Are Canada’s Business Schools Teaching Social and Emotional Skills?
Preface

Canada’s employers are looking for advanced human skills (social and emotional intelligence) in new hires but are finding them to be in short supply. Because business schools are important conduits between young people and work, we examine what bachelor and diploma programs are doing to provide young people with the human skills employers increasingly want and need. We found that teaching so-called soft skills is hard. It remains difficult to create a set of experiences in the classroom to develop, apply, and assess human skills, and so business schools tend to rely on extracurricular initiatives.
About This Project

Between 2015 and 2018, the Conference Board surveyed and interviewed more than 1,000 business school students, faculty, deans, careers office staff, recent graduates, and employers across Canada to gain a better understanding of the issues and challenges facing business schools today. We focused our questions on the skills needs of employers and whether business schools were producing graduates with the right mix of skills for today's labour market and the future of work. The findings from these conversations and a review of the literature and data led us to focus this briefing on the state of social and emotional skills training.

Acknowledgements

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Highlights

• The majority of Canada’s young people (15 to 24 years) who graduate from post-secondary bachelor and diploma programs in business, management, or public administration go on to work in the public and private sectors in positions that require a strong mix of foundational business and human skills.

• But surveys and rankings consistently indicate that business schools are inadequately teaching the full skills inventory or preparing new graduates for work.

• Employers are increasingly demanding human skills (i.e., social and emotional intelligence) but finding them to be in short supply among new hires.

• Business schools say that incorporating human skills training in classroom curricula is easier said than done, owing to challenges around assessing learning outcomes and meeting accreditation standards.
Highlights

- It doesn’t help that the jury is still out on whether human skills can be taught and, if so, how? As a result, most human skills training happens outside the classroom, in the form of extracurricular, non-credit initiatives.

- To improve career success for young people and the success of Canada’s public and private sectors, Canada’s business schools will need to find new and innovative ways to bring human skills training into the classroom and to blend skills training and work as part of the learning continuum.
Introduction

Canada’s business schools are important conduits between young people and work. More than 300,000 students enrolled in business, management, or public administration programs at Canada’s universities and colleges annually between 2011 and 2016. Excluding graduate degrees and professional designations, these programs graduated more than 100,000 students each year. (See Table 1.) The majority are young people, aged 15 to 24, who go on to work not as innovators, entrepreneurs, or managers—at least not immediately—but as employees in the public and private sectors. (See “Youth Employment in Canada.”)

As the world of work becomes more complicated, employers expect more from new graduates. In addition to foundational business skills, which are meant to prepare graduates to go into any sector (or pursue advanced degrees and designations), young business school graduates from bachelor or diploma programs at colleges, polytechnics, and universities are also increasingly expected to have advanced soft skills, or what are now more commonly called social, emotional, or human skills. (See “#FutureSkills Evolution.”) Myriad employer surveys confirm that skills, like self-awareness, adaptability, resilience, relationship management, team work, and ethical judgment, are in high demand.

While every post-secondary program is under pressure today to train students in a wide variety of in-demand skills, business schools are mandated to train graduates (and future leaders) to function in highly

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1 See Appendix A for a primer on business education in Canada. According to Statistics Canada’s classification of instructional programs, the primary groupings for business, management, and public administration include accounting and computer science (code 30.16), public administration and social service professions (code 44), and business, management, marketing, and related support services (code 52). See also Statistics Canada, Table 37-10-0011-01.

2 Statistics Canada, Table 98-400-2016-241

3 Cukier, Hodson, and Omar, “Soft” Skills Are Hard.
What did we find?

- Employers need new hires with social and emotional skills.
- Human skills will be essential in the future.
- Teaching soft skills is hard.

Dynamic professional environments. In this report, we examine how well business schools are preparing the next generation of workers for the new and emerging complexities of working and on-the-job learning. Specifically, we ask what Canada’s business school programs are doing to provide young people with the social and emotional skills employers increasingly want and need.

What did we find? We found that employers identify a strong need for social and emotional skills in new hires. Human skills will be essential for the future of work. Students, recent graduates, and business school leaders recognize this, too. But teaching soft skills is hard. They are personal and experiential, and it remains difficult to create a set of experiences in the classroom to develop and apply, let alone assess, human skills.

To complicate matters, business schools are beholden to program-specific learning outcomes and accreditation standards, which make it difficult to add to or change formal curricula. For these reasons, business schools turn to non-credit, extracurricular activities geared toward developing social and emotional competencies in students. While these initiatives are helpful skill-builders, human skills are drivers of change in the new economy, and the future of work depends on embedding human skills training and development in and across business school learning environments as part of a continuous learning flow.

Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>104,121</td>
<td>109,203</td>
<td>112,557</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Statistics Canada.
Youth Employment in Canada

Although Canada’s 6.8 million youth, defined by Employment and Social Development Canada’s (ESDC) 2017 Expert Panel on Youth Employment as 15- to 29-year-olds, are better educated and employed than youth in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) peer countries, changing social and economic conditions in Canada, along with the changing nature of work, mean that more and more young people, especially vulnerable youth, are experiencing challenges and barriers to meaningful employment.

