

**Reviewing Canadian Post-Secondary Education:  
Post-Secondary Education Policy in Post-Industrial Canada**

[Dale Kirby](#), PhD  
Assistant Professor  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

**Abstract**

Since 2004, a number of Canadian provinces have initiated comprehensive reviews of their respective public post-secondary education systems. This paper examines the ways in which these provincial post-secondary education reviews are consistent with the pervasive influence of economic globalization on higher education and a more market-driven and commercially-oriented ideological outlook on post-secondary education's *raison d'être*. Taken together, these provincial reviews provide an informative and interesting repository of the current tendencies in Canadian post-secondary education policy.

## **Reviewing Canadian Post-Secondary Education: Post-Secondary Education Policy in Post-Industrial Canada**

Since 2004, governments of four Canadian provinces, namely Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario, have undertaken wide-ranging reviews of their respective provincial post-secondary education systems. Newfoundland and Labrador's *White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education* (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005) and Alberta's *Advanced Education and Technology Review* (Alberta, 2006) were completed by ministry/legislative commissions. Ontario's *Post-Secondary Education Review* (Ontario, 2005) and British Columbia's *Campus 20/20* review (British Columbia, 2007) were each conducted by external, independent commissions appointed by the governments in these provinces. Comprehensive province-wide public consultations were central to the work of each of these exercises and, while they differed somewhat in their structure, the mandates and overarching themes of the four reviews were very similar. The major themes addressed in the final reports of each of the reviews included affordability, accessibility, accountability, institutional collaboration, diversity, funding and quality. While there are differences in the size and scope of the post-secondary systems in each of these four provinces, the final review reports, hereinafter referred to as the Alberta review, the British Columbia review, the Newfoundland review and the Ontario review, collectively provide an interesting repository of the current post-secondary policy tendencies in Canada. The principal arguments and recommendations put forward in the review reports have key differences but they also include important similarities. Taken together, they demonstrate the pervasive influence of economic globalization which is accompanied by an increasingly utilitarian, market-oriented ideological outlook on post-secondary education's *raison d'être*. The policies advocated in the review reports illustrate, to varying extents, the impact of such dominant influences on modern post-secondary policies as privatization, marketization, quality assurance and internationalization. Before exploring these observations in some depth, it is useful to briefly review the nature and organization of Canadian post-secondary education and the post-secondary systems in Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario.

## Post-Secondary Education in Canada

In Canada, education, including post-secondary education, is constitutionally a provincial responsibility<sup>1</sup>. Post-secondary education is the responsibility of each respective provincial government and there is no national or federal government department charged with overseeing post-secondary education policy on a national basis. However, the Canadian Constitution commits both levels of government to “furthering economic development to reduce disparities in opportunities<sup>2</sup>”. The commitment of both levels of government to furthering economic development has direct implications, at least in principle, for post-secondary education policy in Canada since both levels of government have an interest in facilitating the ability of post-secondary institutions to contribute to economic development. While Canada’s provincial governments are the primary funding sources for the post-secondary institutions within their jurisdiction, the federal government supports the development of post-secondary education by providing funding for research initiatives at colleges and universities, financial assistance programs for students and indirect funding to post-secondary institutions via fiscal transfer arrangements with the provinces. In the Canadian context, national post-secondary education policy is in essence represented by the amalgamation of the common interests across post-secondary education policy in each province.

Post-secondary education in Canada is delivered by universities and community and vocational colleges. There is also a smaller number of institutions offering specialized programs (i.e., agricultural or fine arts programs). Canada does not have a formal system for institutional accreditation. Instead, accreditation, including the granting of university degrees, is entirely a matter for the governments of each province. Historically, degree-granting authority has been the exclusive domain of public universities and a small number of private, mainly religious institutions. Public colleges and private career colleges mainly offer academic and vocationally-oriented programs of study that lead to certificates and diplomas. Canadian universities trace their heritage to the medieval European *studia generalia* of Bologna, Paris, Oxford and Cambridge and are oriented toward the dual aims of teaching and research as initiated by the first research universities of 18th century Scotland and the Humboldtian universities of early 19th century Germany. In contrast to universities, Canada’s community colleges are a much more

---

<sup>1</sup> Section 93 of the *Canadian Constitution Act of 1982* assigns paramount authority over education to the provinces.

<sup>2</sup> See section 36 of the *Canadian Constitution Act of 1982*.

recent invention, originating in the massive, mostly federal investments in non-university post-secondary education in the 1960's. Community colleges in each of the provinces offer adult general education and upgrading programs along with a comprehensive mix of occupationally-oriented technical and vocational training programs in a wide range of fields, including applied arts, business, health sciences and technology (Gallagher & Dennison, 1995; Jones 1997). In recent years a number of provinces have extended degree-granting authority to community colleges and a small, but growing number of secular private universities. Table 1 presents some vital statistics for the provincial post-secondary education systems in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario.

