Indigenous Education and Residential Schools: 1867-1910

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Introduction

“This research was supported by the Valerie Kuehne Undergraduate Research Awards, University of Victoria”

The Canadian government’s treatment of indigenous people is a shameful piece of the country’s short history. The government’s attempt at assimilation through the use of residential schools traumatized many generations of indigenous children, and its effects can still be seen today, over 25 years since the closure of the last school. Recent discoveries of over 1000 unmarked graves at these schools paint a picture of the horror that was endured inside them.

Here, I analyze the indigenous schooling system more broadly and examine data for schools situated both on and off reserve. Our variables of interest are those containing data on teacher salary, those containing data on student attendance, and those containing information on whether a school was funded by the church, the government, or the respective band.

Data

The data used is taken from the “Indian Affairs Annual Reports 1864-1990” section of *Library and Archives Canada.* After being taken from the archives, a lot of these data had to then be digitized and tabulated; this had not been done previously due to the relative newness of this specific field of study

Another step involved sorting through the tabulated data and pulling out the tables containing school data specifically. These tables would list each individual school as the row header and a non-exhaustive list of some of the information included is teacher name and salary, how the school was funded and the amount, and information about student attendance, often divided by gender and by grade. The data is separated by year, and occasionally within each year the data is further separated by the type of school, whether it was a boarding school, and industrial school or a day school.

Methodology

In order to regress the data for further analysis, I had to design a program in Stata that would merge together the tables from the same year, if applicable, and then append these to the tables from previous years and in the years that followed. In the end, after I had cleaned out blank and unnecessary entries, I had one large data set with over 14 000 entries that allowed me to observe trends in data over time.

I then had to decide what variables would be of interest. One step I took was creating a variable called att_ratio which showcased the ratio of attending students to students on the registry by dividing the former variable by the latter. I considered this to be one of the variables of interest. In addition, I considered the variable depicting the annual salary of teachers, which I labeled sal_annum. Lastly, I created two variables describing the type of funding the schools received. The first, fnd_pd_num, would be marked as 1 if the school was funded through the government, a 0 if the school was funded by the band, and 0.5 if it was a mix of the two. The second of these variables, fnd_pd_chr, would be listed as 1 if the school was funded partially or in full by a church, a Christian society, or a missionary group, and 0 otherwise. I regressed all of these variables against each other, as well as the year variable to observe trends over time.

Results

Trends over time

Over time, various trends arose in the data. The most notable of these being a shift in the type of funding. The schools in later years are more often funded by the government and less often by the band or the church. In addition, the attendance ratio of students increases over time, as well as teacher salary.

Source	SS	df	MS		
Model	121.195491	1	121.195491	Number of obs	3194
Residual	402.378397	3192	.126058395	F(1, 3192)	961.42
				Prob > F	0.0000
Total	523.573889	3193	.163975537	R-squared	0.2315
				Adj R-squared	0.2312
				Root MSE	.35505

fnd_pd_num	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
year	.0225071	.0007259	31.01	0.000	.0210839	.0239304
_cons	-41.93957	1.377869	-30.44	0.000	-44.64117	-39.23797

Source	SS	df	MS		
Model	42.5032678	1	42.5032678	Number of obs	3737
Residual	234.252419	3735	.062718184	F(1, 3735)	677.69
				Prob > F	0.0000
Total	276.755686	3736	.074078075	R-squared	0.1536
				Adj R-squared	0.1534
				Root MSE	.25044

fnd_pd_chr	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
year	-.0099688	.0003829	-26.03	0.000	-.0107196	-.009218
_cons	18.97801	.7259323	26.14	0.000	17.55475	20.40128

Effect of Type of Funding

Funding from the government rather than a church or school was observed to increase teacher salary and the attendance ratio over time. Church funding was observed to decrease both. This, when coupled with the data depicting funding shift, could explain the increase in teacher salary and attendance over time.

Source	SS	df	MS		
Model	373559026	1	373559026	Number of obs	3085
Residual	1.7207e+10	3083	5581292.62	F(1, 3083)	66.93
				Prob > F	0.0000
Total	1.7581e+10	3084	5700610.95	R-squared	0.0212
				Adj R-squared	0.0209
				Root MSE	2362.5

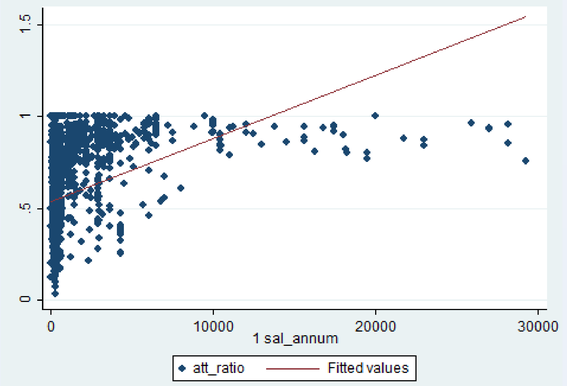
sal_annum	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
fnd_pd_num	850.7991	103.9956	8.18	0.000	646.8915	1054.707
_cons	248.4342	91.3143	2.72	0.007	69.39116	427.4772

Source	SS	df	MS		
Model	2.71333599	1	2.71333599	Number of obs	2399
Residual	109.454931	2397	.0456633	F(1, 2397)	59.42
				Prob > F	0.0000
Total	112.168267	2398	.046775758	R-squared	0.0242
				Adj R-squared	0.0238
				Root MSE	.21369

att_ratio	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
fnd_pd_num	.0981239	.0127294	7.71	0.000	.0731622	.1230855
_cons	.4871716	.0117297	41.53	0.000	.4641702	.510173

Effect of Teacher Salary

An increase in teacher salary has the highest effect on the attendance ratio than any other variable, demonstrated by a beta coefficient of 0.4132153. The figure below shows the trend. Future research could explore the implications of this.



Conclusion and Future Research

Upon regressing the various variables against each other, I am left with a clear picture of how they are related to one another, and what that meant for the situation on the ground regarding these schools. Consistent with previous research is the trend of funding shifting away from the band and church, and more towards the government. What I can add to this is evidence that the shifting of funding to the government increased teacher salaries and increased the rate to which students attended. I believe this conclusion is logical as the government would have had the resources to increase funding where they thought was necessary, and to enforce attendance to a higher degree.

With these data, there are many directions that one could take in further research. For example, one could examine how a shifting of funding to the government affected how students were connected to their culture. I believe that a shifting of funding to the government, and the subsequent decrease of involvement from the band, would have created a major shift in how students were connected to their culture. One could also create a variable for the school type, whether it was a boarding, day, or industrial school, and use that data to analyze some of the previous questions.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Rob Gillezeau for being an excellent supervisor and for guiding me throughout the various stages of my work. I would also like to thank Rob Gillezeau, Donn Feir, Maggie Jones, Nathaniel Hope-Tucker, and Harlan Hoffman-Miller for their many hours spent cleaning and preparing the data for use in this research. Lastly, I would like to thank Rob Gillezeau and Donn Feir for offering me the opportunity to continue with this research, with the hope of producing a published work.