

Draft Policy Narrative – May 2005

**The Development of a Post-Secondary Education System
in British Columbia:
Transformation and Change**

by

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1. Introduction

The story of higher education policy in British Columbia provides a rich opportunity, not only to chart the parallel unfolding of events within and outside government, but also to examine these questions of causation and judgment in higher education policy. The period since the early 1980s has certainly been a period of dramatic, perhaps even revolutionary change. The pressure for access has led to the emergence of new institutional types, raising new questions about differentiation, mandate and identity and new lines of stratification. A trend toward vocationalism in the university sector has coincided with ‘academic drift’ in the community college sector, leading to convergences in programming and institutional functions across the system, as well as competition for resources, students, and external partners. Unprecedented demand has made education a viable industry, sustaining both a proliferation of private providers and a range of new entrepreneurial activities within public institutions. Levels and objectives of public funding have swung dramatically over the period. Public investments in higher education, in the form of capital grants and tuition subsidies, have alternately expanded and contracted, being at some times applied across the board, and at others targeted to specific social groups or economic sectors. Likewise, policymakers have treated higher education at some times as a mechanism for social inclusion and equality, at others as an instrument for labour force development, and at yet others as a market sector in its own right.

The focus of this project is how policy priorities get translated into the higher education system as reflected in “system” behaviours, performance, fiscal arrangements, design and structural components. The underlying questions driving this project are: What are the conditions that make the emergence of a particular policy agenda possible?; How do these rules and regularities shape policy choices?; How have provinces attempted to alter their policy environments?; What particular combinations within policy environments have either facilitated or constrained the capacity of a province to adapt to changes in the external environment?; What aspects of the policy environment are associated with particular performance patterns? To respond to these questions it is important to consider a comparative analysis of higher education policy environments on a case by case basis.

1.1 Purpose of Research Study

The purpose of this research report is to present a case study of evolution over the last

twenty years of British Columbia's higher education system. This working paper is part of a larger research project funded by the Ford Foundation known as the Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies (AIHEPS). The purpose of the larger study is to provide evidence about the relationship between policy environments, the process of decision-making ("rules of the game"), and performance of higher education in selected jurisdictions in the United States, Mexico and Canada. The first part of the study began in September 1999 with New York University and the Centro de Investigacion y Estudios Avanzados in Mexico City. The second part of the study began in September 2002 and marked the addition of Canada to the project and researchers from Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia under the leadership of the Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training (CHET) at the UBC. In the case of Canada profiles of higher education in three provinces (Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia) have been developed as well as a national profile. The profiles will be used to convene policy leaders around the theme of developing and implementing agendas that use policy to pursue public priorities for higher education.

1.2 Objectives of the Research Study

Canadian provinces appear to be changing: system designs, in particular the balance between public and private provision of higher education; arrangements for collaboration, communication and accountability; and fiscal policies to incorporate greater emphasis on market mechanisms. We currently have little information on how these changes are affecting the policy making process. The main objective of this study is to understand what are driving these changes and how they influence performance or behaviour of higher education systems, and to determine whether aspects of performance or behaviour can be traced to particular configurations of higher education in each of the three Canadian province, and selected jurisdictions in the United States and Mexico. Cross-national comparisons will be considered to further our understandings from the national profiles.

1.3 Limitations and Definitions

We are not asserting a causal relationship between policy context, policies and outcomes in this study. Rather we are tracing the connection between the dominant political economy, policies and changes/trends/patterns that have occurred over time in the higher education system

and in system indicators. Given the complexities of system dynamics whereby multiple variables are operating and influencing the system, it would be difficult, and methodically unwise, to make causal claims without first inviting more research.

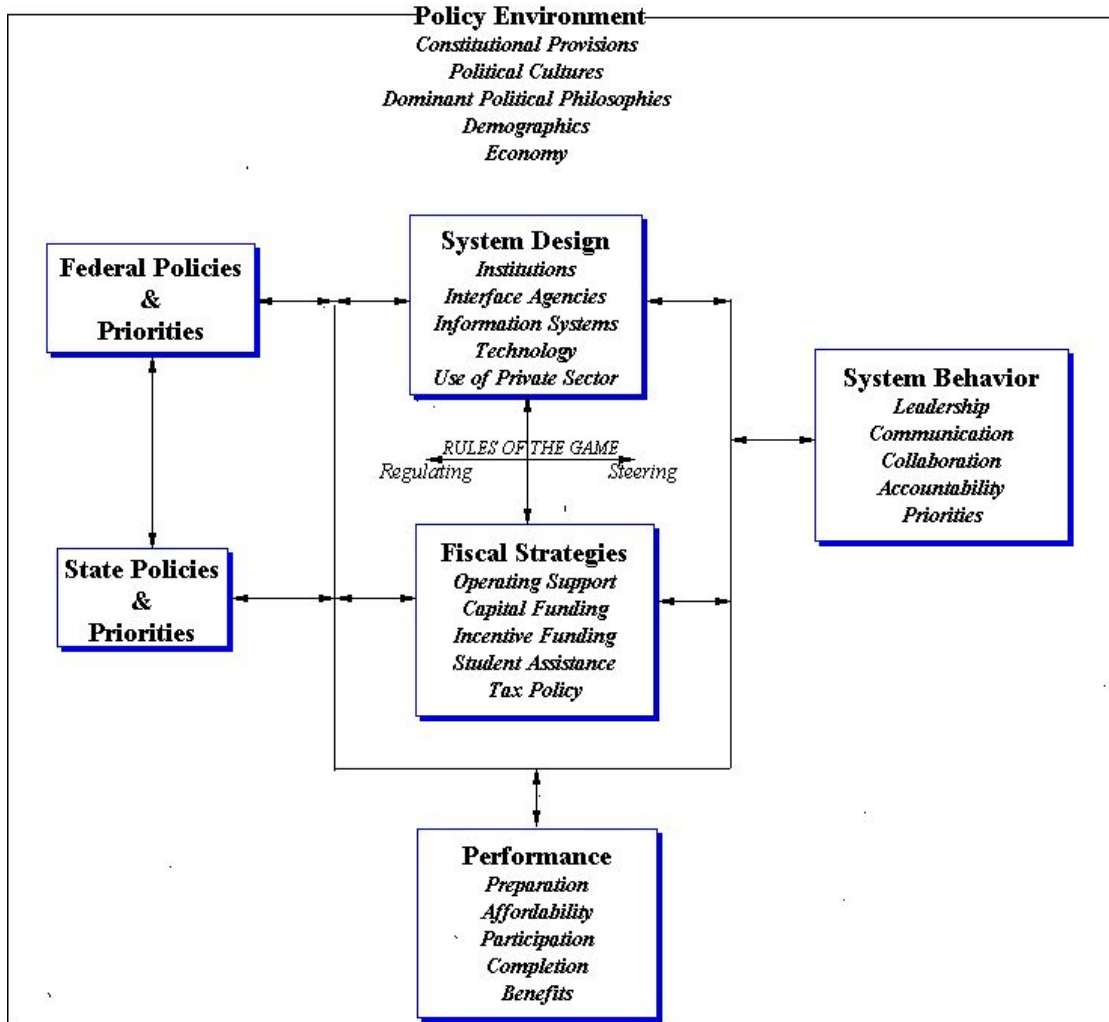
1.4 AIHEPS Framework

The theoretical framework employed for the project was initially developed during the first part of the study. Figure 1 displays the AIHEPS framework as it appeared at the point when Canada joined the study. Briefly, the initial framework envisioned examining links between state/province and federal policies and higher education performance across the following dimensions:

- The general context or “policy environments” that includes population demographics, history, geography (regionalism), political culture, economies, political philosophies/ideologies and constitutional issues;
 - The priorities of the government at both the federal and provincial (or state) governments concerning higher education policy;
 - The organization of the higher education system (system design) including the types of institutions, co-ordinating agencies, information systems, technology and the private sector;
- The financial strategies (fiscal policies) concerning the functioning of institutions, operating support, capital funding, incentive funding, student assistance and tax policy;
- The behaviour of the system contextualized by jurisdiction including communication, collaboration accountability and priorities; and
- The performance of the system based on indicators developed by the participants.

The framework presents the relationship as a multidimensional, dynamic exchange between policy makers, the higher education community and the higher education behaviour and performance. This framework has been revisited and refined upon discussion between the three countries. It is anticipated, as the project unfolds, the framework will be further amended to reflect the emerging understanding of the workings of each jurisdiction’s higher education policy environments.

FIGURE 1: Linking State and Federal Policies to Higher Education Performance



1.5 Canadian Research Design

The research design aims at constructing provincial and federal profiles of the relationship between policy environments, decision-making process, and performance of higher education. To this end the project employed a comparative, multiple, nested case study research design (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). The case studies are being conducted at the provincial and national levels. There are three provincial teams (Québec, Ontario and British Columbia) of Canadian researchers under the direction of CHET at the UBC.¹ Each team is responsible for one provincial case study. Beyond the use of indicators and other secondary

¹ Dr. Claude Trottier (Laval University) is the Principal Investigator for the Québec case study. Dr. Donald Fisher (UBC) and Dr. Kjell Rubenson are the Principal Investigators for the British Columbia case study. Dr. Theresa Shanahan (York University) is the Principal Investigator for the Ontario case study.

statistical data, we rely upon documentary and policy analysis and qualitative interviews. We have created a documentary database (including policy statements, laws, by-laws, briefs, periodicals, pamphlets, association newsletters, government reports and commissions) that explicates the policies that have guided post-secondary education over the last two decades (1985- 2004). The aim is to reconstruct and render sociologically intelligible the divergence in political, ideological and socio-educational positions among the major social actors in Canadian higher education (for example: governments, government departments, unions, institutional leaders, professional associations). In the analysis policies are treated as the operational statements of values, ‘statements of prescriptive intent’ (Kogan, 1975). Defining policy and policies in this way draws our attention to the importance of power, control and conflict in the policy-making process. Logically, we cannot divorce policies from interests, from domination and from justice (Ball, 1997). This situates our work in the tradition of policy sociology which is concerned with theorizing the nature of policy and its production and illuminate the policy discourse (Gale, 1999; 2001).

To document the policy environment we decided to use a set of policy priorities as sensitizing concepts. These priorities also cut across the AIHEPS model (see Figure 1). We grouped these priorities under four overlapping headings: Political; Economic; Academic and Residual.² The definition of a post-secondary education system we used is as follows: “The sum

² **Political Priorities (Ideology of Governments)**

- Accountability (fiscal reporting; use of funds; responsibility to citizens; contribution to democratic process)
- Marketization/Globalization (deregulation of fees; competition; promotion of market behaviour)
- Academic-Industry Partnerships
- Public-Private Relationships
- Expansion of Private Sector
- Access and Equity (particular focus on Aboriginal/Indigenous populations)
- Quality
 - Participation;
 - Levels of Completion;
 - Total Quality Management;
 - Relevance of Education: employment of students/starting salaries; access/participation/outcome “benefits”;
 - Question: do performance indicator policies actually measure quality?

Economic Priorities

- Economic Development
- Funding
- Transfer Payments
- R&D
- Internationalization

of component institutions, agencies and government departments which provide, regulate and coordinate post-secondary education” (Jones, 1997; Skolnik, 1992). With post-secondary education under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, it is the combined influences of the history, demographics, politics and economics of this province that produce the policies shaping the post secondary system and the priorities assigned to it. Our definition of the post-secondary education system includes all public and private institutions operating in British Columbia. Following Jones, Skolnik and Soren (1998) we posit three major approaches to the coordination of post-secondary education systems: institutional-level; sector-level; and system-level. An institutional approach means that institutions are highly autonomous and self-regulating. Coordination tends to be bilateral and formal or informal. Coordination at sector level characterizes all Canadian provinces. The post-secondary system is explicitly organized and has component parts, which are treated differentially. At this level we observe mechanisms for coordination within sectors and between sectors. In BC, the BC Council for Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) is an obvious example of a mechanism for coordination between sectors. No province is yet at the system level of coordination where agencies transcend institutional and sector boundaries. For Jones, Skolnik and Soren, system level coordination “treats all parts of the post-secondary enterprise as components of a whole. These may be a variety of institutional types. There may even be clear sector distinctions. But the central emphasis is on system level planning and coordination” (1998: 17).

This paper is divided into seven main sections. In the Introduction we list the purpose and objectives of the AIHEPS study, before leading into a description of the guiding conceptual framework. In the second section, we describe the current design and organization of the higher education system in British Columbia and document the current government’s fiscal policy.

-
- Vocationalism
[Accountability, Academic-Industry Partnerships]

Academic Priorities

- Lifelong Learning
- Distance Education
- Information & Communication Technologies
- Academic-Industry Partnerships, R&D, Internationalization]

Residual / Emerging Issues (issues not important to government but should be)

- Renewal of Professorate

Third we trace the development of BC's post-secondary system with a particular focus on how the general policy environment has been driven by the changing political economy. After a brief historical section we use changes in political administration as a means for organizing this narrative. Three political parties have held power in BC since the mid-1980s, Social Credit, New Democratic and Liberal. Fourth, we describe and analyze the policy-making process using the concepts of policy communities, policy institutions and policy capacity to help organize the section. Fifth, we identify the key policy priorities and proceed to document them each in turn following a linear mode of organization. Each priority is defined before we describe how the priority has been translated into action. The major policy priorities were accessibility, vocationalism and skills, accountability, science and technology, and, marketization. Sixth, we trace fiscal policy and the financing of the postsecondary system. This leads into a summary of impact of policy priorities and the aligned fiscal policies on system design and organization and on a range of outcomes. Here we pay special attention to participation and choice, affordability, completion and benefits. Finally, we draw some conclusions about the relationship between the policy environment, system design and outcomes in BC.

2. System Design and Fiscal Policy in 2004

2.1 Public Sector

Existing legislation divides the public PSE system into two sectors: the university sector and the college and university college, institute and agency sector. At this point in the development of the PSE system, the province has a total of 26 public institutions serving the needs of the people of the province – 6 universities; 3 university colleges and the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) which are authorized to grant associate, baccalaureate degrees; and applied Masters' degrees, The Emily Carr Institute³ and 11 colleges are also authorized to grant associate and baccalaureate degrees and a variety of certificates and diplomas in a wide range of programs. Completing the system are four provincial institutes that offer certificates and diplomas.

Four of the six public universities (The University of British Columbia (UBC), Simon Fraser University (SFU), University of Victoria, and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC)) are traditional universities and offer baccalaureate, magisterial and doctoral degrees as authorized under the *University Act*. In 2004, UBC expanded to incorporate part of the Okanagan University College in Kelowna as a campus of UBC. Universities operate as independent corporations with a significant degree of autonomy. Like most traditional Canadian universities, these universities adopt a bicameral governance model. Each Board of Governors has responsibility for the management, administration, control of property, revenue, and has other general powers associated with managing the affairs of the university including the power to set and collect fees and enter into agreements on behalf of the university. As with bicameralism, the Senate has powers related to academic and program issues. Under the *University Act*, the Board of Governors must consider recommendations from the Senate when making decisions concerning the establishment of faculties and departments. The only power of the Minister referenced in the legislation are the approval of new degree programs and the right to request reports and information from the universities.

Up until recently, the Open Learning Agency (OLA) also provided on-line access to a variety of certificates and diplomas. In 2002, the OLA was dismantled. The BC Campus replaced OLA as a distance education network of publicly funded post-secondary institutions in BC. In 2004, the University College of the Cariboo was re-named the Thompson Rivers

³ The Emily Carr Institute has proposed to government that it offer a Masters in Applied Arts.

University (TRU) of the Cariboo and given responsibility for distance education throughout the province. TRU is a special purpose university that will offer undergraduate programs as well as masters degrees in applied and professional fields. The liberal government also closed down another NDP creation, Technical University. The campus was incorporated into SFU in 2003.

Royal Roads University was established in 1995 under its own legislation, *The Royal Roads University Act* (RRU Act). This university differs from the other BC universities in various aspects. It offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, as well as certificates and diplomas in selected applied and professional fields. Its corporate governance model is one whereby the President, also the Chief Executive Officer, holds the powers of both the Board of Governors and Senate. The RRU Act stipulates the establishment of a program and research council to advise the Board of Governors on instructional program, research priorities, program objectives and learning outcomes. The council is comprised of a majority of Board appointed external representatives to ensure relevance of the mandate of the university. An academic council also exists to advise the President on such matters as qualifications for admission, curriculum content, academic standards and criteria for awarding certificates, diploma and degrees. The academic council is composed of elected internal representatives.

The colleges, university colleges and provincial institutes are established under the *College and Institute Act*. Each college provides career, technical and vocational training, and university transfer programs that lead to certificates, two-year diplomas, and two-year associate degrees. A university college differs from a college in that it is also authorized to offer four-year baccalaureate degree programs as well as offer courses of study for an applied master's degree program. A provincial institute may be designated by a minister under the Act to provide instruction in career, technical, vocational, artistic or other postsecondary education or training leading to a certificate, diploma or baccalaureate technology degree.

Each of these institutions has a Board of Governors who has the responsibility to manage, administer and direct the affairs of the institution. As "agents of the crown," colleges, university colleges and institutions are more closely tied to government. *The College and Institute Act* lists a number of powers and duties of the Minister that relate to institutions' programs, budgets and credentials. Another dissimilarity is that instead of a Senate, the colleges, university colleges and institutes each has an education council, with the exception of the Justice Institute of BC. Each education council is comprised of 20 voting members. The role of an education council is

primarily to advise the board on the development of educational policy including the implementation, cancellation and evaluation of programs, policies on faculty qualifications, admission policies and matters of student discipline. In addition, the education council has power to set policies concerning a variety of areas including student performance, academic standards and grading, awards and curriculum content.

