

The Development of Vocational Education in Canada

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Our article considers the roots of prejudice against vocational education, surveys its history, and examines constitutional dilemmas that have inhibited its development. We emphasize that as technological advances draw the world more closely together, vocational preparedness becomes increasingly important. In an era of international cartels and free trade associations, "muddling through" no longer works. Since Canada cannot expect immigration to solve its labour problems, it requires a national system of vocational training, a systemic solution that ensures young people see vocational education as challenging and worthwhile.

L'article suivant cherche à identifier les sources des préjugés contre l'enseignement professionnel, rappelle l'histoire de cet enseignement et fait le point sur les dilemmes constitutionnels qui ont entravé son développement. Les auteurs soulignent l'importance grandissante de la préparation à la vie professionnelle au fur et à mesure que le monde devient, en raison des progrès de la technologie, un village planétaire. Dans une ère de cartels internationaux et d'accords de libre échange, il n'est plus question de seulement "se tirer d'affaire." Comme le Canada ne peut pas compter sur l'immigration pour résoudre ses problèmes de main-d'oeuvre, il faut un système national de formation professionnelle, une solution systémique qui permettra aux jeunes de voir l'éducation professionnelle comme quelque chose de stimulant et qui en vaut vraiment la peine.

Canadians have historically considered vocational education to be preparation for second-class citizenship. Until recently, we did not treat domestic programs for training highly skilled workers as vital to the nation's interest. Whereas European countries had programs to prepare craftspeople for skilled trades, Canada relied on immigration to fill these jobs. Vocational preparation in North America came to be seen as a

social policy measure directed at society's marginal or outcast elements such as orphans, young people with criminal records and slow learners. . . . It seems that apprenticeship training in Canada never has been able to completely change this stigma, for it has always been considered the lowest form of training or education, to be mounted mainly to satisfy the needs of underprivileged groups. (Weiermair, 1984, p. 5)

We here explore the roots of Canadian prejudice against vocational education, survey the Canadian history of the field, and examine constitutional dilemmas that have inhibited appropriate development of vocational education.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Formal vocational education in Canada dates back to the late seventeenth century. To make the fledgling colony self-sufficient, the intendant and bishop of New France tried to establish both secondary industries and a trade school. Their work affected only a small percentage of the population; most people continued to see education primarily as an academic activity.

By the end of the nineteenth century, most provinces had established compulsory, tax-supported elementary schooling. Public interest in education grew, and commercial and industrial leaders supported the drive toward universal basic literacy. Traditional interpretations see these industrialists as practicing a kind of bourgeois "noblesse oblige" because they recognized the need for an educated electorate in a democracy.

More recently, revisionist historians of education have reinterpreted the nineteenth-century compulsory education movement as a capitalist plot to oppress the common people (Prentice, 1977; Spring, 1972). Such historians see compulsory schooling not as a way to provide commoners with the means of upward social mobility and intellectual liberation, but as a training and conditioning mechanism to transform an agricultural society into an industrial one, and to prepare children to become punctual, diligent, and submissive workers. Such views are probably extreme, but by the end of the nineteenth century, when sizeable numbers of pupils began to remain in schools beyond the standard eight grades, the industrial lobby began to question the kind of education being provided at the secondary school level (Gidney & Millar, 1990).

High schools in English Canada could follow one of three educational models. From England came the tradition of preparing sons of gentlemen for university in schools originally called Latin Grammar Schools and later just grammar schools. These emphasized a classical curriculum and gave high priority to sports, all under the Anglican church's watchful guidance (Mangan, 1981). Scotland, a poorer nation but with a strong commitment to education, had developed a more general curriculum for secondary school students (Hamilton, 1970). Scottish secondary schools accommodated capable students from all social classes, preparing students both for university matriculation and for more practical pursuits. Bookkeeping, navigation, and other applications of academic study were common courses in Scottish secondary schools. The third model was that of the English dissenting academies, which revealed their middle-class roots and aspirations by discarding much of the traditional, classical curriculum and by almost solely offering practical courses.