“The shift away from manufacturing to service and knowledge economies,” concludes the Expert Panel’s 13 Ways to Modernize Youth Employment in Canada report, “means there is a greater emphasis on ‘soft’ skills like problem solving, communication, interpersonal skills and critical thinking. Our educational institutions are struggling to keep up to date with the pace of change, and students feel like they are behind or unprepared for the job market when they graduate.”

The result? Young people continue to experience challenging school-to-career transitions and are more likely to be in precarious, contractual, or low-quality work, fuelled in part by the “gig” economy. Vulnerable youth, including low-income, rural and remote, newcomers, Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, and LGBTQ2S+ and racialized youth, are at greater risk yet of unemployment or underemployment.

We know, however, that Canadians with a post-secondary education experience more long-term benefits, from higher earnings to improved health and standards of living. We also know that they are better able to weather labour market uncertainties. For these reasons alone, young people today require better access to in-demand skills training, increased awareness and inclusion practices, innovative co-developed programs based on partnerships between post-secondary education and employers, improved matching between job seekers and employers, and better labour market information to improve their employment pathways and outcomes.

Sources: ESDC; OECD; The Conference Board of Canada.

Shifting Demands

Business schools have an important stake in the overall performance of Canada’s public and private sectors, not to mention the innovation ecosystem. But surveys and rankings consistently indicate that business schools are inadequately teaching the full skills inventory or preparing new graduates for work. Employers are underwhelmed by business school graduates’ skill sets when they are hired into entry-level positions. Surveys also show that links between businesses and business schools remain weak, and that Canada is underperforming when it comes to business sophistication.

Outcomes data show that business school graduates, from bachelor and diploma programs, tend to pursue fairly traditional pathways. After graduation, the majority of young people either pursue graduate/professional training or go on to work in entry-level positions in the public and private sectors. And what are the skills that matter most to the professional programs that recruit them and the employers who hire them?

Namely, it is the right mix of foundational business and human skills, which makes more sense considering that more than 50 per cent end up in sales and service or professional business and finance roles. Incidentally, only 6 per cent go into management roles straight out of school. (See Chart 1.)

According to Tim Daus, Executive Director of the Canadian Federation of Business School Deans, the skills pendulum has swung back to the liberal arts and soft skills at a time when businesses are changing fast and facing more uncertainty, and when business schools are under new pressure to train students for the unknown.

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7 Tim Daus (Executive Director, Canadian Federation of Business School Deans), phone interview by the author, September 18, 2018.
Learning and Work Redefined

The Business Council of Canada’s recent survey of 95 large Canadian private sector employers found that while new graduates appear to have adequate foundational skills, including basic literacy and numeracy, “employers are less impressed with the human skills and basic business acumen of new graduates.”\(^8\) Less than 20 per cent of those surveyed strongly agreed that entry-level hires have “human skills”—specifically, the ability to collaborate, build relationships, and work in teams.

Fewer still strongly agreed that they had basic “business acumen,” though shortcomings in this category were also a concern for junior through to intermediate staff. The good news? About a quarter of respondents confirmed that “there has been some improvement in human skills over the past five years.” This means that post-secondary education institutions have been making strides—perceptions of university and college graduates returned similar results—but “graduates’ abilities still lag behind employers’ expectations.”\(^9\)

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\(^9\) Ibid.
Most of the 10 key findings from RBC’s recent study, *Humans Wanted*, can be grouped into two categories: skills needs are changing—and changing fast—and Canada’s skills-training programs are not keeping pace. The study identifies six skills clusters based on essential skill sets and fully three of them—solvers, facilitators, and providers—emphasize emotional skills, management skills, critical thinking, and analytical skills. Compared with the doers, crafters, and technicians, which emphasize various levels of technical skills, the RBC report finds that jobs in the first group are the least likely to be disrupted and will be the most in demand.10

A September 2018 working paper from Ontario’s Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity concluded that “[o]f the 1.3 million forecasted job openings in Ontario between 2017 and 2021, the majority are for positions requiring reading comprehension, critical thinking, analytical skills, and emotional intelligence.”11 At least 80 per cent of job openings in the province—in some cases as high as 96 per cent—between now and 2021 will require aptitude in these skills, whereas fewer than half of the new jobs will require math, science, and technical skills.

If on the surface findings like these appear to run counter to the narrative around our future dependency on STEM12 training and development, rest assured that the Council of Canadian Academies’ 2015 Expert Panel on STEM Skills for the Future, its more recent Expert Panel on the State of Sciences and Technology and Industrial Research and Development in Canada, as well as the federal government’s Fundamental Science Review13 in 2017 (a.k.a. the “Naylor Report”) make compelling cases for the central role that STEM skills play in improving Canada’s innovation capacity, productivity, and standards of living. There is no argument here.