Table 1: Selected Characteristics of the Post-Secondary Education Systems in the Canadian Provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario

	Alberta	British Columbia	Newfoundland and Labrador	Ontario
University Enrolment <sup>1</sup>	82,974	122,672	16,417	366,040
University Participation Rate <sup>1</sup>	16.2%	13.3%	24.2%	23.7%
College Enrolment <sup>1</sup>	80,605	130,525	13,537	221,493
College Participation Rate <sup>1</sup>	11.6%	9.1%	11.0%	12.9%
Total University and College Expenditures (millions) <sup>2</sup>	\$3.70	\$3.97	\$.544	\$12.5

<sup>1</sup>Source: Junor, S., & Usher, A. (2004). *The price of knowledge 2004: Access and student finance in Canada*. Montreal, PQ: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Statistics Canada. (2007). *Universities and colleges revenue and expenditures, by province and territory*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

With approximately 2.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) devoted to post-secondary education, Canada has the third highest expenditure on educational institutions relative to GDP amongst OECD countries, after the United States (2.9%) and South Korea (2.6%) (OECD, 2006). Over time, participation in post-secondary education has been growing strongly across the country. For instance, the post-secondary participation of young people aged 20 to 24 rose from 28% in 1990 to 41% in 2005 (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006). In 2006, total full-time enrolment at Canadian universities reached an all time high of 815,000 students (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2007). While participation rates in community college

education programs appear to be relatively equal by family income background (Corak, Lipps, & Zhao, 2003; Drolet, 2005), several studies have shown that university participation rates are not equal, with the participation of individuals from the higher income quartiles being substantially higher than those from the lower ones (Frenette, 2007; Junor & Usher, 2004). Amongst the 30 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada has the highest percentage of overall post-secondary educational attainment with almost half of the population aged 25 to 64 having completed either college or university. In 2004, approximately 22% of working-age Canadians had completed a university education and a further 22% had attained a college or vocational education (OECD, 2006).

### **Globalization and the Objectives of Post-Secondary Education**

Governments at the provincial and federal levels in Canada each regard investments in post-secondary education as critical to productivity and economic growth. In the 2004, 2005, and 2006 budget announcements, the federal government noted that a more educated workforce is essential to Canada's global economic competitiveness. The term globalization is often used to refer to the dominating influence of free market forces in economies around the world as they become more integrated through trade liberalization, advances in technology and increased labour mobility. Broadly speaking, globalization refers to the social, technological, economic, political, geographical, ideological and cultural changes affecting nations (Dudley, 1998; Rojewski & Lasonen, 2004). Globalization has been accompanied by increasing levels of state intervention, by recent historical standards, in society and the economy through education, training and labor market policies (Levin, 2003). With the advent of a 'knowledge-based' economy, education is increasingly viewed as an agency capable of fostering economic prosperity by facilitating innovation and providing sufficient human capital (i.e., educated workers) to meet the changing demands of industry. This economic-utilitarian policy approach accentuates the contribution of post-secondary education to economic development and places lesser emphasis on traditional academic-humanist perspectives on post-secondary education, which tend to emphasize education for citizenship and the collective benefit of society. These liberal-humanist goals are perhaps best reflected in Article 26(2) of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which stated that:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (United Nations, 1948)

As this paper will illustrate, the policy approaches recommended in the Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Ontario policy reviews reflect the dominance of the economic-utilitarian discourse and represent some of the over-arching trends in modern post-secondary education including: the continuing and expanding influence of privatization and marketization in post-secondary systems; the growing role of governments in quantifying and monitoring the quality of post-secondary institutions and their programs; and the growing emphasis on internationalization as a mechanism for meeting national challenges in the areas of post-secondary education funding, workforce development and innovation.

The importance of education as a domestic economic investment, derived from human capital theory, has been progressively articulated by policy-makers and governmental organizations. The OECD has persistently documented and reported that increased state investments in human capital by its member countries through post-secondary education has yielded high returns in terms of increased labour market participation, productivity and economic development (OECD, 2003). There is no disputing that post-secondary education has always served both economic and non-economic purposes. The dynamic relationship that exists between the academic-humanist and economic-utilitarian objectives of post-secondary education has been incisively noted by Skolnik (2004):

The economic objectives include preparing people to be productive workers in professional and other occupations and research which results in new products, new technologies and greater economic efficiency. As important as these objectives are, they stand in contrast to the cultural, moral, civic and broader intellectual purposes of education. There has been a perennial tension between these two sets of objectives, and arguably a society is best served when there is a healthy balance between the two. Globalization threatens to upset this balance, as governments employ financial and other policy levers in ways to get universities to give the dominant emphasis to the economic objectives of their activities. (p. 4)

Undoubtedly, some sectors within Canadian provincial post-secondary education systems are more utilitarian in their purpose than others. Vocational and workforce training programs are, in fact, utilitarian by their very nature and intent. Institutions delivering education programs of this type, such as community colleges, are mandated to address the education and skill requirements of industry. However, one should not overlook the social development objectives of public investment in even the most vocationally-oriented post-secondary institutions. Access to education at all levels helps to reduce inequality by providing the citizens with opportunities for personal and occupational advancement that they would not have otherwise had. As American educator Horace Mann noted more than a century ago, “Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery” (Mann, 1868, p. 669). Canada’s non-university sector grew out of the public demand for access to post-secondary opportunities in 1960’s, and accommodating this desire for access has served the nation’s workforce requirements well (Gallagher & Dennison, 1995; Schuetze & Dennison, 2005). With globalization, the economic-utilitarian discourse is expanded beyond workforce education to include the entirety of post-secondary education, including university-level studies. Governments have long recognized the connection between universities and economic growth; however, the role of universities in knowledge production, innovation and economic success has become a key public policy focus of the post-industrial information age (Fallis, 2005). The potential for universities to supply the highly skilled workers needed to compete internationally is increasingly recognized, and university programs, particularly science, technology and professional programs, are frequently linked to the preferences of employers and the needs of the ‘new economy’. Much of the growth in university enrolment in Canada has been driven by the shifting of labour market educational requirements of the ‘knowledge economy’. Jobs in nursing, teaching and management that had previously required only the completion of high school or a short period of technical training now require one or more university degrees. Many new occupations in human services, transportation, communications, business and personal services require university-level education as well.

