

What do colleges do and why do they matter? Thinking about the role of colleges as local actors

Leesa Wheelahan



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Turtle Island

By NASA - This is NASA image applied as a texture on a sphere using program., Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=113399>



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NOVEMBER 2016

GLOBAL TRENDS IN TVET:
a framework for social justice

Education International
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Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

[http://download.ei-
ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/GlobalTrendsInTVET.pdf](http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/GlobalTrendsInTVET.pdf)

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Education International Research

Case Study of TAFE and public vocational education in Australia
Preliminary Report

Leesa Wheelahan, Gavin Moodie,
Eric Lavigne and Fatima Samji

University of Toronto,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

October 2018

https://issuu.com/educationinternational/docs/2018_eiresearch_tviet_australia_prel

Education International Research

Case Study of Further Education in England
Preliminary Report

Gavin Moodie, Leesa Wheelahan,
Eric Lavigne and Lindsay Coppers

University of Toronto,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

October 2018

https://issuu.com/educationinternational/docs/2018_eiresearch_tviet_england_prel

Education International Research

TVET in Taiwan
Preliminary Report

Leping Mou, Eric Lavigne,
Ashley Rostamian, Gavin Moodie,
Leesa Wheelahan

University of Toronto,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

October 2018

https://issuu.com/educationinternational/docs/2018_eiresearch_tviet_taiwan_prel

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Education
International
Research



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**Technical and Vocational Education
and Training as a Framework for Social Justice:
Analysis and Evidence From World Case Studies**

Gavin Moodie, Leesa Wheelahan, and Eric Lavigne

*University of Toronto,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education*

https://issuu.com/educationinternational/docs/2019_eiresearch_tvte



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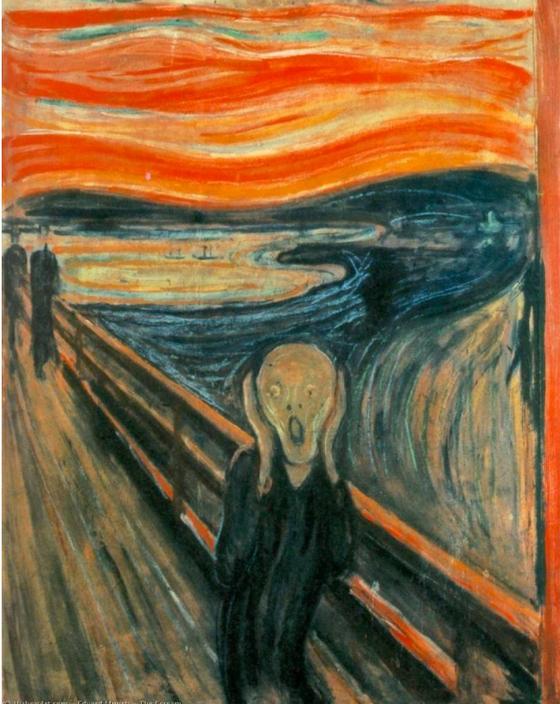
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Nomenclature!

- Colleges that offer vocational education – the second vocationally oriented tier of post-school education
- ISCED 5 type institutions that offer short cycle tertiary education (about 2 years) as a key part of their mission (but may offer some degrees & post-graduate programs)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edvard-Munch-The-Scream.jpg>



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Argument

- Colleges are under-theorised, compared to schools & universities
- Leaves them vulnerable to vicissitudes of marketisation & privatisation
- Undermines the institutional conditions that support colleges



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- TVET most marketised of all education sectors because of link to world of work
- Seen to lack responsiveness & need market discipline
- Undermined by lack of funding, but blamed for poor outcomes
- Compete with for-profit providers – drive down price & in many instances - quality
- Interchangeable ‘provider’ in a market of providers
- Model is pushed on low & mid-income countries by IGOs & NGOs