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12 STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
13 Naylor and others, *Investing in Canada’s Future.*
What these studies and others like them confirm, though, is that an array of skill sets is needed and those in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and business through to the STEM fields will all be fundamental, in combination, to train people for the future of work. These studies also clarify that in addition to basic or foundational business skills, Canada’s business schools will need to do more to train graduates in the skills that are hardest to automate.

Or, as Alex Usher, President of Higher Education Strategy Associates, and Richard Florizone, President of Dalhousie University, recently put it: “The skills of the future are very human ones. Employers will continue to seek specific technical skills, but the skills of the future are those that machines have the hardest time replicating.”

#FutureSkills Evolution

1980s–1990s
Computers and automation decreased the value of workplace skills. Businesses replaced skilled workers with more efficient machines. Insurance companies laid off file clerks. Store check-out clerks scanned barcodes instead of entering prices. Ordering, reordering, and inventory were all automated. Everyone with a computer became their own typist.

In these and other ways, technology (or automation in the workplace) decreased the value of skills, particularly lower-level skills. But this is also what led to the increased demand for workers with more education and higher-level skills.

2001: Skills Odyssey
By the early 2000s, skills definitions began to transition from “tasks for jobs” frameworks to include a more holistic range of competencies and foundational skills. Competencies included resource management, information processing, and interpersonal skills, as well as understanding and working with social, organizational, and technological systems. Foundational skills included basic literacy and numeracy, thinking skills, personal qualities (responsibility, social

15 Danziger and Gottschalk, America Unequal.
and emotional skills), and self-management (being a self-starter, setting realistic goals, self-assessment, etc.).

**2010+**

In 2011, the Institute for the Future (IFTF) identified 10 key future work skills that would be important before 2020:

- Sense-making (connecting ideas and developing new ones)
- Social intelligence (connecting with others)
- Novel and adaptive thinking (thinking outside the box and adapting it to new realities)
- Cross-cultural competency (operating in diverse cultural settings)
- Computational thinking (seeing trends and patterns in data)
- New media literacy (developing new content and persuasive communications)
- Transdisciplinary (understanding and synthesizing data across disciplines)
- Design mindset (solving problems logically, intuitively, imaginatively, and systemically)
- Cognitive load management (filtering information and managing distractions)
- Virtual collaboration (working efficiently and productively as part of a virtual team)
- Resilience (responding positively to organizational change and new challenges)

IFTF’s list is similar to the top 10 skills identified in the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) *The Future of Jobs* report as being the most in demand by 2020:

- Complex problem-solving
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- People management
- Coordinating with others
- Emotional intelligence
- Judgment and decision-making
- Service orientation
- Negotiation
- Cognitive flexibility

In other words, different tasks now and in the future will require different skills sets, different types of thinking, and different work environments to accomplish them successfully. Only some of them will be technical skill sets, while most will

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require the kind of advanced human skills training provided by post-secondary
education institutions in partnership with employers. As the authors of both
the IFTF and WEF reports point out, the implications of these developments
will be felt by educational institutions, businesses, and governments, each
of which will have to commit to continually renewing its skills-training and
development strategies.\footnote{Davies, Fidler, and Gorbis, \textit{Future Work Skills 2020}; World Economic Forum, \textit{The Future of Jobs}. See also Patterson, “Future Skills Soft Skills Matter.” Patterson cites \textit{The Future of Jobs} report by WEF and also the top five skills (communication, organization, writing, customer service, and research) identified by Burning Glass Technologies’ recent analysis of job-postings data.}

Sources: Danziger and Gottshalk; U.S. Department of Labor; Davies, Fidler, and Gorbis; World Economic Forum; Patterson.

Can You Teach Human Skills?

While technical or applied skills can easily become outdated or obsolete
with the advent of new technologies, social and emotional skills are
durable; they help individuals work with and relate to one another,
adapt to new circumstances, and remain flexible in the face of change,
which is doubly important in an environment when workers change jobs
more frequently.\footnote{Harris, “Job Hopping Is the New Normal”; Zimmerman, “Millennials.”}

OECD’s Directorate for Education recently released a report on social
and emotional skills, what they are, how to measure them, and what
impact they have on students and their well-being. This work is part
of a longitudinal study developed by OECD to examine how cities and
countries can improve social and emotional skills among school-aged
children and youth, based on the assumption that social and emotional
skills are increasingly critical in diverse and changing economies

So what are they really? Social and emotional skills include the abilities
of people to regulate their thoughts, behaviours, and self-perceptions,
and to engage with others in productive and functional ways. Unlike
cognitive skills (e.g., literacy and numeracy), social and emotional skills

Social and emotional skills are increasingly critical in diverse and changing economies and societies.
are not based on information-processing, but on the mental capacity to measure how one feels, sees oneself, motivates oneself, behaves, and works with others.

