

Jones, Glen A. (2009). Internationalization and Higher Education Policy in Canada: Three Challenges. In Trilokekar, Roopa Desai, Jones, Glen A. and Shubert, Adrian (Eds.). *Canada's Universities Go Global* (pp. 355-369). Toronto: James Lorimer and Company (CAUT Series).

Internationalization and Higher Education Policy in Canada: Three Challenges.

Glen A. Jones

Introduction

Internationalization has become an important theme in national higher education policy in many jurisdictions.¹ The objectives of facilitating student mobility and providing new international opportunities for students underscore many of the major reforms currently taking place in Europe. Other European public policy initiatives have directly encouraged the internationalization of the curriculum through the support of joint degrees, and provided major support for new international research initiatives. American mechanisms for supporting research continue to provide the infrastructure associated with attracting and funding a significant number of international graduate students, and the Simon Study Abroad Act represents a strategic, national approach to facilitating study abroad opportunities for undergraduate students.² Australia has devoted considerable attention to increasing its share of the international student market, and higher education has now become one of that country's leading industries. China has made substantive investments designed to increase the international experience of faculty, support the development of international partnerships, and fund strategic research initiatives.

Some Canadian governments have also taken steps to facilitate or encourage international activity within the higher education sector. Several provinces provide support for international student mobility³ and different departments of the Government of Canada operate international scholarship and mobility programs.⁴ There are a plethora of

arrangements and initiatives emerging within individual universities that include everything from major curriculum reform projects, funding development initiatives, encouraging international research partnerships, and marketing international programs.⁵

On the other hand, it is difficult to argue that internationalization has been anything like the driving force or major theme within Canadian higher education policy that it has within many other jurisdictions. My objective in this paper is to explain why internationalization has received so little attention within higher education policy in this country.⁶ I will argue that the discussion of internationalization and higher education policy in Canada has faced three basic challenges during the last three decades: the challenge associated with the Canadianization movement of the 1970s; the challenge associated with Canada's federal structures and our decentralized approach to higher education policy; and the fear that international activities and initiatives will displace national activities and initiatives. I will conclude by offering a number of modest suggestions for change.

The Challenge of Canadianization:

The first step towards understanding the strange intersection between internationalization and higher education policy in Canada is to recall that forty years ago the great debate was on the "Canadianization" of Canadian universities. The centennial celebrations and Expo 67 in Montreal had awakened a new sense of nationalism within Canadian society, but a series of reports and polemics raised serious questions about whether the Canadian educational system was teaching Canadians about Canada. A 1968 report of the National History Project, based on observations at over 900 schools, revealed that there was surprisingly little Canadian content in our elementary and secondary schools.⁷ In their 1969

book, “The Struggle for Canadian Universities,” Mathews and Steele argued that the mammoth expansion of higher education enrolment during the prior decade had largely been accomplished by hiring foreign (most frequently American) professors.⁸ How could these institutions fulfill their social and cultural role when they were staffed by individuals who knew little about Canadian history, politics, or culture?

Within a few years the issue was taken up by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada when it appointed Thomas Symons, the founding president of Trent University, to review the state of Canadian studies. In his detailed report, *To Know Ourselves*, Symons concluded that there was much work to be done to increase the coverage of Canadian topics and perspectives within the university curriculum, and to strengthen Canadian scholarship on Canadian studies.⁹ Like any academic discussion, there were differences of opinion over how best to solve the problem, and there continues to be a debate over the origins and influences associated with what some have called the Canadianization movement.¹⁰

There was, however, little disagreement over the two components of the problem. The need for new professors by the rapidly expanding Canadian higher education system far outpaced the domestic output of graduates from doctoral programs, and in some cases graduates with credentials from elite American institutions were viewed as more qualified than their Canadian counterparts. Claude Bissell, the President of the University of Toronto, wrote:

In our colonial heart of hearts, we believed that advanced degrees from Harvard, Stanford, Michigan, and California, glowed more brightly than advanced degrees from McGill, Toronto, Alberta, and British Columbia. I think that attitude is changing and we now have confidence in what we can do ourselves.¹¹

The second component of the problem, obviously related to the first, was that not enough emphasis was being placed on the study of Canada in Canadian schools and universities. More attention needed to be paid to the study of Canada and those things Canadian within the humanities (including the study of Canadian literature, art and history) and in the rapidly expanding social sciences.

In many respects the Canadianization movement within higher education was in tune with, and occasionally intersected, the nationalist public policy direction of the Trudeau era. Canada's foreign policy was recast as an extension of domestic interests.¹² Canada's cultural, social, and economic interests needed to be protected. The federal government moved to provide financial support for Canadian studies, the protection of cultural industries including the arts and publishing, and, eventually, to create employment policies that strongly affirmed the importance of employing Canadians except in situations where no Canadian was qualified for the position.