Privatisation & marketisation

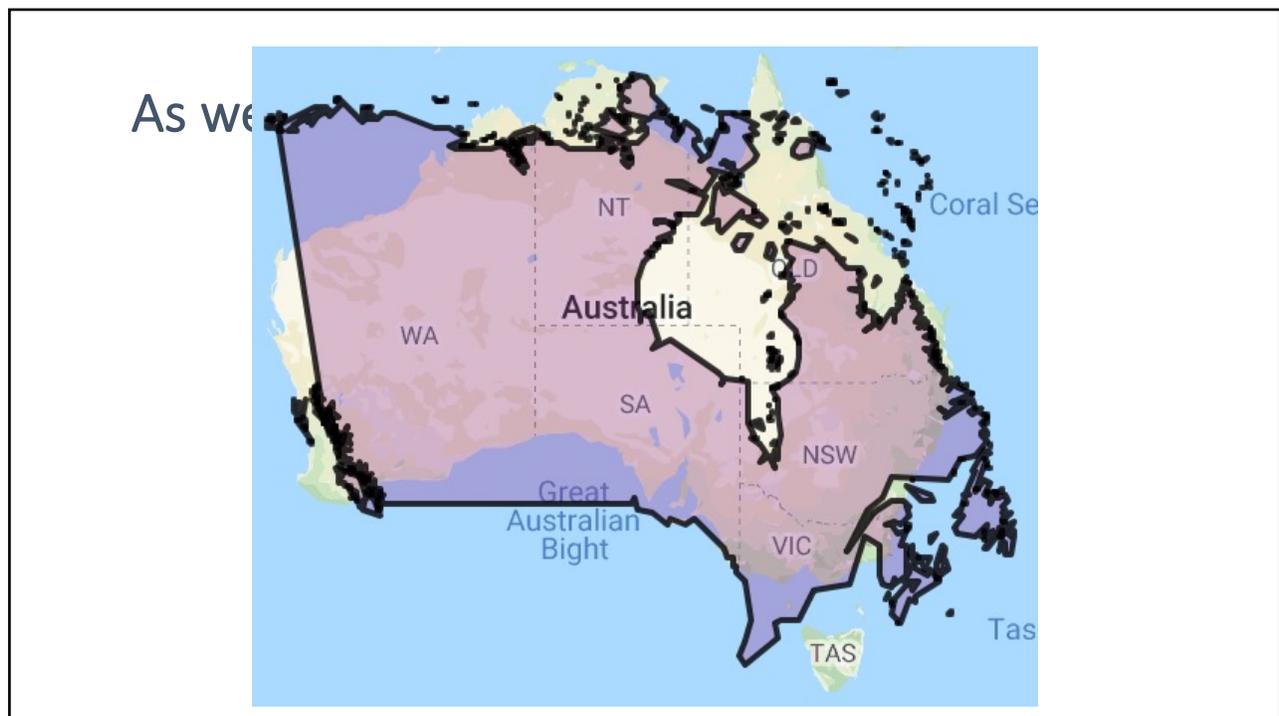


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Tale of two countries

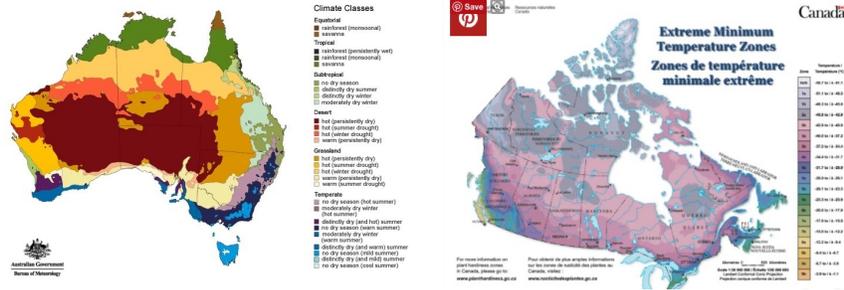
Australia and Canada

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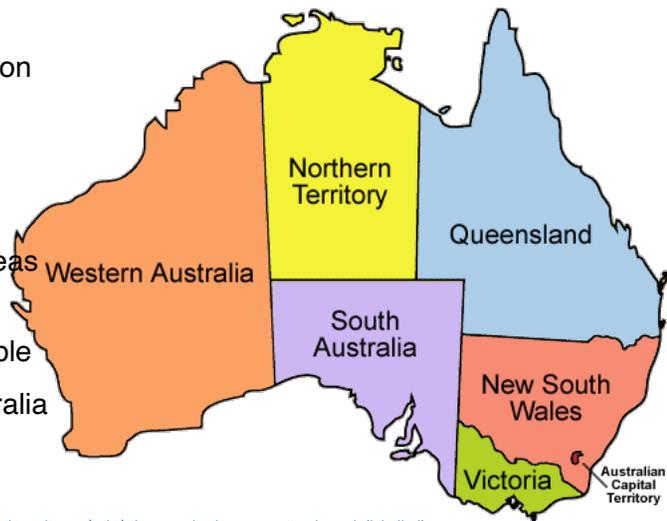
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One big difference (among others)



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- Australia has a population of 26 million
- It is a federation with 6 states & 2 territories
- It is part of the Commonwealth
- 30% of Australians were born overseas
- It was founded through colonial dispossession of its Indigenous people
- Aboriginal people have lived in Australia for more than 50,000 years
- It is very hot



