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**The Entrepreneurial Canadian College: Grasping
Opportunity Driven by Changing Government Policies
and International Student Needs**

**Natasha Mrkic
Instructor
Langara College
Canada**

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Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL:
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The Entrepreneurial Canadian College: Grasping Opportunity Driven by Changing Government Policies and International Student Needs

**Natasha Mrkic
Instructor
Langara College
Canada**

Abstract

Higher education institutions may find it is challenging to deliver educational programming in the global environment where there are increasingly powerful discourses and neo-liberal policies. In the face of declining government support, this Canadian Institution has struggled to re-invent itself by operating in a more business-oriented way. A top-down managerial approach is replacing the collegial way work used to be organized, with new terms appearing, such as *sense of urgency*, *strategic plans*, *re-branding*, and rhetoric that revolves around the mission to be *entrepreneurial*. Being innovative leaders in education means being entrepreneurial while thinking about how to make the curriculum that is delivered relevant to learners. This paper discusses the results of a descriptive qualitative study dedicated to looking at the impact of a trend in post-secondary education that might be rationalized as academic capitalism by revealing faculty and administrators' perceptions about the role of career development and its role in educational programming. The development of dedicated educational programming that has an increasing focus on work-integrated education is driven by predominantly economic motivations. The strategic plan builds on opportunities such as immigration policy and international students' needs. The main objective is to demonstrate the integration of career development tools in any curriculum that engage students in the experience and promote reflective learning, as well as meet government mandates. This paper explores the effects of academic capitalism and entrepreneurialism in college discourse and strategic priorities by uncovering perceptions about the role of career development that is increasingly embedded in the curriculum.

Keywords: Academic Capitalism, Career Development, Entrepreneurialism, Strategic Plan, Work-Integrated Education.

Introduction

Langara College is a medium sized community college located in Vancouver, Canada. It is a post-secondary institution adapting to a new strategic plan in which the direction of the Institution has an increasing focus on work-integrated education and career development. Within the Institution, the rhetoric is challenging workers to be entrepreneurial, think ‘outside of the box,’ and ‘be innovative.’ This rhetoric emphasizes the ‘job market’ mentality, which some educators at the institution would argue flattens and reduces educational discourse. The rhetoric of entrepreneurialism can be found in Langara’s strategic plan, policy documents, and in the discourse of faculty and administrators, yet there is little documentation or analysis of what it means to people who work at the College. This paper is a shorter version of my doctoral dissertation thesis.

The research draws significantly from the theoretical framework of academic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997, and Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004), which is further informed by entrepreneurialism and resource dependency theory. It broadens existing literature to include perceptions of faculty and administrators working in a higher education setting during a major transition within the college. During the transition there is emphasis on career development as a strategic priority and it is seen by faculty as an example of academic capitalism.

People at the Institution are guided by the strategic plan to think about ways of integrating work-integrated education and at the same time prioritize financial sustainability. The main reason why Langara College is not masked in this paper is that I believed it to be a good example of how a public institution is affected by external forces that are driven by politics, societal change, and economics. Through this research, my desire was to find evidence of forces that create change and to understand how people within the Institution live through these changes. My hope was to determine whether entrepreneurialism played a role in the emphasis of career development programming.

Langara was faced with difficult decisions in 2013-2014. Due to large financial deficits, the Institution was either going to shrink in size or try to develop new programming to attract new markets. The second option aligned better with government mandates. In January 2015, the first Langara Post Degree Diploma (PDD) programs rolled out with an international student target market, successfully bringing in increased revenues. The strategic plan (Langara 2020 Strategic Plan, 2015) states that 75% of college revenues need to be “independently generated” (p. 5), and by January 2018 the number of PDD programs had increased from two to six, with more PDD programs being in development stages. Career development was initially identified as one of the Institution’s strategic priorities, and this continues to be a focus.

There may however be a gap between the strategic plan visioning, and the lived experiences of faculty and administrators who create educational programming and enact a ‘new direction’ for the Institution that hinges on the rhetoric of entrepreneurialism. Entrepreneurialism is the spirit or state of acting in an entrepreneurial manner, which is how staff is required to act to achieve the goals of the strategic plan in this case study. The problem addressed here is the gap between policies and processes surrounding attainment of strategic goals and the perceptions

and experiences of faculty and administrators. These people follow policy or are guided by policy that prescribes the necessity to develop new programming that meets student academic and institutional revenue needs through the development of programs with a career development component.