The focus on the economic-utilitarian objectives of post-secondary education is evidenced in the official statements made by the Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador education ministers when initiating their respective post-secondary system reviews. In

announcing the Newfoundland review, the education minister stated that the post-secondary system needs to be “well positioned to contribute to the economic growth of our province and the employment prospects of our graduates” (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004, ¶ 3). Ontario’s Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities similarly inaugurated the review of Ontario’s system by affirming that “the key to competing and winning in a highly competitive global economy is having the most highly skilled and educated workforce” (Ontario, 2004, ¶ 3). This perspective is also reflected in the terms of reference for British Columbia’s review which states that the goal of the province’s review exercise is “to connect the opportunities of higher education, training and lifelong learning to the health and sustainability of our communities, economy and province to ensure British Columbians are well-positioned over the next 10 to 20 years to succeed in our increasingly knowledge-based and global economy” (British Columbia, 2007, p. 12).

While the reports of each of the reviews do briefly comment on the benefits of learning at the post-secondary level for the sake of learning itself, the observations and recommendations included in the final reports overwhelmingly emphasize the more economic-utilitarian positions on the purposes of post-secondary study. Each of the reports emphasizes the need to increase access to post-secondary education as a means of gaining a competitive advantage, developing a highly skilled workforce and meeting provincial goals for economic growth. For example, the authors of the Alberta report regard post-secondary education as a means of ensuring that “Alberta is well positioned to be an active participant in both social and economic global opportunities. A globally-focused Alberta will have strong and responsive knowledge networks that help learners succeed in a global marketplace” (Alberta, 2006, p.13). British Columbia’s review report states that, “higher learning . . . will be valued not only for its contribution to individual growth and fulfillment, but as a critically necessary contributor to social and economic progress and sustainability” (British Columbia, 2006, p.9). The Ontario report notes that “because the new economy demands it, the number of people attending [post-secondary studies] will need to rise substantially in the years ahead” (Ontario, 2005, p.1). Finally, the Newfoundland report observes that “in a world shaped by information technologies and global economies, post-secondary education offers many opportunities for individuals to participate in community life and achieve economic success” (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p.3). In keeping with this viewpoint, all four of the reports emphasize the need to extend post-secondary



access to all who are willing and qualified to attend. Particular attention is devoted to increasing the participation and attainment levels of under-represented groups, both in the education system and the labour market. Each report proposes policy interventions and outreach initiatives intended to increase participation rates for Aboriginal people, adult learners, francophones, women in “non-traditional fields”, students with disabilities, rural populations and “first generation” students – those whose parents did not attend postsecondary education. For example, the British Columbia report points out that “Aboriginal people represent a significant potential source of the skilled labour we will increasingly need and will increasingly find in short supply” (British Columbia, 2007, p. 36).

### **Privatization in Canadian Post-Secondary Education**

In the Canadian context, privatization of post-secondary education does not refer to the transfer of public institutions to private sector ownership. Rather, privatization in the Canadian post-secondary sector can be seen in the adoption of policies that require individuals to pay a larger portion of the costs for their own education and training, the increasing reliance on private contributions as a source of revenue for post-secondary education and the creation of privately owned and operated post-secondary institutions. At present, with over 43% of post-secondary education revenues coming from private sources, Canada is well above the OECD average of 23% in terms of private funding for national systems of post-secondary education (OECD, 2006).

Canadian post-secondary institutions have frequently compensated for decreases in public funding by increasing the required contributions of students through tuition fees and by intensifying fundraising efforts in order to increase private sector and philanthropic support. Across Canada, the decade of the 1990’s was a period of reduced funding for the post-secondary sector, largely brought about by decreases in federal funding transfers to the provinces. Throughout the 1990’s, regular reductions in provincial funding to colleges and universities resulted in inflation-exceeding tuition increases and the elimination of most of the non-repayable grant aid available to students. In 1990-91, government grants accounted for 69% of the total revenue of Canadian universities compared to 55% in 2000-01. From 1990-91 to 2000-01, average undergraduate tuition fees rose by over 135%, more than six times the rate of inflation, and at the end of the decade student fees accounted for 19% of the average total revenue of

Canadian universities compared to 12% ten years earlier (Statistics Canada, 2002a; Statistics Canada, 2002b). These increases in private costs have coincided with significant increases in the number of student loan borrowers, average student loan debts and incidence of student loan repayment difficulties (Bell & Anisef, 2005).