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Australia_locator-MJC_coloured_\(labelled\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Australia_locator-MJC_coloured_(labelled).png)



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Three sectors of post-secondary education in Australia

- Higher education
 - Universities (almost all public), 'private' & not-for-profit HE (relatively small), some TAFEs (sort of)
- Vocational education
 - TAFE (public)
 - Mostly privates
 - Some (not many) not-for-profits
- Adult & community education (very small)

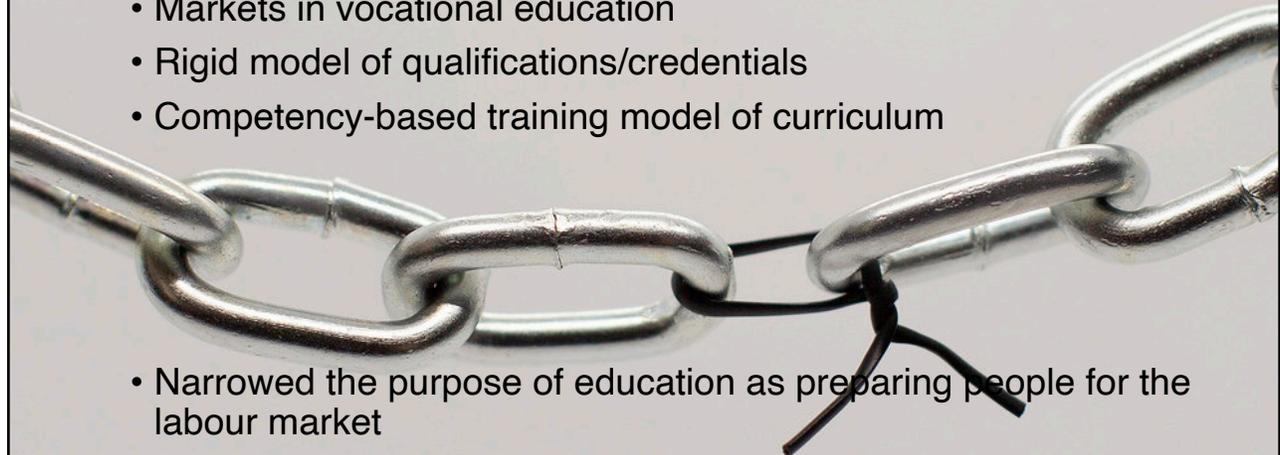


<https://www.flickr.com/photos/takver/7170256758>

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Vocational education sector

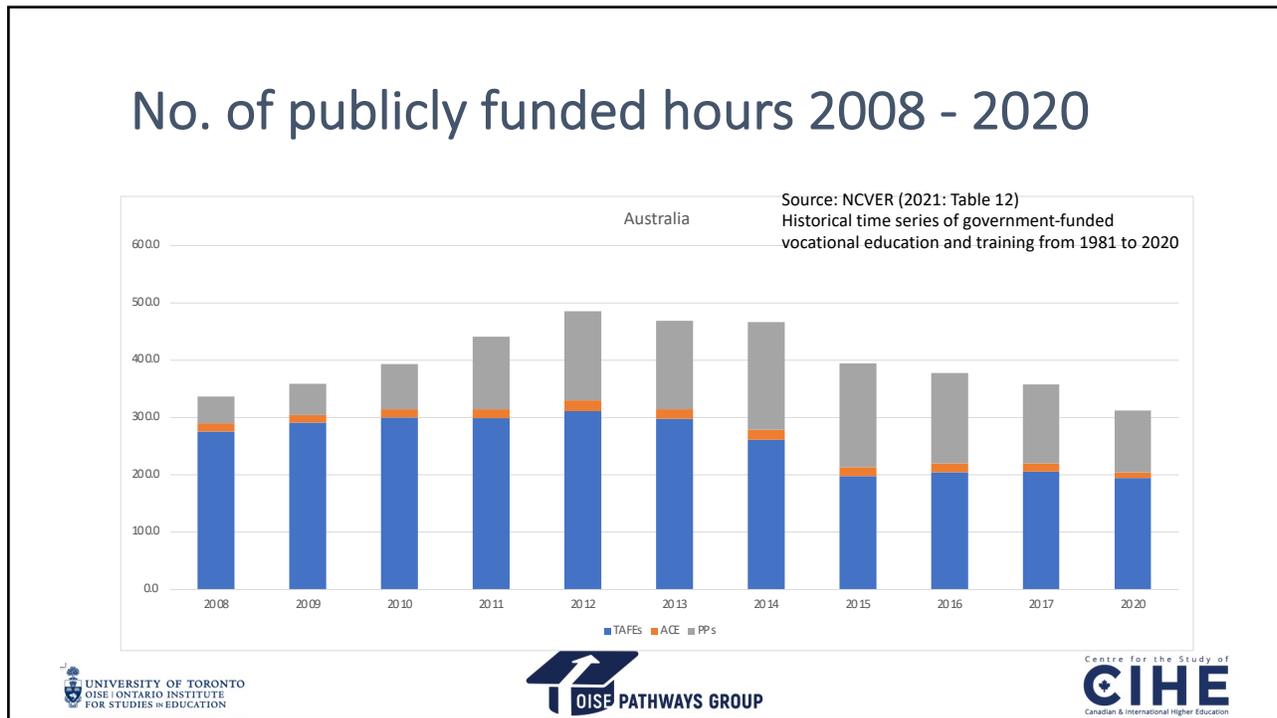
- Markets in vocational education
- Rigid model of qualifications/credentials
- Competency-based training model of curriculum



