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Think Locally, Act Globally: Comparing Urban, Suburban, and Rural Colleges' Internationalization: the Case of the CÉGEPs

By Olivier Bègin-Caouette

Abstract

Community colleges were created to respond to the specific needs of their local community, yet the growing transnational connections established between institutions seem to give the “local”, a global outlook. Based on a survey to which 39 of Québec general and vocational colleges (CEGEPs) - 81% of the population - responded, this article uses frequency analyses to describe how internationalization inputs and outputs differ in rural, suburban and urban institutions. Findings suggest a rural distinctive character but do not show any important difference between urban and suburban institutions. Urban and suburban CEGEPs tend to use an ad-hoc central approach, and focus on student mobility and internationalized curricula, while rural CEGEPs seem to prefer a systematic marginal approach (Burnett & Huisman, 2010) to establish sustainable partnerships and recruit international students. In summary, the study suggests that local communities drive the internationalization process, thus suggesting that CEGEPs and community colleges think locally and act globally.

Résumé

Les collèges communautaires ont été créés afin de répondre aux besoins particuliers de leur communauté environnante. Or la croissance des connexions transnationales semble donner au “local” une apparence globalisée. En s'appuyant sur un questionnaire auquel 39 collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel (cégeps) ont répondu - soit 81% de la population -, cet article utilise une analyse de fréquence afin de montrer comment les intrants et les extrants de l'internationalisation diffèrent selon que l'établissement se situe dans une région rurale, urbaine ou périurbaine. Les résultats suggèrent qu'il existe une “exception rurale”, mais ces résultats ne confirment aucune différence entre les cégeps situés en milieu urbains ou périurbains. Ces derniers tendent à employer une approche centrale et ponctuelle (Burnett & Huisman, 2010); se concentrant sur la mobilité étudiante et l'internationalisation des programmes. De leur côté, les cégeps en région rurale préfèrent une approche systématique et marginale (Ibid) qui leur permet d'établir des partenariats durables et de recruter des étudiants étrangers. En somme, l'étude suggère que l'environnement immédiat des cégeps guide leur internationalisation et, donc, que les cégeps et les collèges communautaires “pensent localement” et “agissent globalement”.

Introduction

Technical Education Institutions (TEIs) were created in order to meet the needs of industrialization (Smyth, 1970). In the 20th century, community colleges spread throughout Canada and the United States because they increase human capital efficiently, meet the growing demand for post-secondary education, and adjust to the changing needs of industries (Skolnik, 2008). Education being placed within provincial jurisdiction, the Canadian case shows great variations in college structure: Ontario and Prince Edward Island use colleges for students not eligible for universities; Manitoba, New Brunswick and Newfoundland focus on short-term work-entry training; Alberta and British Columbia combine technical training and university transfer; and Saskatchewan relies on colleges without walls and technical institutes (Gallagher & Dennison, 1995). Québec colleges of general and vocational education (CEGEPs) are the most distinctive in that they are tuition free and offer two-year mandatory pre-university and three-year technical training (Rocher, 2008). This study is based on the case of CEGEPs, thus permitting limited generalizations.

However, all community colleges share a commitment to their community, offering to the local population low-cost training in preparing for a job, university education or professional development (Medsker, 1973). They also operate under Governments' control and they conduct research consistent with their local realities (Skolnik, 2008). However, the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (1999) pointed out that "the definition of 'community' [...] has now expanded to include not only local geography, but a profession, skill trade, niche market or global workplace" (p.3). Indeed, globalization transforms our understanding of geo-spatial interactions by promoting global actors and transnational connections between geographically distant sub-national actors (Sassen, 2009). Studying 'global cities', Sassen notes that globalization takes a very localized form where communication and finances are centralized in megalopolises, and rural and suburban areas deal with global phenomena in a roundabout way.

Consequently, community colleges face many global challenges (Levin, 2001). While some college leaders argue that an international outlook undermines the "community mission" (Raby & Valeau, 2007), others respond to these challenges by internationalizing, that is, integrating international, intercultural or global components in their educational services or structures (Knight, 2004). In Canada, 86.6% of community colleges recruit international students, 80.6% participate in international cooperation projects, 77.9% organize study-abroad projects, and 72.2% internationalize their curricula (ACCC, 2010). Yet, community colleges remain embedded in specific communities and we need to better understand the influence of the local environment on internationalization.

