THE CANADIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A PROFILE

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature written by Canadians and others about Canadian community colleges and to determine the extent to which these public institutions are uniquely Canadian. Certainly in the early years, growth and development of community colleges seemingly paralleled the development of the U.S. system. From the 80's on, Canadian community college systems suffered and continue to suffer many of the same kinds of financial problems American colleges experience, yet other externalities, entirely Canadian, have had significant impact. These need to be identified and their effects evaluated before we can begin to understand how Canadian institutions function and how they may have to change to survive.

There are ten provinces and two territories of Canada and a total of 123 community colleges: British Columbia (15), Alberta (11), Saskatchewan (15), Manitoba (3), Ontario (22), Quebec (44), New Foundland (1), New Brunswick (9), Prince Edward Island (1), Nova Scotia (0), the Yukon Territory (1), and the Northwest Territories (1) (Dennison and Gallagher, 1986). For each province, the development of the community college took place in its own way. Unlike unified systems in the U.S., governance of each community college system is economically and administratively dependent on the provincial government.

A set of characteristics according to Dennison and Levin (1987) is common to all Canadian community college systems. The focus of this paper will be on these common characteristics and how these characteristics perpetuate the diversity on which Canada prides itself. The paper will specifically look at how and why development of community colleges occurred, how curriculum development evolved, and how organizational structures have been determined.

II. Locating History

Recorded History

The 1985 Nancy M. Sheehan article, "History of Higher Education in Canada," reports that the history of higher education in Canada had not been properly recorded. "Not only have universities and colleges been poorly served by historiography, but other post-secondary institutions, such as normal schools, technical institutions and community colleges have been almost completely neglected. (Dennison, 1978, Calam, 1984, Hardy, 1981), (p. 35)." She was correct in her assessment of the literature being under-utilized, but not in the assumption that such literature did not exist. Since that time, John D. Dennison, John S. Levin, and Paul Gallagher in particular, have made great strides in recording the history

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and in providing critical analysis of the growth and development of the Canadian community college systems. Dennison and Gallagher identified a total of 20 books (16 specific to community colleges), 201 reports and documents (82 specific), 257 articles, 131 thesis and numerous French texts, all written between 1960 and 1985. With careful analysis they produced Canada's Community Colleges: A Critical Analysis in 1986. This text appears to be the first to consciously gather information specific to the support and intellectual documentation of the newest Canadian educational institutions. It is primarily from the perspectives of Dennison, Gallagher and Levin in this and subsequent writings that the educational history of Canada is presented.

Where did the community college begin?

Today, Canadian community colleges seem strikingly similar to those found in the United States. The basic model is primarily American. The two systems did evolve simultaneously, but they did not evolve for exactly the same reasons. While American colleges grew out of the changes made possible by the Morrill Act, specifically the establishment of arts and trade schools, American educators moved forward on the Jeffersonian premise that everyone should have equal opportunity for education (Dennison and Gallagher, p. 13). Canada, steeped in British tradition, was and is unwilling to adopt the theory that opportunity should be offered on a noncompetitive basis (p.14).

The American community college had its roots in junior colleges beginning with one in Joliet, Illinois in 1901. By 1961 there were already 678 two-year colleges in the U.S.; 1,100 had been established by 1970 (p. 14). In contrast, it was not until 1956 that the province of Ontario passed legislation to establish the Lakehead College of Arts, Science, and Technology with its own board of governors. By its governance, this institution came close to the American concept of community college. Lakehead conferred its first degree in 1962, and in 1965, the title Lakehead University was accorded the institution. The province of Alberta argues it established Lethbridge Community College in 1958, the funding of which included the use of local dollars qualified it as the first community college. (p. 301)

Prior to the late 1950's, Canada remained contemptuous of the American system because it did not value what appeared to be an intermediate step between high school and university. Further, the idea of open access was simply unacceptable. Dennison and Gallagher quote Soles ("Role of Two Year College in Creating a New Design for Post-Secondary Education British Columbia" *Journal of Education* (UBC) 16 (April 1970):22-31): "Implicit in the pedagogical thinking of Canadians has been an almost total acceptance of the assumption that subject matter content is distinguished along an hierarchical scale of values (p.14)." Courses of study offered in American community colleges did not seem to be measured on a hierarchical scale. Given growth in the number of perspective students and the flurry of activity in math and science education after WWII, by 1950, Canada too, began to feel a pressure to move in the direction of creating post- secondary educational alternatives.