Degree granting and use of the name ‘university’, used to be prohibited under the *University Act*. To date, this prohibition is contained within the *Degree Authorization Act*. This Act was passed by the Legislature in May 2002 and came into force in early 2003. Sections 3(1) and (2) of the Act is as follows:

3(1) A person must not directly or indirectly do the following things unless the person is authorized to do so by the minister under section 4:

- (a) grant or confer a degree;
- (b) provide a program leading to a degree to be conferred by a person inside or outside British Columbia;
- (c) advertise a program offered in British Columbia leading to a degree to be conferred by a person inside or outside British Columbia;
- (d) sell, offer for sale, or advertise for sale or provide by agreement for a fee, reward or other remuneration, a diploma, certificate, document or other material that indicates or implies the granting or conferring of a degree.

3(2) A person must not directly or indirectly make use of the word “university” or any derivation or abbreviation of the word “university” to indicate that an educational program is available, from or through the person, unless the person is authorized to do so by the minister under section 4 or by an Act.

2.2 Private Sector

The system has also seen a massive expansion in the number and variety of private institutions offering post-secondary credentials to British Columbians. The Province has three private universities. To grant a degree, an institution must be established either under an individual Act or be authorized under the *Degree Authorization Act*. This *Act* provides an application mechanism for private institutions to offer degree programs in BC and thus sets the stage for the addition of a number of private universities. The minister responsible for postsecondary education has the authority to give consent to an applicant to grant a degree if the applicant satisfactorily undergoes a quality assessment process. In addition, the *Act* deregulated the ESL sector, thus opening up a lucrative part of the market to increased competition.

Trinity Western University was founded in 1962, as a liberal arts Christian college. Trinity Western was established as a university by a private member's bill in 1979.⁴ Beyond the recognition of a private institution, Trinity Western also expanded the boundary of what counted as a university in BC. The new institution made fundamental Christian beliefs the foundation for all learning. In addition to Bachelors' degrees, Trinity Western also offers MAs in Leadership, Biblical Studies, Counselling Psychology, TESOL and Interdisciplinary Humanities. In 2002, the Sea to Sky University was established with its own legislation. Sea to Sky will offer a Bachelor of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The latest additions are University Canada West and Sprott Shaw Community College which were approved respectively under the provisions of the *Degree Authorization Act* in October and December 2004. Two degree programs have been approved at University Canada West, a Bachelor of Commerce in Technology Management and an MBA. The university plans to offer a range of practical degree programs in the Arts, Sciences and Business. Sprott Shaw is the first institute that was formally under the Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEA) to be granted the right to offer degree programs.

Governments have consistently attempted to include the private post secondary sector as part of the overall provincial post-secondary system. The BC Liberal government recognizes that the private sector provides additional program delivery in diverse areas and areas of high demand such as the health sector, ESL and the trades. There are currently over 1,100 private postsecondary institutions registered to operate in BC by the PPSEA. Within this group, only Columbia College and Coquitlam College offered academic programs that led through transfer to degree programs at the university level. A new piece of legislation titled, *Private Career Training Institutes Act* (Bill 52) was passed in November 2004. The new Act replaced the *Private Post Secondary Education Act* to govern private training including consumer protection and standards of quality. Under the new Act, the Commission will continue as a corporation under the name of the Private Career Training Institutions Agency. Registration of a private institution under the Act means that it has met the requirements for registration under the Act, the regulations and the bylaws.

⁴ The first private university in BC was the now defunct Notre Dame University that was founded in 1950 in Nelson.

2.3 Intermediary Bodies

Unlike Ontario, intermediary governing bodies in BC have not played a major role. The most significant has been The University Presidents' Council of British Columbia (TUPC). The TUPC is an offshoot of the former Universities Council established under the University Act in 1974. In the spring of 1987, the Universities Council was abolished and provincial funding was withdrawn. Consequently the Presidents of the UBC, SFU and the University of Victoria established the Tri-University Presidents' Council in 1987 by informal agreement. The name was subsequently changed to TUPC when it was expanded to include the new universities. Today TUPC represents the interests of the five public universities. The mandate is to identify issues facing the universities, provide system wide leadership in the development of relevant public policy and communicate on behalf of the university system. It also provides a coordinating forum for its members and acts as a focal point for dealing with the Government of British Columbia and provincial or national bodies associated with universities. The universities do not submit individual budget request but this is being done for the whole sector through the TUPC.

Within the college and institute sector, the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) has been instrumental in ensuring articulation and transferability of credits within the postsecondary system. BC has one of the most sophisticated sets of transfer arrangements in Canada (Andres & Dawson, 1998). The BCCAT was established in 1989 by Stan Hagen the Minister of Advanced Education and Job Training. The Council's key role is to encourage collaborative leadership throughout the BC postsecondary education system to develop and maintain a system of articulation and improve the transferability of academic credits for the benefit of students (BCCAT Annual Report, 2003). Other core agencies for system integration in the college sector, the provincial curriculum and professional development agency, C2T2 and the technical information agency, CEISS, have recently been dissolved.

2.4 Fiscal Policy

The financial relationship between the provinces and the federal government are complex and controversial. In the Canadian federal system the federal government enjoys the largest share of revenues from economic growth (e.g., through income tax). However, the provinces have the main responsibility for providing essential and expensive services such as health and education. These transfer payments were formerly known as Established Programs Financing

(EPF). The transfer program was revised, renamed the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) and reduced. During the 1990s the federal government limited or reduced this financial support to the provinces as part of an overall spending reduction effort. In turn the provinces have had to make up the shortfall in various ways including reducing provincial grants to post secondary institutions setting the stage for the search for alternative sources of revenue for the post secondary system. Currently the provincial governments provide almost all the funding for education, exceptions have been noted above particularly in the federal government's support of university research. Provincial funds for post secondary education are drawn from the general revenue of the province (which includes any federal government transfers and provincial tax revenue). While part of the annual provincial government's budget is set aside for education other provincial ministries outside of education have been involved in initiatives that have benefited education.

The British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education provides block operating grants to public post-secondary institutions to deliver a comprehensive mix of educational programming that best meets the needs of their communities. Block operating grants provide institutions with increased flexibility and autonomy to better manage their institutions with the financial resources available. The Ministry does not specify how the funds are to be spent but does set overall student FTE enrolment targets. Since 2002 the Ministry has also targeted some of the funded enrolment growth to specific provincial government priorities such as information technology, nursing, critical health care professions, doctors, social work and on-line learning. In the initial development of the Ministries Strategic Investment Plan (25,000 new FTE student spaces expansion over the 2004/05 to 2009/10 period) the planning assumptions are based on 55 percent targeted FTE growth and 45% general FTE growth. The 55 percent and 45 percent were based on the FTE allocations for 2002/03 and 2003/04 and projections out for 2004/05 and beyond.

Operating grants provided in block funding are used for instruction, non-sponsored research, support services, student services and administration. Capital funding is provided under a separate process and is not included in the operating grants. The Ministry and Treasury Board review funding for institutions annually during the budget development cycle and institutions are informed of their allocations in late February or March each year.

The overall level of funding for an institution is based on a review of regional demographics, historical performance (i.e., student FTE utilization, student space utilization), anticipated demand and fiscal, economic and social priorities. Funding for similar programs is provided at similar rates. This includes both general FTE growth and growth for targeted programs. The Ministry strives to provide equitable funding to similar institutions within a sector, i.e., universities, university colleges, rural colleges and urban colleges.

The Ministry and institutions communicate on a regular basis regarding funding issues and funding levels. While the Ministry sets the overall budget and funding levels for institutions this is done within the context of an assessment of the available funding, government priorities and the requirements of the post-secondary system.

The principal means that colleges use to bring forward budget issues is through annual face to face budget and accountability meetings. These generally happen in the late fall (late October to early January). These meetings provide the Ministry an opportunity to communicate Ministry and government priorities to institutions. In turn institutions have the opportunity to provide an update on their institutions and the issues they are facing, which range from budgets to programs to assorted other issues.

The colleges do not generally submit individual budget requests through their councils. There is nothing to prevent them from doing this and from time to time they have provided budgets and budget requests to the Ministry. This has happened on both an individual basis and on a collective basis (e.g., University Colleges, British Columbia College Presidents – BCCP), but rarely.

3. Political Economy and the Changing Shape of the Policy Environment

3.1 Political Context

Geography and resources have shaped the province's social and political dynamics, renowned for dramatic valleys and divides of their own. Post-War electoral politics in BC have been dominated by two parties whose persistent antagonism reflects ideological and practical rifts that extend far beyond the electoral arena. On one side is the Social Credit party which, along with its recent successor the BC Liberal Party, held power for about thirty-five of the last fifty years. The party's electoral base has historically been among the independent farmers, ranchers and merchants of rural BC, along with the small-business sector of the urban areas, and underwritten by the financial backing of the corporate sector. Regarding its ideological appeal, Social Credit has consistently presented a socially and fiscally conservative brand of populism, stressing virtues of self-help and entrepreneurialism, and warning against welfare-state dependency and intrusive government, particularly as manifested in business taxes and regulations.

Standing opposite the Socreds throughout this period has been the BC New Democratic Party (NDP). The party was formed as a wing of the Federal NDP in October 1961 from an alliance between two quite distinct working-class movements. One of these was the Commonwealth Co-operative Federation (CCF), a social democratic party formed in Saskatchewan during the 'dustbowl' years of the Great Depression, and the pioneer of public health insurance in Canada. The other party to the marriage was organized labour, an entity with its own internal divisions. The abundance of BC's natural resources had supported high profits in the extraction industries and led to the growth of a well-paid, unionized, blue-collar workforce in forestry, mining and fishing (Marchak, 1983). The formation of the NDP in 1961 was an attempt to meld a pair of political tendencies which, while occasionally and superficially congruent, harboured quite divergent interests and values.

Since 1983, three political parties have been in power in BC: Social Credit under Bill Bennett (1975-1986); William Vander Zalm (1986-1991); and Rita Johnson (1991); NDP under Michael Harcourt (1991-1996); Glen Clark (1996 -1999); Daniel Miller (1999-2000); and Ujjal Dosanjh (2000-2001); and, Liberal under Gordon Campbell (2001-present). The current

iteration of the Liberal party has adopted a neo-liberal ideology emphasizing individualism and market ideology.⁵

3.2 Social Credit Era

The 1960s and 1970s were the halcyon period for post-secondary education in British Columbia. The beginning of the period that is the main focus of our work was marked by the most tumultuous episode in BC's modern political history. The Socreds were narrowly returned to power in 1979 under Bill Bennett. The economic boom that had sustained public sector expansion through the 1970s was by now slipping backward into what would become the deepest worldwide recession since the 1930s. With its narrow dependency on commodities, British Columbia was hit harder than any other region of the country and the unemployment rate doubled from 6.8 percent to 13.8 percent (Schworm, 1984:4; cited in Moran, 1991:117). Campaigning on a platform of fiscal restraint, the Social Credit party was re-elected in May 1983. In July the government introduced a notorious restraint budget along with 34 pieces of proposed legislation which were passed mostly intact in the Legislature. The legislation package included the *Public Service Restraint Act* which gave public sector employers authority to dismiss employees without cause. The government aimed to reduce the public sector by 25 percent through dismissals, privatization and reorganization. Amendments to the *College and Institute Act* removed local representation from governing boards leaving only government appointees (Dennison and Gallagher 1986: 93). Legislation to control salary increases were also introduced to control college budgets (Dennison, 1997). The swift and comprehensive restraint program was partially made possible by its sizeable majority. The aggressiveness of the restraint program is due partially to the desire of Premier Bennett to make the resource industries more competitive and to adopt a growing worldwide neo-conservative outlook (Prince, 1996:254).

The government proceeded to institute a series of privatization initiatives in the social area including the transfer of government-operated child care facilities to non-profit societies. Agencies like the office of the Rentalsman, Human Rights Commissions and the Employment Standards Board were eliminated to cut costs. The Ministry of Attorney General shrank by 20 percent, and the reduction was perceived to be a de-emphasis on the goals of equality, fairness and civil liberties (Prince, 1996: 255-6). The government presented its actions as a prudent

⁵ See Appendix 1 for a listing of the Ministers responsible for post-secondary education.

response to declining revenues and rising social welfare costs, and as a necessary corrective to public ‘mismanagement’ under the NDP. Its many critics, however, saw far more sinister intent. At one level, the Socred policies were regarded as a local experiment with the emergent neo-conservative model associated with Thatcher, Reagan and Pinochet (Magnusson, 1984).

The Socreds’ restraint policies forced the post-secondary education sector into survival mode. Legislated changes to educational governance gave the province centralized control over school and college budgets. Deep cuts were made with little warning. David Thompson University Centre⁶ was closed in 1984. The universities responded by imposing enrolment quotas, increasing tuition, eliminating programs and laying off staff and faculty (Dennison, 1987; Fisher and Gilgoff, 1987). Students paid more for less service, and effective in 1984, provincial grants were replaced with student loans, putting BC in tenth place among the provinces in terms of expenditure per full-time enrolment (Orum, 1992:8).

University and college budgets were clawed back midway through 1982-83 by \$12 million and \$8.5 million respectively (Cameron, 1991:252; Moran 1991:120). By 1984/85, the university budgets were reduced by 5 percent and universities were under great financial pressure. Inflation was at 12 percent and enrolments had increased by 11.4 percent. During the same period, college budgets were cut by 3.5 percent and colleges were similarly faced with attempting to enroll more students while reducing staff and faculty. Other restraint measures included the elimination of the three intermediary councils including the University Council which has long been unpopular with at least two of the universities. Consolidation measures included the melding of The Knowledge Network with the OLI to become the Open Learning Agency and the amalgamation of the Pacific Vocational Institute with BCIT (Dennison, 1997).

The economy began to improve in 1985. By 1986, the economy had recovered from the recession and was growing. Unemployment in BC dropped from 12.5 percent in 1986 to 8.3 percent in 1990. Despite the glittering success of Expo 86 and the Coquihalla Highway, SkyTrain and the Tumbler Ridge coal development project, barely three years into his third term, Premier Bennett resigned in 1986. As Rayner puts it, ‘He knew his government, after almost eleven years in office had become stagnant’ (p.210).

On August 6, 1986 William Vander Zalm led the Social Credit party to an election victory. Bill Vander Zalm was a proponent of neo-conservatism and during his premiership,

⁶ The successor to Notre Dame University.

privatization continued as a policy direction but in conjunction with the easing of some aspects of restraint. By 1986, a neo-conservative agenda was also apparent in Ottawa with the Mulroney government. Due to prior cuts, strong revenue growth and creative accounting practices, the province's budget was balanced by 1987/88 and ran surpluses in the next two years. However deficit budgets followed and reached a record \$2.4 billion in 1991/92 (Prince, 1996:257). In February 1987 Stanley Hagen was appointed minister of the new portfolio of Advanced Education and Job Training. A political newcomer and owner of a rural road construction firm, Hagen had no background in education issues, yet proved to be a collaborative minister with a genuine interest in post-secondary education.

A March 1987 Statistics Canada report produced for the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance showed that only 45 percent of BC high school graduates went directly to full-time studies in colleges, institutes or universities. As the economy began to improve in 1985, the BC higher education system entered a period of sustained expansion and transformation. The first phase of recovery involved ministerial restructuring. The ministry responsible for higher education was renamed and expanded twice in 1986, first acquiring the post-secondary department of the Ministry of Education, and later the job training department of the Ministry of Labour.

Over the next four years, the overriding policy goal for Minister Hagen and his successor Bruce Strachan was to increase access to degree-granting programs for rural, interior populations. In March 1988, Hagen announced the 'Access for All' initiative, thus setting the stage for a massive expansion in degree-granting programs over the next decade. Appointed by Stanley Hagen the Social Credit Minister of Advanced Education and Job Training in 1987, the Provincial Access Committee (PAC) was charged with studying financial need and regional access in the post-secondary system. The PAC concluded that relative to its population, BC ranked ninth among provinces with respect to first degrees awarded, and seventh in terms of full-time postsecondary enrolment of 18-24 year olds (PAC 1988:4; Dennison, 1995:15). The report highlighted two overarching policy goals: improving equitable access for all citizens of the province, and improving "the overall rate of transition of students from high school into

advanced education and job training institutions of all kinds” (Ibid: 5). Its specific recommendations were comprehensive and in some cases quite novel.⁷

The PAC’s recommendations had a clear impact on the structure of the higher education system. It suggested not only adding a “University of the North”, but also introducing a completely new institutional species previously unseen in Canada (Dennison, 1995:16). University Colleges would expand access to degree programs in densely populated areas not adequately served by universities. Access to academic qualifications was also to be expanded by means of a ‘credit bank’ where learners would be able to accumulate credits from open learning courses through the OLA, and even to receive recognition for prior learning (PLA) (ibid:17). Anticipating the need to align programs and academic standards in an increasingly diverse system, the PAC also recommended the creation of a Council on Admissions, Transfer and Articulation to resolve issues of program equivalency, degree requirements and credit transfer.

The report was enthusiastically received across the post-secondary system. In March 1988, Hagen in what was described by one commentator as a “brilliant policy move”⁸ announced the government’s ‘Access for All’ policy initiative, which embodied the report’s main recommendations and ushered in BC’s second major period of higher education expansion and transformation. Hagen faced the need to expand access to degree-granting programs but recognized he did not have the resource capacity to create four new true universities. In 1989 the government designated three community colleges as university colleges,⁹ enabling them to offer baccalaureate studies in partnership with an existing university which would grant the degree. The changes in legislation also authorized BCIT and Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design to offer baccalaureate degrees. The British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) was also created to organize and facilitate student transfer from community colleges into degree-granting programs, in line with the PAC’s recommendation. Funds were committed to further developing the concept of a ‘University in the North’ legislature.

In April 1990, the government unveiled a renamed Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, under Bruce Strachan. Perhaps Strachan’s most visible achievement,

⁷ These recommendations included a more stable funding process that would allow for long-term institutional planning; more funds for literacy and adult basic education; assured provision of first and second-year university courses through all regional colleges; and a range of services specially tailored to under-represented groups such as remote communities, aboriginals; students with disabilities; and the prison population.