I believe that the quite limited discussion of internationalization within higher education policy during the 1970s and most of the 1980s, and the ways in which this discussion were taken up, can largely be explained by the emphasis on Canadianization that emerged in the late 1960s and continued until the Mulroney government shifted the policy discussion in the direction of free trade in the context of global economic markets. The arguments for Canadianization were not anti-internationalist, they were based on the assumption that it was extremely important for Canadians to understand who they were in relation to the rest of the world; the notion was to ensure that there was a clear focus on Canadian studies to complement the other perspectives, albeit largely American and British, that were already well represented in the curriculum.

With the recession of the 1970s the academic labour market shifted dramatically; the expansion of graduate programs and enrolment in the 1960s was now producing more doctoral graduates than the higher education system could absorb. There was little public sympathy for employing the best of the world's academic talent in Canada if it meant that the best Canadian talent would be under or unemployed. There was nothing wrong with introducing Canadian students to concepts and ideas from other nations and cultures, as long as it was Canadian citizens who were studying and teaching these concepts and ideas.

This is not to suggest that the Government of Canada had become isolationist and introverted. With its new emphasis on serving domestic interests, Canadian foreign policy under Trudeau was striking out in quite new directions. Canada strengthened its membership in francophone international organizations, developed new ties with Southeast Asia, and was one of the first western countries to open relations with communist China. New international relationships frequently involved higher education sector components, such as bilateral scholarship agreements or development initiatives. As Trilokekar notes, the biggest international academic relations initiative to emerge during this period was the development of the Canadian Studies Program Abroad which, in many important respects, linked the domestic Canadianization and international agendas to support the study of Canada in foreign countries.¹³

Given this context, there was little Canadian government interest in supporting major new initiatives that would further the international dimensions of Canadian higher education. The social/cultural rationale for internationalization¹⁴ was simply overshadowed by a nationalist agenda that favoured investments in Canadian studies, bilingual programs, and the development of a Canadian academic publishing infrastructure.

The Challenge of Federalism:

Canada is a federation operating under a constitution that assigns authority over certain matters to a federal government and over others to provincial governments. Like other federations, constitutional responsibility for education is assigned to the provincial governments based on the assumption that issues of curriculum and educational standards should respond to local needs.

In most other federations, higher education has come to be viewed as an issue of national state importance, and steps have been taken to strengthen the role of the federal government in regulating a sector that now plays a key role in national economic development. In other words, while education continues to be viewed as a sector that should be regulated at the local level, higher education has been increasingly viewed as a distinct policy area that should be either governed centrally/nationally or should be governed through some form of shared authority relationship between the central and local governments.

The Canadian approach to higher education policy, in contrast, is the most decentralized of any nation in the developed world. There has never been a federal ministry of education or higher education, and there has never been a federal higher education policy framework.¹⁵

This does not mean that the federal government is not involved in higher education policy, in fact it was the Government of Canada that initiated and largely funded the massification of the university sector in the post-war period. The veterans benefit program provided a mechanism for a substantial expansion of access to postsecondary education, funded under system of direct federal grants to universities. In response to provincial concerns over federal interference in an area of provincial responsibility, the direct grants to universities were replaced

by conditional transfer grants to the provinces, which, in response to continuing provincial concerns, were eventually replaced by unconditional transfer grants to the provinces.

In addition to providing core support for higher education through transfer programs, the federal government is also involved in wide range of policy areas that are directly related to higher education, including student financial assistance, research and development, cultural and language policy initiatives, and human resource development. Since there is no ministry with explicit responsibility for higher education, federal involvement in the sector can be defined as the sum of the policy initiatives associated with a range of federal government departments.

The current Canadian reality of federalism has two very important implications for the discussion of internationalization in the context of Canadian higher education policy. The first, and perhaps the most obvious, is that there is no Canadian higher education policy and there is no clear mechanism to develop Canadian higher education policy. In its recent analysis of postsecondary education in Canada, the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) concluded:

Canada currently has no means to establish the national PSE objectives to which it aspires. It has not even reached the first step – the ongoing evaluation of national progress – that would indicate our seriousness about this pan-Canadian priority. If Canada is serious about improving educational outcomes for Canadians to stimulate economic growth, increase Canada’s international competitiveness and enhance social cohesion, it must develop and utilize appropriate tools to expedite this task.¹⁶

