Changing Times, Changing Places: The Global Evolution of the Bachelor's Degree and the Implications for Ontario

Prepared by Higher Education Strategy Associates
for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario

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Introduction

Over the past decade or so, the bachelor's degree has undergone major changes in much of the world. The most important set of changes was brought on by the adoption, across Europe, of the Bologna Process. This led not only to the introduction of bachelor's degrees in countries where no such qualification had previously existed, but also to a pan-continental harmonization (more or less) of the length of the degree, at three years. More recently, a number of universities in the United States – where a four-year degree has been sacrosanct for decades – have started experimenting with shorter degrees. At the same time that systems have been altering the length of degrees, there has also been a trend for systems in Europe and elsewhere – including Ontario and other parts of Canada – to open up degree provision to non-university Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This has broken the centuries-long monopoly of universities over the provision of granting degrees. These two major experiments in changing times and changing places are the subject of this report, which was undertaken by Higher Education Strategy Associates for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO).

Non-University HEIs. *This report will sometimes make use of the somewhat inelegant term "non-university HEI" – which refers to institutions that are not universities but that nevertheless provide degree-level education. In the Canadian context, this term would include colleges and/or polytechnics; in foreign contexts, it can refer to German* "Fachhochschulen," *Dutch* "Hogescholen," *and Finnish polytechnics, etc. The term is used only when there is a need to refer to these institutions collectively in a cross-national context.*

Our approach to this project is not simply to look at global trends in the development of the bachelor's degree and to collect the views of key Ontario stakeholders regarding these developments. For purposes of organizing material on a very complicated topic, we have chosen to look at the material within two main categories. In Chapter 1, entitled "Changing Times," we look at how the lengths of bachelor's degrees have been changing, while in Chapter 2, entitled "Changing Places," we deal with the provision of higher education in non-university settings. Each chapter begins with an in-depth description of global trends in the area (with a particular focus on recent developments within Canada). These global discussions are then augmented by adding data about the views of two key sets of Ontario stakeholders. In order to understand the views of students, we conducted a survey of over 850 Ontario students in university bachelor's degree programs (who were members of our student research panel[1]) about degree lengths and loci. Relevant results from this survey are included in both chapters, and the methodology behind the survey is included as Appendix A. We also solicited the views of key stakeholders concerning the lessons Ontario can learn from global changes – via a multi-stakeholder seminar held in Toronto on March 21, 2011. A list of attendees is included in this report as Appendix C, and a summary of their discussion can be found in each of the two chapters in this report.

[1] HESA operates a student panel of about 8,000 university students nationwide, to which it sends monthly surveys on a variety of issues related to higher education. In the February edition, we added questions about the length and locus of bachelor's degrees, to which 876 Ontario university students responded. [See Appendix A and B for details.]

Chapter 1 Changing Times

Introduction

University credentials have evolved in very different ways around the globe. Though North Americans think of the bachelor's degree as the foundation of university-level higher education, such a degree was essentially unknown in large parts of Europe until quite recently. In much of Central Europe, for instance, the standard length of an initial degree was five or six years, leading to a designation equivalent to a master's degree. Even within those parts of the world that use the bachelor's degree, the length of the degree has never been standard. University systems that descend from the English tradition (such as Australia's or India's, for instance) tend to have a three-year bachelor's degree, while those descended from the Scottish tradition (including the United States) tend to have a four-year bachelor's degree.

At various times in recent years, there have been movements that question the efficiency of longer degrees, in terms of both their cost and their effect on degree completion rates. This idea of shortening degree lengths has certain attractiveness to some policymakers. However, in jurisdictions where longer degrees are the norm, the idea of shortening degrees tends to be seen as "watering down" a degree. In general, it is thought that such a move would tend to come at the expense of general education, leaving students' education too narrow and specific – and certainly, degrees at English universities allow far less room for individual experimentation than is the case in a typical North American four-year program. But objections can also be raised about depth as well as breadth. Some could easily argue that three years does not give students enough time to master the key concepts and skills associated with particular degrees. This view has wide currency in the academy, though it should be noted that few non-professional degrees in North America have strong, defined learning outcomes statements that might actually allow this proposition to be tested.

Still, though there is often resistance to change within academia itself, the past decade has seen some enormous changes in the length of first-degree programs, and the movement in general has tended to be toward shorter programs, as a short tour of policy changes in different parts of the globe will show.

Two-Year Degrees

The most famous examples of two-year degrees (two years being the length of time it would take to obtain the degree if one were studying full time) come from the United States, where they are known as associate degrees. For the most part, these are credentials awarded after two years of study at a community college or junior college, after the completion of which students are expected to go on and complete a "full" bachelor's degree at a four-year institution. However, there are also instances where four-year institutions will hand out associate degrees after two years of study. Rather like Quebec's cégep system, American two-year degrees can be divided into vocational and non-vocational types. Sometimes, these are sought as credentials in and of themselves; more often, they are way stations to obtaining a complete four-year degree, as credits earned toward an associate degree can usually be used for a bachelor's as well.

The United States is not the only jurisdiction that has tried this approach. Colleges in British Columbia also issue associates degrees. The French *diplôme d'études universitaires générales* (or DEUG) that existed prior to the Bologna Process was a very similar type of credential, providing a certification at the end of two years of academic study, even though most students continued on, trying to complete a *licence*. In 2001, the United Kingdom introduced a new "Foundation Degree," which would allow for the aggregation of mainly vocational-type credits into a two-year "degree" – because the number of credits required is equivalent to two years of full-time study. (In fact, however, three or four years is a more normal time to completion, because the degree is taken mainly by students studying part time.) These degrees can then be converted into full bachelor's degrees with only one more year of full-time study.

Generalizing about these kinds of degree is somewhat tricky. Where the two-year "degree program" is designed to be terminal – that is, it is not designed specifically as a stepping stone toward a higher academic degree – it tends to be more vocational in nature. It is not always clear whether these two-year degrees are substantially different from two- or three-year diploma programs in Canadian community colleges or cégeps; the difference may simply be one of nomenclature, rather than substance. Where they are deliberately designed as stepping stones to higher study (e.g., in France and British Columbia), they tend to be more academic in nature.

The arguments in favour of stepping-stone degrees like this tend to revolve around access and cost. They tend to attract students from lower-income backgrounds and are often delivered through community colleges that are designed to provide access to higher education for people outside major urban areas. It's also often argued that this is a cheaper method of educating students than bringing them to major urban centres to receive education in more research-intensive (and hence expensive), four-year institutions. This argument would not apply to the French DEUG, which operates more like a cégep's *diplôme d'études collégiales* (DEC) in that everyone must pass it in order to go on to the *licence.* (Hence, the DEUG is offered at all institutions.)

This report does not concern itself with these shorter degrees, as in all cases they remain "sub-baccalaureate" credentials, rather than baccalaureates proper. No one yet appears to have made the case that a full bachelor's degree, as this term is understood in Europe and North America, can sensibly be delivered in just two years.

Europe

The past decade has seen enormous changes to first-cycle higher education in Europe, mainly as a result of the adoption of the Bologna Accord in over 45 countries across the continent. Though the Bologna Process was not specifically about baccalaureate-level education, it has nevertheless wrought some considerable changes in that realm.

Fundamentally, the Bologna Process is about the creation of a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA), to harmonize degree cycles across the continent, in order to promote greater mobility – not only for students, but also for workers. (Employer confusion concerning different degree names, lengths and standards are seen as a barrier to hiring for mobile Europeans.) Prior to the adoption of Bologna, first degree took from two years (the French DEUG) to six years (the *magister* degree common in Germanic and Scandinavian countries, which was equivalent to a master's degree). A significant element of Bologna was to (1) get the nations of Europe to agree to a three-degree structure (bachelor's, master's and doctorate) and (2) to agree that the first degree would be no more than four years in length[2] (though, in practice, most countries adopted a three-year standard).

In many countries in Europe (including the UK, Iceland and the Baltics), where bachelor's degrees were well established, Bologna did not result in any changes to the existing degree structure, though in some of these countries, degree lengths were shortened from four or five years to just three. (However, Scotland, for instance, kept its four-year degree.) For other countries, such as Spain, which had a two-degree structure, master's degrees were first-entry academic degrees delivered at universities, and bachelor's degrees were first-entry applied degrees delivered in polytechnics, with little or no bridging permitted between the two systems. In still other countries, which had a tradition of long first-entry programs resulting in a master's-like credential – notably Germany, Finland and the Netherlands – an entirely new degree at the bachelor's level was created. It tended to be three years in length. Thus, although this was not the *purpose* of the Bologna Process, the creation of a pan-continental "short" baccalaureate was nevertheless an important side effect of harmonization.

An important question remains unanswered, though. Why did the many ministers involved in reforming their systems choose three years as the length of the first degree? Why not four years – or five? There are two primary reasons for this. Many countries in the EU have had a long tradition of streaming students from a young age. In order to support overall completion levels, different routes are offered from K-12, with curriculum options tailored to the needs, competencies and choices of students. Those in the academic stream, intended to prepare students for PSE, graduate with a focus on a certain field, which allows for more specialized instruction at the PSE level earlier on (Lennon, 2010).

[2] Technically, the formulation is "not less than 180 and not more than 240 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits," with 60 credits being roughly equivalent to a full load. See Gaston (2010), Chapter 2.

Secondly, and perhaps more pointedly, the answer seems to lie in the desire of European governments to shape their higher education systems in such a way as to make them more responsive to the needs of the labour market.[3] Given that the Bologna Process was developed in the shadow of the Lisbon Strategy's 2000 call to make Europe the most competitive economy in the world and also given that much of Europe had suffered from extremely high levels of structural youth unemployment for a great part of the previous decade, it is not surprising that labour-market responsiveness was seen as a very important goal. Shorter degrees with clearer and more labour market-oriented outcomes statements were seen as the means to this end. This view developed in part because of the perceived success that non-university HEIs, such as polytechnics and *Fachhochschulen,* had in promoting employability skills through their shorter-duration programs (see Chapter 2 for details).

Of course, the reality of the new degree structure did not always match the system descriptions in Bologna's promotional materials. In theory, these new, shorter degrees are meant to be newly developed, outcomes-based and more focused on the labour market. In many cases, though, the courses of study that used to lead to *magister* were in many cases simply cut in two, with a bachelor's degree handed out after three years and a master's after five or six. This does not appear to simply be a case of universities trying to do the minimum to comply with a disliked mandate from above; in many ways, it may simply be a response to student demand. This is because students do not appear always to have appreciated shorter degrees.