Background

There are many ways to identify, name and categorize the communities in which colleges evolve. The Carnegie Foundation (2013) developed a classification of community colleges' location. Urban institutions are located within Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs), suburban institutions

are located in Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA), and rural institutions operate outside these areas. Using this classification, Hardy and Katsinas (2007) found that the colleges' relationships with their communities was influenced by their location. For instance, 59% of community colleges are rural, but they enroll only 34% of the student population, suggesting an important enrolment spread. Moreover, white students represent 74% of rural, 54% of suburban and 45% of urban community college enrollment. In terms of budget, rural colleges have a \$23.4 million budget, compared to \$50.2 and \$102.4 million budgets in suburban and urban community colleges respectively.

Miller and Tuttle (2006) studied the 'rural identity' of some community colleges. Despite rural out-migration, poverty and illiteracy, these institutions bring in new people and ideas and they promote respect for differences. Bigelow (2011) found that rural colleges' presidents show a 'rural bias'. In smaller locations, institutions are more involved in volunteering, community projects and charitable giving. The presidents are promoted internally, stay in power longer and prefer hiring from other rural areas.

Urban, suburban and rural community colleges also differ in their academic structure. Charlier and Williams (2011) found a correlation between location and colleges' reliance on adjunct faculty. In rural community colleges, there are fewer part-time faculty and fewer course-hours are taught by adjunct faculty. This is explained by higher levels of faculty satisfaction, a 'fit' between faculty and institutions, and a heavier faculty workload. Yet, dealing with a smaller labour pool, these institutions face higher unmet demands. In contrast, suburban colleges use more adjunct faculty, but have the lowest unmet demand because of their community's diverse economic base and higher income. Finally, urban colleges have both an important unmet demand (in all fields) and rely heavily on adjunct faculty because they compete with other businesses in hiring qualified people, and therefore rely on part-timers who have other jobs.

In terms of student population, Copperland *et al.* (2008) observed that the proportion of part-time students increased with population density; 53% in rural, 60% in suburban and 60.4% in urban community colleges. Glover, Waller and Justice (2010) also observed that suburban institutions charge higher tuition than rural/town community colleges do. Rural institutions are also cheaper, but they lack the resources to offer expensive programs with low-enrollment; and urban institutions, with lowest income-per-student, must charge higher fees to compete in a dense environment.

Internationalization in rural, suburban and urban community colleges

With a more regional outlook than their university counterparts, community colleges develop a structure, programs and facilities that fit the needs of their community. Yet beyond this local identity, there is a need in the global era to appreciate diversity and establish interdependent relationships with organizations abroad, thus making the 'local' a captor in the globalization process (Raby, 2000).

Harder (2011) confirms that the internationalization process is significantly different in rural, suburban and urban community colleges. Through an ad-hoc analysis based on the data collected by the American Council of Education (see Green & Siaya, 2005) regarding six dimensions (articulated commitment, academic offering, organizational infrastructure, external funding, institutional investment in faculty, and international students and student programs), Harder discovered that 81% of rural community colleges had a low internationalization score, compared to 57% of urban and 54% of suburban colleges. Urban colleges demonstrated the highest institutional support for internationalization, and Harder found a correlation between that commitment and international academic requirements. In suburban and rural colleges, institutional support and international students obtained the highest scores. Harder's (2011) article implies that location affects the favoured international activity as well as the intensiveness of the internationalization process.

In Canada, the Carnegie classification is used less than in the U.S. However, some studies reveal similar discrepancies in institutions' internationalization depending on their location. A study of British Columbia university-colleges reveals that the external environment shapes leadership, the recruitment of international students, and the perceived value of internationalization (Evans, 2006). For instance, King University College charges the highest tuition rate to international students (\$11,400) and the lowest to local students (\$3,210) because it must compete for domestic students (who are cautious of the return-on-investment) and have to put more effort into recruiting international students (who have a more elastic demand curve). While smaller communities lament that international students take the place of local students, college leaders argue that, without these additional revenues, some programs would have to be discontinued. Moreover, since international students stay in local families' home, they can bring diversity and dynamism to communities.

In Ontario, Galway (2000) studied two urban, one suburban and two rural Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) and found that size and environment were key factors in the promotion of internationalization. The first urban college considered internationalization to be beneficial to the colleges' reputation and revenues. Motivated by economic rationales, this college created a subsidiary company to handle international work, and it considers other colleges as competitors. The other urban college focuses more on international cooperation projects than international student recruitment. It is interesting to note that this college also internationalizes to attract and prepare its local students for a global world.