In 1966, the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) held a national conference to discuss the community college and how it would provide opportunities for thousands of adults who had little or no access to higher education, to continue or begin their education. It was this conference that confirmed that a community college movement was happening

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in Canada (p. 273). A second conference in 1967 included five more national associations, providing a forum for information sharing among all provinces (p. 274). Subsequently, the CAAE approached the Kellogg Foundation and secured a $202,000, three-year grant to establish a Canadian Commission for the Community College which would act as an information clearinghouse (p.274). The outgrowth of this effort was formation of a national college organization, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. The organization defined its functions as standard-bearer of the new Canadian citizenship concept of national unity, and as the proponent putting forward the idea that continuous learning is prerequisite to enlightened participation in the democratic process in Canada (p. 275)

Why did the community college develop?

Canadian education prior to 1960 was thought to have four components: elementary and secondary; higher education; trade, technical, and vocational training; and adult education (Dennison and Gallagher, 1986, p. 11). As Canada's economic stance changed and the educational needs of the country began to change, there was a need for a different kind of education system that served the technical needs of the country, those areas that fell between higher education and trade, technical and vocational training. Dennison and Gallagher list three factors which contributed to the development of the community college: one, projected increases in the number of people after 1960 who would need post-secondary education; two, the impact of scientific and technological change after WWII; and three, recognition of the human capital theory and the return on educational investment as extolled in Canada's Economic Council Report of 1964 (pp. 12-13). According to the report, Canadian people are their own best renewable resource. For a country larger than the US, it holds only 1/10 of the population. Investment in this population would seem an appropriate step on which all provinces would agree. The Canadian university system, unlike many American institutions, does not provide open access. The community college, made accessible by its very nature of inception, would be the logical providers of the means for insuring a return on its investment.

According to Pineo and Goyder (1989), the assumption in research on post-secondary educational attainment in the '70's was that socioeconomic and ethnic characteristics determined educational levels. They refer to these characteristics as "ascription," and note that in Canada, ascription is extremely high and retention rates extremely low (pp.38-39). Their study resulted in comparison of what they termed "transition probabilities," in this case, specifically the success students have in moving from secondary to post-secondary education in both the U.S. and Canada. They use economic, sociological and ethnic criteria to determine the transitional probabilities. Their data came from the Canadian censuses of 1976 and 1981, from data sets developed in the Canadian Mobility Study (Boyd, et al., 1981, 1985), and conceptually, the study relies on Mare (1979 and 1981) (p. 41). One important limitation of this study is that Canadian post-secondary education is not designated by type and U.S. studies show number of years in college and not specifically type of institution. However, the overall statement of retention is significant.

> "Results of the adjustment reveal that Canada compares favourable with the other industrial countries until ages 18-20 - the post-secondary population, in other words. For the eighties, Canadian educational retention becomes about

typical.... but for the 19 and especially 20 year olds, Canadian enrolments fall well below the cross-national norm. Educational retention among Canadian 15 and 16 year olds actually exceeds the US average, but from age 17 on the familiar pattern of higher retention in the US appears. The key point of the table is that once into the post- secondary phase of formal education, the US becomes the more "typical" society, with Canada as the anomaly (pp.39-40)"

Table 1: Enrolment Rates Adjusted for Level of Economic Development: Canada and USA, 1970
Percent Enrolled

Age Level	Mean for 24 Industrial Societies	Canada (adjusted)	USA (adjusted)
15	72.5	92.9	84.6
16	56.8	83.2	80.5
17	44.5	68.1	71.4
18	29.3	32.9	37.7
19	21.3	16.5	23.4
20	16.8	9.8	17.0