Though data are not publicly available, key informants for this exercise indicate that it is believed that something in the order of 80 per cent of bachelor's graduates in Germany and the Netherlands go on to enroll in a master's-level program. It is suggested that most students have a strong preference for a master's degree as it is essentially the same level of education that was provided previously. Because, the bachelor's degree is viewed essentially as a way station towards a master's degree, it may be rational for institutions to continue to develop curriculum for bachelor's degrees with the former degree in mind.

One key element of the creation/harmonization of the bachelor's degree in Europe has been the concomitant development of a number of modes of degree standardization. The first, and most obvious, is the adoption of the European Credit Transfer System (which gained widespread traction only as a result of Bologna, even though it slightly predates the Accord. Prior to Bologna, many countries did not operate on a credit system, and those that did had wildly varying systems. Now all of Europe has been harmonized into a single credit system (in theory if not entirely in practice). Moreover, unlike the case in North American systems, the European credit hour is actually defined in terms of the expected average hours of student effort (both in class and out) required to meet the course's learning objectives; it is not just a simple count of contact hours. These credit hour measures are also backed by the relevant quality assurance agencies monitoring these kinds of arrangements, and they are supplemented by initiatives like the Tuning Project (which seeks to harmonize degree learning objectives at the disciplinary level

[3] See especially Haug and Tauch (2001), which was prepared for the signatory Bologna Ministers, including the following excerpt: "[T]he general move is clearly toward a stronger attention to employment prospects and the acquisition of core, or transversal, skills" (p. 22).

across Europe). This means that there are relatively firm and sophisticated standards against which the content of a degree can be measured.

United States

In the United States, the tradition of four-year college and university programs dates back to the very first universities established in that country. While students have always been able to complete their university degree requirements in less than four years by taking heavy course loads and studying during the summer, there were few formal programs to help them chart their shorter programs.[4] However, the idea of a three-year bachelor's degree was debated in a 1971 report by the Carnegie Foundation (Carnegie Commission, 1971). The report spurred several years of state-level discussion about the perceived value of providing shortened degrees as a means of expanding options for students.

The discussion focused, in particular, on "time-shortened" degrees made possible through a number of initiatives, including deleting one year of the bachelor general education requirements. Despite interest in the idea, few formal changes were made to either programming or legislation (Smart & Evans, 1977). The idea was reintroduced by S. Frederick Starr, president of Oberlin College, in his October 1991 opinion piece for the *New York Times* in which he argued that higher education was too expensive for students and that one solution would be to offer students the opportunity to obtain a degree in three years (Starr, 1991) Oberlin never implemented Starr's proposal, nor did Stanford University when a similar proposal was put forward there in 1993.

In both cases, the faculty was not convinced that the benefits of lower-cost degrees outweighed the loss in prestige that would come with offering a shorter-length degree that might be perceived to be of inferior quality. It was only in 2008, with the economic downturn, that such programs started to proliferate in a serious way. Many credit US senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee (a former secretary of education under President Reagan) with having offered a particular impetus to this growth when he spoke at the annual meeting of the American Council on Education in 2009, urging college leaders to offer shorter, lower-cost, three-year degrees (American Council on Education, 2009). As of fall 2010, more than 50 schools in the United States now offer shorter degrees, and another 50 or so are expected to introduce such options in fall 2011.The trend toward three-year degree programs has resulted in the development of two main delivery models. The first involved three-year programs that retain the same degree requirements in terms of academic credit hours. However, administrators found ways for students to earn those credits in a compressed period of time. These methods included college-level learning while in high school (Advanced Placement credits or community college credits), heavier course loads during the fall and spring semesters, and summer school courses (both in class and online, etc.). For the sake of simplicity, we will call this the **"compression model."**

[4] Bates College in Maine and Judson College in Alabama were the exceptions. Both have offered guided three-year degree options for many years, though few students at these institutions have availed themselves of this option.

Two examples of the compression model can be found at Ball State University in Indiana and the University of Massachusetts Amherst, respectively. At Ball State, a program called **"**Degree in Three" covers 30 majors, or areas of study, and is aimed at motivated students who are ready to choose their major immediately upon enrolling. In order to meet program requirements, students have to attend two, or sometimes three, summer semesters, as well as taking 15 to 18 credits per semester. Since the tuition fee costs are the same as for the four-year program, Ball State emphasizes the fact that participating students save on one year of living expenses and can go to graduate school or start their careers one year sooner.

To date, however, take-up of the three-year option at Ball State is quite limited, with only 1 per cent of students opting into it.[5] The UMass Amherst three year program is currently available for only three majors (though the intention is to expand it to all 88 majors at the university), and it is restricted to the 10 to 25 per cent of students who enter with a significant number of college-level learning credits. Students take a full course load during the fall and spring semesters, as well as some online offerings and summer courses. The university acknowledges that the three-year degree is not a good option for students who want to study abroad or for those who want to do a double major, as the timeframe reduces options in these areas.

The major difference between the Amherst and Ball State programs is financial. Unlike students at Ball State, Amherst students who choose the three-year option pay only three years' worth of tuition. Amherst is also experimenting with a combined BA/MA, which would allow students to get both degrees in five years (i.e., one year less than normal). The second model, far less common, is what may be called the **"reduction model."** This involves a reconfiguration of the degree requirements in terms of the absolute number of credits needed and/or in terms of the design of an interdisciplinary or other type of innovative curriculum.

In both reconfigurations, the same number of credits is earned with fewer courses. For instance, Southern Oregon University waives some introductory classes for academically gifted students (independently of any Advanced Placement credits which that they may have earned) who participate in the three-year degree program equal to a reduction of 21 to 45 general education credits. Another reduction model has been used at Baldwin-Wallace College in Ohio, where a three-year degree program was introduced in 2011/12, in which students took the same required courses for their major as in the traditional four-year program but needed only 100 credit hours to graduate (as opposed to the usual 124).

This was achieved by allowing them to take fewer elective courses than the number required of students in regular programs. With the lower credit hour requirements, students did not need to attend school during the summer, and with the shorter duration, students could save a year's worth of tuition fees and living costs. The reduction model is a much more radical departure for many institutions (and therefore less common), because it involves re-engineering a degree to focus more on the student than on time spent in classrooms. This means that, unlike the case

[5] For more details on Ball State, see http://cms.bsu.edu/AdmissionsLanding/UndergraduateAdmissions/MajorsandSpecialPrograms/degreein3.aspx.

with the compression model, design needs to occur to a much greater extent on a program-by-program basis, and this raises the transaction costs of implementation.

This approach also entails a much clearer bias in favour of sacrificing program breadth in order to reduce time spent, and since breadth is a much-defended feature of American undergraduate education, it is not easily sacrificed. At Baldwin-Wallace, for instance, the reduction model is being used only in the field of Communication Disorders so far. This is because it is felt that breadth might not matter as much in such an applied field. In other fields, where progression to graduate studies is more likely, there is more reticence about sacrificing depth, because of the perception that this might affect entry to higher levels of study.

Initiatives to reduce degree times are not limited to individual universities. US state governments have also expressed interest in restructured degrees. One state senator supported the idea, suggesting that "Today's economic crisis and tight budgets are the best time to innovate and change" (Strauss, 2009). Rhode Island has mandated its universities to develop three-year accelerated programs, and Pennsylvania is also considering the option (Shellenbarger, 2010). Likewise, Ohio has mandated its state universities to work toward awarding degrees in three years. As the Ohio plan relies on first-year students having previously acquired Advanced Placement and dual high school–college credits, it should be seen as an example of the "compression" model. Several other states, including Arizona, Tennessee, Colorado and California, are currently exploring whether they should mandate their state institutions to offer accelerated, three-year degrees, but at the time of writing, they had yet to pass any legislation to that end. A system report from the University of California clearly states that fiscal constraints and increased enrolments provide a significant rationale for exploring the three-year degree option (University of California, 2010).

Canada

Canadian universities have always offered bachelor's degrees of various lengths. This stems, in part, from the fact that Canadian institutions have come from a mix of traditions; those based on the English tradition tended to offer three-year degrees, while those based on the Scottish tradition tended to offer four-year degrees commonly called 'honours' or 'advanced' degrees. In Ontario, the "honours" degrees of four years' duration were created after the introduction of a requirement in the 1880s that specialist secondary school teachers have an extra year of education (Harris, 1976, p. 120). Many institutions had both types of degrees but treated the two as entirely separate entities; at the University of Toronto, for instance, well into the sixties, students admitted into three- and four-year programs in the same field did not take courses together, as the two programs had entirely separate curricula (the latter being considerably more specialist in orientation and designed for students who might wish to pursue graduate studies) (Friedland, 2002).

More commonly, however, programming was exactly the same, with shared opportunities and classes, etc., where students could specialize in a specific field for their final year. But in many Canadian institutions' arts and science programs, at least, some departments could require prerequisites or a certain GPA level demonstrated in year three before a student was permitted to gain entrance to the honours program in that field. Although the three-year degree continues

to exist in Canada, it has been in decline since at least the 1960s. The gradual increase of the importance of four-year degrees may have stemmed partly from a belief that our degree structure needed to be harmonized with that of the United States for reasons of prestige if not student mobility.

This view may have taken on added prominence because of the large numbers of American academics who came to Canada in the 1960s and 1970s. It may also have stemmed partly from a view—perpetrated by students and parents as much as by administrators—those longer programs would necessarily produce better-educated students than would shorter ones. Quebec is the only province where three-year degrees are still common, where 90-credit degrees are the norm in most undergraduate programs. This is, of course, a result of having students spend 13 years in school prior to arriving at university (six years of primary, five of secondary and two in CEGEP). So in Quebec, as in other parts of the country, a bachelor's degree tends to be awarded after 16 years of grade school and postsecondary education.

Outside Quebec, however, the prevalence of the three-year degree has significantly declined. According to the Canadian University Survey Consortium's 2009 Graduating Student Survey,[6] roughly 78 per cent of graduating students had been enrolled in programs of four years' duration, and another 9 per cent had been in programs of five years' duration, such as education or engineering. Only 9 per cent of finishing undergraduate students had been enrolled in programs that lasted three years. It seems that a substantial number of students in Manitoba graduate with a three-year bachelor's degree. In 2009, 1,551 bachelor of arts degrees were awarded, whereas only 237 advanced (four-year) and 231 honours degrees were awarded. (As noted previously in many programs, students must apply for and be accepted into the honours degree program based on their GPA or combination of prerequisites determined at the program level) (Advanced Education and Literacy Manitoba, 2010, Chapter 1). However, in the sciences, nearly 90 per cent graduated with either an honours or a major degree (four-year degree). Manitoba's universities generally require a minimum of an honours degree for master's programs, yet they offer many pre-master's programs (typically one year in length) as upgrading mechanisms for those with three year BAs.