Can they be taught and are they learnable? In a recent podcast, Miloš Kankaraš and Francesca Gottschalk, analysts in OECD’s Directorate for Education, argue that in fact they are changeable and malleable over a lifetime, like cognitive skills, and subject to environmental factors. They can change after important life events (marriage, having a child, or getting a first job), and they are responsive to educational and intervention programs. Programs as short as two weeks, they explain, have been shown to have long-lasting effects.

Through self-reflection questionnaires, Kankaraš and Gottschalk go on to say, it is also possible to assess social and emotional skills development. News like this should give hope to educators, businesses, and governments. It also makes a compelling case for increasing interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral skills research and training, such as bringing together humanities, social sciences, and business school faculty with business leaders to co-develop curricula and assessment tools aimed at preparing students for the new realities of work.20

**Are Social and Emotional Skills a Passing Fad?**

While social and emotional skills and the need for innovative approaches to teaching them have always been important, their significance and relevance have only grown with increasing automation, immigration, globalization, and the changing nature of work and workplaces.

In our recent report on career skills training and transitions for social sciences and humanities graduates, we looked at how developments in fields such as artificial intelligence and robotics are expected to transform the labour market and how more and more routine or low-skilled jobs and tasks will become automated.21

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20 Kankaraš and Gottschalk, “Episode 10.”
21 Edge, Martin, and McKeen, *Getting to Work*, 3–6. See also McKeen, “In a Time of Robots.”
We considered the argument that this will inevitably mean that we are heading toward an automated, technocratic world, where coding and applied skills, such as those emphasized in STEM fields, will be the only skills we will end up needing.

Not surprisingly, Will-Machines-Replace-Us? articles are commonplace these days and have been for a while.\textsuperscript{22} But most concur, as do we, that while computers will evolve to handle more sophisticated tasks, and more routine ones too, the need for humans, especially our problem-solving abilities, imaginations, adaptability, and capacity to empathize and connect inter-personally, cross-culturally, and globally, will only increase.

For this reason, the future of work will depend just as much, if not more, on human or non-applied social and emotional skills—what RBC and the Business Council of Canada’s Business/Higher Education Roundtable call “human skills,” or what CPA Canada calls “enabling skills.” (See “Portrait of the Accountant as an Emotionally Intelligent Young Person.”)

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**Portrait of the Accountant as an Emotionally Intelligent Young Person**

According to Tashia Batstone, Senior Vice-President of External Relations and Business Development at CPA Canada, technology is quickly changing skills requirements for the accounting profession. For example, CPA Canada is replacing the competencies for tax returns and compliance work, as more of it becomes mechanized, with a qualitative competency framework (or map) that emphasizes planning, leadership, communication, critical thinking, and client services. To qualify for a CPA designation, which requires a prior undergraduate degree, often in a business subject, future accountants must demonstrate both technical and “enabling” competencies.\textsuperscript{23}

In 2018, Peggy Coady, Sean Byrne, and John Casey published the results of their strategic mapping study of 31 skills required for professional accountants.

\textsuperscript{22} For example, Grasso, “Will Machines Replace Us or Work With Us?”; Chui, Manyika, and Miremadi, “Where Machines Could Replace Humans”; Kasparov, “Intelligent Machines Will Teach Us.”

\textsuperscript{23} Tashia Batstone (Senior Vice-President of External Relations and Business Development, CPA Canada), phone interview by the author, July 11, 2018. See also CPA Canada, “Entering the CPA Professional Education Program.”
They found that “university accounting programs could consider increasing the emphases placed on particular EI and non-emotional intelligence (non-EI) skills while other skills could be de-emphasised.”24 Their study, which included an exhaustive literature review, revealed that accounting students had underdeveloped soft skills compared with those in other disciplines. New hires were found lacking in soft skills, while the most successful accountants and most effective leaders were found to be both technically and emotionally competent.

Coady, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Business Administration at Memorial University in Newfoundland and Labrador, is a chartered accountant, holds a bachelor of commerce, an MBA, and a doctorate of business education specializing in emotional intelligence in the accounting profession. In an interview, Prof. Coady relayed that she had recently asked her students what skill they viewed as the most important for an accountant to have. The overriding answer? Customer service/relationship-building, which, as it turns out, the students felt was not taught in their program at all.

Can you teach it? Coady believes it is possible but it depends on the social/emotional baseline students start from and how driven they are to develop. “Unfortunately,” Prof. Coady went on to say, “undergraduate business programs aren’t doing a lot to teach social and emotional skills at the moment.”25

Sources: Batstone, interview; CPA Canada; Coady, Byrne, and Casey.

In 2015, Chui, Manyika, and Miremadi estimated that up to 45 per cent of workplace activities could be automated by technologies that already exist. And not just the low-wage, low-skilled jobs. They found that some of the highest-paid, highest-skilled jobs, including financial managers, doctors, senior executives, and even CEOs, could be automated.