Although the suburban college recruited 103 international students to compensate for a reduction in funding, internationalization seemed primarily to prepare students for the global economy. At the same time, it used internationalization to promote respect for racial and cultural differences in the community. This idea of linking internationalization and community development is prominent in rural colleges. One leader said that colleges should not use internationalization to generate a profit, but to broaden the

horizons of local students and to diversify their homogeneous communities. Recruiting international students costs this college money. Yet, when international students stay with local families, it creates long-lasting friendships and dynamism.

The leader of the second rural college echoed the concerns stated above. Although he recognized the importance of introducing international students to the isolated community, and promoting overseas learning and professional development opportunities, it abolished the international office because internationalization was too expensive for this rural institution. He stated that, “the activities enrich the college's surrounding community, but (internationalization) is not a big money maker and not a way for the college to overcome under-funding” (in Galway, 2000, p.179). It should be noted that two rural CAAT called for a coordinated approach to internationalization in Ontario and Canada.

Internationalization in rural, suburban and urban CEGEPs

As mentioned above, CEGEPs are a very distinct type of college and, consequently, their internationalization approach is also distinct. First, it is motivated by political rationales and supported by the Government of Québec, which formulated in 1965 the ‘Gerin-Lajoie Doctrine’ stating that the Province could establish international relations in its jurisdiction (Paquin, 2006). The Ministry of Education (2002) adopted a *National Strategy to Succeed in Internationalizing Quebec Education* that provided funding for students and faculty going abroad and sharing expertise. Second, the 48 CEGEPs are represented by CEGEP International, an organization that contributes to the international reputation of CEGEPs and facilitates the international initiatives of its members (Roberge, 2010). The community of practice formed by CEGEPs, CEGEP International and the Government of Québec results in a coherent, coordinated and efficient international initiatives (Bégin-Caouette, 2012).

Bégin-Caouette (2011) observed that CEGEPs were primarily using an activity-based approach. In terms of activities, CEGEPs are highly involved in student mobility projects, while community colleges are more involved in international student recruitment. This could be explained by the fact that community colleges can keep the tuition fees paid by international students, but receive less funding from the Government for student mobility. Compared to community colleges that internationalize mostly for economic reasons, CEGEPs do so for socio-cultural and academic reasons. Finally, in terms of organizational strategies, Bégin-Caouette observed a subtle decentralization trend in CEGEPs, but reported that international activities remained centralized under one direction or service in most community colleges.

However, even if the internationalization of CEGEPs is distinct, two studies (based on the same data set) suggest that the process is also influenced by location. CEGEP International (2011) sent a survey to 39 CEGEPs (81% of the population) and its report states that the priority given to different international activities varies depending on location. For

instance, rural CEGEPs give the highest priority to student mobility, and they form the only group in which some CEGEPs prioritize faculty mobility. On the other hand, the majority of students participating in mobility projects come from urban and suburban areas.

In a study on the internationalization of CEGEP faculty's professional development, Bégin-Caouette (2012) found that the perceived impact of internationalization varied depending on location. For instance, rural CEGEPs see the benefit for the development of their community while urban CEGEPs observe an impact on the recruitment of local students. Moreover, the author noted suburban colleges had concluded more faculty exchange agreements with international partners, but that the areas covered in these agreements were less diversified than for urban CEGEPs. Finally, while more urban CEGEP faculty went abroad (often to accompany students), rural faculty went abroad to work as teachers or participate in international conferences.

Research question and methodology

The literature suggests that, similar to the community colleges, location could partly influence the internationalization process in CEGEPs. However, few studies identify these discrepancies. This article will thus attempt to understand how the internationalization process differs in rural, suburban and urban CEGEPs; especially in terms of inputs and outputs. Inputs include three dimensions from Green and Siaya's (2005) (articulated commitment, organization structure, and human resources) as well as funding and partnerships. Outputs also include three dimensions based on the work of Green and Siaya (academic offering, international students and students programs) as well as international cooperation, research, curricula and intercultural events.