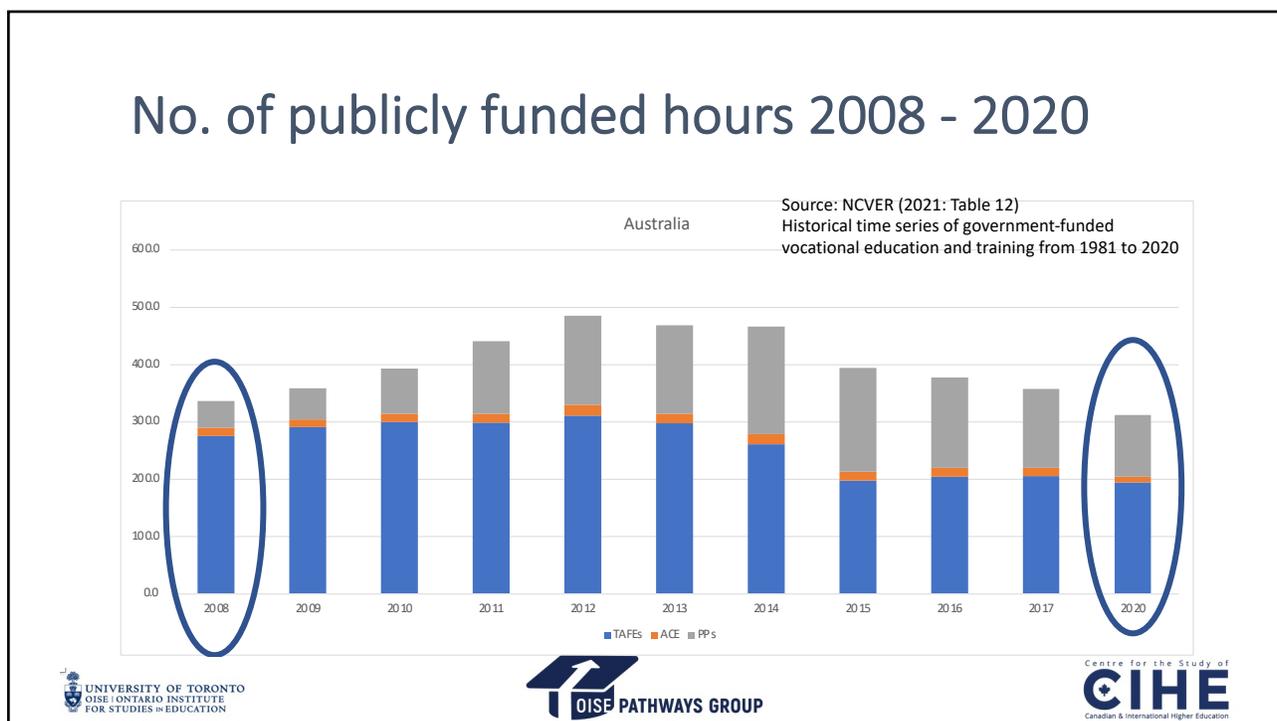
- Narrowed the purpose of education as preparing people for the labour market
- Broader developmental and progressive purposes of education diminished