But there was one caveat: “Fewer than 5 per cent of occupations can be entirely automated using current technology,” the authors pointed out. This means that most jobs are likely to be changed partly but not entirely by automation. They gave the example of mortgage-loan officers, who will spend less time processing paperwork, and lawyers, who will benefit

24 Coady, Byrne, and Casey, “Positioning of Emotional Intelligence Skills,” 94–120.
25 Peggy Coady (Associate Professor, Faculty of Business Administration, Memorial University), phone interview by the author, September 25, 2018.
from text-mining software. Both will have more time to spend on client-facing roles.26

Rather than compete with computers, then, a point that Livia Gershon, a writer for *Aeon*, recently made, software and machines are more likely to free us up to focus more on working with others, on teams, or in the service of clients and customers. In other words, “many of the most important jobs of the future will require soft skills, not advanced algebra,” Gershon concludes.27

What Do B-School Stakeholders Have to Say About All of This?

**Employers Want Human Skills, but Need to Be Creative When Hiring**

We asked more than 300 employers of business school graduates about their views of the skills and competencies of new hires and what skills gaps they perceive. Employers emphasized that human skills are in high demand but are not explicitly taught in business education programs. Knowing this, employers are increasingly looking to candidates’ extracurricular activities for evidence of human skills.

Beyond the technical skills to do the job, recruiters focus on candidates’ potential fit with the company’s culture—often zeroing in on their interpersonal skills, adaptability, and reliability. Panel interviewing using situational questioning is often used to ensure a well-rounded sense of the true fit and qualifications. Also important:

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26 Chui, Manyika, and Miremadi, “Four Fundamentals of Workplace Automation.”
• Written and verbal communications skills, from presentations to interacting with clients, as well as the ability to work as part of a team.
• The attitude of new recruits was closely tied to their perceived abilities. Employers prized self-motivation, including the willingness and ability to learn. Ownership of learning, readiness to adapt, and resilience were also highlighted as critical for all employees, but especially new hires, to ensure their career development.
• The moral or ethical philosophy of candidates was deemed important, too, since employee codes of conduct are critical for establishing and maintaining trust.
• The ability to mitigate risk through critical thinking was identified as important for several industries.

Employers generally recognize that some degree of on-the-job training is needed for new hires, whether or not they are recent graduates from a post-secondary education program. Some employers resist allocating too many resources to new hires, though, until they are sure the candidate is a good fit for the organization. But human skills were viewed as critical training areas for recent graduates of business programs. Those organizations or roles that work with international clients or in diverse communities also look to develop cultural diversity and communications competencies in new hires.

Students and Recent Graduates Know What They Don’t Know

In the process of collecting data on the state of business education programs in Canada, we asked more than 650 business school students and recent graduates why they chose their programs. Beyond the usual motives, like proximity to home, cost, and program length, the most common reason students gave for enrolling in a business program was to gain the foundational skills and knowledge they needed to get a public or private sector job.

We asked the same group what skills they thought employers were looking for and what skills they thought they needed to achieve their career goals. Most felt that a balanced mix of skills was the best route to employment and career progression.
• They emphasized soft and hard skills (or technical skills) but pointed out that their programs still prioritized the technical.
• Administration, finance, and accounting skills remain critical, but respondents identified problem-solving, adaptability, communication, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, work ethic, resourcefulness, and relationship-building as the soft skills they needed for success in the job market. They emphasized that these skills are rarely taught.
• The recent grads we spoke with emphasized the skills that enabled them to communicate with different people across the office and the workforce, understand office culture, gain a more holistic view of the organization and the industry, manage groups, add value in teams, identify opportunities for change, and understand the human element at work more generally.
• Although project-based teamwork was commonplace in business schools, students and recent grads did not find that they built effective teamwork skills from the experience. Too often, students assigned to work in teams (as employees are in the workplace) were left alone to deal with team issues. Simply providing the opportunity to work on a team, in other words, is not the same as providing guidance and tools for effective team work.

What were the shortcomings or gaps in your business school training?
According to recent graduates, aging institutional academic frameworks and professors who did not come from business meant, for some, that the content was abstracted or outdated, and the training was disconnected from the real world.

Some graduates appreciated case studies focused on a company issue that needed solving, but mainly because they learned workplace policies, human resources concepts, and laws and regulations as opposed to human skills. Others felt case studies were inapplicable to the workplace.

Human skills mattered most, and programs that included holistic approaches to learning about organizations and understanding their human elements (including issues related to sustainability, social responsibility, and internationalization) were perceived as some of the most important components of business school learning, but also some of the most inadequately addressed in the business school programs.
B-School Teaching Methods

We asked students and recent graduates to comment on business school teaching methods. While lectures, including guest lectures, were commonplace, students were not convinced that they were ideal teaching methods. Respondents preferred opportunities to participate in real-life projects that involved teamwork and collaboration, including with students in different disciplines, as well as presentations, simulations, debates, and group work, and would have benefited from guidance on conflict resolution.

