representatives in the Canadian society. As a result of adopting amendments to The Indian Act in 1876, Indian people who completed a college or university lost Status of Indian and were considered to be full members of Canadian society as

they were believed to have become fully “civilized”. Due to historical factors, higher and post-secondary education was considered by indigenous peoples as a way of losing their individual identity and therefore it was not popular with them (Opening the door: reducing barriers to post-secondary education in Canada, 2011). The researchers of historical and pedagogical problems note that in 1968 only 168 students of Indian origin studied in colleges and universities of Canada (information about Métis and Inuits is not available) (Opening the door: reducing barriers to post-secondary education in Canada, 2011).

Unlike Canada, quite a few universities in the USA were opened specifically for providing higher education to indigenous peoples, among them being Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth universities. In 1970 only the University of Montana (Missoula, the USA) trained more than 300 representatives of Indian origin (Opening the door: reducing barriers to post-secondary education in Canada, 2011).

In Canada, during XIX–XX centuries in post-secondary and higher education establishments, there were opened only several separate departments dealing with investigations into ethnic, anthropological, linguistic, historical, and archaeological characteristics of indigenous peoples. By the late 1960, the country had developed neither the policy and strategy of the indigenous peoples’ education nor any programs to support and finance their post-secondary education. Only from the mid-1970’s the Canadian government started to introduce first financial support programs for Indians who had the status of indigenous people (Opening the door: reducing barriers to post-secondary education in Canada, 2011).

The low rates of academic achievements still in public schools are, first of all, among the social factors that prevent students of indigenous origin from getting the post-secondary education. Many students of indigenous origin either don’t finish school or receive incomplete secondary education, thus failing to continue getting an education in higher education establishments. According to the results of 2006 census, 40 % of indigenous students aged 20 to 24 years didn’t complete secondary education (Price & Burtch, 2010) and therefore didn’t receive the required number of credits for admission to college or university. Moreover, many students of indigenous origin who finish school and receive complete secondary education, often have low success rates making it difficult for them to be admitted to institutions of the post-secondary education system. Besides, those applicants who are enrolled often do not have enough skills for successful learning, causing their expulsion after the first or second year (Best practices in increasing aboriginal postsecondary enrolment rates, 2002).

The Centres for Adult Education function in different provinces and territories of Canada with the aim

to enhance academic achievements of Canadians. They help adults to improve their reading and math skills, to study the subjects required for obtaining Secondary School Certificate, to prepare for entering college or university etc. Indigenous peoples, any other residents of the country or immigrants with permanent residence in Canada can get the services of the Centres free of charge (Silver, Klyne & Simard, 2003).

The high level of unemployment among indigenous peoples is a not less important social factor that contributes to the low numbers of indigenous people getting the post-secondary education. In many communities, the rate of unemployment amounts to 50 %, and sometimes even to 75 %. As under such conditions, temporary seasonal work and social benefits are the major sources of income, most families can’t afford to pay for their children’s education and have to search for additional financial support. There are many Canadian government support programs for Status Indians, whereas Métis and Non-status Indians do not have an opportunity to receive such support. Besides, most often students have to leave homes for cities or university campuses, but there are not enough funds allocated by the government to fully cover the cost of tuition, textbooks, accommodation, and catering (Aboriginal peoples and post-secondary education, 2004; Best practices in increasing aboriginal postsecondary enrolment rates, 2002).

According to M. Frenette, one more reason is a lack of jobs in the labour market for indigenous people with professional qualifications, in particular, in the remote northern districts of the country and in reservations. In the course of the research, it has also been discovered that representatives of indigenous origin normally choose professional educational programs in the sphere of the humanities and social sciences, while non-indigenous people often choose physical and mathematical disciplines as well as computer sciences. This tendency is particularly typical of aboriginal males. As it is known, in the present labour market of Canada the professions of humanitarian and social spheres are less popular and the specialists in these fields receive much lower salaries than those working in the field of physics and mathematics as well as computer industry. Consequently, the choice of professional programs significantly influences the level of income and unemployment among people of indigenous origin (Frenette, 2014).