Because early nineteenth-century colonial administrators in British North America came mainly from the English upper classes, they selected the first model. Those colonists who aspired to join the petty aristocracy supported the establishment of grammar schools for their children. This English transplant did not flourish on Canadian soil. Largely Anglican, in a society increasingly non-conformist, and offering a curriculum totally unrelated to colonial life, grammar schools had trouble attracting students (Wilson, 1970).

By the mid-nineteenth century, the reins of power in Ontario had largely been assumed by the middle class. Because most who presumed to leadership belonged either to the Methodist or to the Presbyterian church, their orientation toward secondary education came from either the Scottish or non-conformist tradition. As a result, in 1871, Ontario passed an act replacing the old grammar schools with two distinctly different institutions: Collegiate institutes, offering a classical program to prepare students for university admission, and high schools, offering English, natural sciences, and commercial subjects.

Canada, however, found it difficult to maintain two distinct kinds of secondary schools. For one thing, the population was small; only in the largest centres were there enough students to support both a collegiate institute and a high school. There was also the problem of social aspirations—immigrants came to North America believing social mobility possible, if not for them, at least for their children. People, therefore, often demanded secondary education that would open doors. They wanted their children to take Latin and Greek, allowing access to university, and not just bookkeeping and agriculture, which would limit their prospects. Smaller centres, therefore, often developed collegiate institutes rather than high schools. When high schools *were* established, parents often pressured them into providing those academic subjects that would gain university admission for graduates. High schools' boards of trustees frequently acceded to such requests because schools offering academic subjects often received larger government grants.

Were this not complicated enough, in the late nineteenth century universities changed their courses of study by introducing the natural sciences. The collegiate institutes followed suit and also began to offer sciences originally intended to be taught by high schools. By the turn of the century, therefore, despite differences in name, most Canadian secondary schools offered a rather general but distinctly academic curriculum with only slight attention to practical subjects.

Canada was then just beginning to function autonomously. It had become self-governing in 1867 and, in its second decade, had launched a protectionist "national policy" to encourage and to stimulate economic self-sufficiency. By the mid-1890s, this policy began to bear fruit, largely because of the ending of prolonged, world-wide economic depression, and settlement of the Canadian prairies. In the improved economic climate, with ample natural

resources and a sizeable captive market in the west, industrial and commercial interests campaigned for state-supported technical and vocational education.

The Canadian Manufacturers Association (CMA), formed in 1887 to further the cause of secondary industry, led this campaign. Assisted by such groups as the Trades and Labour Congress and the Dominion Board of Trade, the CMA became the primary lobby force pressuring the federal government to promote vocational education. It argued that to compete with other industrialized states, Canada needed more skilled workers.

The lobbyists aimed at the federal government in Ottawa rather than at the various provincial governments with constitutional responsibility for public education. There are several reasons why these special-interest groups believed vocational education was Ottawa's responsibility. First, they saw industrial development, including vocational education, as an economic aspect of nation-building—a federal responsibility. Second, the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway started a tradition of government-industry co-operation. Because of a shortage of capital, the federal government was the only adequate source of Canadian finance for major projects; industrial groups therefore looked to Ottawa to launch vocational education (Stamp, 1970a). Moreover, various interest groups wanted the kind of standardized programs only federal government could provide. The lobbyists did not want a patchwork approach, with each province establishing its own unique program.

The CMA was fortunate in the timing of its lobbying efforts. The development of vocational education required the combined effort of both provincial and federal governments. Canada's first three decades had been fraught with federal-provincial tensions, but the new government elected in 1896 eased these disputes and opened the way for more co-operation.