An occasionally intense policy debate continues to be waged about the appropriate level of tuition fees for Canadian post-secondary institutions. Stakeholder groups have periodically argued that provincial governments should eliminate tuition fees entirely. It has often been suggested that, in accordance with tuition rationalization theory (Hearn and Longanecker, 1985), it is inequitable for all taxpayers to subsidize the total costs of post-secondary education since the majority of college and university students come from middle- and upper-income backgrounds while those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are vastly under-represented (McGill University, 2007; Stager, 1996). Following this thinking, it is often proposed that students pay some set portion of their post-secondary program costs in the form of tuition fees (often 25%-35%) because they can expect to incur greater lifetime earnings compared to those individuals who do not participate in post-secondary education (Concordia University, 2007; Finnie, 2001). Another proposition is that post-secondary education should function under a system where tuition fees are relatively high, compared to current fees, and amounts of available means-tested student financial assistance are equivalently high. It has been suggested that under this “high tuition, high aid” model only slightly fewer students from middle- and upper-income backgrounds would attend, because they are less price-sensitive, while college and university participation for students from low-income families would be less encumbered due to the availability of more substantial amounts of financial aid (Hearn & Longanecker, 1985; Stager, 1996).

Tuition fees levels were ‘frozen’ in Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador before the post-secondary education reviews were undertaken in these provinces. The reviews report that provincial governments employ varying degrees of regulation in setting tuition fees.

Newfoundland and Labrador’s public post-secondary institutions have the second lowest tuition fees in the country (only the province of Quebec has lower college and university fees). While the Newfoundland report contended that education is to some degree an individual’s private investment and that tuition “represents a relatively small portion of post-secondary education costs and is not a primary contributor to high student debt” (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005,

p. 71), the report recommended a continuation of the fee freeze subsidy provided to institutions. The authors of the Alberta review recommended a reduction in tuition fees to 2004-05 levels and keeping future tuition fee increases “modest” by limiting them to the level of the Consumer Price Index (Alberta, 2006). Following a somewhat similar approach, the British Columbia review suggested that government “establish a regulatory framework for tuition that provides institutions with the ability to set their own tuition rates provided that increases are limited to the increase in the Higher Education Price Index” (British Columbia, 2007, p. 84). This proposed price index would measure the average relative level in the price of the fixed basket of goods and services that are purchased by post-secondary institutions. The Ontario report suggested that the province would be best served by ending its tuition freeze, and by instead developing a new regulatory framework that would devolve the responsibility for tuition fee levels to individual institutions. The report asserted that “the notion that higher education is some kind of nationalized industry, where the price of everything is set by central planners in [government], is out of place in the modern world” (Ontario, 2005, p.23).

While the Alberta and British Columbia reviews make no mention of private sector contributions, both the Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador reviews advocate that post-secondary institutions continue to seek the assistance of private donors in order to fund infrastructure and research projects. The Ontario report observed that the province “must convince the private sector that continued investment in research and innovation . . . are crucial to the future social and economic health of the province (Ontario, 2005, p. 7),” and that “partner donations have figured prominently in recent capital strategies. They should continue to be encouraged and given priority, but should not be made mandatory” (Ontario, 2005, p. 89). The Newfoundland report proposes a “matching capital fundraising campaign” with government matching privately raised contributions to cover growing infrastructure costs (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p.69). The report characterizes academic research as “a significant economic generator” and “the foundation of the value-added products and services that characterize a knowledge-based economy” (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p.69).

A key part of the system of post-secondary education in Canada is notably absent from three of the provincial post-secondary reviews. The Alberta, Newfoundland and Ontario reviews do not include private sector deliverers of post-secondary education in their analysis. Private career colleges, essentially privately owned commercial enterprises, enroll large numbers of

students and are governed by provincial legislation in each of the provinces. It would have been advantageous to include these institutions in the provincial reviews considering that sizable private vocational training sectors have emerged in most Canadian provinces since the 1980s, encouraged by mainly federal policies on labour market training and adjustment (McBride & Kealey, 2000; Schuetze & Dennison, 2005). The Alberta review makes no mention of these institutions while the Ontario post-secondary review states that “private career colleges also provide valued postsecondary programming. While they are part of the Ontario landscape, they are not part of the mandate of this review. They are the subject of a separate study by the ministry” (Ontario, 2005, p. 40). The study, a review of the Private Career Colleges Act and regulations, was initiated by the Ontario government in March 2004. The Newfoundland review was explicitly mandated to include only those institutions in the public sector and the report at no point makes reference to the province’s private colleges. As in Ontario, the Newfoundland and Labrador government separately reviewed the province’s private college legislation and regulations in 1998 (Newfoundland and Labrador, 1999b). In contrast, the British Columbia review makes a number of recommendations regarding government oversight of the private colleges sector and ultimately suggests that a separate external review of the Private Career Training Institutions Act be commissioned. By not including a thorough analysis of private sector colleges in the provincial reviews, each of the provincial governments missed an important opportunity to conduct genuinely comprehensive reviews of their post-secondary systems and the appropriate roles and aims of the private institutions within them.