Co-ops, internships, work-integrated learning, and other experiential learning opportunities, including volunteer work, workshops, and networking events, need equal emphasis in business school programs. They were widely praised for the opportunities to meet people, develop human skills, and better understand the workplace—especially in an environment where employers are increasingly prioritizing experience over academic success—but needed to be integrated more into the business school programs.

Respondents recognized the value of scenario-based interview training and that, in job interviews, they needed to demonstrate attitudes and behaviours, such as reliability, the ability to adapt to change, think critically, and apply their skills and knowledge to real-world experiences. Finally, students emphasized the need for faculty to stay up-to-date on business-related technologies and the skills employers are looking for.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.
Business schools could be doing more to embed social, emotional, or human skills into the curricula.

B-School Administrators and Faculty Are Providing Alternatives

We spoke with more than 175 administrators and faculty who either work in or are affiliated with college and university-based business schools across Canada and asked them, among other things, how well new graduates at the bachelor or diploma levels are prepared for the world of work. The consensus was that while business schools were providing students with powerful skills toolboxes to apply immediately out of school, they could be doing more to embed social, emotional, or human skills into the business school curricula.

For now, a lot of the emphasis on human skills is happening outside business school classrooms. (See “Walking the Walk: Facilitated Skills Development and Internship Program.”) Through our interviews, we identified some stand-out initiatives:

The Publicly Minded: Community Connections

Yukon College in Whitehorse offers a new Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Governance (developed from the First Nations Governance and Public Administration Certificate program), a Business Administration Diploma, and intends to offer a Bachelor of Business Administration degree (pending approval) in fall 2019 that has been developed from a decolonial perspective. The college operates among 14 First Nations, and a third of its students self identify as Indigenous. The programs, explained Margaret Dumkee, Dean of Applied Science and Management, provide students with experiential learning opportunities to develop their ability to lead, be self-reflective, set goals and pathways, and understand the peoples and cultures of the place where they have chosen to study. Upper-year capstone-style courses allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the program learning outcomes, and to enhance their social and emotional skills by working with faculty and mentors in the community to find solutions to real-world problems and opportunities.28

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28 Margaret Dumkee (Dean of Applied Science and Management), phone interview by the author, October 2, 2018.
Canada’s business schools need stronger links with employers.

The Often Overlooked: Mentorship Initiatives  
Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s School of Business in Surrey recently partnered with the Richmond Chamber of Commerce for an optional “Power of Mentorship Program,” which pairs students with business leaders in the community three to six times a year to learn human skills, including leadership, networking, how to influence people or steer a group, and how to advance an agenda. “Business people call them soft skills, but I think they’re essential skills and we need to make them central to business school education,” said Stephanie Howes, Interim Dean of Kwantlen’s School of Business. “We need a cultural shift in business school education,” Prof. Howes went on to say. “We need to take notes from industry and try our best to simulate inside the classroom what future workers will experience outside it.”

The Old Reliable: Case Competitions  
York University’s Schulich School of Business in Toronto offers extra-curricular initiatives to build social and emotional skills. Undergraduates have the option to participate in case competitions, which require technical knowledge but are more about the “human stuff”—namely, how team members motivate each other and how they get along with people from diverse backgrounds or with different opinions. York is also considering offering improv classes to improve quick, creative thinking, adaptability, and team work.

Myriad colleges, polytechnics, and universities across Canada have long-standing and successful co-op programs. But Canada’s business schools need stronger links with employers, focused specifically on co-developing classroom curriculum and work placement opportunities that facilitate human skills development. Additional challenges include expanding the number of placements, especially for under-represented groups, incorporating practical experience into bachelor and diploma programs.

29 Stephanie Howes (Interim Dean, School of Business, Kwantlen Polytechnic University), phone interview by the author, October 10, 2018.
30 Detlev Zwick (Associate Dean, Academic, Schulich School of Business, York University) and Melissa Judd (Assistant Dean, Students, Schulich School of Business, York University), phone interview by the author, October 9, 2018.
programs at an earlier stage, as opposed to tacking it on at the end, and of course assessing learning outcomes. Experiential learning is an important part of the human skills-training and development puzzle. National organizations like Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada and the Business/Higher Education Roundtable are leading the charge to bridge the gaps between education, skills development, and work for Canada’s youth.

The Outlier? Cross-Disciplinary Teaching

At McMaster University in Hamilton, philosophy professors teach ethics and critical thinking courses to undergraduate students in the DeGroote School of Business as part of an Integrated Business and Humanities program. Combined with community engagement and leadership and entrepreneurship training, the program aims to cultivate social and emotional skills, or what Stefan Sciaraffa, Chair of the Department of Philosophy, calls a “values literacy.” While these courses are for credit and classroom-based, they are not yet fully formed answers to the human skills connection conundrum: Prof. Sciaraffa admits that the courses are still taught like regular philosophy courses and the students are assessed in the traditional ways.31

Walking the Walk: Facilitated Skills Development and Internship Program

Ryerson University’s Advanced Digital and Professional Skills Training (ADaPT) program is effectively a b-school boot camp for non-b-school students, while also providing practical human skills and tech skills training for b-school students. The program was developed, with funding from the Province of Ontario, following surveys by Ryerson’s Diversity Institute that revealed skills gaps and disconnects between job seekers and employers. Its goal? To create pathways for individuals facing barriers by linking them to employers looking for talent, explained Wendy Cukier, Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategy, Ted Rogers School of Management and Director of the Diversity Institute.