Ontario

There are few three-year bachelor's degrees currently available in Ontario, and the Ontario University Application Centre noted only 44 programs accepting applications to three-year degrees in fall 2011 (Ontario University Application Centre, 2011). These programs are available at eight universities, and the fields of study range from biology to math to general arts. While it is not possible to accurately establish the availability of three-year programs prior to the present year, it is commonly understood that offerings have been considerably reduced in the past decade.

[6] Note: Only 34 Canadian universities participated in 2009. Retrieved from http://www.cusc-ccreu.ca/publications/rpt_CUSC_Master_V3_2009-1.pdf, p. 16.

One possible reason for the declining interest in the three-year degree is that increasingly, graduate schools require honours degrees as an entry requirement. Previously, students planning to attend professional schools (e.g., medicine or law) could be admitted with a three-year bachelor's degree. This remains a minimum requirement for some professional schools, yet competition for entry is fierce, so an honours degree is becoming the norm. Hence, students may choose to take an extra year of the undergraduate degree in order to keep doors open for future educational opportunities.

Arguably, the decline of the three-year degree in Ontario was hastened by the abolition first of Grade 13 in the 1980s and then of the OACs in 2002. When Ontario high schools were providing an extra year of secondary education, a three-year degree made sense in that the system tended to award degrees after 16 years of study in total. But once the length of secondary education decreased, many Ontario universities felt that since secondary graduates were arriving less prepared for higher education studies, three-year programs were no longer able to prepare students adequately for receiving a bachelor's degree.

As a result, three-year programs were largely eliminated in the run-up to the double cohort (the arrival of both Grade 12s and OAC students in first-year university courses in fall 2003). They were replaced by four-year programs. At roughly the same time that the extra year of secondary school was being eliminated, the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act 2000* (Ontario, 2000) was passed by the Ontario legislature. This act created the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, which two years later, produced the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF).

The framework identifies the main purposes of each qualification, outlines the learning expectations for graduates who hold each type of qualification and shows the relationship between the different qualifications. However, the OQF does not set just one standard for bachelor's degrees. Rather, it codifies the distinction between "bachelor's degrees" (which typically last between six and eight semesters, or 90 to 120 credits) and "bachelor's degrees: honours" (which typically last eight semesters or longer (120 credits or more) based on expected learning outcomes.

Within this framework, the two levels differ in that students with honours degrees are expected to have greater research depth, greater understanding of the theories underlying their chosen discipline and greater ability to integrate and apply knowledge. It is also understood that honours degrees come in several varieties: academic, professionally oriented, and in an applied field of study. In theory, learning outcomes take primacy over the length of degree in determining whether or not a degree is classified as "honours"; the outcomes are absolute, while the recommended time is merely "typical." However, in practice, six and eight semesters appear to act as the lower boundaries for the two types of degrees, suggesting little openness—at an institutional level at least—for providing honours programs in less than four years in the way that American compressed programs do.

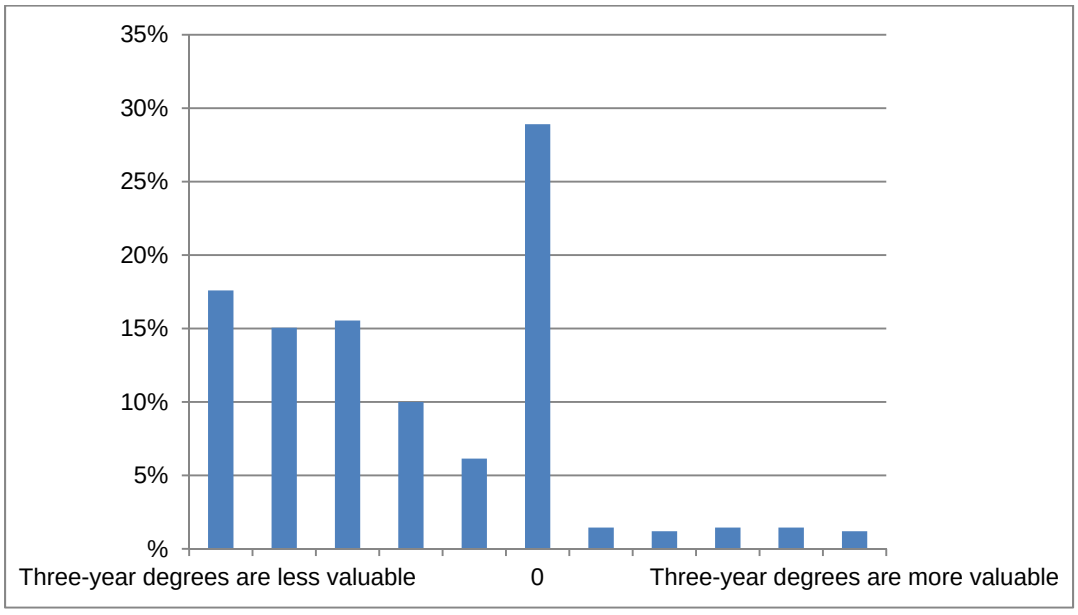
It should also be noted that despite the "typical" length of degrees and the options to advance more quickly (i.e., through summer programming or heavier course loads), research suggests that only 45 per cent of students complete an undergraduate degree by their fourth year of

enrolment (Dooley, Payne, & Robb, 2011). An examination of student persistence in four Ontario universities reveals that by fifth year, 74 per cent have earned a degree and by sixth year, 80 per cent of original entrants have completed the requirements for their program. This suggests that despite options for timely or quick progression, students tend to take longer than this (and most even longer than four years) to proceed through their programs.

Ontario University Students' Views Concerning Shortened Degrees

Generally speaking, Ontario university students are of the opinion that four-year degrees are more valuable than the shorter, three-year degrees. When asked to compare the relative value of the two types of degrees, 64 per cent thought, to varying extents, that four-year degrees were more valuable; 29 per cent said that the two degrees were of roughly equal value; and only 5 per cent said, to varying extents, that three-year degrees were more valuable. In some manner, of course, this may be a self-serving response, since according to the 2009 CUSC survey (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2009)*;* approximately 94 per cent of Ontario students end up graduating with four-year degrees.

Figure 1
Ontario Students' Views Concerning the Value of Degrees of Varying Lengths



As part of the survey, students were asked whether or not they would enroll in a three-year program that allowed them to graduate with honours but that required them to work harder during the shorter time period in which they did their studies. The question was meant to cover both versions of the American three-year programs: those in which students would take more credits within a given time period ("compression") or programs that had been rearranged so that more knowledge would be gained within a smaller number of credits ("reduction"). The implication in either case was that for a three-year program to be equivalent to a four-year

program, it would need to be more intense. Of the students surveyed, 41 per cent said they would enroll in such a program, while 59 per cent said they would not.

Table 1 shows the relative importance students attached to the possible reasons why they might or might not be interested in a shorter, more intense course of studies. A number of reasons shared top billing among those students saying yes, but the most common were cost and a desire to get on to the next stage of their lives. Of the possible reasons for saying no, the one that seemed the most common was a fear that a shortened program would be too academically challenging.

Table 1
Relative importance of reasons to favour or disfavour a three-year honours option

Reasons for saying yes (*n* = 340)	**Average score (out of 5)**
Enjoy the more challenging workload	3.03
Cost savings because of shorter study period	4.01
Opportunity to get to graduate school more quickly	4.04
Opportunity to get a quicker start in the working world	4.05
Reasons for saying no (*n* = 489)	
Concerned that a 3-year degree would be seen as inferior	3.13
Course load would be too challenging	3.95
I would miss out on the full university experience	3.42
Cost concerns (heavier workload would preclude working)	3.22

Views of Key Stakeholders

Key Ontario stakeholders (see Appendix C) had a variety of views about the issue of appropriate length of undergraduate degrees and about whether shorter programs – either of the "compressed" or of the "reduction" variety – might make sense in the province.

The first was the observation that Ontario is in the midst of a shift regarding how to define degree lengths and degree programs. Though the Ontario Qualifications Framework has been in existence for nearly a decade, it has been used to look at new programs more extensively than to look at existing ones. Inside the more established institutions, an awareness of the framework and the language of learning outcomes – and how this, in turn, might affect degree-level programming – is really only starting to emerge. A second very pertinent point is the observation that because Ontario institutions all operate on a credit system, students are to some extent able to speed up or lengthen their degree programs on their own if they so desire. Even now, a student can finish a "four-year" degree program in three years simply by taking heavier course loads and adding summer courses. This was generally seen as a positive thing, because with this method, students can easily change their minds about the program they want to complete and the pace at which they wish to complete it. One seminar participant noted that

many students say they go to University of Guelph for its trimester system, which allows students to graduate more quickly. Yet few, in fact, take advantage of this option, thus underlining the need for systems that permit flexibility in program lengths.

Equally important was the fact that students who participated expressed various concerns about shorter degrees. Some were concerned that shorter study times might mean they would lose the "full student experience," as shorter study periods would make it more difficult to fit in experiential learning periods, study abroad programs and the like. There was also concern that shorter, more intense study periods might hinder the ability of students to mix school and paid employment, thus possibly reducing affordability. On the other hand, the non-students in the group (i.e., university and college representatives) were more likely to see how shorter programs might possibly benefit students. One participant from the college sector wondered if longer programs were simply a luxury that belonged to a different era. With education becoming more expensive and the labour market becoming tighter due to skill shortages, some thought that the attraction of shorter programs would become more evident over time. It was thought, in particular, that shorter degrees might appeal to people who were interested in highly labour market-focused credentials or to people who were interested in a short-duration upgrade from a diploma.

Seminar participants were generally quite cool to the notion of standardized degree lengths, be they three years, four years or any other length. This was due, in part, to pragmatic concerns about costs of conversion. The effect of change on collective agreements was often mentioned, as were complicating knock-on effects on funding formulae and possible other, unintended, consequences. Most viewed the example of Germany, where over 80 per cent of bachelor's graduates went on to do a master's degree, as a cautionary tale. At a broader level, though, the resistance to standardized degree lengths came from two other sources. The first was a general enthusiasm for the concept of learning outcomes. As one participant said, the issue of degree lengths may be an issue at present only because not enough participants in the system take the concept of learning outcomes seriously. If there were better ways of determining and measuring learning outcomes, degree length might become irrelevant. The second source of resistance was simply a belief that a diversity of degree lengths was a good thing in and of itself, as market forces would ensure innovation and diversity.