### **Marketization in Canadian Post-Secondary Education**

Trends in post-secondary privatization are frequently accompanied by marketization. Marketization in post-secondary education occurs when traditional academic-humanist values and public and citizenship interests are overtaken or displaced by market principles such as competition, profit and private-interest. Education is treated as a consumer commodity with market principles emphasizing greater choice and the certainty of return on the education consumer’s investment. A basic concern about growing marketization in the post-secondary sector is that some institutions will prosper in a market-based system and some will fare more poorly, for such is the nature of market ideology. Lang (2005) has suggested that public post-secondary institutions in Canada operate in what may be best described as a quasi-market

environment. Market behaviour in the system is increasingly evidenced in the growth in prominence of the commercialization of knowledge and research. Marketization is also inherent in the restructuring of funding mechanisms from unconditional block grant transfers to separate, time-limited funding envelopes for program initiatives that meet predetermined government objectives as opposed to those of institutions. These funding envelopes are often allocated on a competitive basis and sometimes require matching private or partner donations. For example, the federal government has invested several billion dollars in the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) “to strengthen the capacity of Canadian universities, colleges, research hospitals, and non-profit research institutions to carry out world-class research and technology development that benefits Canadians” (CFI, 2007). The CFI funds only a portion of research infrastructure costs with outstanding, matching funds necessarily provided by “partners from the public, private, and voluntary sectors” (CFI, 2007).

The growing emphasis on the marketability of knowledge and the commercialization of research is reflected in each of the provincial review reports. The British Columbia report recommended “establish[ing] a continuing commercialization strategy to ensure that the province and post-secondary institutions are maximizing opportunities to benefit from commercially realizable research discoveries” (British Columbia, 2007, p. 81). Likewise the Alberta review advised that “as substantial players within Alberta’s research and development sector, the province’s postsecondary institutions are ready to enhance Alberta’s technology development and commercialization capacity” (Alberta, 2006, p. 1), and the Newfoundland review states that “research, both basic and applied, is the foundation of the value-added products and services that characterize the knowledge-based economy” (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 69). There is increasing concern in the academic community that the heightened emphasis on the commercial value of research comes at the expense of curiosity-driven research pursuits and impacts the associated tradition of institutional autonomy and academic freedom (Bruneau & Savage, 2002). Each of the four provincial reviews acknowledges these concerns; for example, Ontario’s review notes the “considerable discussion, both at the federal and provincial levels, about the need to encourage the commercialization of research. This is important, but it must be borne in mind that basic research remains fundamental to the mission of higher education” (Ontario, 2005, p. 10).

## **Quality Assessment in Canadian Post-Secondary Education**

As the public has been compelled to cover a greater proportion of the cost for post-secondary education through tuition fees, there has been a coinciding and growing emphasis on institutional accountability and quality. Since the 1980's, the issue of quality in post-secondary education (its assessment, management and improvement) has become a central policy issue for provincial governments. More and more, post-secondary institutions are required to demonstrate to the general public that they are making efficient use of the funds made available to them and that they are providing a high quality output in return these funds. With the emergence of the market model and the adoption of private sector management practices in post-secondary education, many jurisdictions have developed systems of performance evaluation to encourage institutional accountability for quality and efficiency, including systems of performance-based funding. The appropriateness and effectiveness of these approaches have been frequently called into question. Depending on how they are designed and implemented, performance indicators and performance funding may in fact reward performance in meeting specific public policy objectives as opposed to providing some reliable and transparent measure of educational quality (Bruneau & Savage, 2002; Hayes & Wynyard, 2002; Lang, 2005). Another difficulty with performance indicators is that while such models are easily applied to business production, where inputs, processes and outcomes are much easier to define, quantify and control, the application of these models to the post-secondary sector is limited by the unpredictability and complexity of the post-secondary environment. To begin with, one's perception of quality will depend to some degree on one's philosophical outlook on post-secondary education. While a list of inputs like funding, student and faculty numbers and characteristics, and library holdings may be readily compiled, agreement on appropriate measures of output has shown itself to be elusive. Outputs may focus on student academic performance (e.g., cumulative averages, graduation/completion rates, number of credits accumulated, average study duration, ratio of graduates to beginners, or numbers of degrees awarded); the labour market outcomes of students (e.g., graduate employment rates, extent to which students' employment is related to their field of studies, or student performance on professional licensure exams); or the satisfaction of education stakeholders (e.g., employers, students, government, social partners). There is no consensus on which output measures are appropriate or that they actually provide a reliable accounting of the outputs they are intended to measure. For these reasons, efforts to introduce of performance

indicators are often met with some combination of skepticism, critique and opposition (Finnie & Usher, 2005).