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/yusamoilov/49919376386>

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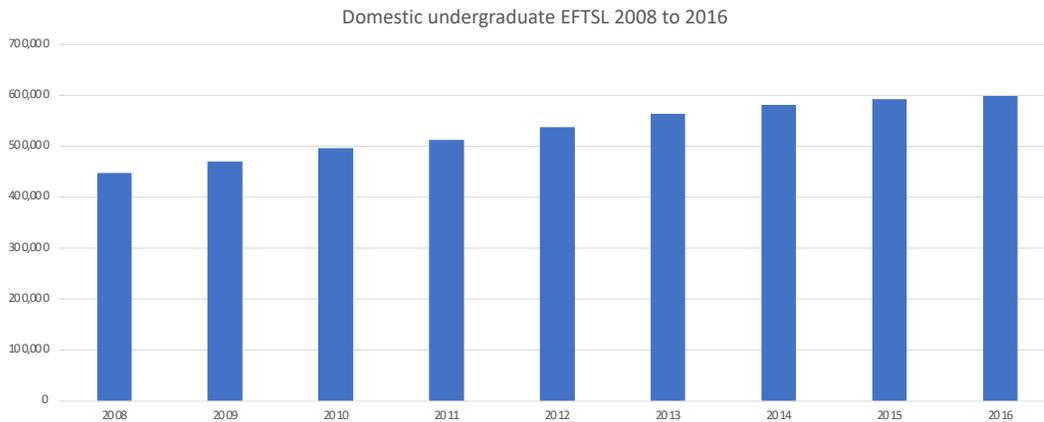


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Compared to 34% growth in Higher education over similar time



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In 2020 there were 4006 'registered training organisations' of which:

No:	%	
24	0.6	TAFE – technical & further education
635	15.8	Other public institutions (including schools) mostly very small
3347	83.5	Private providers

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System infrastructure – inefficient & wasteful

- Average number of students per institution 270.3
 - Concentrated in TAFEs & small no. big privates
- In 2016, about 1600 qualifications, 85% of enrolments in 200 qualifications,
 - 336 qualifications had 0 enrolments
- Market in providers, but not in qualifications – all had to be ‘industry led’ qualifications – one qualification for the whole country – very slow to change, stakes very high
- All had to be regulated

Lost decade

Corruption, scandal & loss of trust

Establishment of a huge regulatory framework

Emphasis is to stamp out bad behaviour in for-profit markets, usually after it has happened

Funding for for-profit vocational education

Gerald Burke:

“Government funding to non-TAFE provider began to grow in the 1990s with provision by the Commonwealth government to the states of ‘growth funds’ of which a proportion had to be allocated to private providers...

“Each of these developments while extending the provision of training was associated with waste and fraud.”

Burke, G. (2018). *Changes in funding in Australian vocational education and their effects*. LH Martin Institute

<https://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/lh-martin-institute/resources/topics/role-of-tafe-vet/vocational-education-for-the-21st-century-a-series-of-policy-discussion-papers>

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Private colleges go fishing for students, using jobs ads as bait.

Bitá, Natasha and Edwards, Verity (2015, March 31). *Australian*.

No computer, but man in pub ‘offered \$50 to sign up’

Loussikian, Kylar (2015, December 10). *Australian*.

Public cash pays for financial adviser ‘four-day’ diploma.

Klan, Anthony (2014, September 2) *Australian*.

Need help losing your nest egg? With my four-day \$1425 diploma I can help.

Klan, Anthony (2014, August 30) *Australian*.

College made millions by tricking Indigenous people, court finds.

Knaus, Christopher (2017, June 30). *Guardian*.

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ASQA cancels 2700 security quals

Hare, Julie (2016, November 11) *Australian*.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/asqa-cancels-2700-security-quals/news-story/a638fd78976e8168d151536555fd0f5f>

ALMOST 10,000 government-funded vocational students in Victoria have had their qualifications recalled in the past year because of concerns about poor training and standards breaches, stoking calls for a regulatory crackdown.

Trounson, Andrew (2015, February 19) Certificate recall exposes training. *Australian*.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/education/certificate-recall-exposes-training/news-story/d8bc85d7ca868a7703059f53239f07ec>



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Canada has a very strong college sector

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- 10 provinces & 3 territories
- 38 million population
- 22% of population born overseas (29% in Ontario)
- History of colonial dispossession
- No federal ministry of education
- Very cold place to live

Canada

CANADA – Political

——— International boundary
 - - - - - Provincial/territorial boundary
 ◆ Province/territory
 ◆ Ottawa National capital
 ◆ Regina Provincial/territorial capital

Scale
0 250 500 750 1 000 km

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Post-secondary education attainment 2016