31 Stefan Sciaraffa (Chair, Department of Philosophy, McMaster University), phone interview by the author, October 15, 2018.
With its employer partners and Magnet, the Ryerson-based digital social innovation and job-matching platform, the Diversity Institute built an employer-centred, non-credit competency-based work integrated learning program open to students and graduates from any program and any post-secondary education institution. Participants received intensive self-assessment using online psychographic tools, such as Lumina Spark, as well as testing in Microsoft Office and basic writing skills. Working with partners, the curriculum included workshops on job-searching and resumé skills, writing for an audience, presentation skills, introduction to finance, applied research skills, advanced Excel, introduction to coding, introduction to business and marketing, and more over a two-week period, with optional workshops for more in-depth exposure to high-demand digital skills.

Participants were then assisted in obtaining a three- to four-month paid internship. Some elected to start a business. Other versions of ADaPT followed, including part-time versions as well as customized skills-training programs for specific employers, like RBC, Pegasystems, and Salesforce.

The results have been impressive: the program has helped more than 500 university students and graduates prepare for and transition into meaningful employment. Employers highlighted the importance of creating pathways for diverse talent: more than three-quarters of the participants self-identified as women, racialized minorities, persons with disabilities, or Indigenous people. They were drawn from more than 20 universities and more than 80 per cent studied business, arts, or social sciences. Only 20 per cent were STEM graduates.

The bonus? The cross-disciplinary nature of the ADaPT classes benefits everyone. Arts students get a deep dive into key b-school concepts; b-school students hone their human skills and extend their practical hands on digital skills; STEM students improve their communications and job search skills. And they all learn from one another. The focus now is on replicating and scaling the program.32

Source: Cukier, interview.

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32 Wendy Cukier (Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategy, Ted Rogers School of Management and Director of the Diversity Institute, Ryerson University), phone interview by the author, October 17, 2018, and e-mail correspondence with the author, October 21, 2018.
Why is social and emotional skills training not a bigger part of the b-school curriculum? Why does so much of it still happen outside the classroom? Business school administrators and faculty continue to cite the challenges of planning in terms of learning outcomes, assessing human skills acquisition, and measuring for accreditation purposes. “Social and emotional skills aren’t always easy to measure,” noted Detlev Zwick, Associate Dean, Academic, at York University’s Schulich School of Business. “Because it is harder to assess social and emotional skills objectively,” Prof. Zwick went on to say, “they may not easily find their way into the classroom. These skills are certainly being learned in the classroom setting, during group work for example, but creating learning experiences for social and emotional skills outside the classroom where the pressures of measuring everything all of the time, especially skills that are arguably harder to measure, offers more freedom and room to try things out.”

The Summing Up

Why is all of this important? Because it is about the social and emotional well-being of youth and future workers and the health and well-being of Canada’s society and economy. It is also about understanding our strengths and opportunities as well as our weaknesses and threats, so we can empower our skills-training systems and our employers to reinforce the first two and eliminate the second two. Most pressing is the need to help vulnerable youth facing barriers to employment and to address youth underemployment and school-to-work transition challenges more broadly.

What’s clear is that business schools have an opportunity to teach the social and emotional skills that employers are looking for in new hires and that young people need to compete and function effectively in today’s labour market. To remain competitive, current, and connected, business schools need to work with humanities and social science faculties on campus and with businesses and industries off campus to offer more holistic, cross-disciplinary, and inclusive for-credit...
programming as well as work placements that blend skills training and work as part of a learning continuum.

This will mean finding new and innovative ways to bring human skills training into the classroom and developing social and emotional skills assessment tools and strategies that enable students to be successful and satisfy accreditation standards in the process. To train young people to be globally minded, especially as schools bring in more international students and companies become more global, it will mean including different cultural worldviews, different ways of communicating, and a new openness to diversity.