⁸ Interview, October 2004.

⁹ Cariboo College in Kamloops, Malaspina College in Nanaimo and Okanagan College in Kelowna.

and the Socreds' last major step in fulfillment of the Access for All initiative, was to introduce the UNBC Act on June 1st, 1990. Located in Prince George, the most northerly major town in the interior of BC, UNBC honoured a long-standing commitment to make university education accessible to the people of the North.

In 1988, a report by the Provincial Access Committee¹⁰ urged the Provincial government to consult with Aboriginal organizations and post secondary institutions to address Aboriginal under-representation in higher education. The following year, the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners was formed. The committee was co-chaired by Chief Gordon Antoine from the Coldwater Band, and Dr. Peter Jones, then President of Fraser Valley College, and committee membership was primarily Aboriginal. After extensive consultation with Aboriginal people and organizations, post-secondary institutions, and others, the 1990 *Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners* (also known as the Green Report) was released. This document initiated policy discourse about Aboriginal post-secondary education in British Columbia.

Key to the report are four principles that not only guided the writing of the report, but also are offered as the foundation for implementing recommendations. The principles include: (1) that First Nations have a right to self-determination in education, and therefore must be part of the decision-making process; (2) that because education is an inherent Aboriginal right, it is a federal responsibility that can only be devolved to the province with First Nations approval; (3) that contemporary higher education reflect a holistic approach, consistent with traditional education, that enhances First Nations languages and values; and (4) that the Province responsibility to ensure Aboriginal access to higher education that is holistic requires cooperative planning by First Nations and post-secondary authorities.¹¹ The twenty-one recommendations that follow are framed as “Challenges to the Post-Secondary System” and include governance, jurisdiction, cultural, program, financial, and geographic challenges.

Before leaving office the Social Credit government introduced legislation in 1990 establishing the independent Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC) to takeover the functions previously performed by the Independent Schools Branch in the Ministry of Education. As an independent agency, with industry representation, PPSEC gave the private

¹⁰ Undoubtedly, this document, plus other BC post-secondary education policy documents would give greater insight on developments in Aboriginal post-secondary education. This, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹¹ Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 11

training industry greater control over its own governance, and introduced stronger consumer protection measures in the wake of several high-profile bankruptcies and complaints over educational quality in the sector. According to numerous observers, the public furor that followed the collapse of Alpha College in 1987 was the catalyst for change. Alpha College had offered ESL and high school education to an international clientele (Culos, 2005). The Commission continued to operate through the NDP years but was eliminated once the Liberals took power.

3.3 The NDP Mandate (1991-2001)

In 1991, the New Democratic Party under the leadership of Mike Harcourt won an unprecedented victory with 51 of 75 seats. With its strong legislative majority, the NDP was free to pursue an ambitious reform agenda, in which higher education policy would play an integral part. Accessibility continued to be a major policy priority but the major goal was the expansion of the vocational and skill-building capacity of the system as a whole. More than any previous government, the NDP administrations were determined to link higher education and work in the most transparent manner.

Economically, there was a deep recession in Canada although BC was somewhat shielded. Nonetheless, the unemployment rate rose to 10.4 percent within a year of the NDP winning the provincial election in late 1991 (Prince, 1996:259). In the early 1990s, poverty rates in BC increased. The portion of the BC population living in low-income poverty rose from 13.8 percent in 1989 to 17.3 percent, 1993. While poverty among senior citizens had been dropping for over a decade, poverty among families with children had been rising (Prince, 1996:263). The Harcourt government did not espouse the new right ideology. The government's major policy themes were to reduce provincial debt, eliminate the deficit, protect the social safety net, maintain stability in the health care system and invest in people through education and skills training. Other government social priorities include equality for women, pay equity, child care, personal safety, assistance to victims of violence, and forging relationships with aboriginal peoples. The Harcourt government also invested heavily in social infrastructure such as public schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, courthouses, non-profit housing and recreational facilities. To finance the infrastructure projects, the NDP borrowed and thus increased the provincial deficit. They justified this approach by arguing that today's taxpayers should not have

to shoulder the entire cost of services and facilities that would benefit future British Columbians for decades to come (Prince, 1996:260-3). The NDP's goal was to eliminate the provincial deficit by the start of the 1996/97 fiscal year. To this end, they slowed down growth in program spending and raised taxes in their early budgets.

A particularly influential report was the October 1991 submission of the BC Task Force on Employment and Training, also known as the "Strand Report" for its chairman Kenneth Strand, or by its subtitle, "The Way Ahead". The Task Force had been commissioned in August 1989 with three objectives: to examine training and employment issues; to recommend long-term responses to structural unemployment; and to recommend on building greater consensus among labour market stakeholders. Not surprisingly, it traced structural unemployment in BC to three basic drivers found in many other jurisdictions: globalization, technological change, and demographic trends including an ageing workforce and a relatively large cohort of young job-seekers. But it also found that the problem in BC was more widespread and longer lasting than in other parts of the country, due to relatively low skills and education and a weak labour market information system.

The report made 28 recommendations, many of which would be enacted in the course of the NDP's skills agenda over the next decade. Regarding structural unemployment, the task force gave priority to reducing long-term unemployment by addressing the needs of low-skilled or low-educated workers. At the policy level, it recommended better alignment of federal and provincial labour market policies, with a general preference for 'active' remedies, and better coordination among training providers. More specifically, it recommended efforts to revitalize apprenticeship, partly by reforming the Provincial Apprenticeship Board to give labour and business greater control in the system's governance. Finally, the Task Force called on the government to improve its overall management of labour force development issues by integrating various relevant functions, and improving its labour market research, data management, and decision-making capabilities.

The Strand report recommendations were reinforced in 1992 by the findings of a similar study, *Forces of Change* (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education Training and Technology, 1992). Foreshadowing a future debate, it again raised the issue of educational 'relevance.' In addition to the question of relevance, it identified three other challenges for BC's education and training system: the challenge of quantity, as public demand for access continued

to rise; the question of quality, cast as an imperative to find alternate delivery methods in the face of rising demand; and the question of resources as state's fiscal limits were stretched.

The participatory approach to policy formation/promulgation continued with a major summit in 1992 on Trade and Economic Opportunities, followed in 1993 by another on Skill Development and Training. In his opening remarks to the latter, Premier Harcourt announced his government's intention to treat education "... as intimately interwoven with social, economic and workplace concerns."¹² The announcement was followed in the fall of 1993 by the creation of a new Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour. Apart from symbolically highlighting the government's emphasis on non-university learning, the new super ministry gathered responsibility for higher education, labour force development, and industrial relations under a single portfolio. In the next legislative session Cabinet approved a package of initiatives under the name *Skills Now!*

The BC skills agenda closely followed the lead of the highly influential Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that since the middle of the 1980s vigorously argued that the economy and education were changing in ways that increased their interdependency and that "*education*" is becoming less clearly distinct from that which is "*the economy*" (OECD, 1989, p. 19). OECD notes a perception that national differences in economic performance can increasingly be directly attributed to varying degrees of educational effectiveness and countries learning capabilities (OECD, 1989). The capacity to adapt and adjust to new technologies is believed to improve with education. Since new technologies are expected to increase productivity and efficiency, a more educated workforce is better able to adjust to rapid changes in new technologies and to compete globally.

Skills Now defined a central thrust of the government's integrated agenda over the next two years, and marks the high point of the vocationalist tendency under the NDP. The number of new spaces in the college, institute and university sector tripled from 2,700 in 1993 to 8,100 in 1994, bringing enrolments to over 180,000. Apprenticeship programs expanded and training came to rely more on computers and telecommunications. The government established a 'challenge' fund of \$12 million for colleges and universities "to find innovative and cost-effective ways to teach skills to more students" (Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour,

¹² See the 'Opening remarks by Premier Mike Harcourt'. Premier's Summit: Skills Development and Training. Summary of Proceedings. June 23-25, 1993, p. 48.

1995:4). At the same time, it created six new programs in advanced technology areas. Six million dollars was pledged for new equipment purchases, subject to matching by the private sector. In line with the Strand recommendations, the government pilot tested a number of “Training and Enterprise Centres” to provide comprehensive employment, training, and labour market information services, eventually opening sixteen community skills centres throughout the province.

In July 1994 the government followed through on another key Strand report recommendation by creating the British Columbia Labour Force Development Board (BCLFDB). Like the Fair Wage policy, the story of the Board illustrates a variety of influences on policy, and the complexity of the NDP’s agenda. According to Hommen (Hommen, 1997), an important factor behind the BCLFDB’s creation was a perception of growing federal encroachment into provincial labour force policy, specifically through the CFLDB. In creating the Board, the province sought partly to head off this interference while addressing a slough of well-known labour market management. With a rather loose mandate to facilitate multipartite cooperation and dialogue on labour market policy, the Board’s most notable achievement was its controversial 1995 report, *Training for What?* The report noted an under-supply of skilled graduates in technological and scientific fields, as well as a pronounced “imbalance in the public post-secondary system toward degree and university transfer programs. The clearly vocationalist slant of the report’s recommendations on educational ‘balance’ drew vociferous critique from academics who saw it as anti-elitist university-bashing, but also as a misguided assessment of academic education’s benefits for the labour market. As it turned out, both the controversy and the Board itself were short-lived. Minister Miller announced its dissolution in the fall of 1996, only two years after it was formed.

With the return of the NDP, the labour minister introduced Bill 43, the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Act (June 1997) which would overhaul the governance of the provincial apprenticeship system and would be administered jointly by both ministries. The legislation created an Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC). ITAC’s mandate would be to: (1) facilitate school-to-work transition and lifelong learning; (2) raise the number of skilled persons in designated trades; (3) increase participation in skilled trades by under-represented groups; (4) promote labour mobility by creating a provincial system of recognized and articulated vocational credentials; and (5) make the best use of available resources. Although the

opposition supported the effort to revitalize the apprenticeship system and allowed the bill to pass without amendment, the size and breadth of the ITAC governing body would be a persistent point of contention.

As BC's higher education system continued to expand and diversify through the 1990s, as new institutions and types of academic credit emerged, and as educational planning became more entwined with other policy objectives, the need for system-wide coordination became ever more apparent. In 1996 the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour articulated this imperative in a major policy paper on non-university higher education: *Charting a New Course – A Strategic Plan for the Future of British Columbia's College, Institute and Agency System*. This “milestone policy”¹³ document highlighted the need for greater integration and coherence across the provincial college and institute system. It set out four principal goals for reform in the non-university sector:

- (1) “Relevance and quality” in college programming would be achieved by establishing ‘outcomes-based’ standards for all general education and liberal arts programs. Students and programs would be expected to meet objective standards, defined not only in terms of job performance, but also in terms of learners’ ability to interact and participate successfully in the community.
- (2) “Access” to educational opportunity would be expanded by continued expansion of institutions, but also by means of new learning technologies (PLA, and expanded use of educational technology), and by smoother mechanisms for credit recognition and transfer.
- (3) “Affordability” would be achieved through greater efficiency in instructional delivery, including distance education and the reduction of program duplication. Provincial funding for colleges and institutes would be restructured. Apart from the Basic Operating Grant there would be three separate ‘envelopes’ contingent on colleges’ progress toward partnerships (with the private sector and other levels of government); the development of on-line courses; and capital expansion.
- (4) “Accountability” would be enhanced by requiring colleges and institutes to develop ‘key performance indicators’ (KPIs) and to report on the definition and achievement of learning outcomes in all program areas.

Charting a New Course had multiple effects on the system. On the one hand, the new funding formula and accountability measures imposed managerialist constraints on colleges. But it also brought a more conciliatory and inclusive tone to skills policy discourse.

¹³ Interview, October 2003.

The plan also set out roles for three provincial educational agencies to help achieve the goals of system integration. The Open Learning Agency would continue to play a role in educational broadcasting and distance learning, and in administering a credit bank for open learning. The Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2) would provide a range of services in relation to the government's goals of 'quality and relevance'. It promoted professional development for college instructors and administrators, particularly in relation to outcomes-based curriculum development and instruction, and the use of new learning technologies including on-line delivery. It would receive about half its funding as a core operating grant, and generate by contracting with the ministry and other clients. A third key agency, in this case oriented to the government's "accountability" goal, was the Centre for Education Information Standards and Services. CEISS was responsible for gathering and disseminating data on labour market demand and higher education supply. It compiled an annual report on employment outcomes for graduates of the college and institute system, and provided consulting and technical services on management information systems (MIS) for the colleges. CEISS also provided an internet portal to provincial and federal labour market information and career planning services.

Another interesting example of system-wide integration during the NDP tenure involved the creation of a central marketing agency for the public college system. The Contract Training Marketing Society (CTM), was established to support the efforts of community colleges to win contracts for customized training services, particularly with the provincial government. While the initiative was consistent with the government's general goals for the college system it also illustrates the complexity of the policy environment. The impetus for a centralized contract training body came from several directions at once. It aligned well with the themes of *Charting a New Course*, in particular the focus on system-wide efficiencies and synergies, and on building colleges' capacity for 'flexible' and innovative delivery. It also fit nicely with the recommendations of a 1993 enquiry into public sector efficiency that had urged the government to harmonize its procurement and collective bargaining practices across ministries. But other, more direct pressures and interests were also involved. Faced with this combination of increased competition and vanishing contracts, colleges and their employee groups were highly motivated

to find new sources of revenue¹⁴, and the most immediate was the province. However, there was a perception that provincial government procurement rules were stacked against public providers. “Using a very broad definition of training, the BC Government and its Crowns and agencies were spending an estimated \$250 million, annually, on training purchases. Very little of this went to the public colleges”(Calvert, 2000). Meanwhile, the provincial government had its own motivations. On the one hand, it wished to see the public colleges become more responsive to government training needs and more flexible in their delivery schedules and formats. In pursuit of these goals, the government agreed in 1996 to establish the Contract Training and Marketing Society as a ‘one-stop shop’ where provincial bureaucrats could access training services of all colleges in the province. The real victory for the public colleges, however, was in securing a change to the government’s purportedly biased procurement practices. The ‘Training Accord’ of 1998 was not a part of the formal bargaining process but rather a side agreement, understood to be contingent on a contract settlement. In effect, it gave the public colleges a ‘right to first consideration’ for government training contracts (‘all else being equal’) in return for their unions’ accepting wage increases of only zero, zero and two percent over the next three years. Direct subsidies for access: Tuition freezes.

General accessibility continued as a major policy objective throughout the 1990s. In parallel with its skills agenda, the NDP government pursued a range of integrated reforms in academic higher education. The main policy thrusts can be placed under three headings: institutional expansion and diversification; low tuition fees and system-wide integration.

The government addressed the explosive demand for academic qualifications through two strategies: by conferring degree-granting powers on a wider range of institutions; and by building more (and more specialized) universities. In 1992 Tom Perry launched a trend in the former direction by introducing an amendment to the University Act that would authorize public colleges and institutes to develop two-year associate degree programs in arts or science. (Hansard, April 27, 1992: 1126). In May 1994, Dan Miller introduced the College and Institute

¹⁴ Another solution was the colleges’ rapid entry into the international education market. Foreign student recruiting by Canadian institutions increased steadily since the eighties and was estimated in 2000 to be worth 203 million dollars in annual direct investment to the BC economy alone, and 2.5 billion dollars nationally(BCCIE (British Columbia Centre for International Education), 2000)(BCCIE (British Columbia Centre for International Education), 2000)(BCCIE (British Columbia Centre for International Education), 2000)(BCCIE (British Columbia Centre for International Education), 2000)(BCCIE (British Columbia Centre for International Education), 2000) (BCCIE, 2000). As of the mid-nineties it was not uncommon, according to one researcher, “for the revenue from international education activities to represent between 10 percent and 20 percent of the entire college budget”(Knowles, 1995).

Amendment Act, further extending the powers of two technical institutes and the newly created university colleges to grant designated four-year baccalaureate degrees. The effect was to expand by six the number of degree-granting post-secondary institutions¹⁵ in the province. Reflecting the labour market orientation of *Skills Now*, and particularly the emphasis on educational ‘relevance’, the new degrees would be offered in applied areas of the arts, sciences and technology. In 1995, the government changed the status of Kwantlen College to a university college with a mandate to offer applied degrees. In addition, three new universities were established between 1990 and 1997. Each was oriented to a specialized educational purpose and constituency, and all were enthusiastically supported by the public and the legislative opposition.

The first, the UNBC in Prince George, was not so much an NDP initiative as the culmination of longstanding efforts by local community activists. The second new university established under the NDP mandate was Royal Roads University (RRU). RRU’s creation emerges from the key themes of the NDP’s higher education policy, including an emphasis on vocational relevance, and the need to balance student demand against fiscal limitations. The precipitating factor, however, was the federal government’s decision in 1994 to close Royal Roads Military College and to dispose of its historic, park-like campus outside the provincial capital, Victoria. The university offers a range of short, modularized programs, primarily at the master’s level. Access is facilitated by the extensive use of prior learning assessment (PLA) strategies. Academic organization is not by traditional disciplines and permanent departments, but rather by ‘themes’ such as entrepreneurship, organizational leadership, environmental sustainability, and conflict resolution.

The Technical University of BC was the third and last new degree-granting institution created by the NDP. Like the UNBC, the original plan emerged from the Social Credit’s ‘Access for All’ initiative, and the urgent need to address higher education access in the Fraser Valley. The objective was explicitly vocational: the new institution would help fuel a regional high-tech economy both by producing ‘market-ready’ technical graduates and by incubating R&D innovations through strategic partnerships with private industry. Despite fierce opposition from the university community the new institution had from its inception a corporate model of governance, justified by the purported need for ‘flexibility’ and ‘responsiveness’ to industry

¹⁵ Malaspina University College, Okanagan University College, University College of the Cariboo, University College of the Fraser Valley, Emily Carr College of Art and Design and BCIT.

requirements. This experiment with Tech BC was only one instance where the NDP's higher education reforms encountered questions of governance and labour relations. In 1992 the University Amendment Act that empowered colleges to grant two-year Associate Degrees had also granted university professors the right to form faculty associations or trade unions, bringing BC law into line with international labour standards. In the college and institute sector, the rights and roles of faculty members continued to evolve as well. The 1994 College and Institute Amendment Act, which opened the way to college degrees, also amended provincial college boards to include elected representatives from faculty, students and support staff in addition to government appointees. At the same time, it created a new governance body in the college sector, the "education council" which, in absence of a university-style senate, would be the college sector's mechanism for democratic oversight in academic matters, and an important symbolic acknowledgment of college instructors' status as professional educators rather than classroom technicians.