The first step was the establishment of the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education (1910). This was due in no small measure to the efforts of the Minister of Labour, William Lyon MacKenzie King. King brought new understanding of the problems facing industry, as his diary shows:

I am pressing hard in Cabinet for the Comm'n, and see the need for it more & more strongly as I read up the matter, see what other countries have done & how far we are behind. (Quoted in Stamp, 1970, p. 454)

The Royal Commission was Canada's first federal commission on education. Its mandate was broad in scope, concerned with all aspects of vocational education at all levels. The Commission's report emphasized the need for massive federal funding for the broad field of vocational education. Although such recommendations were hailed by vocational education's supporters, they created jurisdictional problems for Canada.

A review of three sections of the *Constitution Act* (1867) indicates something of these problems' scope. Section 91 lists the exclusive constitutional

legislative responsibilities of the federal government. Section 92 lists the responsibilities of the provinces. Section 92 Article 13 clearly assigns non-criminal matters to provincial control and gives provinces exclusive legislative authority over property and civil rights. This subsection protects the provincial power to certify vocational teachers and tradespeople, to regulate contracts of employment, and to legislate labour laws. Although Section 93 provides provincial governments with exclusive constitutional responsibility for education, the jurisdictional responsibility for vocational education has never been clear. Despite Section 92 Article 16, which gives provinces constitutional legislative responsibility for "Generally all Matters of a merely local or private nature in the Province," Section 91 states as follows:

It shall be lawful for the Queen, by and with the advice and Consent of the Senate and the House of Commons, to make Laws for the Peace, Order and good Government of Canada, in relation to all Matters not coming within the Classes of Subjects by this Act assigned exclusively to the Legislatures of the Provinces.

The federal government has argued that Section 91 gives it emergency powers to legislate outside of its constitutional legislative responsibilities.

Agriculture was one of the fields in which the provincial and federal governments shared constitutional responsibility. Because Canada then was still primarily an agricultural nation and because most members of parliament represented agricultural constituencies, few persons argued against funding this agricultural vocational education. Agricultural education, therefore, was the first field to receive federal funding.

The *Agriculture Aid Act of 1912* allocated \$500,000 for the support of agricultural education for one year. Subsequently, the *Agriculture Instruction Act of 1913* provided \$10 million over a ten-year period. These funds were allocated to the provinces on the basis of population, to be spent almost unrestrictedly by federal regulations. The provinces used these federal agricultural education funds for their own initiatives. In Alberta, Quebec, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, these grants led to establishment of agricultural colleges. Most provinces also implemented some form of agricultural education in public schools (Johnson, 1968).

Demand for a national education policy on technical and industrial education grew during World War I as the inadequacies of the Canadian industry became apparent. When war ended, the Canadian government passed the *Technical Education Act* (1919). Under its terms, the federal government was to provide \$10 million to the provinces, to be spent over a ten-year period, to promote technical education at the secondary school level. The federal government's funding regulations for this program, however, were considerably tighter than for agricultural education. The restrictive provisions excluded poorer provinces, and by 31 March 1929, only Ontario had claimed its share of the federal funding. As a consequence Ontario's vocational education programs funded under the *Technical Educa-*

tion Act were implemented much earlier than those in some poorer and less industrially developed provinces. Almost 15 years' easing of federal restrictions was required before all provinces participated (Stamp, 1970b).

The 1930s depression severely constrained new federal government initiatives, preventing much development of vocational education in most parts of the country. Ironically, Saskatchewan—the most agricultural province in Canada—was the exception. As the province's net agricultural incomes plummeted and farmers were driven out by drought, dust, and grasshoppers, entire municipalities were depopulated. Those young people who remained in the province stayed in school longer because there were no jobs (Lyons, 1986). Many were not interested in higher education, but wanted more schooling to improve their chances in the job market. Recognizing this, in 1938 the provincial government modified the *Saskatchewan Secondary Education Act*, making it easier for school boards to offer vocational education.

When war came again in 1939, Canada found itself little better off industrially than it had been in 1914. The situation was far more serious, however, because the Nazi blitzkrieg overran France and destroyed much of the industrial strength of Britain, leaving overseas members of the British Commonwealth to produce vitally important war matériel.