Source: "The Educational Situation in OECD Countries." Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Paris, 1974, pp. 23-34.
Notes on adjustment: Source for per capita national income is Statistical Yearbook, Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, 1973 and other years. The regression equations linking enrolment and national income are, with Y=logit transformation of predicted enrolment, and X=per capita national income, 1970 dollars equivalent:

Age			
	15	Y=.000514X - .425	R square= .653
	16	Y=.000300X - .453	= .459
	17	Y=.000221X - .572	= .309
	18	Y=.000124X - .719	= .282
	19	Y=.000098X - .876	= .262
	20	Y=.000097X -1.024	= .256

Adjusted = Grand mean at each level - regression residual
(p. 40)

Using income criteria as the base, Pineo and Goyder conclude that in the US, 55 percent of those completing high school go on to some form of college. In Canada, 70 percent of males and 69 percent of females proceed on, 49 percent of males and 29 percent of females enter the university. "Multiplying the probabilities (.70 x .49 for males and .69 x .29 for females) provides estimates that 34 percent of the males and 20 percent of the females with high school graduation have entered the Canadian universities (p. 43)." Of those, 56 percent graduate.

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When sociological data including gender, age, community region, family background, ethno- religion, are used to determine success in post-secondary education, the outcome is revealing within each variable. However, the results of the study show that Canadian trends in relation to post-secondary education have changed little over time as a direct result of those variables.

> "Mare's analysis of the US began from the seeming anomaly that in the US the effect of social background on years of education has been invariant over the 20th century. The stability was illusory, he showed, the result of two contradictory trends: (i) a decrease in ascription, resulting from rising proportions reaching high transition levels....(ii) a net increase in ascription, due to the importance of social background rising over time. These two forces which so neatly cancelled out in the US do not do so in Canada. Rather the first of the two trends has overwhelmed the second (p. 52)"

The importance of this article is that it sustains the prediction that given improvement in lower level success, upper level educational success is on a constant increase that will only continue. Given the demographics and the economic situations of each province, it is not difficult to say what the choice of futures for those who do not attend the university will be. Since the enrollment estimates are continually increasing, there will be more individuals seeking educational preparation for the work force. If that preparation is not to be found in the university, the community college becomes the viable alternative. According to the Levin and Dennison (1989) study, Canadian community colleges were founded on the ideals of democratization of opportunity, accessibility, adaptability, and comprehensiveness. They were designed to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic environment.

How did the community college develop?

The history of the community college in all regions of Canada according to Dennison and Gallagher (1986) is a phenomenon that occurred over a twenty year period, between 1955 and 1975 (Dennison and Levin, p. 50; Dennison and Gallagher, 1986). Gallagher is quoted as having said, "Extensive, differentiated, and designed specifically to be responsive to public policy shifts, the community college sector...has been a catalyst for change and evolution in post-secondary education (Dennison and Levin, p. 50)."

According to Dennison and Levin (1988), the history of the community college in Canada can be further documented in three phases of development:

The 1955-1970 phase is the first, characterized by autonomy, diversity of curriculum, and unbridled expansion. It is also characterized by generous governmental support which afforded the democratization of opportunity for and access to post-secondary education throughout Canada. Community colleges were very popular and cost exceeded expectation. Consolidation and constraint ultimately became the norm (p. 50).

The next period, 1975-1980, saw the increased control of the provincial governments and decreased program development. Colleges were unable to supply services to meet the de-

mands of the community. Program reduction and restricted admission for certain programs were repressive constraints (p. 51).

From 1980 to the current writing, Canada continues to see an economic recession. Community college are faced with their existing deficits, the privatization of programs, the imposition of specified program priorities on public institutions, designated funding strategies, and legislative control of salary settlements. Governments are emphasizing the role of these institutions in economic development and are de-emphasizing the personal and individual development of students. Colleges are encouraged to develop entrepreneurial activities (p. 51). This is in keeping with the original mission that included being receptive to public policy shifts.

What makes these colleges unique?