Conclusions and Next Steps Regarding "Changing Times"

Though the bachelor's degree has been in existence for centuries, its length has never been standard. In much of the British Commonwealth, the standard length has been three years, whereas in the much-copied Scottish/American model, it has been four. Throughout the world, the number of "short" bachelor's degrees has been growing. However, this has resulted largely from the fact that many new short bachelor's programs are being conjured into existence where none previously existed – as part of the introduction of a three-cycle framework in Europe. Where the length of degrees has been reduced from four years to three, the initiatives tend to be hesitant and tentative, always introduced as an option and even then only for limited groups of students. There is no question that cost control has played a role in the move to three-year degrees in both Europe and the United States. In the United States, where individuals bear a much larger portion of the cost of education, the economic crisis has spurred a desire to offer

students and their families' cheaper educational alternatives. In Europe, increasing access to higher education made the continuance of very long, largely academic, degrees untenable. Reducing public costs was certainly therefore a factor but more so was a desire to get institutions to provide degrees that were more tailored to the needs of the labour market. Judging by current graduate unemployment rates and the degree to which institutions have actually made significant curricular content shifts at the bachelor's level, Bologna's success in achieving either of these goals is debatable.

In North America, the widespread resistance to the idea of shortening degree lengths is paradoxical. Opposition has been made on the grounds that any such shortening would create "a lesser degree," when in fact, the content and outcomes of degrees themselves have been largely unexamined and there are, in reality, few objective standards against which degree content and outcomes can be compared. In theory, the Ontario Qualifications Framework, with its standard description of outcomes, is a significant step in this direction. But it does not operate at quite as deep a level as the European Credit Transfer System or the Tuning Project in Europe. For instance, it leaves unexamined the meaning of a credit – what a credit means, for instance, a point that continues to bedevil issues of credit transfer in the province. In addition, it has yet to become really ingrained as a starting point for discussion about degree quality and transferability. Nevertheless, it remains the only really concrete step Ontario has yet taken in this direction.

Despite the fact that Ontario has few objective standards with which to compare degree content and outcomes, if Ontario stakeholders' views are anything to go by, the province could be at the cusp of a significant evolution in practice related to learning outcomes. Stakeholders, at least, seemed convinced that the use of this kind of terminology and practice was spreading, and that this phenomenon could lead to better ways of measuring degree outcomes. This, in turn, would allow for shorter degrees if they could be shown to deliver substantially similar outcomes.

It is important to note, however, that stakeholders' primary interest in using learning outcomes was not to standardize lengths at three, four or any other number of years, but rather to permit diversity of program lengths. Learning outcomes, it was felt, were a way of providing some degree of quality control and a seal of good housekeeping over a system where diversity of program lengths driven by market needs was the norm.

For the most part, student stakeholders were cautious about the benefits of shorter degrees, but many seemed moderately interested in the idea of getting through an honours degree faster. Though a majority still preferred to take four years or more to complete honours degree requirements, fully 41 per cent of Ontario students said they would be interested in a degree that got them through that type of program more quickly, even if it meant a much heavier workload. On its own, this finding suggests that there would be, at the very least, a strong market for an institution that wanted to present an "intensive" honours model to students. But stakeholders sensibly added a note of caution, pointing out that what students say and what they do are two different things; there are already a number of avenues open to students wishing to complete their degrees more quickly but in practice they are rarely used. Changing degree lengths is something that is actually quite difficult to do and requires a great deal of work in terms of re-aligning curricula at each institution. It is not something to be undertaken lightly.

That said, should one wish to meet the apparent student demand for shorter and more economical programs, the obvious policy step would be to broaden and deepen the discussion about learning outcomes. As the examples in the United States show, inertia and a preference for the status quo will be a major barrier to any attempt to provide shorter degrees, of either the compression or the reduction variety (but more especially the latter). Simply put, the forces of inertia are going to find it very easy to block innovation simply by saying, "Four years good; three years bad" – unless there is concrete evidence to the contrary. And for this to occur, there needs to be a major shift from thinking of degrees not simply as a culmination of a number of input variables (credit hours), but as a fulfillment of particular learning outcomes, both in terms of general and cognitive skills and in terms of specific knowledge obtained. The former are increasingly being measured in the United States through instruments such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), while the latter has been addressed over the last decade by things like the Tuning Process in Europe.[7] Some obvious candidates for initiatives in this area might be the following:

1. *Creating a standard Ontario definition of a credit*. Credits are the building blocks of degrees, so it would seem appropriate to begin attempts to look at learning outcomes on this basis. At the moment, there is no standard definition of the term "credit" in Ontario; indeed, not all institutions even have a definition of the term. Those institutions that do have one tend to base it on hours of classroom time, but even here, standards can vary widely: some universities give credit for 24 hours of classroom time (2 hours/week x 12 weeks), while others require 39 (3 hours/week x 13 weeks).

2. *Experimenting with "Tuning*." While the Ontario Qualifications Framework has looked at degree content at a very high level, it might be interesting to also do as the Europeans have done and start talking about agreed upon outcomes at a disciplinary level. A project modelled on the Lumina Foundation's "Tuning" process (currently operating in three US states) might be a useful way to start a conversation about codifying and harmonizing degree outcomes at the subject level in non-accredited fields of study.

In neither case would one expect a direct relationship between adoption of the project and the creation of shorter degree programs. Rather, these projects are designed to make progress obliquely. A project that began with shorter programs as the goal would likely run into a great deal of political opposition and interference, but a project that involved stakeholders more deeply in conversations about learning outcomes and curricular design would be more likely to succeed. This would be because such conversations might eventually lead to the discovery that it was possible to deliver a bachelor's-level degree in three years (that is, where a three-year degree was essentially a by-product of a broader discussion). In any case, projects like this would have other benefits. For instance, a more common definition of a credit would almost certainly have beneficial impacts on credit transfer. It now seems likely that the topic of subject-

[7] The Tuning Process is also now being trialled in the United States. For more details, see American Council on Education (nd) *Tuning USA*. Retrieved from http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/OnlineResources/Accountability/Tuning_USA.htm

level learning outcomes will rise ever higher on the policy agenda as the OECD's Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project[8] progresses. Given the influence that OECD projects tend to have, some early work on this might be in order in any case.[9]

Chapter 2 Changing Places

Introduction

Some systems of higher education have long had alternatives to universities for the granting of degrees. France, for instance, has the *grandes écoles* – specialist institutions of higher learning that were created when Napoleon closed the universities because he essentially deemed them useless.

In much of the rest of the world, starting in the 1960s, new institutions came into being to provide technical education at a postsecondary level: what we know as "community colleges" or some local equivalent. At the outset, these quite clearly did not provide alternatives to university education. However, over time, some of these institutions became increasingly complex, hired increasingly well-educated faculty and became more and more involved in applied research activities. Then, gradually, it became commonplace in these organizations to offer bachelor's degrees, albeit usually of a more specialized or "applied" character.

There are pros and cons to these arrangements, of course. The "arguments against" usually relate to the devaluation of the term "bachelor's degree" and the impossibility of delivering true bachelor's-level education in an environment that is less scholarly than traditional universities. But there are a number of pros as well – notably, the ability of such organizations to serve an access agenda, as well as their ability to provide new, more applied (and hence labour market-oriented) options for degrees and, in some cases, lower government educational expenditures. The sections below provide details about how these debates are playing out in various countries. In the first section, we take a general look at how non-university Higher Education Institutions in a number of European countries – most of which began life as much more vocationally oriented institutions – have come to absorb extremely large proportions of higher education students. We then look in some detail at New Zealand, which is given a great deal of prominence both because of the significant nature of its reforms and because its system of higher education closely resembles Canada's. Because of this similarity, it provides an easier case for policy learning. Experiments in other Canadian provinces are then examined. Not included in this overview are the UK and Australia, which have unitary higher education systems

[8] For more details, see OECD (nd) *Testing student and university performance globally: OECD's AHELO*. Paris: OECD. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3746,en_2649_35961291_40624662_1_1_1_1,00.html

[9] In the months prior to the publication of this report HEQCO has undertaken a Tuning project, funded eight pilots of the CLA, and is administering the AHELO feasibility study on behalf of the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities.

and hence little scope for granting degrees outside universities.[10] The United States is also omitted from this overview, because it has not recently made any major initiatives in this area.

Europe

Europe's tradition of non-university Higher Education Institutions bears some similarity to Canada's but with a number of important distinctions. It is, however, difficult to generalize about the entire continent's worth of educational types, simply because these institutions are not homogeneous and have very different historical roots. So it is worth going on a brief tour of some of the major countries of continental Europe before beginning such a discussion.

Non-university HEIs are most prominent in Central Europe (particularly in Germany and the Netherlands) and in Scandinavia. In nearly all cases, the non-university HEIs – called *Fachhochschulen* in Germany and Austria, *Hogescholen* in Flanders and the Netherlands (often called by their acronym, HBO, in the latter), *polytechnics* in Finland and *regional colleges* in Norway – are either the direct descendants of small district vocational institutions or the product of mergers between such institutions. However, over time (as early as 1971 in Germany and as late as the mid-1990s in Austria), they came to be seen as places that could deliver "applied higher studies."

Initially at least, the credentials on offer from these institutions were not bachelor's degrees but rather some form of diploma given after three years (usually) of classroom study, along with some form of practical experience not unlike a co-op placement. But despite not being universities and not handing out degrees, they were nevertheless considered by the OECD to be *equivalent* to universities in the sense that they were classified as "Tertiary 5A" under UNESCO's ISCED classification (as opposed to 5B, which are usually shorter and more labour-market-focused).[11] This, as well as the increasing role these institutions play in the field of applied research (see Kyvik & Lepori, 2008), is what has led many of these institutions to describe themselves (in English, if not in their native languages) as "Universities of Applied Sciences."