The CCL report identifies an important problem in the development of higher education policy, but it also serves to illustrate the dynamic tension between the federal government and the provinces that underscores this problem. In 1966 the Government of Canada began to develop an education support branch within the Department of the Secretary of State. As Cameron notes,

“the prospect of a federal office of education was, of course, anathema to the provinces, and they were finally galvanized into taking defensive action”.¹⁷ The provinces moved quickly to establish the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC) as a forum for interprovincial communication and coordination. The conclusion articulated in the above quotation from the CCL report can, therefore, be viewed as a not-so-subtle critique of the CMEC’s failure to move towards pan-Canadian objectives and its work to develop national performance indicators. At the same time, it is important to remember that the Canadian Council on Learning is a somewhat controversial creation of the federal government that is supported by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). It is, in other words, a federally-supported body that is arguing for a much stronger national policy perspective in an area of provincial responsibility.

The second implication is that in the absence of a federal ministry of higher education and since the provincial governments are responsible for regulating and providing direct operating support for higher education, the federal government approach has been fragmented, with authority for a range of policy areas that directly intersect with the postsecondary sector dispersed to different departments and units.¹⁸ A range of federal government departments support internationalization initiatives. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade supports international scholarship programs, international marketing initiatives, and the Canadian Studies abroad initiatives. HRSDC supports academic mobility programs. Other relevant departments and agencies include Industry Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and the Canadian International Development Agency. Under this fragmented approach the coordination of federal government initiatives in the area of internationalization, like other areas of postsecondary policy, becomes enormously challenging.¹⁹ It is also important to note that it is difficult for any single government unit or department to advocate for a strong, coherent policy

for internationalization given the realities of departmental territoriality and unit rivalries²⁰, but also because internationalization is an umbrella concept that captures a wider range of initiatives that transcend the operational boundaries of any single federal department.

The Canadian federal arrangements, therefore, are far from conducive to the development and emergence of something resembling a national strategy for internationalization. In reality, what one might term “Canadian” policy for internationalization is essentially the sum of initiatives emerging from the provinces and a range of federal government units.

The Fear of Displacement:

In the mid-1980s when the Government of Australia was initiating a series of policy changes that were to reposition international student enrolment as a major form of revenue generation within the higher education system²¹, the Canadian provinces were considering the question of foreign student fees. The ways in which these policy issues were framed in each country could not have been more different. In Australia the objective was to create an environment where institutions could increase international enrolment as a market activity. In Canada the question was whether international students should continue to pay the domestic student tuition fee and receive an education subsidized by provincial taxpayers, or whether they should be charged a tuition fee that more accurately reflected the real cost of their education. The Australian conversation was about revenue, the Canadian policy discussion was really about the level of subsidy.

The two dominant themes in provincial government policy for higher education during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s were to increase accessibility while stabilizing or reducing operating grants to institutions. The Canadian approach to higher education that had emerged by the early

1970s was centred around a network of relatively homogeneous publicly-supported universities serving local geographic areas.²² The vast majority of undergraduate students attended a university that was close to home, and the universities generally treated Canadian degrees as equivalent in terms of quality. There was no formal stratification of institutions, and there was limited competition between institutions since provincial governments generally treated universities as equals and the provinces controlled the two largest sources of institutional revenue: operating grants and tuition. The common threads linking provincial policies across the country in this context was to increase access to postsecondary education while tightly controlling operating grant allocations. Generally speaking, participation rates increased, government grants stabilized or increased modestly, and universities across the country complained bitterly about underfunding. One provincial civil servant, interviewed for the Stuart Smith review of university education released in 1991, noted “Our approach is just to starve the buggers to death and hope they’ll react as we’d like”.²³

The issue of international student fees became intertwined with these dual policy themes of access and funding. If international students paid the same level of fees as domestic students, then it meant that international students were being subsidized by provincial taxpayers at the same level as domestic students. If universities were underfunded and unable to admit every student who applied, then provincial governments might be subsidizing an international student who was taking the place of a domestic student. There was nothing wrong with international students, as long as their presence in the system did not come at the expense of the local, domestic agenda of the provincial higher education system. The answer was to charge international students a much higher fee than domestic students, but also to control the level of this fee through provincial regulation so that institutions would not compete with each other for

international students. One-by-one, provincial governments reviewed tuition fee regulations and introduced foreign student fees.

The concern that the international might displace the local did not go away with the introduction of differential fees. In one revision to its complicated funding formula, the Ontario government created a mechanism for pooling and sharing international fee revenues so that there would be no financial advantage to an institution if it were to admit a larger number of international students than its peers. This approach was later abandoned by the Harris government in its re-regulation of tuition policy, but in early 2003, with the domestic demands of the double cohort raising issues of access throughout the Ontario system, the message from the government was to increase domestic enrolment, even if it meant reducing the number of international students that would be admitted to the system.