The federal government responded to the need for more Canadian manufacturing by passing the *Vocational Training Coordination Act* (1942), to federally fund a variety of programs for servicemen, veterans, the unemployed, and supervisors in industry. The programs ranged from vocational courses in secondary schools to apprenticeships. As with previous federal funding arrangements, the federal government laid down conditions or restrictions to determine a province's eligibility for funding. The *Vocational Schools Assistance Agreement* (1945) went even further by providing federal, shared-cost assistance to create provincial composite high schools. It is unclear whether the federal government justified its involvement in a clearly provincial matter on the basis of Section 91 of the *Constitution Act* or on the war-time application of the *War Measures Act* (1914). What is clear, however, is that vocational education could be directly and indirectly affected by federal initiatives.

The federal government, especially during the rapid industrial expansion after World War II, solved the demand for tradespeople by encouraging highly skilled workers from war-torn Europe to emigrate to Canada. Because they could turn to foreign countries as a source of skilled workers, provincial authorities generally saw trades training as a minor aspect of the educational system (Weiermair, 1984). This policy allowed Canada to avoid paying the cost of training workers and, instead, to rely on other nations to pay the costs and set the standards.

Ottawa believed it could fulfill demand for highly skilled labour through immigration. In effect, Canada made itself dependent on other countries' skilled-labour pools. The underdeveloped state of Canadian vocational

education virtually ensured that Canadian children would be disadvantaged in the work force. In 1960, the federal government again intervened in vocational education by introducing the *Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act* (1960), which continued the program established by the *Vocational Training Coordination Act* and expanded it to include the preparation of technical-vocational teachers. Although the federal government's funding priorities induced the "provinces to expand opportunistically in the direction of federal support" (Weiermair, 1984, p. 15), this funding was not used very efficiently for training highly skilled workers. Furthermore, although federal aid amounted to 75% in some programs, poorer provinces lacking a revenue surplus or in debt could not always participate because they were unable to match the federal funding. Therefore, benefits accrued to richer provinces or to those whose priorities matched Ottawa's (Johnson, 1968).

As abruptly as Ottawa had entered vocational training, it left—without consulting the provinces. At a federal-provincial conference in October 1966, the federal government announced it would withdraw from the field of vocational education to enter that of adult occupational training and retraining, and to increase its assistance to universities. Federal officials argued previous programs had distorted educational services by encouraging provincial governments to develop only programs whose costs Ottawa would share and to neglect others financed solely out of provincial coffers. Distinguishing between short-term retraining, for which federal authorities should have responsibility, and long-term vocational preparation, a provincial matter, the federal government launched the *Adult Occupational Training Act* (1966–67) (Stamp, 1970b).

This shift in federal priorities created some major problems. During the 1960s, there was a major campaign to entice adolescents to remain in school. Because under the *Technical and Vocational Training Act* federal funds had paid up to three-quarters of vocational education programs' cost, part of the campaign involved creating alternatives to academic high school programs. Withdrawal of federal funds left the provinces and school boards to pick up the full cost of vocational programs.

By the 1970s, the diminished birthrate and improved economy in Western Europe was affecting Canada's ability to attract skilled workers. At the same time, Europe's increased industrial productivity was beginning to hurt Canada's international balance of trade. Since Canada had not made training skilled labour a national priority, the country had to start virtually at the beginning as it tried to catch up to such other industrialized countries as Japan and West Germany.

The federal government reacted by replacing the *Adult Occupational Training Act*. The basic difference between the *National Training Act* (1982) and its predecessor was that the new act increased federal control. This program targeted specific occupations to meet employers' anticipated needs. It marked a shift away from previous programs, which had encouraged

individual choice, to one in which the federal government aligned itself more closely with interests of business. The government supported preparation for these occupations by means of the *Skills Growth Fund* (Canada Employment and Immigration, 1982–83). Promotion of certain fields without regard for regional differences or aspirations, centralized vocational education.