III. Characteristics

Mission and Goals

According to Dennison and Levin (1987), all community colleges share common principles. The following principles apply to institutions from all provinces and have been chosen as the ones which have endured over time (p. 53).

"1. The community college is designed to provide access to educational opportunity for societal groups previously denied such access through the imposition of academic, socio-economic, geographic and cultural barriers.

2. The community college will maintain a comprehensive curricular model which provides for both education and training within a broad range of both level and scope of program offerings.

3. Community colleges are designed to emphasize a student orientation through their priority upon quality instruction, faculty-student contact, and accessible and comprehensive counseling services.

4. Community colleges will maintain a community orientation through their governance and program advisory structures.

5. Community colleges will adapt to changes in external phenomena such as new student clientele, demand for programs of training and education, technological change in program delivery and structure of the workplace (p. 53)."

Dennison and Levin (1987) review the literature and settle on three major goals of all Canadian community college systems: to function as educational institutions, as training institutions, and as educational and socio-cultural resources for the community (p. 54). These researchers devised a study to determine what the current goals in 1987 were for community colleges. They decided to use as their subjects chief executive officers of every community college across Canada and ministry personnel responsible for college development in each province. These were chosen because they are the two groups which do set the priorities regarding goals and the individual roles of each community college.

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A Goals Inventory instrument was distributed in both English and French among all government personnel and CEO's of all community college institutions. They were asked to rate and rank the goals listed on the survey.

"To prepare citizens to cope with problems of society
To encourage exploration and development of individual potential.
To provide instruction in the basic, general education.
To provide broad, comprehensive curriculum of education and training.
To impart knowledge and skills in vocations and in specialized skills.
To train for employment.
To provide access to educational opportunities.
To serve educational interests and needs of community or region.
To serve as a community resource.
To help attain economic priorities of government.
To help attain political priorities of government.
To help attain social priorities of government (p. 54)"

Each province showed a different and unique rating and ranking scale. From their rankings, Dennison and Levin made some interesting observations concerning the role and function of community colleges in Canada. One, that the survey reinforced the three major roles established from the inception of community colleges in Canada: expand accessibility, train for employment, and incorporate into the curriculum the educational components identified by the community (p. 60). Two, that in all provinces the goals using community colleges as social, economic and political instruments were rejected (p. 60). Third, diversity is still a major characteristic of the system as a whole. Each province ranked the goals differently for varying reasons. "The data provided by this study substantiates the view that colleges in Canada were designed and continue to operate in the context of the socio-cultural, economic and educational differences which exist among the provinces (p. 60)." Fourth, from the two types of respondents, the ranking of goals was consistent between the two groups illustrating a greater diversity on goal ranking *within* groups than *between* groups. Diversity proved to be particularly evident between urban and rural colleges and by their size (p. 60- 61).

The Dennison and Levin survey establishes quantitatively what they suspected was true of community colleges, that the original reasons for establishing them are still the reasons for continuing their development. These institutions provide access to post-secondary education, and that education is by nature of the provinces, diverse. The survey results maintain that the institutions have been successful in remaining true to their traditional functions and have no intention of changing direction (p. 61-62).

Curriculum and Diversity

The "new" colleges were not meant to mirror universities. There were no requirements for faculty to perform research and no real need for them to have advanced degrees beyond the bachelors. These institutions were not single minded like the institutes of technology but were intended to be broad based in their offerings.

> "The 'new' colleges were first characterized by the comprehensiveness or multi-purpose dimensions of their curricula. The principle of comprehensiveness required that they offer a mix of different programmes, for a mix of students with different abilities and past achievements, with a mix of educational goals, within a single institution, usually on a single campus. The mixes differed from province to province and from institution to institution, but the mixes were designed and deliberate, not the result of programme or evaluation or historical accident (Dennison and Gallagher, p. 70)."