While some other countries came to view international students as an opportunity to generate revenue that could be used to subsidize other university activities, the concern underscoring elements of Canadian public policy in the sector was that the international could potentially displace the local. There were fears that international students would take part-time jobs away from domestic students, so international student visas prevented students from being employed off-campus. Even as attitudes changed in the early years of the twenty-first century and both federal and provincial governments began to see the possibilities associated with the international market in higher education, the actual level of government support to the sector for internationalization has been extremely modest, with the exception of Quebec which has viewed international student mobility and the support of international research as components of a broader economic/cultural agenda .

The fear of displacement was never limited to the issue of international students. Domestic students who want to study abroad have never had access to the financial support mechanisms available to students who decide to study in Canada. Graduate students who win major national, competitive scholarships are, with few exceptions, required to study at Canadian universities. Until quite recently, Canada's research granting councils have provided limited support for comparative research projects involving international teams of scholars. The emphasis has been to support Canadian scholarship of international quality, rather than on the participation of Canadian scholars in international projects. There are signs that this may be changing, but there continue to be concerns that since the level of funding is finite, every dollar spent in the support of international research activity, or every dollar spent supporting a Canadian student studying abroad, means one dollar that has not been spent within the domestic higher education system.

Moving Forward:

I believe that these three challenges help to explain why internationalization has received so little attention within higher education policy in Canada. The Canadianization movement, while far from oppositional to the internationalization of research and curriculum, began with the assumption that it was the Canadian, not the international, perspective that needed reinforcement as the nation moved into its second century. Canada's federal arrangements are not conducive to the development of the sorts of national policies and strategies that have emerged in many other jurisdictions, and there are even basic challenges associated with the notion of coordinating initiatives across federal government departments, let alone between federal and provincial levels of government. Until quite recently, there have been a number of policy areas where there has

been a fear that the international will somehow displace the national or local, a perception that can have political salience.

These three factors have clearly not prevented individual institutions from focusing attention on internationalization, or individual governments from taking important (though frequently small) steps towards supporting elements of internationalization. Universities have always had an international dimension, though this has frequently reflected the international activities and interests of individual faculty and students. Elements of internationalization have also been institutionalized at the level of the academic unit with the support of area/international studies, inclusive/international curricula, and international partnerships and exchange programs. Some Canadian universities have come to view internationalization as a strategic, institutional objective.²⁴ However, there are clearly limitations to what can be done without some degree of coordinated effort or policy coherence. Individual universities cannot afford to open international offices to promote communications and partnerships, and so they need to coordinate with the Government of Canada which already maintains an infrastructure of embassies and consulates. They can facilitate exchange and mobility programs, and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada can provide some degree of coordination across the sector, but not to a level that might be possible if there was a national framework, or if this was a federal government priority.

Moving forward begins with the understanding that internationalization should be an objective within Canadian policy for higher education because it is in the national interest. Underscoring the major investments in the internationalization of higher education in other jurisdictions is the recognition that this is an issue of domestic policy, though different countries have pursued quite different strategies and approaches. In contrast, the Canadian discussion of

internationalization seems to take place at the margins rather than at the centre. The recent review of postsecondary education by the Canadian Council for Learning has very little to say about internationalization, and the goals for postsecondary education set out in the report have few points of intersection with the objectives of internationalization.²⁵ Reports at the provincial level, including recent reviews in both Ontario and British Columbia²⁶, go much, much farther, but there is no evidence of anything approaching a national discussion, let alone a national policy objective. The discussion and debate on internationalization seems to be primarily local (issues of curriculum within departments and faculties, student mobility initiatives at the institutional level) or, at best, provincial.

In my opinion, moving forward means positioning the discussion of internationalization as a major issue of domestic, higher education policy. The discussion of internationalization needs to be linked to domestic policy goals in the context of a diverse, multi-cultural Canadian population participating in an increasingly global economy. Internationalization can be regarded as a means of significantly contributing to, rather than displacing, the local. We need to recognize that our domestic objectives for higher education would be furthered by greater pan-Canadian coordination. It is only by recognizing the national potential of internationalization as a means of addressing domestic objectives that it will become a central, rather than marginal, area of higher education policy.

Of course, a national discussion of internationalization means far more than simply talking about the Australian success in the international student market, or European accomplishments in second-language programming and student mobility. We need to study, understand, and compare the national policy approaches that have emerged in other jurisdictions, not so that we can replicate them, but rather so that we have a greater sense of the various

possibilities. We need to find a Canadian approach that makes sense in the context of our decentralized higher education system, and addresses Canada's domestic objectives. We need to find an approach that builds on Canada's strengths and values, and moves us forward in terms of improving postsecondary education in Canada.