Ottawa's current employment policy is embodied in the *Canadian Jobs Strategy* (CJS) (Canada Employment and Immigration, 1985). The federal government lists several principles or objectives for funding job experience and skill training in certain occupational programs. The first principle of CJS decrees that "training and job creation . . . be economic in orientation with emphasis on small business and support of entrepreneurship" (Canada Employment and Immigration, 1985, p. 8). That this program funds training in some skills but not others, further shows the federal government's shift towards alliance with business. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Labour, Employment, and Immigration (1988) concisely summarized CJS's claimed innovations:

It is an attempt to shift away from short-term cyclical measures and provides a combination of skill development and job experience, it attempts to better reflect the needs of local labour markets by facilitating more flexible programming and greater input at the local [level]. . . . In addition, a special focus is provided to youth under the Job Entry Program. (p. 2)

It also marked a new approach in both employment and pre-employment education by "setting of fair employment targets for women, Natives, the disabled, and visible minorities" (p. 18). Although the latest federal initiatives may facilitate accomplishment of aims espoused by the CMA at the turn of the century, they have not been universally applauded. Failure to encourage women to enter and succeed in non-traditional jobs and funding of programs stressing specific, non-transferable skills indicate this program is not completely successful (McKeen, 1987).

One of the program's weaknesses may be its broad scope. Although the program is mandated to provide money for training in occupations where there are personnel shortages, only one aspect of it emphasizes anticipated shortages. Although it increased the amounts available for apprenticeship training, it provides less for vocational training than for job experience programs. Overall, CJS is an affirmative action program to provide work experience, not a plan to prepare highly skilled workers for projected shortages in identified trades.

Because the program's objectives differ widely, the Auditor General was unable to assess the financial accountability of either the work experience or the skills programs. The success of the CJS on a cost-comparative basis is therefore unknown (Auditor General's Report, 1987).

INTERPROVINCIAL CO-OPERATION AND DIVERSITY

Vocational education has, since its inception, depended on federal funding. The *Constitution Act* (1867) made education a provincial constitutional responsibility, so Section 93 did not define vocational education *per se*. Section 91 Article 2A of that act, however, conferred exclusive legislative authority over unemployment insurance to the federal government, a responsibility that includes assisting people with relocation and training for new career opportunities. Although the provinces relied on federal funding for vocational education, each one initially pursued its own unique program. Federal programs such as the *Vocational Training Coordination Act* and the *Vocational Schools Assistance Agreement* made interprovincial co-operation unnecessary by providing the federal government with wider scope in negotiating the terms of agreements.

Formalization of apprenticeship training took place at various times throughout the country. Because trades training falls under provincial jurisdiction, each province has drawn up its own legislation, in many cases with little or no reference to procedures in neighbouring provinces, and this provincialism has produced separate and often different systems of training and certification. Although these systems have evolved since their introduction, lack of uniform standards for training and certification has made it impossible to integrate the provincial systems into one national system.

A 1952 national conference on apprenticeship recommended federal-provincial co-operation in analysis of a number of trades (Canada Employment and Immigration, 1988). The resulting Interprovincial Standards Program Coordinating Committee undertook "the standardization of provincial training and certification programs . . . to thereby increase the mobility of apprentices and journeymen in construction, maintenance, repair, and service trades and occupations" (Interprovincial Standards Program Coordinating Committee, 1987, p. 2). Under this program, over 150,000 Canadian workers have qualified for interprovincial certification in the twenty-four trades that make up the program, and their ranks grow by at least 10,000 new workers annually.

This committee's existence attests to inter-governmental co-operation. The Interprovincial Standards Program exemplifies the benefits of standardized certification, and its success may provide an incentive for incorporating other trades into the program.