Dennison and Gallagher categorize the community college curriculum in the following manner: 1. short-term vocational and trades programmes; 2. long-term apprenticeship training; 3. career, technical and para-professional programmes; 4. university transfer programmes; 5. general academic programmes not intended for transfer; 6. personal interest and community development programmes; 7. pre-college level or upgrading programmes (basic skills); and 8. contract training programmes (pp. 70-72). They name the advantages of a comprehensive curriculum as the following: institutional shared facilities and equipment; savings on purchases, single administrative structures, student mobility between programmes and between academic studies and vocational training, student flexibility in changing their programs and transfer without loss of credit, and accommodating students who have not yet chosen a major (p. 73).

American community colleges have come under scrutiny over the last decade in relation to their general education offerings. The current trend is to make general education requirements standard throughout the nation. In Canada, general education is consistently considered unimportant in all provinces except Quebec. "When asked to indicate why general education did not receive the support and encouragement which most residents felt was desirable, respondents cited three major reasons: budget constraint, the high demand for skill training, and a reduction in the number of hours available for each subject. In each case the responsibility for the decision to reduce the general education component was attributed to senior managers, a charge which they predictably rejected (p. 247)."

Dennison and Gallagher say that there is no unified Canadian educational system. "In social as well as constitutional senses, Canadian education is still provincial, with some notable exceptions in the university sector. Outside the university and voluntary sectors, the only existing instrument to identify and advance common goals is the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, whose members have an essential interest in preserving provincial prerogatives in education; to expect the Council to promote supraprovincial interests is to ask its members to violate their own individual mandates (pp. 5-6)." Canada functions in a state of diversity, and the fact that it continues to do so indicates that the diversity factor is indigenous to the system.

David Pratt lays out general characteristics of the Canadian curriculum (1989). He says, "Scholars do not universally accept needs assessment in developing curriculum (Barrow, 1984). It becomes a cynical political strategem if used to put curriculum to referendum. Needs assessments should inform, but not necessarily determine curriculum decisions (p. 299)." It is that attitude that prevents a uniform general curriculum.

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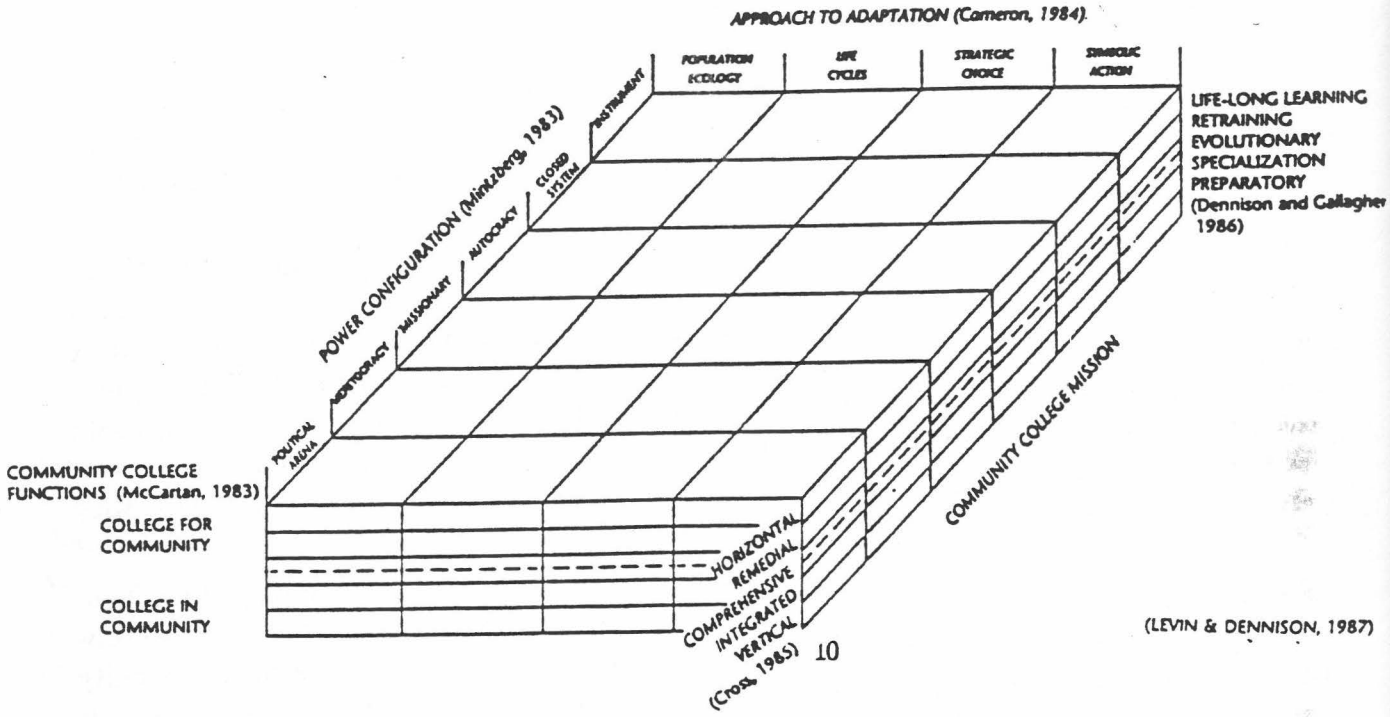
Organizational Theory