It is worth pausing at this point to understand why these European credentials in "applied higher studies" began to be seen as equivalent to university degrees in a way that Canadian college credentials did not. The first reason lay in the fact that a high proportion of teachers in the European institutions held advanced degrees, including doctorates. Thus, on the basis of educational "inputs" (i.e., teaching qualifications), there was little to distinguish the teaching in colleges from the teaching in universities. The second – and perhaps more important – distinction was that all national systems in Europe were careful to ladder their qualifications in such a way that students who received a credential from one of these institutions could gain automatic admittance to a university for continued study at the master's level. In Canada, by contrast, though governments were keen to promote "applied degrees," resistance from

[10] The Australian TAFE sector does, in fact, grant degrees in some very limited areas, but the examples seemed too limited to be included.
[11] For example, Ontario colleges are considered to be 5B programs under the ISCED definition.

universities meant that the new programs associated with these degrees were never properly laddered. That is, the credentials they offered were not always formally recognized as prerequisites for higher levels of study, thus creating at least the perception that these programs were terminal in nature.

Programs in European HEIs rapidly came to take up large fractions of some European countries' higher education enrolments. By 2001, roughly 45 per cent of all higher education enrolments in Finland and Norway were in polytechnics; 25 per cent of enrolments in Germany were in *Fachhochschulen*; and 62 per cent of all higher education enrolments in the Netherlands were in *Hogescholen* (OECD, 2005). By the start of the last decade, European HEIs were also starting to take on the characteristics of universities in the sense that their credentials were beginning to be called "bachelor's degrees." (This was not simply a result of Bologna; in some countries, the move to make these programs "degree programs" preceded Bologna by a few years.) It should be recalled, of course, that in all of these countries, the dominant form of first-cycle higher education at the time was a five- to six-year program leading to a *magister* degree; as a result, these HEIs effectively had the field to themselves for anyone who wanted to obtain a degree in a shorter amount of time.

The Bologna Process complicated the status of these institutions and their programs. On the one hand, because of the three-degree structure, baccalaureate certifications from these institutions could now formally be called bachelor's degrees; on the other hand, the HEIs now had competition for shorter certifications once universities also began offering them. By and large, a certain demarcation exists between the two degrees, with degrees from the non-university HEIs being seen as "applied" or "professional" degrees rather than "academic" ones. But given Bologna's focus on the labour market and a desire for greater application of degrees, this type of education has generally been seen in a more positive light since Bologna, at least by governments.

Evidence of this can be seen in the increasing reach of HEIs; increasingly, these types of institutions are engaging in applied research and offering master's degrees as well as baccalaureates (Kyvik & Lepori, 2008). In addition, credentials have now been laddered – that is, clear pathways have been created between different types of institutions. Prior to Bologna, it was quite difficult (and in countries like Spain, nearly impossible) to take a bachelor's degree at one type of institution and use it to gain entrance for a master's degree at another. But since Bologna, such transferability is understood to be a given, not only because it is a basic feature of a harmonized degree structure, but also because of the use of Qualifications Frameworks and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) with its underlying concept of student effort. All of these factors give universities more confidence in the quality of the graduates of non-university Higher Education Institutions who may be applying to their master's programs. And this situation inevitably gives degree programs at non-university HEIs a major boost in terms of credibility and desirability.

Because of the fluidity of the current situation, little has been written about the effects of the Bologna Process on non-university HEIs. However, it seems fairly clear that Bologna has complicated the status of these institutions. Many feel that universities are being asked to undergo a form of "vocational drift" at the same time as non-university HEIs seem to be

undergoing “academic drift” (Klupp & Teichler, 2008). In some countries, there is a feeling that the long-run trend is to erase distinctions between universities and non-university HEIs.

New Zealand

New Zealand’s experience is perhaps the most interesting relative to Canada, given the similarities of their higher education systems and the length of time New Zealand has experimented with Qualifications Frameworks and laddering.

Prior to 1989, only the six public universities were authorized to provide degree and postgraduate degree programs. Public polytechnics, colleges of education and institutes of technology – which are very similar to traditional Canadian community colleges – provided vocational diplomas and certificates but not degrees. In 1989, however, the *Education Act* was introduced to promote the expansion of higher education. The act authorized the polytechnics and colleges of education to provide degree programs, including, in some cases, postgraduate degrees. The rationale behind the change was that the qualification approval process should concentrate on the quality, the level and the focus of the qualification – rather than on the type of environment in which the qualification was taught. So if a polytechnic had the staffing, resources and research capability to extend one of its specializations to degree level – and if there was enough demand from students –they could develop and win approval for a degree from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, which regulates such matters.

Following this, in the early 1990s, the government also introduced a tertiary education policy known as “Learning for Life,” which called for polytechnics to offer degree programs to increase the number of people with high-quality higher education and to meet the increasing demand for highly skilled employees. The polytechnics responded by offering degree programs and, in some cases, becoming more like universities.

Prior to 1989, New Zealand polytechnics tended to look quite a bit like Ontario community colleges in that they promoted applied and technological research and tended to have strong business links. Like the Ontario colleges, they worked closely with industry associations and business and professional bodies to ensure that their courses were supplying the skills required by employers. Most (14 out of 18) have since added advanced, applied degree-level education to their list of competencies. Some offer as many as 15 separate bachelor’s degree programs in fields as varied as nursing and health sciences, information technology, commerce, and engineering technology. A few now offer master’s and other graduate programs.

Conversations with administrators in New Zealand further confirmed the impression that degree programs offered at polytechnics and institutes of technology are differentiated from degree programs at universities, but not because they are academically inferior or cheaper. Government per-student funding (called the “student achievement component”) is essentially the same for undergraduate programs in polytechnics/institutes of technology and universities, though the funding does differ by discipline. Tuition fees charged to students are also quite

similar, varying by institution and course from about NZ$4,700 to about NZ$7,253.[12] The distinctions that do exist between polytechnic degrees and those offered by universities tend to be related to the disciplines in which degrees are offered and to teaching methods. Most polytechnic degrees are applied or vocational degrees that fit with the government's statement concerning the polytechnics' distinctive contribution.[13] In general, polytechnics rely less on traditional lectures, and classes tend to be smaller and more hands-on. In many polytechnic degrees, there also is a greater use of practical work – via internships, placements in industry or other forms of cooperative education. The faculty also tends to have working experience in their area of expertise – outside of higher education. And students at many polytechnics tend to be older than traditional university students.

A 2009 study by the Ministry of Education used the integrated data set on student loan borrowers to examine the claim that people with bachelor's degrees from polytechnics are discriminated against in the labour market and that they earn less than people who complete similar qualifications at universities (Smyth, Hyatt, Nair, & Scott, 2009). The analysis found that the labour market in New Zealand appears not to discriminate against polytechnic degrees and that pay for the first job of students holding these degrees tends to be roughly the same as first-job pay for graduates with a bachelor's degree from a university. And while university bachelor's graduates tend to earn slightly more on average than polytechnic bachelor's graduates by their fifth year out, the differences are relatively small for the majority of graduates. Moreover, in many of the course areas in which polytechnics have specialized, there is very little difference in the earnings of bachelor's graduates from polytechnics and universities, and in some cases, the polytechnic graduates are earning slightly more than university graduates.

Although the move to launch degree programs in polytechnics in New Zealand has borne extensive fruit, in recent years, the government has started to de-emphasize this role. About five years ago, in its 2007–12 Tertiary Education Strategy, the New Zealand government started to stress the *distinctive* contributions of different types of providers, with each sub-sector having a particular focus and a particular role to play in the network of tertiary education provision (Cullen, 2006). This move encouraged the polytechnics to renew their interest in their traditional core focus—applied professional and vocational qualifications--resulting in a slight reduction in their focus on degree programs.

Though there have been no moves to close down degrees at polytechnics or private training establishments, there has been a decline in enrolments. In 2009, 12 per cent of polytechnic students were studying in degree programs, compared to 17 per cent in 2002. Broadly speaking, the government appears to be shifting back at least somewhat toward a model where polytechnics/institutes of technology are delivering basic foundational and vocational kinds of

[12] One New Zealand institute of technology, Southern Institute of Technology (SIT), introduced what they called a zero pricing strategy in 2000 in order to help reverse population decline in Invercargill, the community where SIT is located. SIT was able to do this because of contributions from the local community and businesses that, together with the per-student government allocation, helped cover students' costs of instruction. Given its small class sizes, SIT was also able to achieve economies of scale by fitting more students into existing classes. The strategy was extremely successful and helped them grow FTE enrolments from 1,700 to 5,000.

[13] For instance, many polytechnic degrees are in fields like nursing, business, computing or technology.

education, which will allow students to progress to higher levels of learning if they so choose – without necessarily providing full degrees themselves. Their role as catalysts of *regional* economic development is also being emphasized, in terms of both teaching and research. As a result of these new pressures, most polytechnics do not feel that they have to make a choice between their degree and their lower-level programs. Instead, they realize that they have to find the proper balance to accommodate demand for a range of qualifications. Many feel that they have an important role to play in offering degrees to non-traditional students who might be intimidated by universities and to students who want to remain in their less densely populated home regions (as many polytechnics and institutes of technology are located in more sparsely populated areas).

Canada

As recently as the late 1980s, Canadian postsecondary institutions were relatively easy to classify. There were two clear institutional types, which played very clearly defined and differentiated roles, even if their responsibilities and laddering functions differed somewhat from province to province. On one side was the traditional university, with a clear mandate for teaching and research; on the other side stood traditional technical, professional and community colleges. Though these colleges differed in their management and governance models, they all placed great emphasis on teaching and had a mandate to focus on broad access, community needs and being responsive to the needs of employers.

By the mid-1990s, however, policy makers in different parts of the country were questioning the binary system of higher education and wondering whether it was time to give non-university HEIs the authority to grant baccalaureate degrees and whether it was still appropriate to have a binary system of "colleges" and "universities" – with only the latter being allowed to grant degrees. Over the next decade or so, provinces began experimenting with new, non-university-based degrees. They were prompted variously by such matters as changes in professional licensing requirements, interests in delivering non-traditional and innovative degree programs and the need to reduce costs and expand access. By 2007, at least 75 degrees were being offered in 40 non-university settings. However, despite the proliferation of these new degree programs over the past decade, they have yet to make much impact on the overall composition of enrolment at the undergraduate level.

In 2008/09, for instance, only five thousand college students were enrolled in college degree programs, representing 3 per cent of the total enrolment (Clark, Moran, Skolnik, & Trick, 2010). Providing a full narrative of the Canadian experience of degree granting in non-university settings is a complicated task, given the number of provinces involved and interprovincial differences in regulations concerning non-university higher education. The fact that policy is made at the provincial level inevitably means that the situation is quite different from one jurisdiction to another.

