

Millennial Teachers of Canada: Innovation within the Boxed-In Constraints of Tradition

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Abstract : Every year, schools aim to develop and adopt new technology and pedagogy as a way to equip today's students with the needed 21st Century skills. However, the field of primary and secondary education may not be as open to embracing change in reality. Despite the drive to reform and innovation, the field of education in Canada is still very much steeped in tradition and uses many of the practices that came into effect over 50 years ago. Among those are employment and retention practices. Millennials are the youngest generation of professionals entering the workplace at this time and the ones leaving their jobs within just a few years. Almost half of new teachers leave Canadian schools within their first five years on the job. This paper discusses one of the contributing factors that lead Canadian millennial teachers to either leave or stay in the profession - standardized education system. Using an exploratory case study approach, in-depth interviews with former and current millennial teachers were conducted to learn about their experiences within the K-12 system. Among the findings were the young teachers' concerns about the constant changes to teaching practices and technological implementations that claimed to advance teaching and learning, and yet in reality only disguised and reiterated the same traditional, outdated, and standardized practices that already existed. Furthermore, while many millennial teachers aspired to be innovative with their curriculum and teaching practices, they felt trapped and helpless in the hands of school leaders who were very reluctant to change. While many new program ideas and technological advancements are being made openly available to teachers on a regular basis, it is important to consider the education field as a whole and how it plays into the teachers' ability to realistically implement changes. By the year 2025, millennials will make up approximately 75% of the North American workforce. It is important to examine generational differences among teachers and understand how millennial teachers may be shaping the future of primary and secondary schools, either by staying or leaving the profession.

Keywords : 21st century skills, millennials, teacher attrition, tradition

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