Dennison and Levin in "Goals of Community Colleges in Canada: A 1987 Perspective," (CJHE, Vol.XVII-1. 1988) emphasize two important characteristics of these colleges. First, community colleges were created by actions of government as a "matter of public policy" in the concerns of tertiary education and job training (p. 51) They are not protected by the same kind of relative autonomy that Canadian universities enjoy. Second, provincial college systems adopted a variety of organizational models, governance policies and patterns of curriculum, thereby creating the diversity that allows them to remain provincially representative (p. 52).

Earlier, Levin and Dennison identified four ideals upon which they say community colleges were founded: democratization of opportunity, accessibility, adaptability, and comprehensiveness. They have designed a theoretical model involving a three-dimensional matrix reflecting theories of adaptation (Cameron, 1984), power (Mintzberg, 1979), and a combination of models specific to the community college as an organization (McCartan, 1983; Cross, 1985; Dennison and Gallagher, 1986), (p. 41). This is done in an attempt to measure how much community colleges have changed ideologically and to assess how well they are managing change.

As Dennison and Gallagher (1986) establish, provincial governments have played a role in the development of the community college and have limited and controlled their autonomy as well as their financial exigency. There have been internal pressures such as faculty organizations, changing student clientele, administrators seeking innovation and boards that have become more politicized. Added to that is the diversity characterizing all the community colleges. Amid all of these factors, they listed common principles. Levin and Dennison (1989) use these same principles in evaluating organizational structures. They draw from organizational theory which deals with adaptation in complex organizations and apply it to the community college structure. They employ Cameron's (1984) population ecology perspective that allows the environment to dictate change, symbolic action perspective that allows managers to provide direction and purpose while building internal consensus, life cycles perspective that predicts stages and allows managers to make decisions at different stages, and strategic choice perspective that allows managers to reduce external environmental influences. These coupled with Mintzberg's power theory offer a two dimensional framework to begin setting up a matrix (p. 45). The third dimension is taken from McCartan's (1983) theory that colleges either adapt and respond to changing community needs or continue to provide traditional educational services, colleges are either for or in the community; and K. Patricia Cross's (1985) five foci open to colleges include: comprehensive, vertical (transfer function), horizontal (linked to the community), integrated (general education and broad student development), and remedial (p. 46). Dennison and Gallager's life-long learning response that includes learning, retraining, evolution of educational need, specialization, and preparation for work, is listed as the third element of this third dimension. The following matrix taken from Levin and Dennison's article illustrates how these fit together.

Figure 1
Adaptation, Function, Power Configuration, and Mission in Community Colleges



Once they devised the matrix, these researchers were ready to gather data. They chose fourteen community colleges across Canada and requested information from presidents, board members, administrators, faculty, support staff and students regarding a) education programs, b) students, c) teaching and support staff, d) administration and administrators, e) curriculum and instruction, f) delivery of instruction, g) accessibility, h) governance, i) advisory bodies, j) relations with government, k) personnel relations, l) finance, and m) relations with community.