At present many universities of Canada offer support programs and preferential terms for indigenous people that choose medical, engineering and legal specialties. The University of Saskatchewan was the first university to realise the lack of qualified lawyers among

the indigenous peoples of the country. In 1973 it introduced support programs for indigenous peoples who intended to enter its College of Law (Best practices in increasing aboriginal postsecondary enrolment rates, 2002).

On the way to obtaining a post-secondary education by the indigenous peoples, there are also obstacles relating to cultural diversity between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples of Canada. The system of post-secondary and higher education of Canada, learning structure, academic process, programs and assessment systems in educational establishments are built on values and knowledge system of European society, which greatly differs from indigenous peoples' educational traditions. Very little attention is paid to cognitive peculiarities of remembering and handling information, and education styles of indigenous peoples that differ from the non-indigenous representatives of Canadian society. Among the teaching staff, one can meet representatives of different nations and nationalities, but there are only a few indigenous representatives who could understand students and encourage them to learn by their own example (Best practices in increasing aboriginal postsecondary enrolment rates, 2002).

The presence of people of indigenous origin in the composition of the faculty or support staff of higher or professional education institutions will help ensure the implementation of effective strategies for attracting and retaining students of indigenous origin (Aboriginal peoples and post-secondary education, 2004).

Family-related factors that prevent from getting higher and post-secondary education refer to intensive responsibility for the family members, traditionally close relationships with family and indigenous community as well as early marriages, compared to the Canadian non-indigenous population. This raises a series of other questions related to creating Centres for childcare affiliated to universities or colleges, allocation of additional funds to finance childcare at home, mobility, family expenses etc.

On the other hand, family factors, which prevent gaining a post-secondary education, can be attributed to the fact that most of the parents have no post-secondary education, and therefore do not always encourage their children to continue their education at universities and colleges. Numerous studies of Canadian scientists show that the higher the education level of parents, the greater the likelihood that their children will study in higher education establishments (Opening the door: reducing barriers to post-secondary education in Canada, 2011).

Individual obstacles on the way to getting higher and post-secondary education relate to the lack of personal motivation. A low social status and unemployment often cause depression, apathy, substance abuse, physical domestic violence, and health problems.

In the communities of indigenous peoples, there is not enough support from families or government institutions / organizations that would help them to overcome all these problems. The students who leave hometowns, reservations and move to study at universities suffer from depression, stress, and discrimination; this generally affects their studies and often causes expulsion from higher education establishments (Best practices in increasing aboriginal postsecondary enrolment rates, 2002).

Nowadays Canadian government promotes the development of post-secondary education of indigenous peoples through special funding programs. Among them, there is Post-Secondary Student Support Program, which provides financial support for the representatives of Status Indians and Innuits that study in institutions of higher or post-secondary education. The program covers the costs of students' training, lodging, relocation expenses, books and more. The program does not fund the education of Métis and Non-status Indians, the exception being Nunavut and Yukon provinces. In the Northwest Territories the government finances higher and post-secondary education of all indigenous peoples, and in the territory of Yukon the government offers a flexible system of subsidies, only partially covering the costs of training Métis and Non-status Indians.

University and College Entrance Preparation Program is one more example of providing financial support. It covers training costs to meet the necessary academic entrance requirements. All other representatives of indigenous peoples can use students' loans and grants programs that are offered by the territorial and provincial governments to all students regardless of their origin.

Conclusions

The results of the analysis of pedagogical literature and statistical data prove that there are barriers of historical, social, economic, cultural, family-related and individual character to getting post-secondary education by indigenous peoples.

But it is important to emphasize the positive experience of Canada in providing support for indigenous peoples in overcoming these barriers. Institutions of higher and post-secondary education throughout Canada offer to indigenous peoples various educational programs and opportunities of acquiring different specialities, though they differ by the level of involvement of these peoples into educational process and provision of the basic principles of successful learning to the representatives of the indigenous population.

Most educational institutions offer academic and psychological support to students of indigenous origin, however, representation of indigenous people among the teaching staff or management bodies of schools is limited.

Studying the Canadian experience of attracting teaching staff of indigenous origin to work in the education system of the country presents the prospect of further research.

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