CURRENT ISSUES IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

In 1988, Canada and the United States signed the *Free Trade Agreement* (FTA), which in effect provides for economic integration of the North American continent. It is unclear how the FTA will affect the demand for skilled and unskilled workers in Canada. Because the Canadian economy is also influenced by global and internal factors, it is difficult to determine

which occupations, industries, and regions will be positively or negatively influenced by the agreement.

The aging of Canada's population is beginning to cause shortages of workers. The economic strength of the industrial heartland, which has recently undergone a decade of extraordinary growth (Ontario Ministry of Skills Development, 1988), negatively affects other parts of the country. Growth in both the service and manufacturing sectors has caused labour shortages in several occupations in Ontario despite the relocation of workers from other regions.

As technological innovation accelerates, the demand for highly skilled employees increases. One solution has been to expand the labour force. Women and minorities are being advised to broaden their career choices to meet this demand for workers. Often, however, women and minorities lack the qualifications needed to move into the skilled work force. Although 54% of women are now employed outside the home, most remain concentrated in occupations traditionally considered female preserves (Canada Employment and Immigration, 1987). Canada Employment and Immigration has recently been unable to persuade highly skilled foreign workers to emigrate. Not only did companies give low priority to company-based worker training programs, but also these programs have been inconsistent in quality and quantity because of variations in the business cycle.

Ontario provides an example of industrial strategy for the service sector based on reasonable projections derived from accurate information collected from various provincial sub-economies. The strategy identifies strengths of the provincial economy, defines or targets international markets in which the province wishes to compete, and builds on those strengths to achieve specific goals. The ministry has identified need for greater investment in worker training to meet anticipated demand for certain occupational groups. The strategy is simple and workable.

Most factors that shaped Canada's vocational education in the past are unlikely to change. Although the weight given to particular factors may diminish or increase, their interaction will shape vocational education's future development.

The most promising trend is co-operation among government, industry, and labour on interprovincial certification to increase worker mobility and to help the Canadian economy grow. This may lead to continuous dialogue extending beyond interprovincial certification to such issues of mutual concern as finance of vocational education and standardization of programming on a cost- and power-sharing basis. Incentive for greater co-operation may come from increased competition in the international marketplace. Canada now has to supply its own highly skilled workers. There is today more need than ever for timely information, co-ordination, and co-operation among government, industry, and labour to create and to modify a unitary industrial development strategy.

Fiscal accountability is intricately tied to the issue of program evaluation. In the past, programming was not jointly initiated and continuously evaluated. Increased international competition may make the co-ordination of programs an economic necessity. Before that can happen, the various interested parties need to establish specific national objectives so they may evaluate the effectiveness of particular programs. In the post-industrial era, it is doubtful whether Canada will be able to maintain a high standard of living without a national strategy.

As a former British colony, Canada has distanced itself from its colonial master, but it is not clear that it is prepared to accept responsibility for charting its own economic destiny. The FTA may bind Canada's economy to a continental economic agenda not of Canada's making. Since the FTA's purpose is greater than merely reducing tariffs, further integration of Canada's economy with that of the United States and separation from other trading partners may be inevitable. It has yet to be shown, however, that Canada could pursue economic neutrality, like Switzerland and Sweden. The United States continues to advocate the advantages of laissez-faire capitalism and the removal of existing trade barriers in the marketplace. Adam Smith's belief in the "invisible hand," operating to promote both the individual's and society's self-interest through competition, accommodated the greed of both individuals and society. Capitalism's proponents argue the free market allows the most equitable distribution of goods and services. In other words, competition to supply demand will reward the efficient. Greed may, however, produce such inequitable consumption that it results in economic and social malaise.

