

## **Learning to Earning | Higher Education and the Changing Job Market Session Summary**

**Civic Ballroom  
Sheraton Centre Toronto  
123 Queen Street West, Toronto, M5H 2M9**

*Thanks to Ian Hartlen and Adrian Philp, recent graduates from the Master of Public Policy Program at the University of Toronto, for their work in summarizing the conference.*

### **Day Two | Friday, November 2, 2012**

#### **Session 6B | The perils of a professional degree**

***Facilitator: Charles Ungerleider, Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group***

***Michael Salvatori, Ontario Colleges of Teachers  
Professional regulation in the public interest***

A discussion of the importance of regulation beginning with an overview of the Ontario College of Teachers as a regulatory body. The primary aim of the college, and of regulation in general, is the protection of the public interest. When it comes to teaching, public interest is in the competency of the teachers and the welfare of students.

Regulatory practices, such as certifications, accreditations and transparency are vital in inspiring confidence and protecting the public interest.

There are many challenges, especially due to jurisdictional differences.

***Alice Pitt, York University  
Faculty autonomy and professional preparation***

Explores the relationship between faculty autonomy and responsibility. Autonomy of the university translates into faculty autonomy, academic freedom and peer review.

There are differences between North America and Europe in that European education is a discipline and is being driven by professional education. The implications of this difference are notable.

There is tension between treating teacher education as vocational, technical training and as a form of preparation for professional life. What is the role of research in managing this tension?

Examples are given of ways in which university research can affect policy and practice.

***Ruth Baumann, Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group***  
***How labour unions view professional preparation***

Unions tend to see professional preparation as confined mostly to pre-service rather than as a career-long process. They are leery of accountability at the individual professional level because of the diversity of effective styles. This can cause tension. Unions want to see teaching given the respect of a profession, but they often struggle to adequately reconcile professionalism with protection of their members.

Currently, Ontario has a structural problem at the point of entry into the profession. The result is an oversupply of teachers in Ontario. Due to this oversupply, many teachers end up doing occasional teaching on a long term basis.

Collective bargaining is historically bad at addressing these problems. Instead of being seen as a way to enable experimentation, collective agreements are too often treated as merely an obstacle that must be overcome.

Baumann concludes that there is a serious need of review and discussion between all parties.

***Brian Abner, Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group***  
***The political economy of university based professional preparation***

Abner defines professional preparation as prerequisites to regulated professions. That is, professions which require licensing such as teaching. Regulation has a couple of effects. First, it protects practitioners from the full force of market competition. A wage premium is built upon core qualifications. Second, it limits entry to the qualified, specifically, university graduates. The degree is core, though it is often supplemented with exams or apprenticeships. The result is a quasi-monopoly with exclusive rights and higher income.

Despite this, we see oversupply. It is important to note that the oversupply is at the existing wage. Unions set a floor on wages. As a result, the market can't clear as wages can't respond to supply. Demand for teachers cannot increase to compensate because K-12 education is funded by the province. A scenario in which demand for teachers is increased by mandating smaller class sizes is desirable but unlikely.

So is there any reason to think we can/should fix the problem of endemic oversupply? Yes. It is a matter of public policy interest due to the element of public funding. Alternative allocation and distribution methods must be considered. The challenge is that the state would have to predict market needs and control enrolment, which would be difficult. Abner suggests that the professional certification process be used to control supply.