Each of the four post-secondary review reports discussed issues of quality while proposing very similar mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating system performance. The evaluation processes suggested provide relatively few specifics and leave considerable room for subjective judgments of how tangible improvements in quality output are to be appropriately defined and demonstrated. For example, the Newfoundland report recommends that the province's existing Council on Higher Education be reconfigured and strengthened through legislation and that the province enter into three-year outcomes-based performance contracts with institutions. The report provides a lengthy list of areas to be included in these performance contracts such as "financial performance measurement; efficiencies for shared service delivery; performance reporting on programs; research and administration; enhanced delivery of academic upgrading and other strategies to improve access for under-represented groups; links to economic development from applied research and innovation; and links to regional diversification strategies" (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 77). The ambiguity of such a list leaves much open to interpretation. As indicated earlier, when it comes to performance indicators the 'devil is in the details'. The Ontario report makes frequent reference to the need for colleges and universities to provide quality improvements in exchange for additional funding but includes few specifics. The report suggests that institutions commit to and be held accountable for multi-year plans that establish standards and measures to assess quality. The report recommends that a "Council on Higher Education" be established through legislation to "advise government on how to achieve its learning mission, set targets and measures for improvement, monitor and report on performance and outcomes, co-ordinate research on higher education, and encourage best practices" (Ontario, 2005, p. 30). The report recommends that the development and refinement of a detailed quality assurance framework be assigned to the proposed Ontario Council on Higher Education following its creation. Likewise, the Alberta report recommends the establishment of an "accountability framework to report on the outcomes" but suggests that further work is needed in order to establish "comprehensive, relevant and understandable measures" (Alberta, 2006, p. 20). The British Columbia review suggested that the province place a greater emphasis on outcome, or performance-based budgeting and create two new provincial coordinating agencies to monitor and report on performance measures. The proposed Higher

Education Presidents' Council would be comprised of institutional representatives while membership on a new Higher Education Board would be drawn from institutions, government and the general public. The report goes one step further in recommending the establishment of a provincial system of public and private post-secondary institution accreditation.

### **Internationalization in Canadian Post-Secondary Education**

Advancing internationalization in post-secondary education policy can serve academic-humanist objectives. For example, international education can promote mutual understanding, facilitate cultural exchange and enhance diversity (Cudmore, 2005). However, like trends in privatization and marketization, the growing internationalization of post-secondary education has been driven by globalization. Since the late 1980's, Canadian post-secondary institutions have been responding to demands for an increased international orientation in their outlook. These demands are in response to the growing numbers of students studying abroad, by necessity or choice, the advantages of transnational faculty exchange, and international collaboration in research. Amongst OECD countries, students from Asia now account for almost half (43%) of all international students (OECD, 2004). Bohm, Davis, Meares and Pearce (2002) have predicted that Asia will account for more than two-thirds of the coming growth in global demand for post-secondary education – from 1.8 million students in 2000 to 7 million in 2025. In 2003/04, a record of 70,000 students from outside Canada enrolled at Canadian universities, up 16.8% from the previous year. Seventy percent these international students were from Asian countries (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2007).

Interest in the furtherance of internationalization is in part motivated by the need for colleges and universities to generate revenues from beyond their local and regional domestic student market. Canadian colleges and universities offer post-secondary services to international students without public subsidization on a more or less full-fee basis. Charging far higher tuition fees to these students has provided institutions with an avenue for coping with the decreases in government funding over the past two decades. The merits of internationalization in the post-secondary sector are also frequently spoken of in terms of their impact on innovation, international trade, foreign investment and advancing Canada's overall economic performance (Conference Board of Canada, 1999). The recruitment of talented international students and researchers is one way of responding to the demand for technology and knowledge transfer in the



research sectors of developed nations. While internationalization can be especially important for economic and workforce development in emerging countries, it can also have less positive consequences in the event that it merely serves to transfer leading talent from Asian and African countries to host countries in the developed world (Cudmore, 2005).

The provincial reviews emphasized the impact of internationalization in similar ways. The Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario reports each point out the need for a province-wide strategy for advancing internationalization. The Ontario report recommended more aggressive international marketing efforts to promote the province as an important “educational destination” for international students. The primary rationale for this approach is that “students from other countries who study in Ontario help promote [Ontario’s] international reputation, contribute to future trade and economic development opportunities, bring expertise – including high quality researchers and graduate students – to Ontario, and enrich the postsecondary experience for all students” (Ontario, 2005, p. 58). The Alberta review similarly notes that Alberta’s aim is to “be a place of choice for international students” (Alberta, 2006, p. 13). The importance of immigration to provincial labour markets in Canada is underscored by the British Columbia review in its observation that as the province “becomes increasingly dependent on immigration to meet labour needs over the next generation, international students will become an important and necessary component of our provincial economic strategy” (British Columbia, 2007, p. 60). The Newfoundland report does not go into great detail on particular strategies associated with the challenges and benefits of internationalization. The report notes that, as a result of the population demographic challenges facing the province, institutions have been compelled to increase their international student recruitment efforts. International students are of growing importance in light of the projected decline in numbers of potential post-secondary students that will coincide with the overall provincial population decline. From a less economic-utilitarian point of view, the Alberta and Ontario reports suggested that opportunities for domestic students to participate in international learning experiences be expanded. As the Ontario review notes, this is intended to provide “stronger ties and contacts with the rest of the world and citizens with a better understanding of global issues” (Ontario, 2005, p. 57).

## **Concluding comments**

Competition for students, patrons, and prestige amongst Canadian post-secondary institutions, especially those that are longstanding, is not a new phenomenon. There is little doubt that this will continue. Some debate has always existed about the role of evaluation in post-secondary education, its purpose, definitions, goals and participants, and these arguments will and should continue. The concept of quality is as old as the oldest universities and a necessary concern for those involved at all levels of post-secondary education. Likewise, while post-secondary education is becoming increasingly international, cosmopolitanism has been an age-old feature of the higher education pursuit. The wandering scholar has been a fixture in university education since ancient times, playing a necessary part in the academic ethos (Kerr, 1990; Pedersen, 1997). This should continue to be so. The overriding change addressed in this paper is how economic globalization has altered the outlook on post-secondary education purposes and processes; how it is increasingly seen as an instrument to serve the economic imperatives of governments and industry; and how trends in post-secondary policy are shaped by forces such as privatization and marketization. Discourses which represent public education as a commercial enterprise pose unprecedented challenges for educators and are inevitably controversial.