¹ For example, see the papers in this volume by Marginson and Teichler.

² In June of 2007 the American Congress approved an Act "To establish the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation under the authorities of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961". At the time of writing, this Act was being considered by the Senate.

³ For example, see the papers by Savage, and Picard and Mills in this volume.

⁴ See the paper by Trilokekar in this volume.

⁵ See, for example, the papers by Taraban, Trilokekar, and Fynbo; Odgers and Giroux; Brandt; and Dwyer and Reed in this volume.

⁶ I would like to acknowledge the comments and suggests provided by Roopa Desai Trilokekar on an earlier version of this paper. Many of the ideas that I discuss in this paper emerged from our conversations while she was conducting her doctoral research.

⁷ A. B. Hodgets, *What Culture? What Heritage? A Study of Civic Education in Canada* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1968).

⁸ R. Mathews & J. Steele, *The Struggle for Canadian Universities* (Toronto: New Press, 1969).

⁹ T. H. B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves. The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies, Volumes I and II* (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975).

¹⁰ J. D. Bercuson, R. Bothwell, & J. L. Granatstein, *The Great Brain Robbery: Canada's Universities on the Road to Ruin* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984); J.J. Cormier, *The Canadianization Movement: Emergence, Survival and Success* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); H.H. Hiller, "The Canadian Sociology Movement: Analysis and Assessment," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 4 no.2 (1979), 125-150; J. Steele & R. Mathews, "Canadianization Revisited: A Comment on Cormier's 'The Canadianization Movement in Context'," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*. 31 no. 4 (2006), 491-508.

¹¹ C. T. Bissell, "The Recovery of the Canadian Tradition in Higher Education," *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 7 no.2 (1977), 1-10.

¹² B. Thordarson, *Trudeau and Foreign Policy: A Study in Decision-Making*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1972).

¹³ R. D. Trilokekar, "Federalism, Foreign Policy and the Internationalization of Higher Education: A Case Study of the International Academic Relations Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2007).

¹⁴ J. Knight, "Internationalization: Concepts, Complexities and Challenges," in *International Handbook of Higher Education*, eds. J. J. F. Forest and P. G. Altbach (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 207-227.

¹⁵ G. A. Jones, "Canada," In *International handbook of higher education*, eds. J.K. Forest & P. G. Altbach (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006) 627-646; T. Shanahan & G. A. Jones, "Shifting roles and approaches: Government coordination of post-secondary education in Canada, 1995-2006," *Higher Education Research and Development*, 26 no. 1 (2007), 31-43; D. M. Cameron, *More Than an Academic Question: Universities, Government, and Public Policy in Canada*, (Halifax: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1991); G. A. Jones (ed), *Higher Education in Canada: Different Systems, Different Perspectives*, (New York: Garland, 1997).

¹⁶ Canadian Council on Learning, *Report on Learning in Canada 2006, Canadian Post-secondary Education: A Positive Record – An Uncertain Future*, (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Learning, 2006) vi.

¹⁷ Cameron, *More Than an Academic Question*, 130.

¹⁸ D. Fisher, K. Rubenson, J. Bernatchez, R. Clift, G. Jones, J. Lee, M. MacIvor, J. Meredith, T. Shanahan, & C. Trottier. *Canadian Federal Policy and Postsecondary Education*, (Vancouver: Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, 2006).

¹⁹ R. D. Trilokekar & G. A. Jones, Internationalizing Canada's Universities. *International Higher Education*, 46 (2007), 12-14.

²⁰ See the paper by Trilokekar in this volume.

²¹ See the paper by Marginson in this volume.

²² G. A. Jones, "Governments, Governance, and Canadian Universities," in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, Volume XI, ed. J. Smart (New York: Agathon, 1996) 337-371.

²³ R. J. Baker, "Review of S. Smith (1991), *Report on the Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University Education* (Ottawa: AUCC, 1991)". *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 22 no.2 (1992), 106.

²⁴ J. Knight, *Internationalization at Canadian Universities: The Changing Landscape* (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1995); J. Knight, *Progress and Promise: The 2000 AUCC Report on Internationalization at Canadian Universities*, (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2000).

²⁵ Canadian Council on Learning, *Report on Learning in Canada 2006*.

²⁶ B. Rae, *Ontario A Leader in Learning. Report and Recommendations* (Toronto: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005); G. Plant, *Access and Excellence: The Campus 2020 Plan for British Columbia's Post-Secondary Education System*, (Victoria: Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007).