Economic and social trends influence each other, and also embody the dreams of a country's greatest resource—its people. Economically successful nations, such as Japan, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland, have committed themselves to developing their citizens' potential. To participate in the post-industrial marketplace, a country needs a well-educated and well-trained work force. Educational and training programs to meet national post-industrial strategies do not evolve by invisible hands but require the consensus of government, industry, and labour. As further international competition concentrates industries in the hands of fewer but larger multinational corporations, competition to lure companies to specific countries will increase, and nations will have to provide incentives such as a highly educated and skilled work force. Through programs like Ontario's service-sector strategy, government will target specific industries for worker training but withdraw from others. Canada must necessarily make education and training of its people one of its highest priorities.

Growing public awareness and concern for human rights, social justice, protection of the environment, and sustained growth for future generations are only a few of the world-wide populist movements influencing political decision making in matters affecting education. Although competition as an ideology may be at its apex of popularity, it may be challenged by forces of

co-operation. Populist concern for the planet's continued existence may make development of the world's human resources, through education and training, not only a Canadian but a global priority.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Development of vocational education in Canada has been hampered by a number of factors. Canada inherited from Britain a tradition that valued academic studies more than manual ones. Immigrants, anxious to have their children succeed in the new world, accepted these educational values. As a result, during the nineteenth century, while European countries evolved well-grounded systems of training skilled craftspeople to support industrial growth, Canada developed a dependence on skilled immigrants to meet its labour needs.

As the country became more industrialized, demands arose for some form of vocational education in Canadian schools. Lobby groups such as the CMA favoured federal involvement in this field, so as to ensure country-wide standards and approaches. Although such uniformity made sense to Canada's industrial and commercial interests, it ran afoul of the constitutional division of powers. The *Constitution Act*, which did not distinguish between training and education, gave provinces exclusive control over both.

Federal involvement in education began in the field of agriculture, one area of shared constitutional responsibility. Under the *Agricultural Instruction Act*, the federal government granted the provinces funding to promote agricultural education. This set a precedent for the *Technical Education Act*, by which the federal government granted provinces funding to encourage technical education. Although there was no provision for shared power in this field, Canadian industrial weaknesses during World War I provided a practical justification for the move. Because the federal government also had the constitutional power to pass legislation to ensure "the peace, order, and good government" of the whole country, it may also have had the legal power. This was the first in a long series of acts under which the federal government financed vocational education.

Federal involvement served as much to distort as to encourage vocational education. Because most federal programs were based on matching grants, they worked to the advantage of richer provinces—thus increasing the country's economic disparities. Furthermore, blinded by the availability of federal funds, most provinces failed to realize their own responsibility for providing vocational education. In most provinces, vocational education programs were exotic transplants that did not grow up as a result of provincial initiatives and were therefore of little assistance in meeting local needs or in promoting local economic structures. Moreover, they tended to flourish like hothouse flowers as long as funding lasted, but wilted as soon as federal priorities and dollars shifted. Over the years, only Ontario, the country's

richest and most industrialized province, took maximum advantage of federal programs.

The original intent of the vocational education lobbyists was to increase the number of skilled workers in Canada. In provinces that promoted the “cultural” aspects of practical courses, however, industrial arts courses did little to advance this aim. To survive in the modern world, Canada must ensure that its young workers are equipped with the best and the latest skills. Hands-on practical experience must be combined with essential technological knowledge. Although the apprenticeship system has worked well, it tends to reinforce traditional approaches; to encourage innovation, vocational training must be upgraded to meet modern needs.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a “National Policy” of tariff protection launched Canada into the industrial age; perhaps a new national policy is needed. As technological advances draw distant parts of the world ever more closely together, vocational preparedness has become increasingly important. In an era of international cartels and free-trade associations, “muddling through” no longer works. Since Canada can no longer look to immigration to solve its labour problems, the country must develop a national system of vocational training.

Although provincial control of education has worked reasonably well in academic fields, it has not worked well for vocational education. Canada’s lack of national standards has inhibited development of a national industrial policy. In this regard, the country is in almost the same situation as it was at the turn of the century. Canada needs a system which will ensure that young people, both men and women, will see vocational education as challenging and worthwhile, not just as a ticket to second-class status.

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