The NDP government was concerned about issues of minority groups including First Nations. While Aboriginal youth accounted for seven percent of the total youth population in 1995/96, they represented less than three percent of the college population and less than two percent of the university population (Training for Whom Research Background Paper, December 1996:98, 99). During the Harcourt regime, in 1995, the government finalized an *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework*. The policy framework sets out the following three fundamental strategies:

- Strengthen public post-secondary institutions in meeting the needs of aboriginal people;
- Stabilize partnership agreements between public and private deliverers of post-secondary education for Aboriginal people; and
- Provide for designation of public aboriginally controlled institutions.

In the same year, the NDP government designated two Aboriginally controlled institutions as provincial institutes under the College and Institute Act: the Institute of Indigenous Government in Vancouver Downtown in May, and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) located in Merritt.

A second major thrust of NDP policy in the academic sector was to subsidize access to post-secondary education through a series of college and university tuition freezes. The first of these was part of broadly targeted Tax and Consumer Rate Freeze Act of 1996 that imposed a three-year freeze on postsecondary tuition. In April 1998 premier Glen Clark introduced a further

Tuition Freeze Act which extended the freeze on public post-secondary tuition rates to March 31, 1999, and would also apply to mandatory ancillary fees as well as to new programs. Over the next few years, subsidized access to post-secondary education seemed to acquire the status of a fundamental right. In all, the freeze would be sustained from 1996/97 through 2001/02, renewed by five separate legislative acts. In every case the freezes were overwhelmingly supported in the legislature by the opposition Liberals. In defense of the 1999 extension, advanced education minister Andrew Petter drew a parallel between the contemporary process of globalization and the industrial revolution of the 18th century, observing that current transformations in work and skill requirements implied the risk of replicating ‘... the huge disparities that arose in wealth and power between those who had access to capital and those who didn’t’ (Hansard, May 18, 1999:12570). He argued the imperative, “... that education becomes more of a universal right and entitlement and less of a market commodity” (ibid.). Petter’s successor, Graeme Bowbrick, invoked the same vision of social solidarity a year later as he announced the next extension of the freeze:

We believe that post-secondary education is an inherent public good and should therefore be funded out of public resources to the greatest extent possible. That’s what the tuition fee freeze is all about. What we’re saying to students with this legislation is this: “You’re not alone. We collectively, as a society and as your government, will support you if you seek higher education (Hansard, April 5, 2000:14812).

In March, 2001 the government introduced legislation that not only extended the freeze, but mandated a five percent cut in tuition.

The tuition fees policy initiative was an attempt to increase equity in the system. This initiative along with the vocational policy thrust resulted in the largest increase in student spaces in BC’s history. More than 40,000 seats (38 percent) were added to the system between 1990/91 and 2003/04. Yet the NDP government did not provide sufficient core funding to cover either inflation or the cost of the extra spaces. The real per-student funding has declined significantly since the early 1990s by 21 percent for universities and 10 percent for colleges. Most of this decline occurred prior to the tuition freeze during the years of the most rapid expansion (CCPA/BC, 2004).

Through 1996-2001, the tuition freeze policy was seen by the NDP as an important instrument of public policy. But as one commentator put it, this was a good example of “a

triumph of great politics over good public policy.”¹⁶ The university sector was critical of the policy because as they saw it they were caught in a double bind. On the one hand government was telling them to expand capacity but refused to provide more funds. In addition, government was tying their hands by not allowing them to increase student fees. This policy conflict was set against the background of a rapid increase in demand from an expanding cohort of academically qualified 18 to 24 year olds. Opposition to the freeze became particularly intense in the last part of the NDP mandate as a re-structured TUPC became a far more potent advocate on both the provincial and federal policy stages.

For the TUPC and their newly appointed President Don Avison, the freeze policy had led to a series of adverse consequences that were not only unanticipated but were also unintended. According to this line of argument, the tuition freeze policy led to an escalation in the grade point average required for students who were seeking access to universities, made it much more difficult for students to transfer into degree-programs from the colleges after their second year, and, rather than benefit working class students, the policy provided a transfer of wealth to the middle and upper-middle classes.

The third policy thrust was the integration of the non-university sector. Through the Skills Now agenda, Training for What, Charting a New Course and the creation of ITAC, the NDP was determined to make the non-university segments of the higher education system more accountable to the public. More directly as we have seen the government attempted to achieve its accountability through KPIs and the Centre for Education Information Standards and Services (CEISS). CEISS was responsible for gathering and disseminating data on labour market demand and higher education supply. It compiled an annual report on employment outcomes for graduates of the college and institute system, and provided consulting and technical services on management information systems (MIS) for the colleges. CEISS also provided an internet portal to provincial and federal labour market information and career planning services.

The NPD also made inroads into the university sector. The New Programs Committee while ostensibly a response to the rapid expansion of degree programs in the university colleges and the institutes, became the gatekeeper for all new degree programs. For the first time, government had a role in monitoring the academic community. The monitoring process was closely tied to the emergence and spread of applied degrees across the higher education sector.

¹⁶ Interview, October, 2004.

Finally, the creation of university colleges, Technical University and RRU, increased the permeability of the boundary that had separated the university and the non-university sectors. As the vocational orientation of the system increased the NDP was achieving its underlying goal of making the system accountable.

Before leaving the NDP it is important to note a change in direction with regard to the support of research and development. Historically, the province has placed a very low premium on funding research capacity. But with the introduction of two federal programs (Canadian Research Chairs and Canadian Foundation for Innovation) that required matching funding from the provinces and with the university presidents through TUPC speaking with a single voice rather than six, we can observe a new commitment in this area. The provincial government set up the BC Knowledge Development Fund (BCKDF) with an initial instalment of \$100 million to engage the federal opportunities. Premier Dosanjh added a further \$117 million in the budget prior to the 2001 election.

In summary, the period of NDP government from 1991 to 2001 saw the energetic and sustained expansion of the higher education system. While it was broadly consistent with provincial policies dating from the 1960s and had much in common with policy trends in other industrialized countries, there were also very distinctive developments. Access to higher education was dramatically expanded by building new institutions and, more controversially, by creating new kinds and sources of credit. The creation of the university colleges and the specialized universities added numerical capacity but also hastened qualitative stratification of the system. By the turn of the century the former, binary system of universities and applied institutions had fragmented into a spectrum of institutional types no longer distinguished by their exclusive focus on liberal education, vocational training, or research, but rather performing any or all of these to varying degrees. Meanwhile, system-wide planning frameworks and support structures sought to align this diverse activity with a finite budget and a set of fundamental principles. One of these was a view of skills and knowledge, and hence of the education system, as critical resources for economic prosperity. Another concerned the role of the state, particularly in assuring equitable access to the opportunities that education promised. Given the province's history, both before and after this period, it is highly doubtful that the political opposition or the majority of the public overtly embraced the NDP's social democratic vision.

Arguably, though, the party's genius was in being able to harness a spectrum of disparate constituencies and motivations to its concrete policy agenda.

3.4 The Liberal Government (2001-present)

After a crushing defeat leaving only two members of the former NDP government in the legislative assembly, a Liberal administration assumed office on June 5, 2001, under Premier Gordon Campbell. The Liberal campaign was vague, promising to build a 'new era of hope and prosperity' by cutting taxes and red tape, revitalizing investment and job creation. In the often tumultuous post-war history of higher education policy in BC, the Liberals' agenda clearly marks the most radical shift in both substance and philosophical orientation in forty years.

Current fiscal policy is based upon the Liberal government's commitment to New Right philosophy. Since taking office in June 2001, the government has made market ideology the cornerstone of its fiscal policy. The first policy intervention was the announcement that personal income taxes would be cut by 25 percent. In its July Economic and Fiscal Update in 2001, the Minister of Finance, Honourable Gary Collins indicated:

The Fiscal Review Panel made it clear that BC has a structural fiscal imbalance and if we did nothing we could face a deficit of more than \$5 billion within three years. The Panel also said that our fiscal problems can be solved with fundamental changes in the way government operates. I'm announcing action on both fronts today to get our economy growing again: 1) we need to make our tax system competitive as a first step to revitalizing economic growth; 2) we need to bring some discipline to spending, with strong, accountable fiscal management. (Economic and Fiscal Update Speech, July 2001)

The Liberal government provided health authorities, School boards and post-secondary institutions with three-year funding commitments. Consequently, starting 2002/03 budgeting has been conducted on a three-year plan basis. The government committed to reduce government red tape and eliminate business subsidies so as to foster suitable conditions for market forces. In its first year in government, A Core Review Task Force was established to renew every government program and service. Any program and service that was deemed inappropriate or within the scope of government was eliminated or phased out. Only programs and services considered 'core services' received government funding. The government's budget, released February 18, 2002, reported a deficit of \$3.4 billion and \$4.4 billion in fiscal 2003, but promised

to balance the budget by 2004-05. Its means of doing this has involved privatization and deregulation.

As a preliminary step, the government announced established of a Cabinet Core Review and Deregulation Task Force to undertake a thorough overhaul of public sector priorities and functions. The worst fears of educators were allayed somewhat by the announcement of a three-year spending freeze on education and health. On “Black Thursday”, January 17th 2002, the government announced a 25 percent average reduction in the budgets of all ministries apart from health and education over the next three years. The Government announced an end to the six-year tuition fee freeze, and the total deregulation of fees for public post-secondary institutions. The announcement was soon followed by tuition fee hikes of 30 to 40 percent in many institutions, and almost 100 percent in some. In March 2002, the Ministry of Advanced Education sent budget letters to all higher education institutions, outlining institutional budget reductions of between 1.6 and 8 percent for the 2002-03 and 2004-05 fiscal years.

Targeted and matching funding schemes were emphasized, giving preference to programs in computer science, computer engineering, electrical engineering, medicine and health related fields. For example, the ‘Leading Edge Endowment Fund’, a cost sharing arrangement with the private sector, launched in April 2002. The intention here is to add \$45 million to post-secondary research and skills training in high-tech fields and to establish 20 permanent research chairs in medical, social, environment and technology fields (the first chair was in spinal cord research). Furthermore, the budgets for several programs government previously supported was eliminated entirely, pushing post-secondary institutions to become more self-sustaining. For example, government funding for co-operative education, work-study and graduate assistantship programs, was cut and these programs had to draw on institutional funds or partnering arrangements.

With a rising economy over the course of their four-year term, the Liberals have a balanced budget and have begun to increase funding for post-secondary education. In preparation for the May 2005 provincial election, the government made a series of promises that are somewhat divergent from their neo-liberal philosophy. Henceforth, student fees will not be allowed to increase at a rate beyond the annual rate of inflation (currently projected at two percent over the next three years). The government has promised \$6 billion over the next three years to fund the extra 25,000 student spaces in universities and colleges that they announced in

2004. The government is thus recognizing a system capacity problem and on the surface is responding through the creation of fully-funded student spaces. Unfortunately, according to the government's own inflation projections, the per student funding will actually drop in each of the next three years from \$8,659 in 2005/06 to \$8,197 in 2007/08, a shortfall of \$162 million, during this period (CUFA/BC, February 18, 2005).

Beyond the fiscal orientation, the changes can be grouped under two headings: institutional changes and legislation. In their first few months in office, the Liberal government eliminated or radically transformed most of the system-wide agencies and support structures for higher education that had been built up over the previous decade and a half. But it also disbanded all of the core agencies deployed by the NDP for system integration under *Charting a New Course*. The provincial curriculum and professional development agency, C2T2 had its budget sharply reduced in the first fiscal year, and in 2003 it was announced that both it and the technical information agency, CEISS, would be dissolved by the end of March, 2004. The Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC) was eliminated. The Open Learning Agency was dissolved, and a process initiated to sell off the educational television broadcaster, the Knowledge Network. The government contended that rapid diffusion of distance-education technology and on-line learning capabilities throughout the higher education system had rendered the OLA redundant. In its place the Ministry announced the creation of 'BC Campus', a distance education network involving the province's colleges, university colleges, universities and institutes. As of January 2003, BC Campus reported that 16 institutions were involved in providing on-line training to approximately 2800 learners (390 FTE) in six programs (C2T2 News, January 2003; http://www.c2t2.ca/binary.asp?from=media&item_id=430). As noted earlier, BC Campus has now been incorporated into Thompson Rivers University.

Many of the institutional changes described above involved the government's use of its law-making powers. But the Liberals also used legislation more broadly to change the 'rules of the game' in the higher education sector. The Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act, or Bill 28, authorized the boards of public institutions to over-ride collective agreement provisions regarding class size, length of academic year and use of distance education methods in schools, colleges, institutes, university-colleges and universities. Predictably, it brought outrage from teachers' organizations, and a charge from the NDP opposition that the government's objective was not educational reform but union-busting (Hansard, Jan. 26, 2001:897). A third piece of

legislation that would have major implications for the shape and structure of the higher education system, was tabled by the minister of Advanced Education in April 2002. Bill 15, the Degree Authorization Act set out criteria under which new institutions, including private and public institutions from outside the province, would be authorized to offer degree programs and grant degrees in British Columbia. In addition, the bill would allow public colleges and institutes to offer 'applied baccalaureate degrees' and university colleges to offer 'applied master's degrees' (Hansard, April 11, 2002).

In a move that reflected the spirit of Bill 15 but was not directly related, the Liberals also authorized during their first year in office the creation of a new, private degree-granting institution near the upscale ski resort of Whistler. A Private Member's Bill was introduced in May 2002 to establish Sea to Sky University, and passed without debate. The university will offer intense, three-week liberal arts courses for \$3000 a course including room and board. University Canada West and Sprott Shaw Community College were the first private institutions to be approved under Bill 15.

The Liberal government announced a three-year spending freeze on education and health but still expected the higher education system to increase enrolment by 8,500 seats over the period 2002-05. Tuition fees were re-regulated allowing institutions to fill the funding gap with increased fees. At the same time, the government sought to head off critical skills shortages by targeting funds to programs in computer science, computer engineering, electrical engineering, medicine and health related fields. To this end (and in a notable departure from the NDP government's use of subsidies to facilitate access) the Liberals announced in August 2001 that medical school graduates would be eligible for a 20 percent remission of their student loans for each year that they practiced in a rural area. Funding was eliminated for a wide range of specific higher education programs such as co-operative education, work-study and graduate assistantships. As noted earlier, we have in 2005 seen a major policy change with regard to student fees and an increased emphasis on accessibility.

According to one commentator the turnaround with regard to the tuition freeze and the targeted program funding were due to the "clear recognition and strong commitment" on the part of university presidents "to the importance of improving the capacity of universities to facilitate the access of those students who should be able to expect an opportunity to attend

university in British Columbia.”¹⁷ As noted earlier, TUPC with the leadership of Jack Blaney and Martha Piper, Presidents of SFU and UBC respectively, had been transformed into a unified strategic policy instrument. The university sector was developing a new approach to collaboration and cooperation between themselves. This is illustrated with the Medical School and Doubling of Opportunity initiatives. The medical initiative involves a partnership between UBC, University of Victoria and UNBC. The numbers attending UBC have increased and a new \$102 million facility is under construction. In addition, teaching capacity and research capacity at both UVic and UNBC has been introduced with a concentration on aging and geriatrics at the former and rural medicine and general practice at the latter. All students will get the same degree from UBC. The Doubling the Opportunity initiative grew out of discussion between industry and the Deans of engineering and was subsequently sponsored by TUPC. The result was an increase in the fiscal capacity and the support for students and professors in the targeted areas of computer engineering, computer science and electrical engineering.

In 2003, the Liberal government decided to update the Policy Framework and produced the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework Draft for Discussion*. The Background section provides an overview of accomplishments resulting from the 1995 Policy Framework. Absent from the background section is any mention of the treaty process,¹⁸ the *inherent right* to self-government, or any discussion about the federal or provincial educational jurisdiction.

In the sections on Vision and Principles, the Draft Document is much less progressive than the original report.

The Ministry of Advanced Education envisions a province where all British Columbians, including Aboriginal learners, have affordable access to the best possible, relevant technologically, advanced, integrated and accountable post-secondary education.¹⁹

References to equitable participation, retention and success rates that were in the 1995 Policy Framework have been eliminated. The role that Aboriginal organizations and institutions play in post-secondary education has been removed from the Vision section, and appears in the scope section that acknowledges partnerships as a way for Aboriginal organizations and institutions to

¹⁷ Interview, October 2003.

¹⁸ British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education 2003, 1.

¹⁹ British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education 2003, 3.

link with public post-secondary institutions. Similarly in the Principles, the word equality and reference to Aboriginal people fulfilling “aspirations for self-determining communities” have been removed. The “social and economic benefits of cooperation” that appeared in the Policy Framework have been replaced by “economic certainty and an enhanced investment climate.” Reference to federal and provincial jurisdictional and fiscal responsibilities have been removed from the Principles section.

The Liberal government adopted a very different approach to accountability. The three-year planning exercises that each ministry undertook included at every point accountability language. A Quality Assurance Board for higher education was created in 2003 with 19 members appointed by government. While the major elements of the system are represented the majority of members are laypeople. Yet their specific actions aimed at dismantling what the NDP had put in place to guarantee accountability. As noted in previous sections, the government eliminated ITAC, PPSEC, CEISS, the New Program Planning Committee, as well as, OLA and Technical University. The latter institution is now part of SFU. The argument so well rehearsed in Alberta and Ontario was that free market competition was the best means for making institutions accountable. In other words, accountability to the marketplace was the best means of making the system accountable to the public.