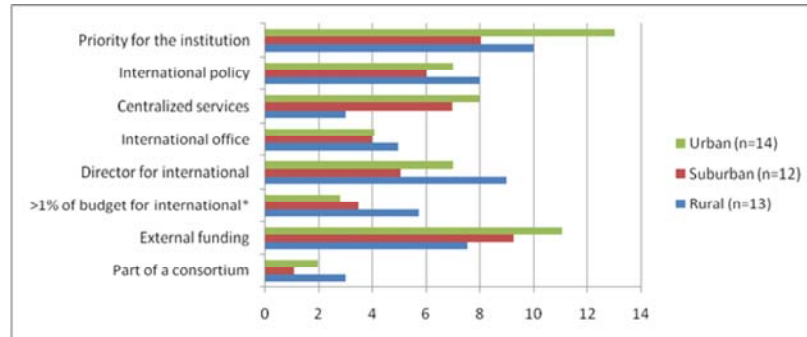
The data used in this study come from a survey sent by Cégep International in 2010 to the 48 CEGEPs, and to which 39 (81%) responded. The sample includes 14 urban (36%), 12 (31%) suburban and 13 (33%) rural CEGEPs. It is representative because, in the population, these percentages are 33%, 35% and 31% respectively. Considering the number and format of the questions (dichotomic and descriptive) as well as the small number of participants, this article relies on frequency analysis. More variables can be covered by using this method, yet the significance of results cannot be calculated.

It should be noted that each CEGEP group contains few institutions (12-14), so a slight difference can appear more important than it is. Moreover, some responses could be biased because the questionnaire was anonymous and sent by an organization dedicated to internationalization. However, this study is more systematic than the case studies cited above and, by taking the necessary precautions in interpreting the results, it can help to draw some hypothesis about the college education system.

Results

Figure 1 below shows that urban CEGEPs are more likely to consider internationalization as a priority, but less likely to spend more than 1% of their budget on international activities. More suburban and urban CEGEPs centralize responsibilities for international activities under one service or direction, and most of them receive external funding. It is noteworthy that the average proportion of budget dedicated to internationalization is 0.89% in urban, 1.17% in rural and 1.44% in suburban CEGEPs. For their part, fewer rural CEGEPs receive external funding, but many dedicate more than 1% of their budget to international activities. More rural CEGEPs also have an international office, a director responsible for international activities, and are part of a consortium.

Figure 1. Number of CEGEPs indicating they have the following inputs for internationalization

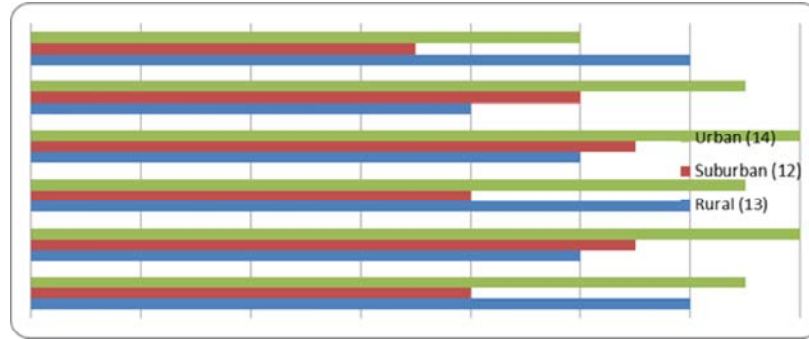


* Only 25 CEGEPs (52% of the population) provided data on their budget.

Figure 2 reveals that outputs vary depending on regions, although much less than in inputs. There are more rural CEGEPs that recruit international students, and more of them also count on a College Center of Technology Transfer (CCTT) that conducts international activities (research, conferences, contracts or international interns). Although CCTTs' role in the internationalization of CEGEPs remains somehow marginal, it should be mentioned that 36% of them attend international conferences and 31% accept international students as interns (Bégin-Caouette, 2011). Moreover, all urban CEGEPs organize intercultural events in their institution (e.g., dinners, talent shows, conferences, etc.), and both urban and suburban CEGEPs are more likely to integrate an international component into their regular programs.

While fewer suburban institutions have signed student mobility agreements with international partners, many have a higher student participation rate in mobility projects (2.1% in the suburban compared with 1.8% in urban and 1% in rural CEGEPs). The three clusters participate equally in international cooperation projects, but rural CEGEPs realize more projects (42) than urban (35) and suburban (18) institutions. However, the monetary value of projects in rural CEGEPs tends to be lower (less than \$500,000) and the projects tend to be located in fewer countries than is the case with their urban counterparts.

Figure 2. Number of CEGEPs realizing the following international activities



Discussion

Community colleges were created to respond to the specific needs of their community and, as such, their structure, programs and relationship with communities depend partly on their rural, suburban or urban location. The objective of this study was to compare rural suburban and urban CEGEPs in terms of their internationalization inputs and outputs. The results do not suggest important differences between suburban and urban CEGEPs, but both seem to differ from rural institutions. The former recognize the importance of internationalization, but they do not need to elaborate a policy or establish an international office to be successful. In fact, urban and suburban CEGEPs seem to have an 'ad hoc-central' response to globalization (Burnett & Huisman, 2010) in that their student mobility is more spontaneous (i.e., fewer agreements signed) but funded more by the government, and they participate in international cooperation in various regions of the world, as long as the contracts are profitable.