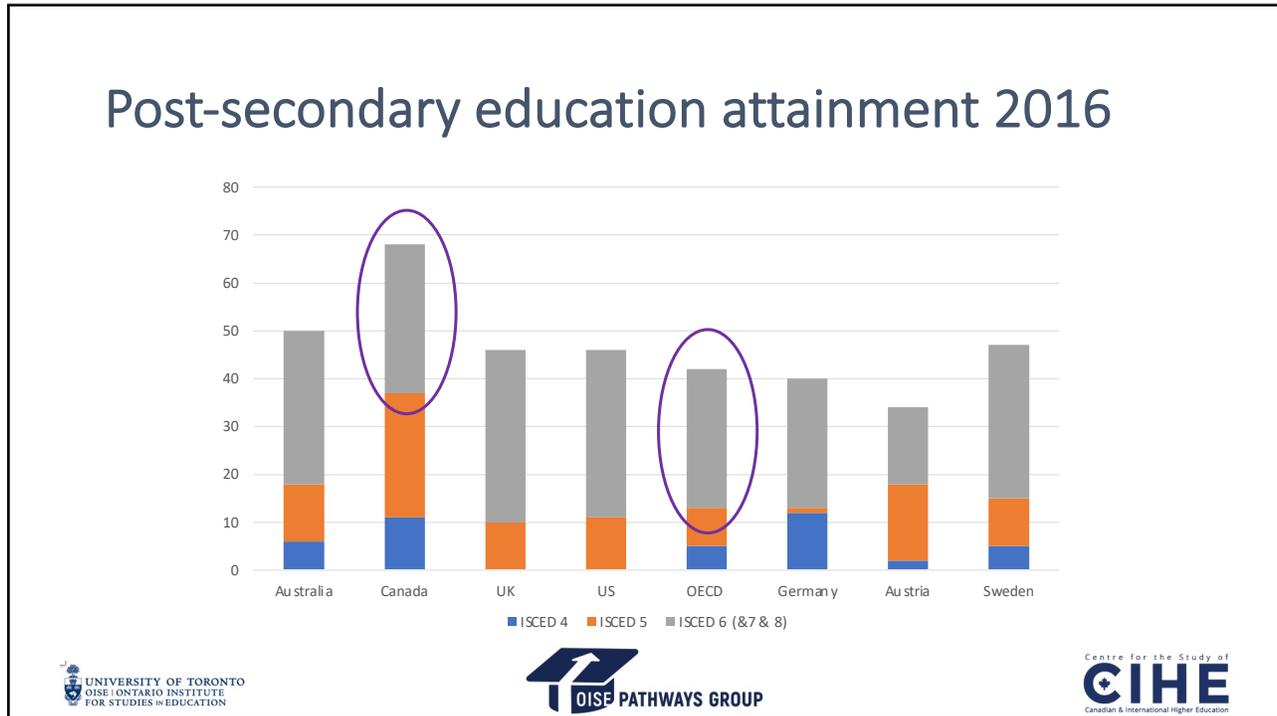
Country	ISCED 4 (%)	ISCED 5 (%)	ISCED 6 (& 7 & 8) (%)
Australia	~6	~12	~32
Canada	~11	~26	~31
UK	0	~10	~36
US	0	~11	~34
OECD	~5	~8	~29
Germany	~12	~2	~26
Austria	~2	~15	~18
Sweden	~5	~10	~31

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College systems emerge in the 1960s

- Most provinces establish college systems in the 1960s
- Different models
 - ‘California’ model in BC
 - Universal model in Quebec (CEGEPs)
 - Vocational model in Ontario (biggest province)

Source: <http://www.spraggettonchess.com/chess-humor-potpourri-and-nonsense/5b56579053bef630aaf224b012b0f74a/>

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Ontario

- 20 public universities
- 24 Colleges of Applied Arts & Technology
- 420 private career colleges (in population of about 14 million)



Source: <https://goo.gl/yvbt4d>



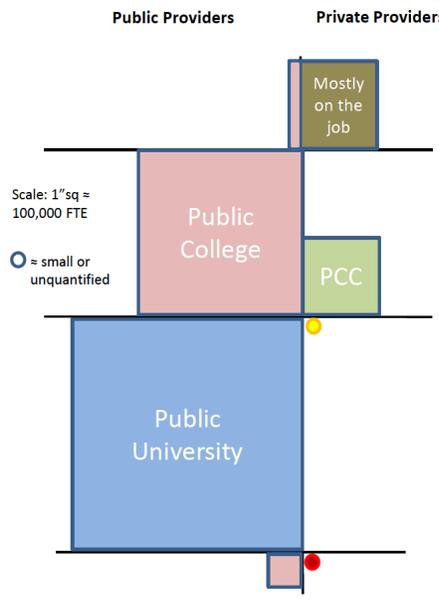


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Ontario PSE system

Milian, R. P., & Hicks, M. (2014). *Ontario Private Career Colleges: An exploratory Analysis*. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario <http://www.heqco.ca/siteCollectionDocuments/PCC%20ENG.pdf>