The magnitude of the shift across the whole policy spectrum raises questions about the determinants of policy and policy change. Naturally, one would expect to find familiar influences such as resource constraints, technological changes, and various kinds of pressure to deal with inadequacies in current policies and structures. A change of some kind to the tuition freeze, for instance, was quite predictable given the growing gap between higher education revenues and operating costs. As noted above, technological change was cited as a factor in the closure of the OLA and the creation of BC Campus. According to the ministry the new arrangement would also “... reduce costly duplication within the system and improve efficiency for students’ (Ministry of Advanced Education, October 30, 2002). Efficiency was evidently an objective in other policy changes as well, as in the case of ITAC where the government’s planning documents cited longstanding and well-known problems with apprenticeship (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002). No doubt, other inefficiencies and pressures could also have been found within the post-secondary education system. Still, it is difficult to identify any obvious factor in the Liberal government’s policy environment that would have

been comparable to the trials suffered and overcome by previous administrations, like the global recession of the mid-1980s, the structural adjustment of the early nineties, or the reduction of federal support to education and training in 1995-96.

Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Liberals' sharp turn does not reflect any particular change in the 'external' environment so much as the government's own neo-liberal ideology, given practical effect by an overwhelming legislative majority. The Liberals' commitment to free market ideals and public-sector downsizing is well enough established in the public record that it need not be demonstrated here, though a few examples illustrate its application to higher education policy. The principle that market forces guarantee fairness (and the implication that government regulations and public enterprise are morally suspect) was frequently invoked. For instance, as he repealed the NDP's Fair Wage legislation the minister of Skills, Training and Labour argued that wage and training requirements it had imposed on contractors amounted to a 'restrictive practice' that unfairly limited their competitiveness and violated the principles of a competitive marketplace (Hansard, August 16, 2001). Similar arguments were invoked in relation to the elimination of the Training Accord and PPSEC, and the introduction of the Degree Authorization Act. Market competition in the education sector would also have the benefit of bringing a competitive stimulus and discipline to an inefficient and bloated public sector. The establishment of the University Canada West is the first private institution to be granted degree-granting status under the Act. The muted public response to the end of the freeze, like the absence of protest over ITAC's elimination, suggests that they gambled well. Similarly, although tens of thousands took to the streets in February 2002 to protest the Black Thursday cuts, the organized opposition soon dissipated, much as it had in the aftermath of the Kelowna Accord of 1984. Now three years later, ideology appears to be less powerful, at least on the surface of the electoral promises. The short-term vicissitudes of parliamentary electoral politics cuts against the ideological principles.

4. Policy-Making Process

The review of changes in the policy environment and policy directions in BC reveals many different causes: the influence of powerful individuals and ideas; of macroeconomic conditions; of demographic and technological change; of interest group pressures; of policy ideas imported from elsewhere; of collective bargaining pressures and fiscal constraints. It also draws attention to the influence of the actual policy making process on the rules of the game.

The policy documents and initial interviews points to the importance of looking at the actual policy process, particularly as it relates to interest groups involvement, as an important element of the policy environment. Our work suggests that differences in the policy making process reflect particular government interests and can be seen as an attempt to influence the rules of the game through the structuring of the public policy process.

From the middle of the 1980s through the 1990s governments regardless of political ideology encouraged public input into the policy making process through the appointment of committees with a broad representation. During his time as Minister, Stanley Hagen appointed several networked committees to study financial need, which would have a significant impact on the structure of the higher education system. The policies as well as the policy process seemed to spring from two related yet distinct sentiments: on one hand, recognition of the inherent and/or instrumental benefits of education, and on the other a commitment to educational access as a democratic right. In line with the “human resources” theory of the day, the government's Access for All initiative addressed the issue of social inclusion, not by directly redistributive means, but rather by investing in public higher education as a spur to economic growth and general prosperity.

In many ways, the NDP's ten-year mandate reflects strong continuities of the policy direction under the late Social Credit era and a further strengthening of the consultative process. In fact a distinguishing feature of the NDP's governing style, especially in the early years of its mandate, seemed to be a preference for using broadly participatory processes and forums as vehicles for both defining and articulating its policy directions. Still, the NDP's policies and policy making process in higher education and elsewhere - bore the mark of a distinctive ideological perspective and political style.

The consultative approach to policy making was evident in the work leading up to the influential *Charting a New Course – A Strategic Plan for the Future of British Columbia's*

College, Institute and Agency System. This process has been credited with achieving a broad acceptance within the college system of a new funding formula and accountability measures and brought a more conciliatory and inclusive tone to skills policy discourse. Yet while the civil servants felt they has a clear role, and the stakeholders were glad to be consulted, administrators at the institutional level were sometimes uncomfortable with the egalitarian approach and the inclusive relationship that characterized the policy environment.²⁰

Charting a New Course as well as NDP policies like *Skills Now* reflect a somewhat technocratic understanding of education as a policy area crucially important to economic competitiveness and general prosperity and social cohesion. On this point, NDP policy was consonant with the directions taken under Social Credit since the mid-1980s. The practical importance of getting the policy ‘right’, as well as the high profile of education and its dominance of the budget encouraged the need broad stakeholder participation in policy generation and governance structures.

The particular approach to system-building during this period was also influenced by the NDP leadership’s ideological commitment to using policy, in higher education and in other areas, to build the foundations of a more social-democratic society. Central to this approach was a vision of European-style cooperation among equally legitimate ‘social partners’ including business, labour, and civil society groups in the policy process.

The same principles were evident in other high-profile policy initiatives of the time. For instance, the government’s Forest Renewal policy (FRBC) responded to structural adjustment in the forest industry by providing a wide range of supports for retraining and economic development activities in depressed rural communities, with joint management by community organizations, unions and employers. All of these initiatives relied on a vision of local community development based on collective endeavour and consensus, ideally channelled through formal community organizations and trade unions. This policy process rooted in the larger ideological framework would remain a source of serious, if sometimes submerged contention and resistance and would eventually be explicitly targeted by interest groups opposed to the philosophy of codetermination.

The emerging BC tradition with broadly constituted committees addressing significant policy issues came to an abrupt halt when the Liberal government took office in 2001. Our

²⁰ Interview, October 2003.

review of the Liberal 'New Era' reforms suggests a radical rupture with the former pattern of higher education policy-making in BC. Within the Ministry, civil servants looked back to the period between 1995 and 1999 when Charting a New Course was being developed, and defined it as a "refreshing, exhilarating, exciting and frustrating time when they [the civil servants] felt they had a part in building a perspective on the non-university side of post-secondary education."²¹ The new model created a certain amount of angst for both the civil servants who bemoaned their loss and the stakeholders who felt they were now excluded. This was particularly the case for the non-university sector, who no longer had a body representing all their interests. As the university colleges separated themselves and voiced their aspirations to become universities so the united front presented through AECBC was shattered. On the other hand, TUPC was able to convince government that the universities should be treated separately and that research was important. As one commentator put it, "there is much more willingness to see differentiation in the system and much more willingness to appreciate that certain institutions in the post-secondary system have distinctive roles to play."²²

Plausibly, the Liberals' aggressive policy reforms do not (only) represent a doctrinaire belief in markets but also a sincerely-held, neo-liberal view of social process. Not only in higher education policy, but across the whole policy-making process, the Liberal's record seems to presuppose a polity of distinct groups with specific and conflicting interests, where the role of public policy is not to articulate and maximize the general good, but to arbitrate in a zero-sum competition for resources and to allocate costs on a "user-pay" basis.

Arguably, the Liberals actively shaped their own 'policy environments whether intentionally or not, through their approach to public consultation and communication. Although, like their predecessors the Liberals set up a number of advisory groups on specific policy issues, it often seemed that their purpose was neither to produce 'objective' information on policy issues, nor to generate democratic consensus, but rather to articulate the positions of the government's partisans. An example is the B.C Progress Board, established by premier Campbell in July 2001 to advise on economic and social policy and composed of fourteen businessmen plus the chancellor of UBC. In December 2002 it released a report recommending comprehensive reforms to the education system (BC Progress Board, 2002). Similarly, the

²¹ Interview, October 2003.

²² Interview, October 2003.

government's consultation process for the overhaul of the apprenticeship system involved, first, synthesizing the recommendations of several business lobby groups (British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, 2002; Coalition of BC Businesses, 2001) into a 'draft' plan and then holding a series of regional discussion forums hosted by employer groups around the province (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002). Meanwhile, the minister of Advanced Education admitted in the legislature that no consultation of any kind with faculty members, unions, students, employers or institutional board members had preceded the government's introduction of Bill 28, which over-rode educators' collective agreements (Hansard, Jan 27, 2002: 973).

Liberal policy since 2001 makes it easier to see in retrospect that an implicit role of many of the policy-making mechanisms and core agencies of the former era was to expose educational policy to a range of stimuli and influences. These included research based information and the views and interests of various social groups.

The history higher education policy in British Columbia seems to reflect changes not only in the 'environment' conventionally understood but also in policy makers and policy making mechanisms. It suggests that government institutions and policy-making processes do not simply telegraph external signals onto public policies, but also exert their own influences on the environment and, in turn, on future policy.

5. Policy Priorities

5.1 Accessibility

5.1.1 Definition

Accessibility is defined in this chapter as participation and retention in, and graduation from the post-secondary system by all willing and capable persons regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, race, culture, religion and geographic region.

5.1.2 Translation

By far the most important policy priority in the development of higher education policy since the mid-1980s is the desire to create more access into the system. The emphasis has varied between different governing parties, but a consistent aim has been to increase access for both full and part time students to degree-granting programs outside the Lower Mainland and Victoria. Accessibility as a priority overlaps with the trend toward ‘academic drift’ in the system, a trend that has been propelled by both professionals within the system and successive provincial governments. Another major policy priority that is often inseparable from the accessibility theme is access to vocational education and training, and in a more general sense, lifelong learning. This theme became particularly important during the NDP administrations. While some of these vocational policy initiatives actions will be discussed under the heading of accessibility, the major focus on ‘Skills’ will be covered as a separate priority.

The 1988 report from the Provincial Access Committee (PAC), which had been firmly initiated, establishes accessibility as the key policy priority for post-secondary education in British Columbia. Through a series of major reports and legislation, this priority was further translated into action by the Socred government. Actions, for example, like the creation of the first university outside the Lower Mainland and the establishment of University Colleges, came to have a clear impact on the structure of the higher education system. During this period, there was a strong focus on generating access to degree programs outside the Lower Mainland and in densely populated areas which up to that point had not been adequately served by universities.

Affordability was not an issue that received much attention in the PAC report nor in the Socred’s discussions on accessibility. This is not surprising as at this time student fees in British Columbia, as in the rest of Canada, had remained relatively stable and low.

When the NDP government took office in 1991, they made the Socred’s Access For All policy the foundation of its integrated reforms in academic higher education. The general

ambition of increasing access got translated into institutional expansion and diversification and low tuition fees. As discussed above, the explosive demand for academic qualifications was addressed by conferring degree-granting powers on a wider range of institutions and by building more (and more specialized) universities.

We can identify some fundamental differences between the Socred and the NDP's approaches to accessibility. The Socred government was primarily interested in increasing the opportunity for traditional forms of post-secondary education, particularly to areas outside the Lower Mainland. The NDP government, while continuing this ambition, also gave more attention to under representation in post-secondary education by minority groups, especially the Aboriginal youth. To address the concerns of the latter, special aboriginal institutions were created, furthermore, the NDP government also focused on new forms of vocational oriented post-secondary education offerings as well as responding to the unions demand for expanding apprentice training in the province.

Towards the end of the NDP reign, student fees had started to increase rapidly in some provinces, particularly Ontario. In order to assist cash strapped universities the government was under severe pressure to embark on the same route. However, concerns that such a move would reduce affordability and therefore threaten the accessibility strategy convinced the NDP government to freeze student fees.

The Liberal government, while maintaining a focus on accessibility, drastically changed the approach it took to the realization of this goal. Having introduced a three-year spending freeze on education and health but still expecting the higher education system to increase enrolment by 8,500 seats over the period 2002-05, the Liberal government allowed institutions to fill the funding gap with increased fees. A vastly improved fiscal environment and political considerations, in conjunction with the upcoming election, resulted in a fundamental reversal of the Liberal's fee policy. The 2005 Throne Speech re-regulated fees and stipulated that any further increase be limited to the rate of inflation. This signaled a reversal to the accessibility policy of the Socred era.

5.2 Vocationalism and Skills

5.2.1 Definition

As noted earlier, a defining characteristic of the NDP administrations during the period 1991-2001 was their commitment to vocationalism and skill training. The underlying theme was

that academic education has received most of the attention in previous decades and now it was the time to rectify this unevenness. Through a series of reports and legislation, successive governments increased both economic and institutional resources for non-academic and applied education.

5.2.2 Translation

The roadmap for the NDP's skills agenda was set by a series of reports during the early 1990s. The grand aim was to dramatically reduce structural unemployment. To achieve this aim the government launched the Skills Now initiative which outlined an integrated plan to increase the amount of vocational education in the higher education system. What followed was a massive expansion in the number of vocational spaces as the new funding mechanisms took effect. Apprenticeship programs expanded, 16 'Training and Enterprise Centres' were established as well as a series of advanced technology courses. In parallel to federal efforts, the government created the BC Labour Force Development Board (BCLFDB) as a means of furthering its vocational agenda and as a parallel structure to the federal body. The Board's major report *Training for What* (1995) drew much criticism for what was perceived to be an anti-academic slant. The BCLFDB was dissolved in 1996.

The vocational trust was continued by Glen Clark who assumed leadership of the party in 1996 and brought the NDP to a second term, however with a much smaller legislative majority and proportion of the popular vote (British Columbia 2002). Bill 43 (Industry Training and Apprenticeship Act, 1997) created the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) which became the main tool for furthering the vocational aims of the government, in particular the revitalization of the apprenticeship system. Finally, the need to coordinate and integrate the various components of the vocational/ skill strategy was articulated in the major policy paper *Charting a New Course – A Strategic Plan for the Future of British Columbia's College, Institute and Agency System* (Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, 1996).

One of the Liberal government's first policy initiative in July 2001, was to terminate the Training Accord which had facilitated the colleges' access to government training contracts, and to dissolve the associated Contract Training Marketing Society (CTM) and thus de-emphasize a central part of the NDP's vocational strategy. In August 2001, the minister of Skills Development and Labour introduced a bill repealing the 1994 Skills Development and Fair Wage Act, a central plank of the NDP's skills agenda. This was followed by a major overhaul of

the skills training system, with the elimination of the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission. ITAC's sixteen regional offices would be closed by March, 2003 dislocating 115 apprenticeship counselors and other staff. A "New Model for Industry Training" was rolled out that would remove the government from its direct involvement with apprentices, give business a dominant role in the governance of the training system, and introduce a system of 'flexible', modular training courses that could be adapted to suit the needs of specific employers and delivered by private trainers (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002). In another institutional change, the government announced in February 2002 that the recently formed Technical University of BC would be dissolved, and its assets and operations taken over by SFU.

5.3 Accountability

5.3.1 Definition

An underlying but consistent theme has been the commitment by successive governments to make the connections between educational spending and useful outcomes more transparent and understandable by the general public. Commitments to accessibility and to vocationalism are good examples of the ways governments have attempted to make the higher education system more accountable to the public interest. Located within these policy initiatives are more specific attempts particularly in the college sector to make institutions directly accountable in their planning and the student outcomes. While the NDP took this direct approach during the 1990s, the Liberals have adopted a different definition of accountability. Accountability has come to mean both quality assurance in the most general sense as well as a blurring of the boundary between the public and the private sectors. In the latter case, this is direct political accountability to the capital interests that are the main backers of the Liberal party.

5.3.2 Translation

Before leaving office the Social Credit government introduced legislation in 1990 to establish an independent Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC) to replace the government office that had performed that function. As an independent agency with industry representation, PPSEC gave the private training industry greater control over its own governance, and introduced stronger consumer protection measures in the wake of several high-profile bankruptcies and complaints over educational quality in the sector. The Commission continued to operate through the NDP years but was eliminated once the Liberals took power.

Through the Skills Now agenda, Training for What, Charting a New Course and the creation of ITAC, the NDP was determined to make the non-university segments of the higher education system more accountable to the public. More directly as we have seen the government attempted to achieve its accountability through KPIs and the Centre for Education Information Standards and Services (CEISS). CEISS was responsible for gathering and disseminating data on labour market demand and higher education supply. It compiled an annual report on employment outcomes for graduates of the college and institute system, and provided consulting and technical services on management information systems (MIS) for the colleges. CEISS also provided an internet portal to provincial and federal labour market information and career planning services.

The NDP also made inroads into the university sector. The New Programs Committee while ostensibly a response to the rapid expansion of degree programs in the university colleges and the institutes, became the gatekeeper for all new degree programs. For the first time, government had a role in monitoring the academic community. The monitoring process was closely tied to the emergence and spread of applied degrees across the higher education sector. Finally, the creation of university colleges, Technical University and RRU, increased the permeability of the boundary that had separated the university and the non-university sectors. As the vocational orientation of the system increased the NDP was achieving its underlying goal of making the system accountable.

As noted earlier, the Liberal government adopted a very different approach to accountability. The three-year planning exercises that each ministry undertook included at every point accountability language. A Quality Assurance Board for higher education was created in 2003 with 19 members appointed by government. While the major elements of the system are represented the majority of members are laypeople. Yet their specific actions aimed at dismantling what the NDP had put in place to guarantee accountability. As noted in previous sections, the government eliminated ITAC, PPSEC, CEISS, the New Program Planning Committee, as well as, OLA and Technical University. The argument so well rehearsed in Alberta and Ontario was that free market competition was the best means for making institutions accountable. In other words, accountability to the marketplace was the best means of making the system accountable to the public. In the university sector, the government has provided targeted

funding for particular occupations and simply decreed that more students will be educated without an increase in funding.