In contrast, rural CEGEPs seem to follow a 'systematic-marginal' approach in which their international activities are more focused, coherently organized and based on informed decisions (Burnett & Huisman, 2010). This seems like an appropriate approach when an organization receives less external funding and dedicates a higher proportion of its budget to international activities. Having a director responsible for internationalization, an international office, student mobility fostered by agreements with partner institutions, and participation in consortia are different facets of a systematic and coordinated process. As expressed in Galway's (2000) interviews with CAAT executives, it seems that rural institutional leaders are more directly involved in the internationalization process and that they prefer a coordinated approach that joins forces for efficiency and economy of scale. More decentralization in smaller rural institutions could also constitute a way to mobilize different units in the process.

Like British Columbian university-colleges in rural areas, rural CEGEPs recruit international students to maintain programs open (Evans, 2006). Indeed, rural institutions lack the resources to offer expensive programs (Glover et al., 2010) and, even if CEGEPs keep only 10% of the international tuition fees, increasing the number of international students minimizes the decrease in total enrolment and, consequently, the decrease in government funding (based partly on enrolment). Moreover, as

demonstrated by the 222 Reunion students who immigrated after their studies, international students bring growth to local communities (Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés Culturelles du Québec, 2011).

Charlier and Williams (2001) reported that rural community colleges face smaller labour pools and higher unmet demands in specific areas. Rural CEGEPs use internationalization to compensate for their lack of expertise as well as distance from major centers and universities. For instance, more rural CEGEPs have established a College Center of Technology Transfer (CCTT) and they participate in more international cooperation projects than do their counterparts. Each CEGEP can establish only a CCTT in one area of expertise that provides technical assistance and, although the CCTT's impact on internationalization is limited, it can increase the expertise of the CEGEP and its instructors, connect the institution to major economic actors, and bring new resources to improve the education offered at home (Bensouda et al., 2013). Similarly, international cooperation projects are conducive to complementary partnerships that can improve the expertise of local teachers (Bégin-Caouette, 2012).

Unlike American and Canadian rural community colleges, rural CEGEPs are internationally active. They are more likely to recruit international students, to conduct international research, and they participate in more international cooperation projects. This difference could be explained by an equalizing CEGEP system in which admissions are managed by three regional services, and curricula, structures and working conditions are determined by the Government of Québec (Lavoie, 2008). Rural CEGEPs also benefit from a community of practice with CEGEP International and the Government. While it is too expensive for rural community colleges to participate in international fairs and meet international partners (Galway, 2000), CEGEP International (funded by all CEGEPs) goes abroad (with representatives of CEGEPs), recruits students (sending them to rural regions), and concludes agreements with foreign partners (Roberge, 2010).

The sense of community is, however, not the prerogative of rural institutions. While Galway's (2000) interviews with CAAT leaders suggested that urban institutions are primarily interested in recruiting international students to generate revenues, Harder (2011) showed that urban community colleges are proactive in adopting international academic requirements for local students. Urban and suburban CEGEPs also internationalize curricula and most organize intercultural events. Their communities being multicultural and directly in contact with manifestations of globalization, urban and suburban community colleges seem to play a supporting role by promoting respect for differences and preparing students for a globalized job market.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this review did not find any major differences between urban and suburban CEGEPs in terms of the internationalization inputs or outputs, but it did find some differences between these CEGEPs and their rural counterparts. Urban and suburban CEGEPs use an 'ad hoc-central' approach that focuses more on student mobility and the internationalization of curricula, while rural CEGEPs prefer a 'systematic-marginal' approach to establish sustainable partnerships with foreign organizations, and recruit international students. Supported by a centralized system, these international activities help rural CEGEPs to overcome some regional disadvantages. In that sense, internationalization appears as an optional tool that rural CEGEPs may use to deal with local issues, rather than a required response for suburban and urban colleges that face inescapable global issues.

Looking at sub-national organizations allows the reader to grasp the construction, evolution and impact of globalization. As Raby (2000) affirmed, the growing diversity and the transnational connections established between single institutions give the 'local' a global outlook. However, while it has been argued that the definition of community has evolved to include the 'global', this paper shows that its original meaning still drives the initiatives of community colleges and CEGEP at the global level. In brief, CEGEPs and community colleges think locally and act globally.

End Note: Acknowledgement

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