However, a national *framework* for degree quality assurance does now exist (the 2007 CMEC Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance in Degree Education in Canada [CMEC, 2007]). This statement implicitly defines types of degrees but omits discussion of the types of institutions that can or should grant such degrees. Since their inception in the 1960s, colleges in

British Columbia offered the first two years of university studies with a view to encouraging students to then transfer those credits to one of the province's universities. Unlike the case in Alberta, which also has widespread credit transfer, colleges in BC may grant "associate degrees" for finishing just two years of a degree, much as American colleges do.

Starting in 1988, in response to a perception that access to university-level education in BC was in need of serious expansion,[14] a number of these colleges gained the right to offer all four years of programming (though the degrees were still awarded by one of the existing universities). By 1995, they were given the right to full degree-granting status and given the title "university colleges" (Dennison & Schuetze, 2004, p. 18), though these institutions were not allowed to call themselves "universities" until 2008. By and large, as British Columbia institutions came closer and closer to granting full degrees, their status changed. Far from creating a situation where degrees were being granted in a large number of new, non-university settings, British Columbia simply ended up creating a lot of new universities. There were some exceptions to this pattern, of course; the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), for instance, has resolutely avoided becoming a university, even though a majority of its students are now in degree programs. And there have been a number of other developments as well. Foreign providers have been approved to deliver degrees in the province (Farleigh Dickinson University of New Jersey, for instance). And a new type of degree known as an "applied degree" was introduced – that is, one tied to a specific occupation, designed with support from employer groups – which can be delivered through colleges as well as universities.

Alberta, like British Columbia, spent decades developing a college system based partly on the premise that these colleges should act as "feeders" to the main universities (the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge) by providing transferable credits that would represent the equivalent of the first two years of university. Here, too, colleges that were already in the business of providing university-credit courses began to push for the right to offer degrees on their own, and as early as 1995, they were allowed to start offering applied degrees in a number of fields. To a certain extent, developments in Alberta mirrored those in British Columbia. Just as institutions such as Kwantlen and Fraser Valley switched from being colleges to universities, Mount Royal and Grant McEwan in Alberta gained a new and explicitly higher status. However, as a means to limit more upward drift, the Alberta government decided to create six very specific institutional sectors.

The "old" universities became known as "comprehensive academic and research institutions," while the new universities became "baccalaureate and applied studies institutions." The Northern and Southern Alberta Institutes of Technology (NAIT and SAIT), which also grant applied degrees, became known as "polytechnics," while the rest of the community college system became known as "comprehensive community institutions." Religious ("independent") institutions and specialty institutions (like the Alberta College of Art & Design and the Banff Centre) also received their own separate designations. Thus, the key innovation in Alberta did not lie primarily in the expansion of degree-granting powers. The main innovation consisted of the development of an accompanying framework that recognized the proliferation of higher

[14] For an in-depth discussion of these reforms, see Dennison and Schuetze (2004), pp. 13–38.

education missions and institutional types but that tied institutions as far as possible into particular roles. This prevented any perceived "mission creep" on the part of institutions that were newly permitted to offer degrees.

In Ontario, the key policy decisions were made through the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act* (2000), which permitted both colleges and private postsecondary institutions to offer a baccalaureate-level degree. For the most part, the new degrees that have been permitted have been in applied areas of study. Originally, these degrees were unlike some already relatively applied degree programs in university (e.g., nursing or journalism) in that they were meant to have a "hands-on" focus in a particular field leading directly to employment. For this reason, most new degrees offered by non-university HEIs in Ontario require students to do a one-term work placement in their final year of study. Despite the original designation, there have been changes in nomenclature so that college-offered degrees do not have to include the word "applied" in their titles, though the degrees must still be professionally oriented.[15]

One aspect of the degree-expansion process that ties British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario together is the quality assurance process they are all using to determine which non-university Higher Education Institutions are eligible to deliver baccalaureate programming. All three have arms-lengths agencies: the British Columbia Degree Quality Assessment Board (BCDQAB), the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) and the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB), respectively. And all of these agencies have very similar structures and mandates (though PEQAB is alone in not having jurisdiction over programs offered by universities). Each board or council is composed primarily of lay members (but serviced by professional, full-time secretariats), which make recommendations to a responsible minister about specific applications under their legislation regarding the granting of degrees. In all three cases, the minister retains the power to refuse a recommendation from the board or council, though such refusals appear to be relatively rare.

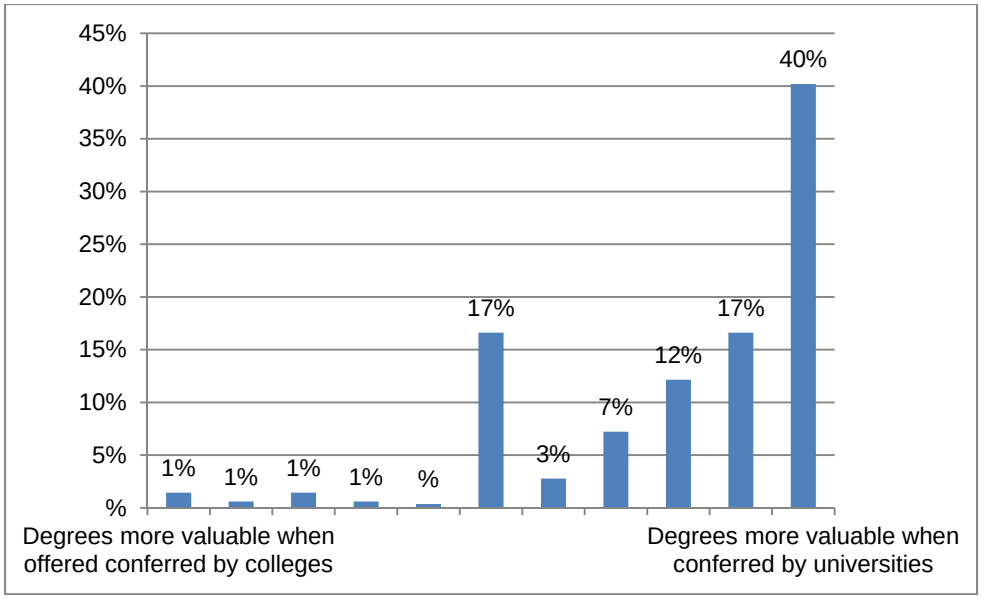
Views of Ontario University Students on College vs. University Degrees

It is perhaps no surprise that the Ontario university student sample tended to indicate that they viewed degrees as being intrinsically more valuable if they came from universities than if they came from colleges. Less than 5 per cent saw degrees from colleges as being, to varying extents, more valuable than degrees from universities, whereas almost 80 per cent said that

[15] There are a variety of ways to indicate with nomenclature whether a degree is applied/professional or research oriented. With the exception of the bachelor of applied science degree, which connotes a research-oriented degree, research-oriented degrees are normally of the form *bachelor of faculty (subject)* – for example, bachelor of arts (psychology) or bachelor of science (chemistry). The level of study at the bachelor's level can be further differentiated as "honours" for research-oriented degrees. Because the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act* (2000) allows colleges to offer degrees only in applied areas, research-oriented nomenclatures (e.g., bachelor of arts/science/applied science) and the term "honours" are not available for designating college degrees. The typical approaches to nomenclature for applied college bachelor degrees are (1) *bachelor of faculty (subject)* – for example, bachelor of technology (information technology); (2) *bachelor of applied faculty (subject)* (with the exception of "applied science") – for example, bachelor of applied arts (justice studies); or (3) *bachelor of subject* – for example, bachelor of interior design.

university degrees were, to some extent, more valuable than those conferred by colleges. However, 17 per cent stated that the two were roughly equally valuable.

Figure 2
Views on the desirability of degrees offered at different types of institutions



In order to better understand why students might believe degrees from one type of institution were better than those from another, we asked them about a number of features of these institutional types and whether they rated these features as being better at colleges or at universities. We also asked students about how important each of the factors was in their own decision to choose a place of study. The results are shown in Table 2, in order of rated importance.

Table 2
Undergraduate students' views on whether specific education-related factors are better at colleges or universities

	Rated Importance (out of 5)	Better at Colleges (%)	About the Same (%)	Better at Universities (%)
Long-term career options	4.23	7	27	66
Quality of instructors	3.74	6	37	57
Institutional prestige	3.60	<1	12	88
Easier acceptance into graduate programs	3.49	8	13%	79
Short-term job prospects after graduation	3.32	43	37	21
Making friends with people who will be valuable contacts later	3.09	6	71	24

	Rated Importance (out of 5)	Better at Colleges (%)	About the Same (%)	Better at Universities (%)
Tuition costs	3.01	82	16	2
Class size	2.85	61	33	6
Faculty involvement in research	2.67	2	11	87
Easier admission criteria	2.39	87	12	1

University undergraduates were clear in saying that their main reason for choosing an institution was "long-term career options," and 66 per cent of them felt that universities did a better job at delivering these options than did colleges. While they were of the opinion that colleges did a better job of improving students' short-term job prospects after graduation (43 per cent vs. 21 per cent), this factor was perceived as considerably less important in choosing where to study (average score 3.32 out of 5 vs. 4.23 for long-term career options). In the other three top areas of importance – the quality of instructors, institutional prestige, and easier acceptance into graduate programs – students were vastly more likely to say that these factors were better at universities than at colleges. The areas where students were likely to believe that colleges did a better job – lower tuition costs, class sizes and easier admissions – were also the areas on which students were least likely to place importance.

A separate question in the survey allowed us to determine which students in the sample had previously spent time in a community college and whether or not they had different views about the desirability of college – in comparison to colleagues who had always been in university. In their answers to all the questions, they were slightly more positive about colleges than the other students were – usually by about five percentage points – but the basic pattern was no different.

Obviously, the sample available to us for this project was not an ideal one, as we were incapable of sampling the views of degree-program students in colleges. These results should therefore under no circumstances be seen as an informed rejection of offering degree-level programs in colleges. However, they can be interpreted as an informed statement of general satisfaction with university-offered degrees. Or, to put it another way, if there is a burgeoning market for college-offered degrees, it isn't being led by dissatisfied university customers.

That said, an HEQCO analysis of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) student surveys suggest that college degrees serve a somewhat different demographic than do universities. In 2010, based on administrative data provided to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) of the 4,505 graduates, 30 per cent were over 25 years old and 57 per cent were male. Of these, 80 per cent noted that their main goal for enrolling in college was to prepare for employment or a career, and 12 per cent had enrolled in order to prepare for further college or university education. Fifteen per cent had attended university previously but had not completed a degree. Six per cent had a previous degree. In addition graduates of college degree programs appeared satisfied with their programs, and their labour market outcomes were reasonably positive. Seventy-nine per cent were satisfied with the overall quality of the learning experiences in their program, and 85 per cent of graduates said they would recommend the program to others.