5.4 Marketization and Privatization

5.4.1 Definition

The neo-liberal commitment to market ideology and to the reduction in the size of the public sector.

5.4.2 Translation

Bill 15, the Degree Authorization Act (2002) set out criteria under which new institutions, including private and public institutions from outside the province, would be authorized to offer degree programs and grant degrees in British Columbia. In addition, the bill would allow public colleges and institutes to offer ‘applied baccalaureate degrees’ and university colleges to offer ‘applied master’s degrees’ (Hansard, April 11, 2002).

In a move that reflected the spirit of Bill 15 but was not directly related, the Liberals also authorized during their first year in office the creation of a new, private degree-granting institution near the upscale ski resort of Whistler. A Private Member’s Bill was introduced in May 2002 to establish Sea to Sky University, and passed without debate. The university will offer intense, three-week liberal arts courses for \$3000 a course including room and board.

Liberal reforms of higher education governance seem to reflect similar objectives: under the “new model” the governing board for apprenticeship is reduced from 26 to nine members (all employer representatives) (Hansard, August 16, 2001:23). Citing the need for greater responsiveness to market opportunities, the government restructured the board of Royal Roads University along corporate lines in June 2002. Finally, the re-regulation of fees was a clear attempt to create a quasi-market in the higher education system.

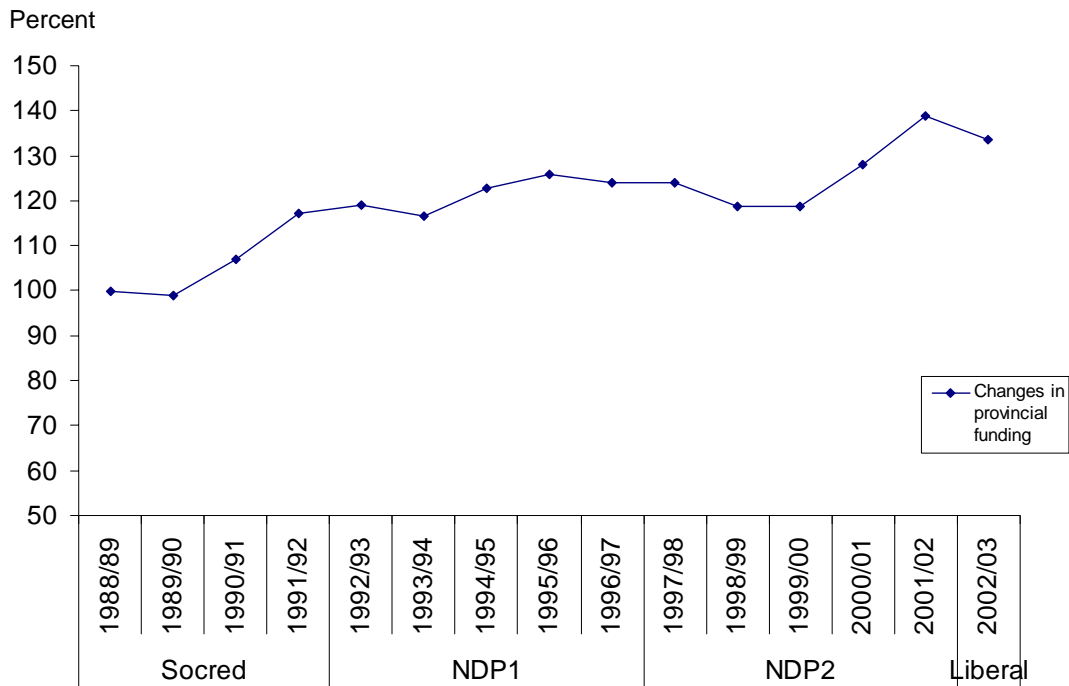
6. Funding and Outcomes

6.1 Funding of Post-Secondary Education in BC.

Regardless of which party that has governed British Columbia post-secondary education has always been pronounced as a policy priority. In this section we will try to assess whether these pronouncements were merely rhetoric or if they were based on a deeper commitment to increased participation. As evidence we will look at the changes in funding allocation to the sector. First, does government funding of post-secondary education actually increase? Second, do increases in funding simply mirror a rise in enrolment? Third, how well has post-secondary education done over time in comparison to other policy areas like e.g. health?

The analysis starts with mapping changes in provincial expenditure on post-secondary education and training over the last fifteen years (see Figure 2: 1988/89 is used as the reference year). The comparisons are made in 1988/89 dollars. In this year the sector received just over 10 billion dollars from the provincial government. Funding for post-secondary education increased rapidly during the end of the Socred period and in 1991/92 the sector received 17 percent more funds from the provincial government than in 1988/89. The increase in provincial transfer continued during the first four years of the first NDP mandate but started to decline in 1996/97. This is most likely related to the sharp cuts in 1995/96 of Canada Health and Social Transfer from the federal government to the provinces which substantially reduced resources for post-secondary education. These cut continued to be felt during the second NDP mandate and the provincial transfer dropped by about 6 percent between 1995/96 and 1999/00. With an improved economy, and partly increased federal transfers, provincial governments funding for post-secondary education increased sharply during the last years of the NDP era. This was followed by a small drop in the first year of the Liberal government.

Figure 2. Changes in provincial expenditure on post-secondary education in BC 1988/89-2003/04
1988/89=100

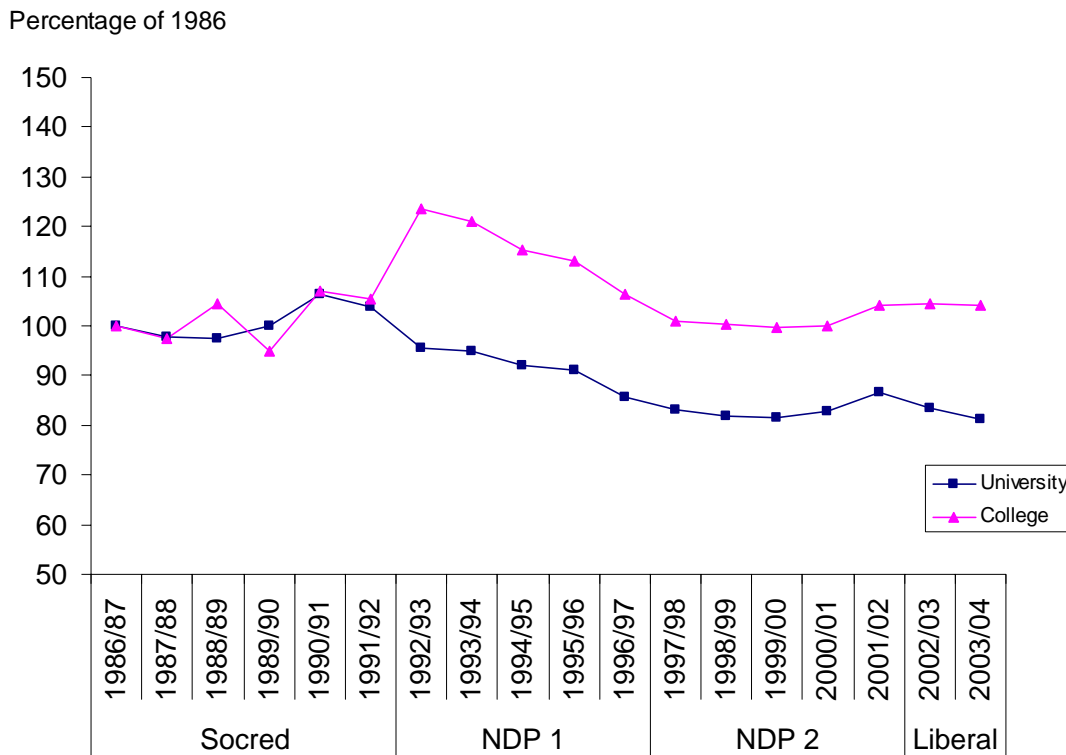


Source: BC Ministry of Advanced Education

A common complaint from public post-secondary institutions is that funding has not kept pace with the increase in enrolment. This claim is supported by the data presented in Figure 3, which documents changes in provincial grants towards operating expenditures (constant dollars) per funded FTE for colleges and universities from 1986/87 to 2003/04. In 1986/87 colleges received \$4,599 per FTE and the universities \$7,953. During the Socred era the provincial grant per FTE for universities and colleges followed a similar pattern. At the end of the era the grants have risen somewhat. The dip in grant per FTE to colleges in 1989/90 was due to a modest increase in provincial transfers coupled by five percent increase in college student enrolment that year, which is one year after the implementation of Access for All. During the NDP regime the provincial grant per funded FTE for universities consistently decreased until 1999/00 when it started to rebound somewhat. In 1998/99 universities received close to 20 percent less per full time FTE than in 1986/87. This shows that funding per FTE had not kept up with enrolment increases in university education. Colleges saw a marked increase in funding per full time FTE in

the first NDP budget which most likely can be explained by an expansion of FTE in the university colleges and the initiation of a skills agenda. This is followed by a decreasing trend but not as sharp as in the university sector which most likely had to do with the impact of the Skills Now initiative. As for the universities sector there is an increase in funding per FTE for colleges at the end of the NDP era but at a somewhat lower level than in the university sector. The high level of funding per FTE for colleges was mainly unchanged during the first two years of the Liberal government. However, the FTE for universities have started to decrease slightly during the first two years of the Liberal regime.

Figure 3. Changes in provincial grants per funded full time FTE, 1986/87-2003/04 in constant dollar (1986 dollar) 1986/87=100



Source: BC Ministry of Advanced Education

A limitation with the analysis presented in Figures 2 and 3 is that the changes in transfer do not address the relative priority of the sector. As a complement to the data presented in

Figures 2 and 3 Table 1 focuses on the share of public expenditure that has been allocated for the different policy sectors over the last twenty years. This provides an indication of the importance given by the government to power to post-secondary education.

The data clearly reveal that the share going to post-secondary education has always been relative low in comparison to other areas, particularly health. The relative funding for health started to accelerate during the second NDP government and has continued to do so during the Liberal government. In 1986/87, 28.6 percent of the expenditures went to health and by the end of the Social Credit mandate it had risen to 32.6 percent. It remained at around this level during the first NDP mandate but rose during the second NDP mandate and reached 38.0 in 2001/02. This trend continued under the Liberal government and by 2004/05 health care receives 42.6 percent and according to the Budget Plan this figure will rise to 43.9 percent in the 2007/08 budget year.

In contrast, the share of resources being earmarked for post-secondary education has, with the exception of a couple of ups and downs, remained relatively stable. During the Socred government the proportion that went to post-secondary education rose sharply in the 1987/88 budget year when it went from 6.4 percent in the year before to 7.8 percent in 1987/88. This is the largest year over year change in the entire 20 year period. It is interesting that this precedes the announcement of the Access for All initiative which happened in March 1988. According to Table 1 the relative expenditure on post-secondary education did not increase as a result of this initiative but did in fact go down slightly from the 1987/88 peak.

During the first NDP mandate the post-secondary education initially received a slightly lower share than during the end of the Socred era. Following the *Skills Now* initiative the NDP priority seem to have changed and in 1995/96 the share going to post-secondary education had increased to 8.1 percent. This policy continued during the second NDP government and in 2000/01 post-secondary education and training accounted for 8.5 percent of the public expenditures, the highest it ever reached during the 20 year period. In its last budget the NDP government reduced its share to 7.9 percent. During the Liberal era the relative allocation to post-secondary education has been somewhat lower and stood at 7.6 percent in 2004/05 budget year.

Table 1. Expenditure – budget plan 1986/87 to 2006/07
in percentage of total expenditure

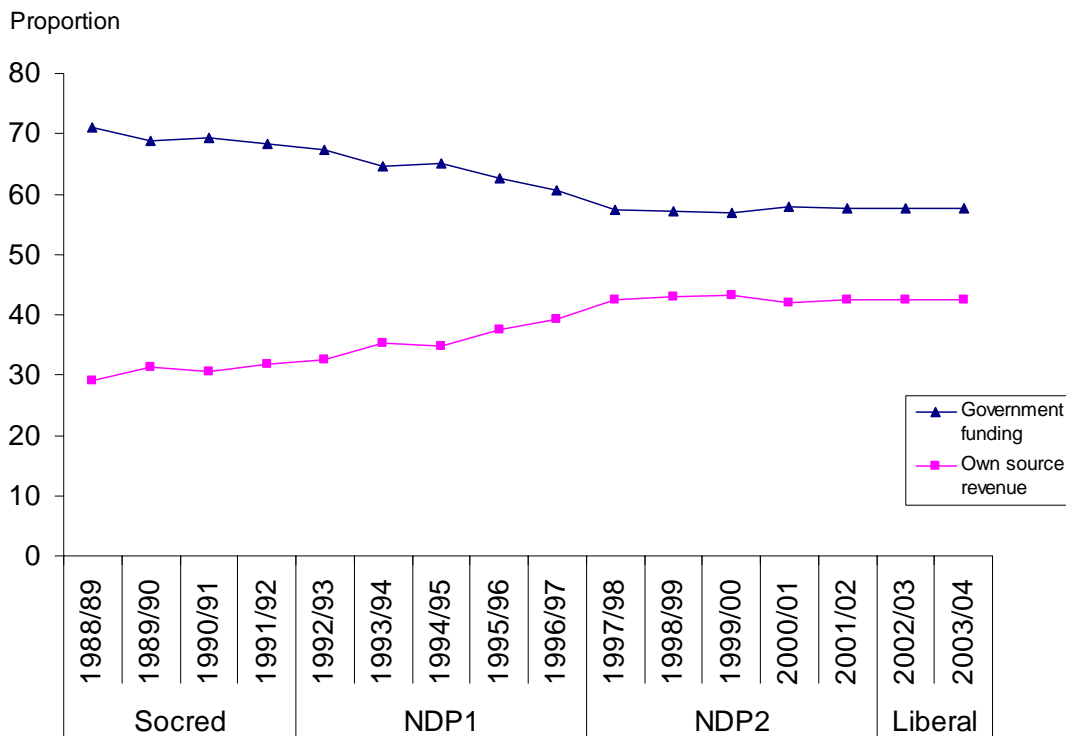
		Post secondary Education and Training	Education	Health	Social Services and Housing	Transportation and Highways	Rest of government
Socred	1986/87	6.4	12.3	28.6	15.4	10.4	26.9
	1987/88	7.8	13.4	31.1	13.6	8.4	25.7
	1988/89	7.3	16.7	33.1	11.8	6.2	25.0
	1989/90	7.4	16.5	31.9	11.9	7.5	24.7
	1990/91	7.4	19.8	31.5	11.2	8.0	22.2
	1991/92	7.5	19.9	32.6	12.0	7.7	20.4
NDP 1	1992/93	7.2	20.0	33.0	13.2	4.6	22.1
	1993/94	7.1	19.3	32.6	14.9	4.0	22.1
	1994/95	7.9	19.3	32.7	13.9	3.5	22.7
	1995/96	8.1	19.8	32.9	13.8	3.3	22.1
	1996/97	-	-	33.7	12.6	3.1	22.4
NDP 2	1997/98	8.1	20.2	35.7	8.3	6.6	21.1
	1998/99	8.1	20.8	35.3	7.6	6.9	21.3
	1999/00	8.3	20.7	36.7	7.4	7.0	19.9
	2000/01	8.5	20.3	37.1	9.1	6.7	18.2
	2001/02	7.9	19.7	38.0	9.7	7.0	17.7
Liberal	2002/03	7.4	19.0	40.0	7.0	6.1	20.4
	2003/04	7.6	19.4	40.8	5.7	5.8	20.8
	2004/05	7.6	19.6	42.6	5.1	6.0	19.2
	2005/06	7.3	18.9	42.5	5.1	5.9	20.4
	2006/07	7.5	19.0	43.5	5.1	5.9	19.0
	2007/08	7.6	18.8	43.9	5.1	5.9	18.7

Source: British Columbia Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations, Budget document

It is interesting to note that the major relative increase to post-secondary under the Socred took place not as a result of the report from the Access for All initiative but in fact occurred at the time the task force was formed. Thus, the increase and the creation of the task force better speak to the importance given to post-secondary education by the Socred government than what happened after the report was published. We suspect that this might be quite typical of the way reforms occur in the public sector. We can further note that the Socred government put more priority on K-12 education that saw its share increase dramatically between 1986/87 and 1991/92. During the NDP era there seems to have been a somewhat better correspondence between the policy rhetoric, stressing the centrality of post-secondary education and training, and the share of public resources being allocated to this policy area. However, it is worth to note that K-12 has continued to be a priority area also during the NDP and Liberal governments.

Faced with insufficient government funding to meet major enrolment increases post-secondary institutions have increasingly adapted a market approach and focused on increasing revenue from other sources than government. Figure 4 describes the relative share of revenue coming from (a) transfers from different levels of government, and (b) revenue generated from different sources by the institutions. The data show the dramatic change that has occurred over the last fifteen years in the funding of post-secondary education in British Columbia. In 1988/89 governments transfer made up 71 percent of the total revenue of the post-secondary institutions while only 29 percent came from revenue raised by the institutions. Hereafter followed a period of steady decline in the proportion of revenue stemming from government transfers and a growing dependence on outside funds. By 2000 governments' relative contribution was down to 56.8 percent of the total revenue with the rest 43.2 percent being raised by the institutions. Since then it has gone up slightly and stood at 57.8 percent in 2004.

Figure 4. Proportion of revenue from (a) government transfer, and (b) own source of revenue, 1988/89-2003/04



Source: Statistics Canada, Table 385-0007.