Business schools remain important pathways for Canada’s young people between skills training and work. But they will need to do more to prepare graduates not just for the evolving technical realities but also for the urgent social and emotional demands of the future of work. Business schools that devote more space to teaching human skills will enable future workers to deal professionally, productively, and empathetically with one another, with the public, with clients, and with partners both at home and around the world.
APPENDIX A

A Primer on Business Education in Canada

In 2015, business, management, and public administration accounted for the most post-secondary enrolments in Canada, at 356,793 students. At the university (undergraduate) level, there were 189,948 enrolments in business, marketing, and public administration programs. At the college level, there were 119,436 enrolments.¹

Bachelor degrees in business are offered by most universities and some colleges, most commonly under the titles Bachelor of Commerce (BComm/BCom) or Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA). A variety of majors or concentrations are available, including:

- Accounting and/or Financial Management Services and/or Personal Financial Planning²
- Business Analytics³
- Business Technology Management⁴
- East Asian, European, or Latin-American Business Studies⁵
- Economics⁶
- Entrepreneurial Leadership or Entrepreneurship and Innovation⁷
- Finance⁸
- Human Resources or Organizational Behaviour⁹

1 Statistics Canada, Table 37-10-0011-01.
2 McMaster University, "Academic Programs"; University of Calgary, "Personal Financial Planning."
3 University of Calgary, "Business Analytics (BANA)."
4 Ryerson University, "Business Technology Management (BComm)."
5 University of Alberta, "Bachelor of Commerce Majors."
6 Thompson Rivers University, "Economics Major: Bachelor of Business Administration."
7 SFU Beedie School of Business, "Concentrations."
8 Athabasca University, "Bachelor of Commerce in Finance."
9 UBC Sauder School of Business, "Organizational Behaviour & Human Resources."
- International Business\textsuperscript{10}
- Management (including General Business Management, Human Resources Management, Operations Management, Supply Chain Management, Global Supply Chain and Logistics Management, or Marketing Management)\textsuperscript{11}
- Management Information Systems\textsuperscript{12}
- Marketing\textsuperscript{13}
- Risk Management and Insurance\textsuperscript{14}
- Strategic Analysis\textsuperscript{15}

Other available business-related degrees include Bachelor of Arts (BA) with a major in Business, Bachelor of Business Studies (BBST), Bachelor of Accounting (BAcc), Bachelor of Management (BMgmt), Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations (BHRLR),\textsuperscript{16} and Bachelor of Management and Organizational Studies (BMOS).

Some business programs focus on specific sectors—for example, the Bachelor of Business in Tourism and Hospitality (BBTH) at the University of Prince Edward Island or the Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Forest Business Management at the University of Alberta.\textsuperscript{17} Others combine business studies with other disciplines—for instance, the Bachelor of Global Business and Digital Arts (BGbDA) or the entrepreneurship option in engineering at the University of Waterloo; the Combined BCom and Juris Doctor at Queen’s University; or the Integrated Business and Humanities program at McMaster University.\textsuperscript{18}

A wide array of business diplomas is available, with colleges and polytechnics offering general programs in business/office administration or management, as well as more specialized programs—for instance,\textsuperscript{10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18}

\textsuperscript{10} Carleton University, “International Business (BCom).”
\textsuperscript{11} SFU Beedie School of Business, “Concentrations.”
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} University of Calgary, “Risk Management and Insurance.”
\textsuperscript{15} SFU Beedie School of Business, “Concentrations.”
\textsuperscript{16} Athabasca University, “Human Resources & Labour Relations.”
\textsuperscript{17} University of Prince Edward Island, “Bachelor of Business in Tourism and Hospitality”; University of Alberta, “Forest Business Management.”
\textsuperscript{18} University of Waterloo, “Global Business and Digital Arts”; University of Waterloo, “Entrepreneurship Option in Engineering”; Queen’s University, “Optional Programs”; McMaster University, “Integrated Business and Humanities (IBH).”
programs in advertising and marketing communications management, accounting, entrepreneurship and innovation, or business for journeyperson management.\textsuperscript{19} CEGEPS offer technical and pre-university studies in business-related disciplines, and some universities offer business diplomas as well.\textsuperscript{20} Certificates in business-related disciplines are offered at most colleges and some universities, with specializations such as leadership, business intelligence system infrastructure, labour relations, administrative studies, business fundamentals for Aboriginal communities, and project management.\textsuperscript{21}

Public administration programs, while grouped with business programs by Statistics Canada for data collection purposes, encompass disciplines such as social work, community organization and advocacy, public policy analysis, and human services.\textsuperscript{22} Undergraduate degrees and diplomas in public administration can be housed in an institution’s business school, but just as often, they are located in other schools or faculties.\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{20} CÉGEP Garneau, “Techniques de comptabilité de gestion”; CÉGEP de l’Outaouais, “Organisation et gestion”; Victoria Island University, “Diploma in Business Administration.”


\textsuperscript{22} Statistics Canada, Variant of CIP 2016.

\textsuperscript{23} For example, the University of Ottawa’s Bachelor of Social Sciences (BSocSc) in Public Administration is offered by the School of Political Studies; Ryerson University’s BA in Public Administration and Governance is housed in its Department of Politics and Public Administration; and Carleton University’s Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management (BPAPM) is based in the university’s College of Public Affairs. University of Ottawa, “Public Administration”; Ryerson University, “Public Administration and Governance (BA)”; Carleton University, “Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management.”
APPENDIX B

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