> "Collected data were used to develop descriptions of change in each of the fourteen colleges. From these descriptions the theoretical perspectives were applied as a way of categorizing the colleges. The categories indicate the kinds of institutions which are emerging in the 1980's and were expressed under the descriptions of functions, missions and goals. The categories also indicate organizational behaviours which direct action (or changes) and the actions (or changes) themselves. These are expressed as power configurations and adaptations (p. 49)."

The most important information coming out of this study is the affirmation that the pri-

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mary influences on change for Canadian community colleges come from the provincial governments. Colleges are encouraged to become more entrepreneurial and set economic rather than social goals (p. 49-50). Community pressures focus on programs designed to upgrade personnel in the workplace. Pressures from educational institutions vary by region, but articulation agreements are of concern to all institutions. Internal pressures center on defining or refining mission statements and setting priorities for programs and for the organization as a whole. CEO's are identified as the key determinants of organizational change and the role of Boards of Governors seems to be diminishing. Human resource development is a common concern in every region. And finally, the student pool has increased to include mature students with clear interests in the technologies, women and minorities with special interests. Offering remediation in a time of tight budget allocation is a real concern. These pressures are common to all institutions (p. 50-51). The five principles drawn from the literature (Dennison and Gallagher, 1986): flexibility, accessibility, comprehensiveness, teaching, and community focus remain the key elements to institutional survival (pp. 54-55).

IV. Conclusion

What is the future of the community college in Canada?

Dennison and Gallagher conclude their treatise by characterizing community college institutions as mavericks, but admit that playing that role to the hilt might reinforce the image of this "unique, significant educational force (p. 283)." They offer up the community college as one of the elements of hope for the future of Canadian education. The possibilities for using these institutions to promote the culture and heritage of Canada and for promoting citizenship are all present. The real strength of the Canadian community college system is in the stance it has taken against meeting governmental chosen priorities it considers detrimental to their established missions. Dennison and Levin comment,

> "What is remarkable within this context is the degree to which the colleges and, in the view of both government officials and chief executive officers, are pursuing their more broadly based functions. There is no denying the importance of 'job training', but even that role is generally perceived in a broader sense of the term.
>
> The study has also invited a variety of further research initiatives. How are the goals of colleges viewed by other important constituent groups; i.e., employers, instructors, students, and the wider community? What will be the impact of the current policy of encouraging industry based, rather than institutionally based programs? What will be the long-term effect of Canadian Job Strategy? Can the goal of broad accessibility be maintained in the face of further financial restraint? Can the comprehensive curriculum survive under more designated funding formulae? Will the pressure upon universities force colleges to accommodate more students seeking academic programs (p. 61)?"

These questions will have to be answered by all the individual provinces, and the answers will not all be the same. Each will address the situation indigenous to the province. It is not

unthinkable that the financial reigns may be turned over to the institutions themselves. In a time when funding is extremely tight, Dr. Geraldine Kenny-Wallace, President of McMaster University, spoke recently to *The Chronicle for Higher Education* (February 5, 1992) concerning the future of all higher education in Canada.

> "In her view, which is echoed by other university presidents, the government also needs to rethink its approach to supporting post-secondary education. 'Either give us a healthy dose of funds to meet our needs, or let us take control of our lives,' she urges. She says she sees the government's announcements on financing and restructuring as a clear indication that it plans to give universities less room, not more, to decide their future.
>
> The New Democratic government already has shown that it is anxious to see dismantled the barriers that make it difficult for students to transfer from the three-year community colleges, where they pursue specialized training, to universities, where they could gain a strong liberal-arts education. Given that the members of the party's blue-collar constituency are more likely to attend or send their children to community colleges than to universities, the government is intent on encouraging cooperative alliances between the two sectors to improve education and training opportunities for all.
>
> Last week the university and community-college presidents in Ontario met for the first time to discuss ways to clear the way for students to move more easily between the two systems (p. A42)."

Ontario may set the pace for the other provinces and territories in this important task, to make accessible the community college and transfer probabilities. Community colleges might at last, achieve financial autonomy which may well mean administrative autonomy.

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