A closer look at revenue sources, see Table 2, reveals that the decrease in government transfer is entirely related to a decrease in the share of provincial transfers to the post-secondary education institutions. At the end of the Socred mandate provincial transfers constituted 61.4 percent of total revenue. During the end of the first NDP mandate this figure had dropped to 55.5 percent and continued its decline under the second NDP mandate when it reached a low of 50.8 percent. Under the first two years of the Liberal era it has remained at this low level. The federal contributions going directly to the post-secondary institutions, which always have been a very small share of the total revenue, have not shown the same degree of variation. They were mainly stable during the late 1980s and early 1990s but declined in 1995/96 and remained low until 1998/99 when they started to increase. This trend continued until 2001/02 where after it has stabilised at 6.8 percent of total revenue. Turning to the institutions own source of revenue, tuition came to be responsible for an increasing share of revenue during the first NDP era when it went from 13.8 percent to 17.0 percent. After some minor ups and downs it was back at this level during the last year of the second NDP mandate and has stayed there during the first years of the Liberal mandate. The other main source of own funding comes from other sales of goods and services. The income from this source rose from around 10.5 percent during the Socred era to a high of 17.9 under the second NDP era, when it fluctuated up and down, and is presently at 17.8 percent.

Table 2. Funding sources as a percent of total funding:
BC post-secondary education, 1986/87 to 2003/04

		Own Source Revenue				Government Transfers	
		Tuition Fees	Other Sales of Goods and Services	Investment Income	Other: Own Source Revenue	Federal	Provincial
Socred	1988/89	13.0	10.7	2.2	3.2	6.3	64.6
	1989/90	13.7	10.7	3.1	3.7	10.0	58.8
	1990/91	13.7	10.0	3.1	3.9	7.2	62.1
	1991/92	13.8	10.0	4.0	3.8	6.9	61.4
NDP 1	1992/93	13.9	10.5	3.9	4.3	6.8	60.5
	1993/94	15.2	13.3	2.6	4.2	6.6	58.1
	1994/95	15.6	11.7	2.2	5.4	6.6	58.4
	1995/96	16.1	14.2	3.1	4.2	5.2	57.2
	1996/97	17.0	15.2	2.5	4.6	5.0	55.5
NDP 2	1997/98	17.2	17.9	2.7	4.7	4.7	52.6
	1998/99	17.9	17.9	2.5	4.6	5.2	52.0
	1999/00	18.6	15.5	3.3	5.3	6.0	50.8
	2000/01	18.3	15.8	2.5	5.3	6.0	52.0
	2001/02	17.0	17.8	1.7	6.0	6.8	50.8
Liberal	2002/03	17.0	17.8	1.7	6.0	6.8	50.8
	2003/04	17.0	17.8	1.7	6.0	6.8	50.8

Source: British Columbia Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations, Budget document

6.2 Outcomes for British Columbia

To comply with the indicators used in the AIHEPS case studies carried out in the USA and Mexico we will look at following post-secondary education indicators: accessibility, affordability, enrollment and completion. In addition we will briefly address how well the K-12 system prepares students for entrance to post-secondary education.

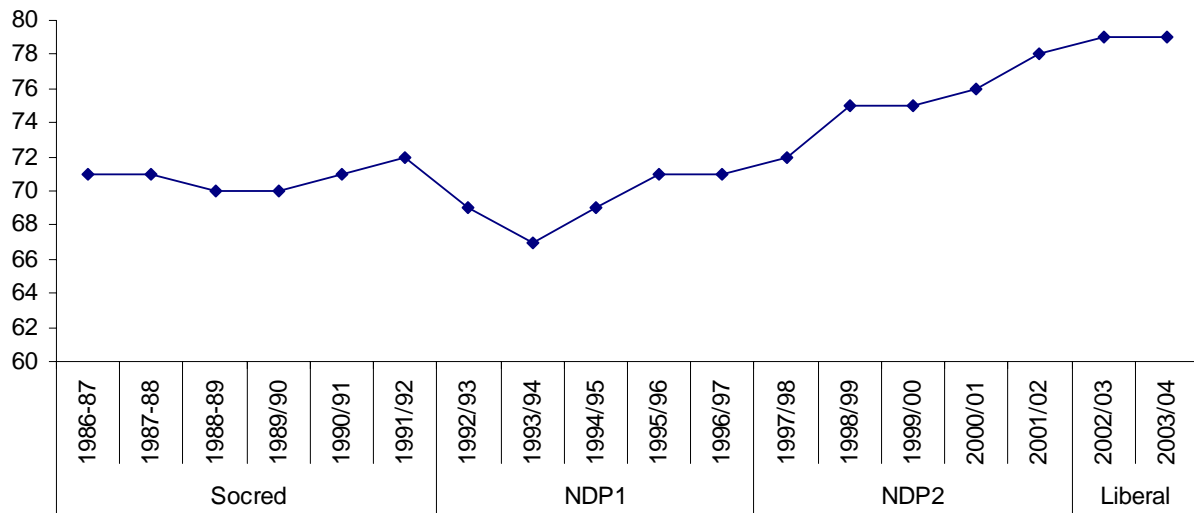
6.2.1 Preparation

In the Canadian case studies we are using two indicators to assess the how well the provinces prepare its young population to enter post-secondary education; high school completion rates and results from the International Student Assessment (PISA).

As evident of Figure 5, during the Socred era there were only minor changes in high school completion in BC. During the first two years of the NDP era the high school completion dropped and reached a low of 67 percent in 1993/94. It then rose steadily and in the last year of

the second NDP government it had reached 78 percent. This trend has continued during the first two years of the Liberal government. One disturbing fact is that the graduation rate for aboriginal students in BC is substantially below the average rate. In 2003/04 the graduation rate of non-aboriginal was 82 percent as compared to 46 percent among aboriginal youth.

Figure 5. British Columbia high school completion rate
1986/87 to 2003/04



Source: BC Ministry of Education

The results from the International Student Assessment (PISA) project that focuses on the performance of the 15-years old provide an indication of the quality of the K-12 system in the AIHEPS countries, see Table 5. The data show that there are substantial differences between the three countries. Canadian 15-years old performed much better than their US or Mexican counterparts on all four measures. The performance in the three Canadian provinces was quite similar in reading but with Quebec youngsters performing better in mathematics and science than their counterparts in Ontario and British Columbia.

Two findings stand out in Tables 5. First, Canadian 15 year olds are, according to the PISA results, very well prepared and scored consistently very high on the different tests. Second, BC students are among the best in Canada (HRDC, 2003).

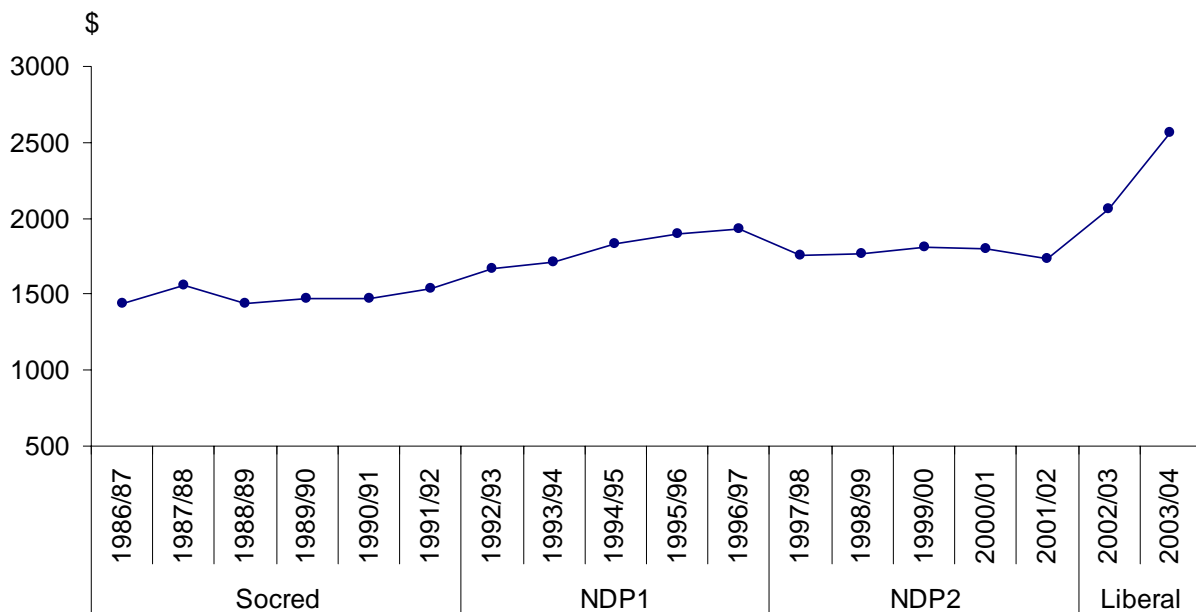
Table 5. International student assessment (PISA) 2000. Results for 15-year-olds

Subject (average score)	BC	Ontario	Quebec	Canada	USA	Mexico
Reading	538	533	536	534	504	422
Mathematics	534	524	550	533	493	387
Science	533	522	541	529	499	422
Reading retrieving	535	528	531	530	499	402

6.2.2 Affordability

The Canadian case studies are working with two measures of affordability; average undergraduate tuition fees and the amount a student can borrow and or receive as a grant. Tuition fees for undergraduate students in Faculty of Arts rose only slightly under the Socred and first NDP mandate, see Figure 6. During the second NDP era, the fees remained flat and even decreased somewhat in constant dollars. This reflects the commitment of this government to accessibility. When the Liberals took office this position changed and in accordance with its market philosophy the fees were allowed to increase rapidly. However, as noted in the text above, the Liberal government is about to change its policy and will for the coming year only allow the fees to increase at the rate of inflation.

Figure 6. Undergraduate Faculty of Arts , full-time public and private tuition in 1986 dollars



Source: Statistics Canada Survey ID 3123.

Affordability is dependent not only by the level of student fees but also on the level of loans that are available. Students in BC will have to rely on loans and grants to a higher extent than students in Quebec who receive much larger sum in the form of assistance. The same is true for students in Ontario, see Table 6.

Table 6. Maximum provincial student loan (full-time, with no dependents, single, based on 34 weeks of study) and total maximum assistance for 2001

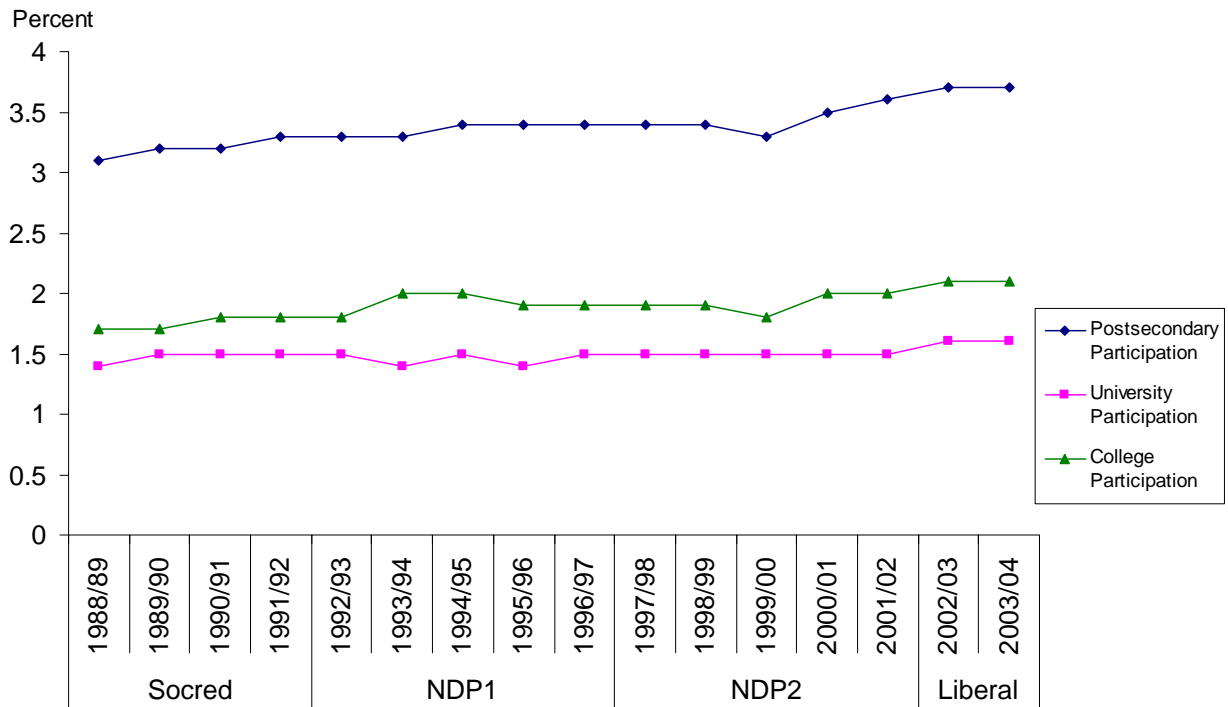
	Max. loan	Total max. assistance (incl. grants)
BC	\$8,840/year	\$8,840/year (\$260/week)
Quebec		
Cegep student	\$2,005/year	\$14,152/year (\$416/week)
Undergraduate student	\$2,460/year	\$16,619/year (\$489/week)
Graduate student	\$3,255/year	\$17,414/year (\$512/week)
Ontario	\$9,350/year	\$9,350/year (\$275/week)

6.2.3 Participation and choice

Access is appraised with regard to participation in post-secondary education on a per capita basis as well as the rate among the traditional student group, 18-24 year-olds. On a per capita basis we can note a gradual increase in participation in post-secondary education in British Columbia over the period 1988/89- 2003/04, see Figure 7. During the Socred government the rate rose from 3.1 percent in the academic year 1988/89 to 3.3 percent in 1991/92. During the first NDP mandate the rate went up slightly to 3.4 percent. The cuts in federal transfers during the first years of the second NDP mandate are reflected in a small drop in per capita participation. Similarly, the increased money flow from the federal government at the end of the decade might explain the rather sharp increase in participation rate at the end of the second NDP government. The rate continued to rise slightly under the first years of Liberal leadership.

Figure 7 reveals that the increase in per capita participation rate has been stronger for college education than for university education. Over the period the former rose from 1.7 percent in 1988/89 to 2.1 percent in 2003/04 while the latter increased from 1.4 percent to 1.6 percent.

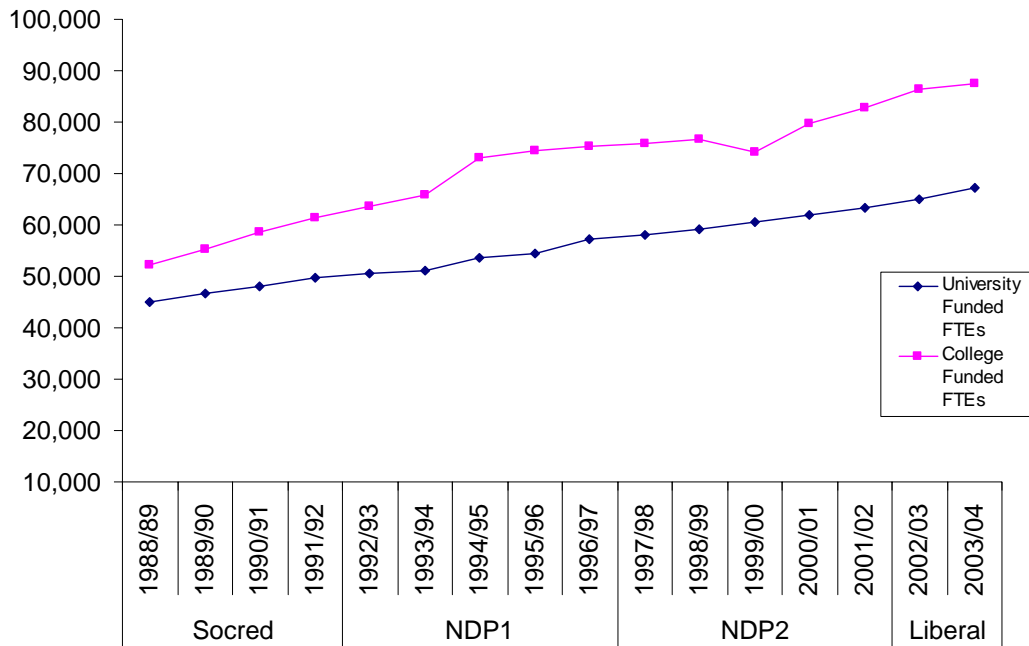
Figure 7. Per capita participation rate in postsecondary education in BC (1988/89-2003/04), enrolment in college and university education



Source: Statistics Canada (for population rate) and Ministry of Education (college actual FTEs) and the University Presidents' Council (university actual FTEs)

The difference in enrolment increase between the college and university sectors is also evident in Figure 8 that presents changes in funded full-time equivalent enrolment (FTE). Over the period college FTE increased by 80 percent as compared to 68 percent for the university sector. During the Socred era and the beginning of the first NDP government the FTE college enrolment increased at a faster rate than university enrolment. This was followed by a slight decline in the college sector while enrolment in the university sector continued to increase. This resulted in a narrowing of the gap in number of funded enrolment in the two sectors. From 1999/00 the enrollment boost in the colleges has once again surpassed the increases in university FTE. Looking at the slopes for the two sectors it is interesting to note that while there has been a very steady increase year by year in the university sector while the college enrolment shows larger variations over time.