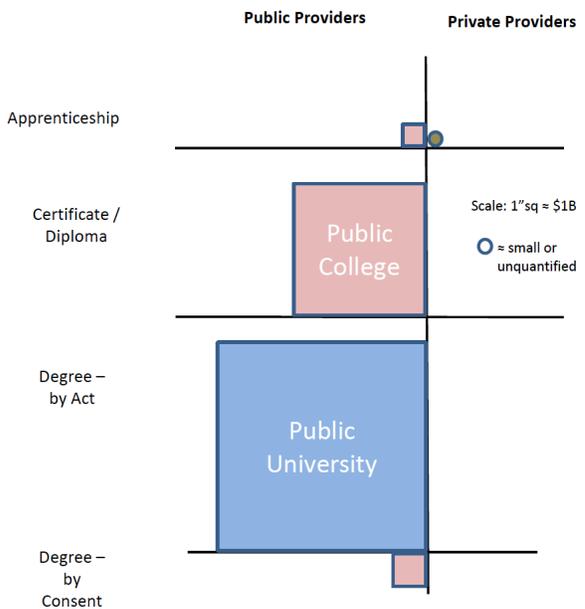
Figure 1b: Relative Size by FTE Enrolments



Scale: 1"sq = 100,000 FTE

○ = small or unquantified

Figure 1c: Relative Size by Direct Government Funding
(for postsecondary learning, sponsored research and tax credits excluded)



Scale: 1"sq = \$1B

○ = small or unquantified

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Canada – two college funding streams



Natural Sciences and Engineering
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences
naturelles et en génie du Canada





Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca

- **College and Community Innovation program –**
 - **Innovation Links grants**
 - https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/professors-professeurs/rpp-pp/cui2i-innovuc_eng.asp
 - **College and Community Social Innovation Fund**
 - https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/RPP-PP/CCSIF-ICC_eng.asp







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Innovation Showcase

Colleges and institutes strengthen Canada's capacity to innovate by undertaking applied research projects that refine and adapt products, services, technologies, and processes.



Zero Emissions Public Transit

Red River College

Electric vehicles hold great promise for reducing reliance on fossil fuels for public transportation around the world. But batteries and recharging facilities need to be more efficient to make the...



Worth a Thousand Words

Red Deer College

Picture this: women, working to get footholds in a new country, are armed with cameras. What will the pictures they take tell them about the journey they're on? What will they tell the new country...



Working with UNEP on Sustainability and Consumption

Red River College

In a globalized and networked society, sometimes it is necessary first to invest in people, relationships and ideas. Such efforts may produce results far out of proportion to the investment. After...



Winter Planting Enhances Wetland Reclamation for Oil Sands

Grande Prairie Regional College

Reclaiming lands deforested by oil sands excavation has been one of the greatest challenges of the burgeoning oil industry in Alberta. Success with winter replanting of spruce trees undertaken by...

<https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/our-members/applied-research/>

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What can we learn?

- Colleges the anchor of their communities
- Strong public system, highly trusted, confidence in qualifications/credentials
- Rich curriculum
- Applied degrees (public funding)
- Applied research – good funding (comparatively)

Source: <https://techcrunch.com/2017/09/28/anchor-raises-10-million-for-podcast-platform/>



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Theorising colleges using institutional theory

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Institutional theory

- Sociological institutionalism & historical institutionalism
- Institutions the basic building blocks of society
- Modes of social organisation & resources shaped by rules, norms & discourses
- Enable & constrain agency through providing parameters for action (path dependencies)



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Amartya Sen (1999: 123)

- ‘Individuals live and operate in a world of institutions, many of which operate across borders. Our opportunities and prospects depend crucially on what institutions exist and how they function.
- Not only do institutions contribute to our freedoms, their roles can be sensibly evaluated in the light of their contributions to our freedoms.’



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Institutions & organisations

- Institutions – state, family, economy, market, religion etc...

But

- ‘We suggest that organizations come to be regarded as institutions to the extent that their existence and operation become in a specific way publicly guaranteed and privileged, by becoming backed up by societal norms and the enforcement capacities related to them’.