Views of Key Stakeholders Regarding Relevance to Ontario of Policy Lessons in Other Countries

There was a substantial amount of skepticism among stakeholders as to the relevance to Ontario of many of the policy lessons of the past few years in places like Europe and New Zealand. One significant point of discussion in this regard was the relatively slow (compared to New Zealand and Europe) rate of growth of bachelor's degree enrolments at non-university HEIs in Ontario. This was partly because of system design: at the outset (a decade ago), limits were put on the ability of Ontario colleges to offer degree-level programs both in terms of the proportion of programs offered at colleges 5 per cent at Colleges of Applied Arts and Sciences (CAATs) and 15 per cent at the newly designated Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning ITALs) and in terms of subject matter. (Colleges are essentially prevented from offering degrees that compete with existing degree programs at university, which eliminates the possibility of their offering degrees in any core academic disciplines.) However, since few colleges actually fill their quota, this is likely not a complete answer.

From there, the discussion moved to the issue of whether more students at the bachelor's level *should* move to colleges for cost reasons, as was suggested in the recently published book *Academic Transformation* by Ian Clark et al. (Clark, Moran, Skolnik, & Trick, 2010). A number of college participants were clearly in favour of such a shift, arguing, in effect, that the college programs were in high demand, and since they were highly targeted to the labour market, they were of added importance during periods of slow economic growth.[16] University participants did not dispute those points, but took aim, instead, at the notion that teaching undergraduates in colleges was inherently cheaper than doing so in universities. They pointed out that as colleges hired more faculty with doctorates, labour costs would rise and so, too, would the pressure for research funding (i.e., the dreaded "academic drift"). In the long run, more degree programs in colleges might therefore prove inflationary at the college level if not within the system as a whole.

This led to a further discussion about whether it made sense to push students toward these college bachelor's degrees without first solving the problems of laddering to higher degrees. The government policy that prevented colleges from offering programs that compete with university programs has meant that colleges have focused on so-called "niche" programs (e.g., bachelor of business in golf management) which may not align with the traditional fields of study in which master's degrees are offered. Thus, many of the difficulties that college students encounter in getting their degrees recognized as prerequisites for further study arise not because universities dismiss college-based credentials outright,[17] but rather because the high degree of

[16] It was not always clear whether the "high demand" argument was being made with respect to college programs generally or with respect to college-based baccalaureate programs. If the latter, it would appear to be a paradox that college degree programs could simultaneously be in high demand and be so slow to grow.

[17] College participants did note that they had encountered instances of their graduates having been summarily told that their credentials from colleges were insufficient for qualification by certain university graduate program admissions officers. However, when representations were made to more senior officials in universities on the subject, these decisions were always reversed. This does not mean that these students were necessarily offered places; it

specialization means that graduates who have college bachelor's degrees may lack the breadth of subject knowledge usually required of graduate students. The discussion then hovered around the edges of whether or not the policy of forcing colleges into these "niche" programs made sense. As one participant put it: "If we have well-defined outcomes for a program of study, why should we care who provides it?" However, no conclusions were reached.

It should be noted that a good deal of discussion around this issue was taken up by consternation over the use of the term "applied" (as opposed to "academic," in terms of program orientation). Although the term "applied" is used in a relatively uncontroversial fashion elsewhere in the world, in Ontario it has a fairly specific—and, in many people's eyes, derogatory—meaning related to its use as a term to signify short, vocational programs offered at Ontario colleges. While colleges are no longer required to use the "applied" designation, the distinction in Ontario, it seems, identifies that a program is "professionally oriented" (i.e., tailored toward a relatively narrow occupational sector).

In many respects, this is an issue of being "divided by a common language," but the phenomenon is a useful reminder that specific terminologies imported from abroad need to be chosen carefully when policy is being discussed. Broadly, though, there was a feeling among seminar participants that much of the discussion on these topics was largely academic (so to speak) – in the absence of any serious policy leadership on the part of the provincial government. In the present system at least, major shifts in enrolment are essentially impossible in the absence of some substantial shifts in funding policy, and no one present thought that this would be likely to happen, given the general view of government disengagement on the issue. As one participant said: "If the government wants to get serious about enrolment management then this discussion makes sense; if not, then it's kind of pointless."

When the idea of a more competitive and market-based system (presumably funded either by higher tuition or vouchers, or some combination of the two) was raised, three key points were made. First, it was noted that Ontario's Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board would become even more important as a guarantor of outcomes (one university participant described PEQAB as "a critical piece of infrastructure"); second, it was pointed out that efficient markets require good information, and it was not clear at the moment whether Ontario had really cracked the problem of how to give students good information; and third, it was noted that competition might matter in the GTA but that outside of that region, the issue was essentially irrelevant, because many non-GTA institutions had trouble merely filling seats.

A final point in the discussion concerned the issue of "place." Some felt that the main thrust of the discussion – that of "where" degrees might be taught – in a sense ignored one of the biggest innovations of the past couple of decades – namely, the development of *joint/collaborative* college diploma/university degree programs (of which over one hundred now exist). These, it was felt, needed to be more prominently included in the mix.

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merely signifies that they had won the right to be considered (which is, of course, all that anyone from any institution can ask).

Conclusions and Next Steps Regarding "Changing Places"

It is difficult to identify a global trend with respect to providing bachelor's degrees through non-university HEIs. In Europe, the fact that these institutions award bachelor's degrees is, in a sense, an accident of Bologna – though non-university HEIs in Europe had been awarding three-year credentials in "applied higher studies" for much longer. As in British Columbia, where the most advanced degree-granting colleges simply became universities, the fact that these institutions grant bachelor's degrees simply seems to be hastening the elimination of the line between the two sectors.

In other jurisdictions, such as Alberta and New Zealand, there is a desire to make sure many different institutions can offer degrees (particularly of an "applied" nature). But there is also a desire to ensure that a real and substantial mission differentiation exists between sectors. In a sense, there seems to be a recognition here that, without sufficient regulation or political direction, the main effect of expanding degree-granting power into non-university HEIs will be to reduce institutional differentiation and not to expand it. Containing costs per student has clearly been a factor behind some governments' desire to allow non-university HEIs to confer bachelor's degrees in non-university settings. Even in cases where these institutions have later become universities themselves (e.g., in Alberta and British Columbia); governments have gone to some lengths to keep a rein on costs at those institutions. (This has been done largely by giving them a legal designation that falls well short of allowing them to participate fully in the kinds of research activities in which more comprehensive universities engage.)

But that clearly isn't the only reason; governments around the world, when they allow non-university HEIs to offer degrees, they are primarily interested in the creation of degrees that are more occupation-oriented, or "applied." The implication clearly is that the more theoretically oriented university sector is simply not up to this task. "Improving access" is occasionally used as a justification for these kinds of programs, but it is not always entirely clear what this term means or whether it should be accepted as anything more than rhetorical. The term likely applies most to New Zealand, where new degrees are, in many instances, offered in polytechnics outside the big cities, where the universities are located. It applies significantly less to Canada, where new, college-based degree programs are located almost exclusively in big cities that are already well served by existing universities. And in Europe, "improving access" is not very applicable, since population density there is such that most communities are reasonably proximate to a higher education institution. In these European countries, the "access" mandate can, at best, be described not in terms of geographical access, but rather in terms of non-traditional programs' supposed appeal to a non-traditional audience.

Explaining differing levels of take-up of these degrees in applied areas of study is perhaps a more difficult task. Why do degree enrolments in non-university HEIs make up 62 per cent of total tertiary enrolments in the Netherlands and only 2 per cent in Ontario? The difference certainly does not stem from an issue of relative prestige, because Ontario colleges' burden of being lower in the academic hierarchy is shared by non-university HEIs elsewhere. Clearly, some of the variation has to do with history. Much of the non-university HEIs' "market share" in central Europe is a reflection of the fact that prior to Bologna they had no competition for short-duration tertiary certifications, as universities were focused on longer degrees. But partly also, it

is that in both New Zealand and Europe systems take into account, to a much greater extent, the need to provide the very laddering opportunities which, for a variety of reasons, have proved difficult to build into the Ontario system. Ontario's lack of laddering stems, in part, from a policy decision to restrict the kinds of degrees offered at colleges to areas in which there is no competition from universities – a barrier that European systems at least do not have to face.

Among students currently taking degrees at Ontario's universities, few seem to think that a degree in a different setting would be as valuable as getting one from a university. This is despite students generally agreeing that colleges are better at short-term job preparation and at keeping class sizes low. If – and this is by no means certain – this result is in any way indicative of the way high school students think about the two types of institution, then adding degree capacity in non-university HEIs may suffer simply from limits on demand, given the restrictions colleges currently face in the type of programs they can offer.

Admittedly, the sample of students used to answer this question was less than ideal. As they were all university-based students, the results most likely reflect a self-serving desire among respondents to make their own credentials look better. Had the project been able to ask students in colleges/polytechnics about the degrees they took, no doubt we would have been able to report high levels of program satisfaction and likely quite a different view about relative merits of degrees offered in college settings (as discussed above). Nevertheless, the results suggest that, under current policy conditions at least, students at universities are not sufficiently discontented with large classes and longer transitions to the labour market to make college-offered degrees an attractive alternative.

Based on this survey of issues, there seems to be little in the way of compelling reasons to shift more of the traditional bachelor's-level teaching load to colleges. The wide geographical distribution of universities in Ontario seems to negate a geographic access rationale. It is possible that there might be a cost rationale, but many stakeholders seem convinced that any cost advantage is likely to prove fleeting, as bachelor's-degree-granting status will inevitably increase teaching costs at any institution that begins to confer such degrees. (It would be interesting to conduct further research into unit teaching costs over time in those colleges that have been awarded the right to award bachelor's degrees to see if granting bachelor's degrees really does increase teaching costs.)