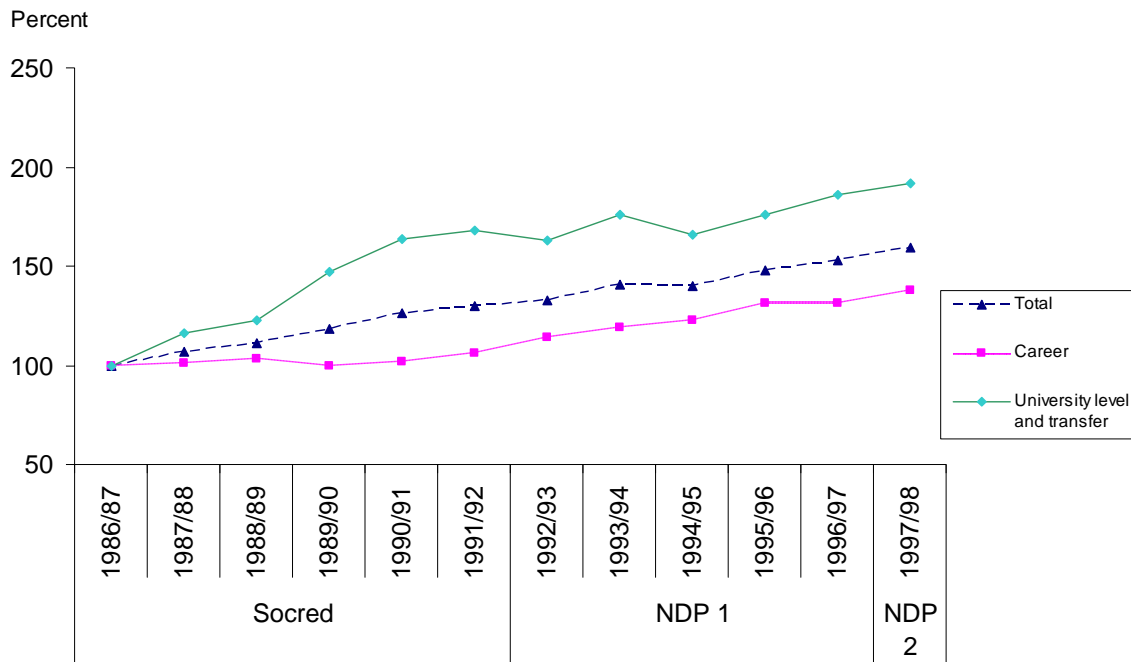
Figure 8. Funded full-time equivalent enrolment for the university and college sectors



Source: Ministry of Advanced Education (college funded FTEs) and TUPC (university funded FTEs)

Does the more rapid enrolment increase in the college sector indicate that government favored career education over a more general university education? Figure 9 begins to answer this question. As noted in Figure 9, the college sector in British Columbia is divided in two streams, career education and university transfer. The data clearly demonstrate that the major student expansion has occurred in the university transfer segment. This sector grew from 19,486 students in 1986/87 to 37,529 in 1998/99- almost a doubling. During the same period the number of full-time students in career programs only rose from 30,949 to 42,825, an increase by 38 percent. A closer look at the data reveals that the expansion of the university transfer stream was particularly rapid during the Socred mandate but slowed down under the NDP era. Further, almost all the growth in career programs occurred during the time NDP was in power. The findings suggest that the Socred's Access for All policy came to be interpreted as university education for all. We can further conclude that the NDP emphasis on skills translated into strengthening the career programs in the college sector.

Figure 9. Full-time enrolment in community colleges, by program
1986/87-1998/99, 1986/87=100



Source: Ministry of Advanced Education

Traditionally, the participation rates for 18-24 year olds in BC have been lower than the Canadian average. However, as reflected in Table 7, the concerted effort during the latter part of the 1990s in BC to expand the system has improved the situation and the figure is now slightly above the Canadian average. When it comes to young adults the BC participation rate is now substantially higher than the Canadian average.

Table 7. PSE participation rates by age (18-24 and 25-29)

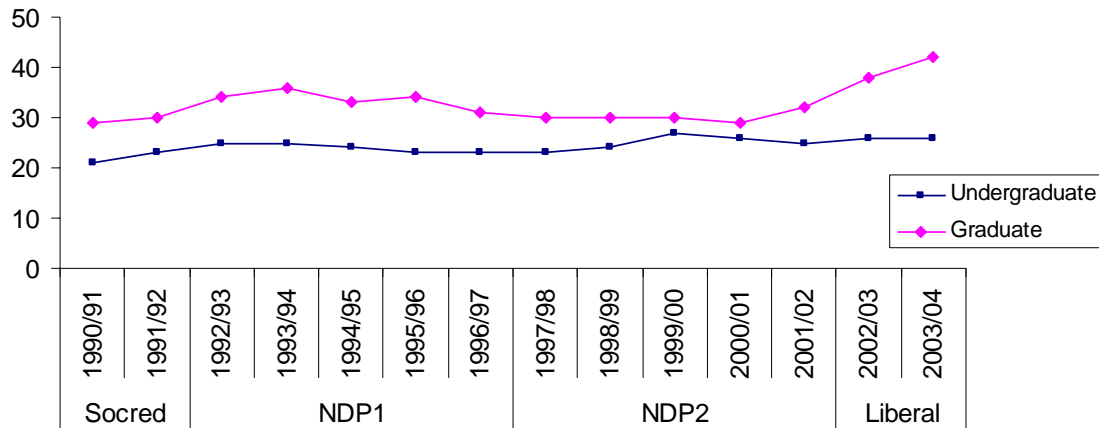
	1976	1990	1997	2000
BC				
Age 18-24	18.8	29.3	36.8	38.7
Age 25-29	7.7	7.2	14.4	14.6

Source: Labour Force Stats 2001.

The relative increase in BC participation rates in the latter half of 1990s might partly have been a result of the NDP:s policy to keep the tuition fees unchanged as well a rapid increase in funding.

As discussed above, enrolment has increased at a faster rate than government funding which resulted in a decreased funding per student. In this perspective it is of interest to try to assess what has happened with completion rates. Unfortunately there is no longitudinal information on what has happened to individual students and who actually graduated. Instead we have to rely on a rough estimate where the graduation numbers in university programs are compared with the enrollment numbers six years prior. Figure 10 shows that using this rough indicator graduation rates for undergraduate university programs have remained quite stable over the period. Graduate completion rate improved between 1990/91 and 1993/94 where after it declined up until 2001/02. Over the last three years the completion rate in graduate programs has improved substantially.

Figure 10. Undergraduate and graduate university degrees conferred after 6-years, 1990/91-2003/04



Source: TUPC.

Conclusion

This chronology has highlighted a number of developments in different, overlapping dimensions of higher education policy as it has evolved in British Columbia over the last forty and especially the last fifteen to twenty years. As in many other parts of the world, higher education in BC has seen phenomenal growth during this period, both in terms of public participation and in terms of its profile on the government policy agenda. As elsewhere, this evolution is marked by some key features – mass participation, economic utility, growing standardization and central administration -- and seems to have been influenced by some common factors (the global economy, public demand for access, and limited public resources). Laid over this basic framework are many local peculiarities that give BC's experience a unique cast. The province's historical position as a resource provider had a great influence on social institutions including the labour movement, political parties, and the cultural values and perspectives of various groups. Individuals such as McDonald, McGeer and Miller have left their own imprints on policies and institutions, some more enduring than others. Over time, higher education policy has gained prominence, whether because politicians and bureaucrats have seen it as the common denominator among many other policy issues, or because public demand made it impossible to ignore. Political ideology has also supplied concepts and terminology for interpreting these demands and articulating various imperatives for the higher education system.

Nor do these variations in policy necessarily align with our intuitive or common-sense expectations of the environment. For instance, the two periods of greatest expansion in BC's higher education system were both initiated under nominally small-'c' conservative governments. By contrast, notable shifts toward vocational 'relevance' and managerialist accountability in higher education policy were introduced by social democrats (and the highest-educated governing caucus in BC history). Divergent trends and developments do not just reveal the complexity of the policy environment, but also license different theoretical perspectives on the real drivers of policy change. While presenting a narrative about the evolution of higher education in British Columbia, this paper strives also to surface some of the socio-theoretical assumptions and values orientations that participants and observers of this evolution have employed. It seems reasonable to point, if not to a continuous evolution in higher education policy in BC, at least to several fairly distinct phases and sets of influences over the last two or

three decades. Still, these apparent continuities are offset by enough unexpected turns, strange alliances, and counterintuitive developments to inspire historical wonder and theoretical caution.

The balance between equality of opportunity and the common good and labour market responsiveness and economic development has altered during the period since the Second World War. Utilitarian and social principles have been operative throughout the system at most times but the stress placed on these priorities has differed. At the time of the Macdonald Report, broad consensus supported the expansion of student places. Responding to economic demand or creating a more open opportunity structure produced little or no conflict. The strongest emphasis on the common good appears in policies developed under Eileen Dailly, then Minister of Education in the first NDP government. In the early 1970s, human capital theory was under attack in most Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. The focus was on those parts of society not served by the rapid expansion of post-secondary education in the 1960s.

Beginning with the Macdonald Report, policies have voiced the need to address geographic, social and economic barriers to participation. While Macdonald emphasized expanding access through building more physical structures, the cost-saving advantages of distance education, telecommunications technologies and computer-based learning were recognized in the post-McGeer era. Following the establishment of the OLI in 1978, the building of technological and institutional support for multimedia learning throughout the province has been a long process. Since the 1996 release of the Ministry's plan, Charting a New Course, targeted funding has been available for institutions to participate in building an electronic network.

Since the mid-1980s, the role of education in wealth creation has come to dominate the policy discussions on education. The Human Capital theory that came to force in the early 1960s and fuelled the rapid expansion of PSE has returned under the guise of human resources development. In most countries the same argument is put forward by politicians, business, labour and representatives from the academy. The message is that with the emergence of what has become known as the knowledge-based economy, the links between education and the economy have taken on a new urgency. The general thesis is that the more advanced the economy the greater the returns to investment in education (Marginson, 1997, p.110). Education improves the capacity to adapt and adjust to new technologies, which results in increased

productivity, flexibility and efficiency. A more educated workforce is seen as being better able to adjust to rapid changes and withstand the increased uncertainty surrounding the world of work. New technology is expected to facilitate more competence-intensive production, raising the intensity of global competition and forcing adjustment all the way down to the shop floor and into the labour market on an unprecedented scale among industrialized countries.

Collectivism has been an underlying principle in the debates over differentiation, coordination and centralization that have run throughout the period. Macdonald envisioned a stratified system with institutions having different purposes but integrated in a common plan. McGeer preferred a centralized, coordinated system. In British Columbia a binary system of colleges and universities emerged first, but with the creation of four-year university colleges and the expansion of degree-granting status to almost all public institutions, the boundary lines separating strata have been blurred. The overwhelming power of 'academic drift' means that the university system is differentiated into four layers, which are separated by the level and type of degree the institutions offer: full universities (whole range of degrees); university colleges and BCIT (full range except non-applied masters degrees and doctorates); Colleges and Emily Carr (up to bachelors degrees); and, Provincial Institutes (no degrees). This does not take into account the private institutions that offer degrees and other credentials either directly or at a distance. This group clearly occupies a fifth strata and a new fault line between public and private provision. This process is a result of policy decisions taken mainly in response to demands to increase access.

Alongside the move to decentralize is an increasing emphasis on accountability. Government attempts to extend accountability through techniques like performance indicators and performance-based funding into the realm of personal autonomy. Accountability has also come to mean recognition of the dominance of market ideology. In the past, the academic tradition that emphasized autonomy and independence protected universities and academics from explicit interference from external forces. Governments have pressed universities to be more responsive to the economy and to create alliances with the private sector. The accountability models are embedded within the broader, ideological mechanisms, variously characterized as public sector reform, new public management and the 'evaluative state', that have accompanied the political-economic transition from welfare state to the global economy (Fisher & Rubenson,

1998). The incentive for individual researchers and universities is the prospect of increased research funds.

The history higher education policy in British Columbia seems to reflect changes not only in the ‘environment’ conventionally understood but also in policy makers and policy making mechanisms. It suggests that government institutions and policy-making processes do not simply telegraph external signals onto public policies, but also exert their own influences on the environment and, in turn, on future policy. In our narrative we have focused mainly on how aspects of the external environment seem to have influenced governments’ decisions on higher education. Apart from noting some coincidences between such things as tuition subsidies and enrolment rates, we have said almost nothing about the reciprocal relationship: how public policy has affected the outside world. Given the costs involved, and the bottomless faith that governments and publics seem to place in the instrumental power of higher education to improve individuals and society, more careful study is needed to associate education policy in BC with such benefits as economic growth, industrial innovation, or social cohesion (Rubenson, 2003; Wolf, 2002).

Looking across the two periods of dramatic change, the 1960s and the 1990s, we can identify four long-term trends. First is the expansion of the system both in terms of students and institutions. Second is the diversification of the system as it evolved from a ‘university dominated’ model through a ‘binary’ stage to the current ‘diversified’ or ‘stratified’ system. In the Scott typology, BC’s system is clearly a mixed category situated somewhere between the ‘binary’ and ‘stratified’. Third is ‘academic drift’. This begins with the creation of the colleges, which incorporated the existing vocational schools but also from the beginning served an academic transfer function. More recently, we have seen the emergence of a new research university and the transformation of five of the colleges into university colleges. As noted earlier, in 2004 two of the university colleges achieved university status. The three remaining university colleges have clear ambitions to become research universities. In addition, most other institutions have sought and gained degree-granting status. Finally, and alongside academic drift, we have the continuing emphasis on linking education and work. This was particularly noticeable in the 1990s as the private sector expanded and we saw the creation of two niche universities, Technical University and Royal Roads University. Inevitably these trends both reflect and have been driven by a set of underlying principles.

Post-secondary education has for the last twenty years been and will continue to be a government priority. The public's perception that a good education is the passport to personal prosperity coupled with the popular notion that an educated citizenry is a necessity for a nation's prosperity drives this policy priority. As long as the public continues to demand more post-secondary education, any government, regardless of its political ideology will accede. While funding has not always been generous for various reasons including fiscal restraint, the budgets for education and post-secondary education have often been spared when other areas have suffered deep cuts during economic downturns. In its attempt to cure the structural deficit and to balance the provincial budget by 2004/05, the Liberal Government has protected the budgets of education and post-secondary education while cutting the budgets of other ministries. Health is also exempted from cuts and has also experienced growth because again the voters have told government that it is the peoples' priority.

The policy environment set by successive provincial governments have until recently been remarkably stable. Successive Social Credit and New Democratic administrations have been committed to 'access' and vocationalism. The pressure for 'academic drift' has come from within the system and from interior communities who wanted more access to degree-granting programs outside the Vancouver and Victoria conurbations. Most recently, the operation of ideology can be recognized in the contrast between the NDPs freeze on student fees versus the Liberal's program of re-regulation. While all governments since the mid-1980s have not been able to ignore the importance of the market, the current Liberal government is the first to enthusiastically support this approach to governing. Further, while the definition of what counts as a university has been changing over the last decade particularly with the advent of the university colleges, British Columbia does seem to be on the verge of dramatic changes in the post-secondary system.

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Appendix : British Columbian Political Parties, Ministers Responsible for Post Secondary Education, Ministries, and Legislation

Party: Premier	Minister	Ministry	Policy/Bill/ Reform/ Act
Social Credit: William Vander Zalm 1986-1991	Stan Hagen 1985-1989	Advanced Education & Job Training	1989- Bill 72, Science Council Act
	Bruce Strachan 1990-1992		1990- Bill 18, Science and Technology Fund Act 1990- Bill 24, Private Post Secondary Education Act 1990-Bill 40,UNBC Act
Rita Johnston 1991	Bruce Strachan 1990-1992	Advanced Education Training & Technology	
New Democratic Party: Mike Harcourt 1991-1996	Thomas Perry 1992-1993	Advanced Education Training & Technology	1992-Bill 2, Repeal of BC Assoc of Colleges Incorporation Act. Creation of Advanced Education Council of BC 1992-Bill 23, University Amendment Act: 1) Repeal of section 80 prohibiting university faculty from forming faculty associations or trade unions; 2) Authorization of public colleges and institutes to grant associate degrees
	Dan Miller 1993-1996	Skills, Training and Labour (super-ministry)	1993-Bill 15, Allows for government to recover savings resulting from strikes or lockouts 1994- Bill 37, Skills Development and Fair Wage Act 1994-Bill 22, College & Institute Amendment Act: 1) University college and institutes given the power to grant baccalaureate degrees; 2) Allows colleges and institutes to elect faculty students & staff to governing boards 1994-Bill 23, Institute of Technology Amendment Act 1995- Bill 49, Royal Roads University Act

Party: Premier	Minister	Ministry	Policy/Bill/ Reform/ Act
New Democratic Party: Glen Clark 1996-1999	Paul Ramsey 1996	Education, Skills & Training	1997-Bill 30, Technical University of BC Act: established TechBC as degree granting
	Moe Sihota 1996		
	Joy MacPhail 1996-1997	Education, Skills & Training/ Labour	1997-Bill 43, Industry Training & Apprenticeship Act: replaced previous Apprenticeship Act
	Paul Ramsey 1997-1998	Education, Skills & Training	1998-Bill 8, Tuition Freeze Act
	Andrew Petter 1998-2000	Advanced Education, Training & Technology	1999-Bill 59, Tuition Freeze Act 2000-Bill 6, Tuition Freeze Act
Dan Miller 1999-2000	Graeme Bowbrick 2000		
Ujjal Dosanjh 2000-2001	Cathy McGregor 2000-2001		2001-Bill 9, Access to Education Act: reduced tuition fees, froze mandatory ancilliary fees, provided compensation to BC institutions for fee differentials
Liberal: Gordon Campbell 2001-present	Shirley Bond 2001 - present	Advanced Education	<p>2001-Bill 28-Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act: Removed issues of class size, length of academic year and use of distance education methods from the bargaining table.</p> <p>2001-Bill 22: Skills Development & Fair Wage Repeal Act</p> <p>2002-Bill 15-Degree Authorization Act: 1) Private and public institutions to offer degree programs; 2) public colleges and institutes to offer applied baccalaureate degrees; 3) university colleges to offer applied master's degrees</p> <p>2002-Bill 50-Advanced Education Statues Amendment Act: repealed TechBC and moved programs to SFU</p> <p>2002- Private Members Bill: Sea to Sky University Act</p>