(Streeck & Thelen 2005: 12)



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Floral_matryoshka_set_2_smallest_doll_nested.JPG

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Mission of
schools &
universities
generally
understood



(Laura Howells/CBC)
<https://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2020/09/09/classrooms-in-the-forest-school-teaching-largely-outside-this-fall-in-northwestern-canada/>

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The 'mission' of colleges ambiguous

- In colleges such as Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand, South Africa & the UK & other systems shaped by the colonial legacy
- Cast as residual, doing what universities & schools don't do



<https://outerlayer.com/products/the-middle-child-bar-soap>

Colleges, less understood

- Have less autonomy, less power, sector which is 'acted upon', not seen as actor in own right
- Purpose – supply skilled labour for lower status occupations
- Public vocational education institutions an interchangeable 'provider'



Reimagine college education

Away from narrow preparation of specific jobs, tasks & roles to broad occupations

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Requires an expansive view of
purposes of college education

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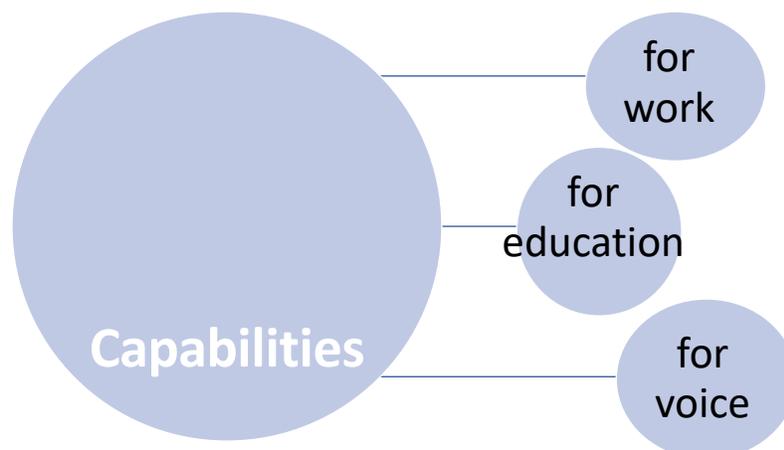
From human capital to human capabilities

“At the risk of oversimplification, it can be said that the literature on human capital tends to concentrate on the agency of human beings in augmenting production possibilities. The perspective of human capability focuses, on the other hand, on the ability – the substantive freedom – of people to lead the lives they have reason to value and to enhance the real choices they have. The two perspectives cannot but be related, since both are concerned with the role of human beings, and in particular with the actual abilities that they achieve and acquire.

But the yardstick of assessment concentrates on different achievements” (Sen 2007: 99).

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Employability versus Capability: Schröer 2015



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Three purposes of post-secondary education

1. Educational, to develop graduates' and society's understanding of theoretical, abstract knowledge;
2. Occupational, to develop graduates' individual and work groups' collective productive capacity; and
3. Social, to advance society, and social justice and inclusion.

(Moodie & Wheelahan, 2023 – forthcoming)

<https://www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/view-image.php?image=54462&picture=hand-in-ok-sign>



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What kinds of institutions can deliver these outcomes?

Institutions as local actors – principle of subsidiarity

“The capability framework does not call for the disappearance of all forms of central intervention, but it requires that it should be framed in such a way as to allow the local actors to have their say at all stages of the policy process.” (Bonvin & Farvaque, 2006: 136)



<https://publicdomainvectors.org/en/free-clipart/Conference-symbols/51564.html>

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Institutionalise colleges' mission

- Anchors of their communities
- Highly trusted, strong confidence in credentials
- 'Local actors' need as much discretion as possible
- Don't take this for granted – Australia as salutary example of what *not* to do

<https://techcrunch.com/2017/09/28/anchor-raises-10-million-for-podcast-platform/>



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Move away from residual definition

- Local powerhouses for sustainable, socially inclusive regional social & economic development
- Develop, codify & institutionalise knowledge and skills needed for changing world of work
- *Research* how work is changing using local knowledge & insights from applied disciplines
- How should the work of electricians or aged care workers change & how should curriculum change?



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Teachers as dual-professionals

- Teachers who are both industry experts & expert teachers
- Who can work with industry partners to anticipate future needs & codify & institutionalise knowledge & skills needed for the future
- Work with disadvantaged communities & support disadvantaged students to become successful learners, workers & citizens

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Janus1.JPG>



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Make the invisible visible

- Senior managers on local economic & social development boards
- Teachers & staff who work with local communities, developing contextually appropriate pathways to learning, to work, & to active participation in society
- Local anchors with autonomy

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HMS_Ark_Royal_Emerges_from_the_Mist_to_Dock_in_Portsmouth_for_the_Final_Time_MOD_45152133.jpg



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Key research questions

1. What should college qualifications look like?
2. What can colleges do that universities & schools can't do?
3. What roles do colleges play in supporting local & regional economic, social & cultural development?
4. How will the work of occupations served by colleges change in 5, 10 & 15 years time? How should qualifications change?
5. How can we support college teachers as 'dual-professionals' – industry experts & expert teachers?

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Thank you!

<https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cihe/cihe-speaker-series/>