

Continental 'Drift': Autonomy, Government, and Governance in Canadian Duals, Coast to Coast to Coast (0087)

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In their excellent survey of dual-sector universities in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom, Neil Garrod and Bruce Macfarlane (2007), have provided a fruitful base for those interested in that most fascinating of post-secondary hybrids: the dual sector, or 'dual' university that provides both further and higher education. In "Scoping the Duals," as well as in their book Challenging Boundaries: Managing the Integration of Post-Secondary Education (2009), Garrod and Macfarlane feature British Columbia as Canada's province most engaged with duals. The recent work of Fleming and Lee, and Barnsley and Sparks (2009), documents that phenomenon from as early as the Macdonald Report (1962), through to Levin (2003) and Dennison (2006). As all these scholars point out, this phenomenon has seen the number of degree-granting institutions in British Columbia increase dramatically in recent years as institutions evolve from community colleges to university colleges to dual-sector universities. As this evolution progresses, in British Columbia and elsewhere, attention needs to be paid to the extent to which the governance structures of the new duals are revamped to recognize their new role as degree-granting institutions and, in particular, their relative autonomy from government, which autonomy has historically been a hallmark of degree-granting institutions.

Regarding duals, the case of British Columbia is so salient and rich that studies such as Garrod and Macfarlane's pay little research attention to the other Canadian provinces and territories, each of which is, under Canadian law, its own advanced education jurisdiction. In this paper we fill that gap by providing an empirical 'scope' of the duals across Canada, and the extent to which their governing boards are controlled by the governments that create them. In BC, for example, the provincial government keeps a tight reign on boards, appointing over half of board members. This work will provide a rich field for further study on comparative international trends in the governance of duals.

As the general scholarship on duals has noted, these hybrid institutions and the issues they raise are complex; indeed, in Canada, with thirteen educational jurisdictions and many different approaches to duals, the first part of the research methodology requires the establishment of meaningful parameters for the inclusion of institutions in our sample group.

In this respect, first, although a number of traditional universities in Canada offer further education as part of the relentless drive for academic units to generate their own revenue, we have excluded them because their further education programs have had no apparent impact on the schools' underlying governance structure. Second, we have in general left aside special purpose institutions such as faith-based schools because their governance structures are frequently driven not by the government but by the special purpose they exist to serve. Third, because we focus on government and governance, we examine only public institutions. Fourth, in Canada, Quebec's culture around higher education is unique, and we have left that province for a larger study in the future. Fifth, we have left aside the four art colleges in Canada, three of which have now been

designated universities, simply because they have traditionally awarded BFAs. Sixth, because the governance around institutions designed expressly from a First Nations perspective is a separate and complex issue, we have left them aside. Seventh, and finally, for any institution to be considered a dual, we looked for at least one stand-alone, full four-year degree awarded by the institution itself.

Using these parameters, we have conducted our preliminary survey. The first interesting finding on which we will report is that some provinces, particularly the Atlantic provinces, are not in the least interested in duals; they have elected to maintain a very sharp distinction between colleges and universities. New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland each have one community college with several campuses, but no duals. Interestingly, in March 2010, New Brunswick issued a report on its “Action Plan to Transform Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick” that does not even consider the opportunities offered by duals, though accessibility is a theme. Likely the small population of the province may be well enough served by its four universities.

The maritime province of Nova Scotia, however, has deliberately and expressly embraced duals by creating two, complete with new Acts for each, as well as mandated governance changes to become autonomous, four-year degree-granting institutions. In Nova Scotia, the ratio of government-appointed members on their governing boards is only one third, as opposed to over one half in BC, resulting in much greater autonomy—that hallmark of higher education—for the former.

Moving east from Atlantic Canada, we observe that another Canadian province is a significant advocate of duals. In Ontario, fully eleven of the twenty-four colleges are duals. Given this statistic, we were initially surprised that little scholarship on duals

mentions Ontario. The Government of Ontario 2000-01 Business Plan for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities previews the 2002 Ontario *Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act* which explains that the use of duals is a strategy to “provide students with more choices for flexible learning opportunities, such as the chance to obtain applied degrees from colleges.” The Act provides that the college boards have between twelve and twenty members (most have seventeen), of which none are appointed by the government, unlike the Ontario universities, all of which have government appointees. Interestingly, and unlike British Columbia, none of these colleges has changed its name to reflect its new status. A significant section of the paper we propose will explore the fact that this level of autonomy in Ontario is completely opposite to the control the government asserts in British Columbia, and less than the moderate government involvement in Nova Scotia, and is perhaps somewhat counter-intuitive to the general notion that the further removed from a university an institution is, the less autonomy it has. Ontario is a very interesting case.

Moving on to the Prairies, our preliminary survey reveals that the only dual activity in Manitoba and Saskatchewan centres on the First Nations, which as we say deserves its own study. Alberta has embraced the dual in recent years; Grant MacEwan College has been awarding Bachelor’s degrees since 2004, and Mount Royal College since 2007. In September 2009, the Government of Alberta redesignated each as a university. Starting in the Fall of 2010, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology will start its first baccalaureate in Business Administration; its counterpart, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, has offered two Bachelors in Business Administration

since 2007. In Alberta, all post-secondaries operate under one Act, which gives the Government the strong majority of board appointments.

Canada's north comprises three territories: Yukon, Nunavut, and the North West Territories. Of these, only Yukon College offers one stand-alone degree, and that is in Aboriginal Education, which as stated we believe deserves a separate treatment.

The paper we propose will provide a comparative study of the impact of differing governance models on the cultures of duals in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, thus producing baseline data using the Canadian experience as a sample of the autonomy of dual sector universities. Using interviews to augment our research, we will offer comments and insight from the perspective of the government jurisdictions that have implemented duals, and also from the perspective of the institutions whose governance must include the provision of both further and higher education in Canada. We also wish to provide some insights about jurisdictions that have considered but rejected duals as a model. The paper completes a much needed national-level study of perspectives on autonomy and governance in dual-sector universities in Canada.

References:

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