The extent to which post-secondary education in Canada will become more economically-oriented and market-driven is still by and large dependent on government regulation and planning. The four post-secondary reviews discussed leave little doubt that Canadian provincial governments have embraced the view that important economic dividends can be derived from public investment in education. The reviews also demonstrate a greater interest, by traditional standards, in influencing post-secondary institutions through funding, quasi-market mechanisms and legislative authority, especially in questions of accountability, transparency and quality. These latter three priorities are reasonable expectations to place on public institutions. It is equally reasonable to be attentive to how Canadian post-secondary institutions accommodate the influences of market competition and corporate managerial practices. Considering the pervasive influences of globalization discussed in this paper, if the current public service orientation of Canadian post-secondary is to be preserved it will be necessary to ensure that the delicate balance between the dual objectives of academic-humanism and economic-utilitarianism is maintained.

In recent years, Canadian governments have introduced financial, policy and legislative mechanisms that have noticeably increased government involvement in setting the priorities and directions of post-secondary institutions. In many cases, these interventions have involved policy approaches that are infused with a private sector ethos. For example, in both Ontario and Alberta, a portion of provincial funding, albeit a relatively small portion, is contingent on performance in accordance with selected criteria (Eastman, 2003). At the same time, governments have also taken measures to open public post-secondary education to private entrepreneurs and investors. In a number of provinces, namely Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Ontario, governments have enacted legislation to permit the operation of private degree-granting institutions, including for-profit institutions, thereby eliminating virtual public sector monopolies on degree-granting. The province of British Columbia in particular has extended degree-granting authority to a total of 15 private institutions. These increases in privatization, along with policies that have resulted in increased educational costs and student borrowing, have bought about a redefinition of the provision of education at the post-secondary level as a commercial activity rather than a social good (Bok, 2003; Tudiver, 1999; Turk, 2000). This shift has the potential to negatively, and perhaps irreversibly, impact post-secondary education in terms of both quality and accessibility. As the humanistic goals of Canadian post-secondary policy cede ground to more commercial and economic goals, it is necessary to scrutinize and debate the long term impact of this exchange on the organization, character and values of our colleges and universities. In his observation on the impact of increasing commercialization in Canadian universities, Nobel Prize winner John Polanyi summed up the potential impact of this exchange as follows:

At a certain point . . . we don't have universities anymore, but outlying branches of industry. Then, all the things industry turns to universities for—breadth of knowledge, far time horizons and independence of voice—are lost. (Conlon, 2000, p. 150)

## References

- Alberta. (2006). *A learning Alberta*. Edmonton, AB: Author. Retrieved May 1, 2007, from [http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/alearningalberta/Steering\\_Committee\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/alearningalberta/Steering_Committee_Final_Report.pdf)
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. (2007). *Trends in higher education. Volume 1. Enrolment*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Bell, S., & Anisef, P. (2005). Accessibility and student debt: The shift from public to private support in Canada. In R. Sweet & P. Anisef (Eds.), *Preparing for post-secondary education: New roles for governments and families* (pp. 55-86). Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Bohn, A., Davis, D., Meares, D., & Pearce, D. (2002). *Global student mobility 2025: Forecasts of the global demand for international higher education*. Sydney: IDP Education Australia.
- Bok, D. (2003). *Universities in the marketplace: The commercialization of higher education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- British Columbia. (2007). *Campus 2020: Thinking ahead the report*. Victoria, BC: Author. Retrieved May 1, 2007, from <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/campus2020/campus2020-thinkingahead-report.pdf>
- Bruneau, W., & Savage, D. C. (2002). *Counting out the scholars. The case against performance indicators in higher education*. Toronto, ON: James Lorimer and Company.
- Canadian Council on Learning. (2006). *Canadian post-secondary education: A positive record, an uncertain future*. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved February 13, 2007, from <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/NR/rdonlyres/BD46F091-D856-4EEB-B361-D83780BFE78C/0/PSEReport2006EN.pdf>
- Canada Foundation for Innovation. (2007). *CFI overview*. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved January 28, 2007, from <http://www.innovation.ca/about/index.cfm?websiteid=5>
- Concordia University. (2007, January 23). *Presentation by Concordia University to the National Assembly of Québec*. Montreal, PQ: Author. Retrieved January 24, 2007, from <http://mediarelations.concordia.ca/mediaroom/pressreleases/2007/01/008478.shtml>

