

Institutional Autonomy vs State Control: Dual Sector Universities in British Columbia Canada (0312)

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In 2003 and 2008, the provincial government in British Columbia (BC) Canada re-designated a number of former community colleges as dual sector, teaching-intensive universities (Province of British Columbia, 2005; Province of British Columbia, 2015). These hybrid post-secondary institutions are unique in Canada and perhaps unusual in other countries. They challenge the boundaries (Garrod and Macfarlane, 2007; Garrod and Macfarlane, 2009) between community colleges and universities, as well as between further education and higher education. From Barnett's perspective, they may represent a distinct way of 'being a university' (Barnett, 2011), that is quite different from research-intensive universities. The BC Provincial Government refers to these institutions as 'special purpose, teaching universities' and 'teaching-intensive universities'. As such, they provide all of the preparatory and sub-degree courses that they have offered as BC community colleges since they were created in the 1960's and 1970's, as well as a full range of undergraduate degrees in arts and science, business, nursing, design, etc., and post-graduate degrees (masters level).

The legislation that established these dual sector universities placed significant legislative control over what they must do and what they cannot do. For example, they are required by statute to offer community college level courses including adult basic education (high school completion) and trades training (Section 3.1 Thompson Rivers University Act (2005); Section 47.1 (a) University Act (2015)). As well, there are restrictions on their research mandates. The TRU Act states the university will "undertake and maintain research and scholarly activities" to support its community college level **and** its university degree courses. The University Act's language is even more restrictive for the special purpose, teaching universities. It allows them to engage in research and scholarship "so far as and to the extent that its resources from time to time permit ... to support the programs of the special purpose, teaching university. Funding to these dual sector universities is lower than it is for BC's research-intensive universities who are to undertake "original research in all branches of knowledge" (Sections 2 (c) and (d) University Act). In addition, the Senates (academic governing bodies) of the teaching-intensive universities have fewer powers than the Senates of the research-intensive universities, and hence they have less freedom in academic governance.

It seems likely that the Provincial Government, in crafting such legislation, wished to control these new universities to ensure that they did not engage in academic drift (Fleming and Lee, 2009; Levin, 2003; Morphew and Huisman, 2002; Neave, 1979) by eliminating their community college level courses and reinvesting those funds in degree level courses and in research. This has happened in other jurisdictions such as Australia (Harman, 1977), however, Watson, writing about the English polytechnics that became

universities in 1992, presented evidence that academic drift is by no means inevitable (Watson and Bowden, 2002).

In implementing these policies, institutional senior administrators may have had their own goals and priorities. They may have felt that as universities they had more freedom and autonomy than they had as community colleges, and that to be seen as legitimate (Fleming and Lee, 2009; Fleming, 2010), as 'real' universities by their students and their communities, they needed to adopt Canadian university norms and expectations (these are set out in the criteria for membership in Universities Canada (Universities Canada, 2015) the national association of Canadian universities), which include substantial research activities, supported by research funding from the federal government, faculty ranks, and higher levels of salary compensation for top research-active faculty. At the same time, they probably understood the controls that the enabling legislation contained.

This research is an analysis of the policies that created the BC teaching-intensive universities as well as their implementation, and is grounded in 'policy sociology' (Ozga, 1987). As such, it could be considered a 'policy trajectory' study (Ball, 1993). Previous work that is relevant includes Dennison and Levin's study that researched the goals of Canadian community colleges. They administered surveys to provincial policy-makers who were responsible for community colleges, and as well to senior college administrators (Dennison and Levin, 1988). Also, Parry, as part of a larger study that researched the UK government's policy of expanding higher education in the further education sector to widen participation to higher education interviewed policy-makers in government and at the 'sector bodies' (Parry, 2008, p. 3).

This paper presentation will report on the analysis of interviews with policy-makers who developed the legislation that created Thompson Rivers University and the other BC teaching-intensive universities to determine what were their most important goals in drafting these policies. How did they wish to control these institutions and what freedoms did they wish them to exercise? It will also include interviews with past and present senior administrators of the institutions who were responsible for implementing these policies in their new universities, to ascertain to what extent their institutional goals were the same as or different from those identified by the policy-makers and as set out in legislation. How much control did the senior administrators want government to have? What freedoms did they have as teaching-intensive universities and what freedoms did they wish they had? Finally, the research asks from the perspective of both policy-makers and senior institutional administrators, what in their view was the appropriate balance between freedom and control in establishing these teaching-intensive universities?

The interviews will be undertaken in September 2016.

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