The rationale of wishing to foster innovation and more professionally oriented bachelor's degrees remains, of course. Where there are potentially rationales to see more traditional degrees delivered in non-traditional settings in an attempt to increase competition and quality. That is, greater competition in a particular field might raise quality overall (though cost reductions as a consequence of competition seem unlikely). In areas like business, accounting and the social sciences – fields where the primary determinant of quality is staff and little physical capital is required – colleges would most likely be able to organize and offer degree programs of sufficiently high quality that they could compete with universities for students. And their appeal would increase if they infused the curriculum with some aspects of the professional orientation that they have done well with in other areas. This, of course, would require a

wholesale shift in policy. At the moment, Ontario's system for allowing colleges to set up degree programs is specifically arranged to *prevent* competition between universities and colleges.[18] This seems partly to have been the result of political expediency (Why pick a fight with the vested interest of universities?). But the system was also set up this way because of concerns that degrees in more traditional areas of study might not be of as high a quality in a non-university setting. As with the issue of shortening degree times, however, there are ways to monitor and safeguard quality standards if an approach based more on "learning outcomes" were to be taken.

It could also be useful to do research to discover how well graduates of college-delivered bachelor's degree programs have done in graduate school. If enough data were available to show that such graduates were coping with further studies at a level similar to that of graduates of university bachelor's programs, there would be evidence that quality standards in these bachelor's programs are sufficiently high to merit further expansion. Even if such expansion were not considered financially or politically desirable, a study like this would nevertheless be of assistance in ongoing efforts to create more explicit laddering for college-delivered bachelor's degrees. And this would presumably enhance the value of such degrees in the view of prospective students.

Conclusion

For centuries, universities have had a monopoly on the granting of degrees and have also had the freedom, more or less, to define what a degree was. Over the past couple of decades, many Western countries have begun loosening that monopoly by allowing degrees to be delivered in non-university settings. They carried out this change by imposing limits on institutions' freedom to define a degree (through degree Qualifications Frameworks and the like) or by taking on the right to define a degree directly through legislation. Globally, we are still at the beginning of this process of de-monopolization of the degree-granting process, and a great deal of experimentation is currently in progress. Although many of the trends are heading in similar directions, it is not always easy to apply policy lessons from one country to another, because the starting point of the different reforms can differ enormously.

One observation is key however. In order to create more diversity in program offerings for *students* – be it in terms of program lengths or program delivery sites – there paradoxically needs to be more harmonization of standards among *providers,* in order to ensure that diverse qualifications remain broadly portable. And, increasingly, learning outcomes standards seem to be taking centre stage in this process of harmonization.

Ontario has already taken some significant first steps in looking at learning outcomes. Certainly, its Qualifications Framework is the most complete and detailed in Canada, and PEQAB has done a great deal of work on the issue. However, the discussion remains some distance from the mainstream in the discourse of the province's higher education system. As a result, it seems

[18] Technically, the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities forbade "duplication," rather than "competition," but the effect is the same.

likely that most discussions about changing program lengths or loci will automatically become bogged down in discussions about “quality” (or lack thereof) that lack much content or metrics.

There are suggestions – no more than that, really – that delivering more degrees of shorter duration and/or delivered via colleges might be beneficial to the individual and society at large. But to prove that this is the case requires much greater attention to learning outcomes – from the level of individual credits to the level of programs and degrees. As detailed in the conclusions to the two chapters, HEQCO could usefully play a role in this by initiating projects which look at outcomes in various ways – either by attempting a Tuning-like project, looking at possibilities for a common definition of a credit, or taking a closer look at further education outcomes for graduates of college-delivered bachelor’s programs.[19] Such projects would not only have the effect of making it easier to assess the desirability of shorter or college-delivered degrees, but also obtain information that may make credit transfer or degree laddering much simpler.

[19] Just prior to publication of this report, HEQCO initiated a series of projects on Learning Outcomes.

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Appendix A

Survey Methodology

The data in this report were collected during an online survey conducted by Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) between February 18 and March 1, 2011. HESA runs an ongoing online panel with a membership of over 8,000 undergraduate students who were enrolled in an undergraduate program in a Canadian degree-granting institution at some point in the 2009/10 academic year and who returned for study in 2010/11. Each month, HESA sends a survey on a variety of issues to students on the panel, with a response rate which varies from month to month but which is usually in the range of 25 to 40 per cent. The sample for this study is 846 cases, all from universities in the province of Ontario.

Obviously, the resulting sample for any of these monthly surveys is not a purely random one, as members of the panel must have responded to at least one previous survey administered by Higher Education Strategy Associates (either directly or as part of its Canadian Education Project). Since the surveys are not based on random probability samples, the concept of "margin of sampling error" is not applicable to results shown here. As with most student surveys, females are slightly overrepresented; they appear to be simply likelier to respond to surveys than males. Our panel is also slightly overweight in Ontario and underweight in Quebec. It is also biased toward upper-year students. Exact numbers in the sample change from month to month, and up-to-date details of the survey demographics are available on request.

All HESA reports using data for our panel are re-weighted based on publicly available data related to gender and province of enrolment. For this study, the province of origin enrolment is not an issue, because all the interviewees are from the same region, so only gender weighting has been used. Based on comparisons between our weighted sample and those of other major student surveys such as Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey or one of the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium's three rotating surveys, we are confident that results from our panel are reasonably representative of the Canadian university undergraduate student population.

Appendix B

Survey Questions

The following represent the specific questions asked of panel members concerning the issue of undergraduate degrees. HESA maintains a demographic file on each respondent based on previous surveys, so these questions were not asked as part of the January 2011 survey.

[1] Are you currently enrolled in a . . .

[1] 3 year bachelor's degree
[2] 4 year bachelor's degree
[3] 5 years or more bachelor's degree
[4] Other

[2] In your opinion . . .

5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Three-year bachelor's degrees are much less valuable than four-year degrees.

[3] If you had the opportunity to enrol in a program of study that would allow you to graduate with full honours after 3 years but would require you to work harder, would you do so?

[1] Yes
[0] No

[4] How important were each of the following factors in your decision to say yes to the previous question? (Not at all Important/Somewhat Unimportant/Neutral/ Important/Very Important)

[1] Enjoyment or challenge of a heavier course load
[2] Cost savings, as a shorter program would decrease overall tuition fees and living expenses
[3] Earlier enrolment to graduate or professional programs
[4] Earlier start in the working world

[5] How important were each of the following factors in your decision to say no to the previous question? (Not at all Important/Somewhat Unimportant/Neutral/ Important/Very Important)

[1] Three-year honours degrees might be seen as inferior to four-year degrees
[2] Course load would be too challenging
[3] I would miss out on the full university experience

[4] Cost concerns (e.g., heavier course load would make it harder to undertake paid employment)

[6] In your opinion . . .

5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

[1] Bachelor's degrees are more valuable when offered at a college

Thinking about bachelor's degrees, please indicate whether each of the factors listed below is better at colleges [1], at universities [3], or if the two are about the same [2].

[1] Class size
[2] Quality of instructors
[3] Faculty involvement in research
[4] Short-term job prospects after graduation
[5] Long-term career options
[6] Easier acceptance to graduate or professional programs
[7] Tuition cost
[8] Easy to get into
[9] Making friends with people who will be valuable contacts later in life
[10] School prestige

[7] Please indicate how important each of the following factors was in your decision to attend your current institution. (Not at all Important/Somewhat Unimportant/Neutral/ Important/Very Important)

[1] Class size
[2] Quality of instructors
[3]Faculty involvement in research
[4] Short-term job prospects after graduation
[5] Long-term career options
[6] Easier acceptance to graduate or professional programs
[7] Tuition cost
[8] Easy to get into
[9] Making friends with people who will be valuable contacts later in life [10] School prestige

[8] Have you ever attended a college?
[1] Yes
[2] No

Appendix C

List of Participants in Stakeholder Consultations Held March 21, 2011

- Alexi White, OUSA
- Nora Loreto (representing Sandy Hudson), CFS Ontario
- Jim Robeson, College Student Alliance
- Peter Gooch, Council of Ontario Universities
- Erica Simmons, Council of Ontario Universities
- Donna Woolcott, Council of Ontario Universities
- Cindy Robinson, Council of Ontario Universities
- Monica Reilly, Colleges Ontario
- Suzanne Dwyer, Colleges Ontario
- Virginia Hatchette, PEQAB
- Lucia Padure, TCU (Government of Ontario)
- Susan Golets, TCU (Government of Ontario)
- Manzur Malik, Ontario Public Service Employees Union
- Ann Dean, Humber College
- Marjorie McColm, George Brown College

In addition, Ken Norrie, Richard Wiggers and Mary Catharine Lennon of HEQCO were in attendance, as were Alex Usher and Paul Jarvey of HESA. The meeting was chaired by HESA's Pamela Marcucci.

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations was invited to the consultation, but declined to attend.

Appendix D

Discussion Guide for Stakeholder Consultations held March 21, 2011

(Note: The guide was accompanied by an early version of this report.)

Introduction

This guide is intended to provide a basis for discussion for the March 21 Symposium organized by Higher Education Strategy Associates on behalf of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. It accompanies the document "Changing Times, Changing Places".

The purpose of the overall project is to understand the global changes that have been occurring in Baccalaureate-level education, and to gain the views of key Ontario stakeholders as to what lessons – if any – are relevant to the provincial system of post-secondary education.

The paper, as you will have seen, is divided into two sections. The first, "Changing Times", deals with developments in the length of degree programs, and we will deal with issues related to this section before lunch on the 21st. The second, "Changing Places", deals with the increasing prevalence of degrees being delivered in non-university settings, and we will deal with issues related to this section after lunch.

Section 1 – Changing Times (Monday AM)

1. What did you think of the section? Were there particular parts that you thought were more intriguing than others? Were there parts where you wanted more information?

2. In principle, is there a "right length" for an undergraduate degree? What considerations should go into defining the length of a degree?

3. A number of US states and individual universities are looking at shortening degree lengths. What are the pros and cons of such approaches? Would such approaches work in Ontario?

4. The European approach to degree lengths focuses more on learning objectives and hours of effort. What are the pros and cons of such an approach? Would such approaches work in Ontario?

Section 2 – Changing Places (Monday PM)

1. What did you think of the section? Were there particular parts that you thought were more intriguing than others? Were there parts where you wanted more information?

2. Is distinguishing between “academic” (i.e. university) and “applied” (i.e. non-university) degrees necessary? Why or why not?

3. Why, in your opinion, have degree programs in non-University HEIs been less successful in gaining market share in Canada than elsewhere?

4. Part of the European approach to promoting degrees at non-university HEIs involves a great deal of external standard-setting (such as Quality Assurance Frameworks, the European Credit Transfer System, etc.) which permits much more efficient laddering between degrees at different institutional types. What are the pros and cons of such an approach? Would such approaches work in Ontario?