- Conference Board of Canada. (1999). *The economic implications of international education for Canada and nine comparator countries*. Ottawa, Ontario: Author.
- Conlon, M. (2000). Betrayal of the public trust: Corporate governance of Canadian universities. In J. L. Turk (Ed.), *The corporate campus: Commercialization and the dangers to Canada's colleges and universities* (pp. 145-150). Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Corak, M., Lipps, G., & Zhao, J. (2003). *Family income and participation in post-secondary education*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.
- Cudmore, G. (2005). Globalization, internationalization and the recruitment of international students in higher education, and in the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 35(1), 37-60.
- Drolet, M. (2005). *Participation in post-secondary education in Canada: Has the role of parental income and education changed over the 1990s?* Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.
- Dudley, J. (1998). Globalization and education policy in Australia. In J. Currie and J. Newson (Eds.), *Universities and globalization* (pp. 21-43). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Eastman, J. (2003). *Strategic management of universities?* CSSHE Professional File, Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education, No. 24, Fall.
- Fallis, G. (2005). *The mission of the university*. CSSHE Professional File, Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education, No. 26, Summer.
- Finnie, R. (2001). Student loans: The empirical record. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 31(3), 93-142.
- Finnie, R., & Usher, A. (2005). *Measuring the quality of post-secondary education: Concepts, current practices and a strategic plan*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Policy Research Networks.
- Frenette, M. (2007). Why are youth from lower-income families less likely to attend university? Evidence from academic abilities, parental influences and financial constraints. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada. Retrieved February 8, 2007, from <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=11F0019MIE2007295>
- Gallagher, P., & Dennison, J. D. (1995). Canada's community college systems: A study of diversity. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 12(5), 382-393.
- Hayes, D., & Wynyard, R. (Eds.). (2002). *The McDonaldization of higher education*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.

- Hearn, J. C., & Longanecker, D. (1985). Enrollment effects of alternative postsecondary pricing policies. *Journal of Higher Education*, 56(5), 485-508.
- Junor, S., & Usher, A. (2004). *The price of knowledge 2004: Access and student finance in Canada*. Montreal, PQ: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.
- Kerr, C. (1990) The internationalization of learning and the nationalization of the purposes of higher education: Two "laws of motion" in conflict?" *European Journal of Education*, 25(1), 5–22.
- Lang, D. W. (2005). The political economy of performance funding. In F. Iacobucci and C. Tuohy (Eds.), *Taking public universities seriously*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Levin, J. S. (2003). Two British Columbia university colleges and the process of economic globalization. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 33(1), 59-86.
- Mann, H. (1868). Twelfth annual report to the Massachusetts State Board of Education, 1848. In M. Mann (Ed.), *Life and works of Horace Mann* (vol. 3, p. 669). Boston: Walker, Fuller.
- McBride, M., & Kealey, G. (2000). *The impact of privatization on Newfoundland college students: The case of the Career Academy*. Toronto, ON: Centre for Research on Work and Society, York University. Retrieved October 30, 2006, from <http://www.yorku.ca/crws/network/members/McBride-Kealey.pdf>
- McGill University. (2007, January 16). *McGill University presentation before the Commission de l'éducation de L'Assemblée nationale du Québec*. Montreal, PQ: Author. Retrieved January 24, 2007, from <http://www.mcgill.ca/principal/speeches/atout>
- Newfoundland and Labrador. (2004, June 29). *Minister launches White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education*. Retrieved December 1, 2006, from <http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2004/edu/0629n01.htm>
- Newfoundland and Labrador. (2005). *Foundation for success: White paper on public post-secondary education*. St. John's, NL: Department of Education.
- Ontario. (2004, June 8). *Post-secondary review to improve quality and expand access: Former Premier Bob Rae to conduct comprehensive review*. Toronto, ON: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.
- Ontario. (2005). *Ontario: A leader in learning*. Toronto, ON: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2003). *The sources of economic growth in OECD countries*. Paris: Author.
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2004). *Internationalization and trade in higher education: Opportunities and challenges*. Paris: Author.
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2006). *Education at a glance 2006*. Paris: Author.
- Pedersen, O. (1997). *The first universities: Studium generale and the origins of university education in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rojewski, J. W., & Lasonen, J. (2004). The role of globalization and context on workforce education and development. In J. W. Rojewski (Ed.), *International perspectives on workforce education and development: New views for a new century*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Schuetze, H. G., & Dennison, J. (2005). Extending access, choice and the reign of the market: Higher education reforms in British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 34(3), 13-38.
- Skolnik, M. (2004, February). *Does structure matter: (Where) do questions about structure fit on the higher education policy agenda?* Paper presented at the John Deutsch Institute's Higher Education in Canada Conference, Kingston, Ontario.
- Stager, D.A. (1989). *Focus on fees: Alternative policies for university tuition fees*. Toronto, ON: Council of Ontario Universities.
- Statistics Canada. (2002a, September 16). *University finances, 2000/01*. *The Daily*. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Supply and Services.
- Statistics Canada. (2002b, August 21). *University tuition fees, 2002/03*. *The Daily*. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Supply and Services.
- Statistics Canada. (2007). *Universities and colleges revenue and expenditures, by province and territory (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick)*. Retrieved February 7, 2007, from <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/govt41a.htm>
- Tudiver, N. (1999). *Universities for sale: Resisting corporate control over Canadian higher education*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.

Turk, J. L. (Ed.). (2000). *The corporate campus: Commercialization and the dangers to Canada's colleges and universities*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.

United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York: Author. Retrieved September 7, 2007, from <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.ht>