I investigated the impact of market-oriented rhetoric (Apple, 2001; Gunter and Fintzgerald, 2015; Levin, 1994, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004; and others), or what might be referred to as ‘academic capitalism’ by examining faculty and administrator perceptions regarding the role of career development and its role in educational programming. The study is an example of academic capitalism and contributes to understanding how the role of career development is conceptualized at Langara College during a time of transition and reform. Three principal questions are investigated:

1. What are the understandings of faculty and administrators about career development and its role in educational programming?
2. What do faculty and administrators perceive to be the most important components of a Career Development Centre?
3. How do faculty and administrators engage in developing new curricula to accommodate the new vision for the Institution?

Participants were chosen from areas where programming includes some form of career development. From talking to participants prior to the interviews I knew that they wanted their voices to be heard. As I listened to and observed participants during the interviews, I confirmed that they were eager to share their experiences over the last few years. Upon conducting interviews, it was obvious that the majority of faculty and administrator opinions were aligned with the strategic plan and that people were trying hard to manage their increasing workloads. By looking at the ways resources were obtained by the institution, in this case using one concept of academic capitalism, *career development as strategic priority reform*, I was trying to understand one area of the complex whole. This area embraced the faculty and administrator perceptions of career development as strategic priority reform and how this reform has changed the way that people work and live within the College.

Literature Review

The updated 2020 Vision continues with this vision statement: “We provide students with the academic and experiential foundation to chart their course to further education, professional and personal development and career success” (Langara College, 2020 Strategic Plan, 2015). The study reveals how people within the Institution made sense of the new direction and how they responded in terms of program development, ways of operating, and relationships with other areas of society.

What is often heard is that we need more qualified people entering our workforce, that we have an ageing population, and that there are declining enrolments of domestic students at Langara College (Langara Institutional Research, 2014-2016).

Due to lower domestic enrolments, and increasing costs for Langara College, as well as diminishing dollars provided by the government to support programming, the Institution is faced with tough choices to thrive and survive. What we also understand is that the Canadian government is encouraging immigration through study at Canadian institutions by offering eligible international students a three-year work permit after completing a two-year program in one of our Institutions. A three-year work permit may further lead to permanent residency (CIC website, 2017), which is what students cite as their main reason for enrolling in a Post Degree Diploma program (Langara College, CCDC student feedback, 2015-2016).

One major purpose of colleges in British Columbia (B.C.) is to provide transfer credits to universities. British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec are the only provinces in Canada that have adopted articulated models of inter-institutional transfer where university-equivalent courses are available at colleges. This allows students the opportunity to transfer to a university to further complete their studies. Langara College is a pathways college and 75% of its students transfer to a university.

The second purpose of colleges is to meet the needs of students and prepare them for the workforce. The creation of British Columbia's provincial public colleges occurred in the 1960s in order to contribute to the province's economy and society. Through legislation in 1977, the provincial government claimed the role of the main influencer in B.C.'s colleges, and later in the 1980s, they maintained a community responsiveness philosophy focusing on students, open-access to education and training, and a comprehensive curriculum (Dennison & Gallagher, 2014; Levin, 1994). By the 90s it was clear that colleges played a vital role in preparing students for work and life, and in strengthening the provincial economy. The provincial government's 1996 strategic plan (Province of British Columbia, 1996) emphasized economic globalization threats and plans for public post-secondary institutions to meet international competition, keep pace with technological advances, and train a skilled workforce (Province of British Columbia).

Over the past 30 years community colleges have become an increasingly important resource in their communities contributing to the concept of life-long learning (Dennison, 1984) and applied education (Dennison & Schuetze 2004; Levin 2017). Meanwhile, there has been an emphasis on moving towards market practices and a more market-style orientation to operation. In this "breaking of the monopoly" of public education (Dennison & Schuetze 2004), private educational investors entered the market competing for paying students. In his work on community colleges, Levin (2017) described the government's encouragement in allowing higher education institutions to meet budget shortfalls through tuition fees, making international students a critical source of revenue.

In British Columbia, career educators typically provide career development and support to the student through the concept of work-integrated education. There exists an acknowledgement of the blurring of definitions. The British Columbia Accountability Council for Co-operative Education (ACCE), which is part of the Association for Cooperative Education (ACE), has created the *Comparative Matrix of Co-operative Education with Other Forms of Work-Integrated Education and Work-Integrated Learning* (2016), in order to assist with creating a shared language. Below

is a breakdown of types of work-integrated education and work-integrated learning, taken from this matrix.

Table 1.1. *Types of Work-Integrated Education and Work-Integrated Learning*

Work Integrated Education	Work Integrated Learning
Applied Research	Para-professional
Apprenticeship	Research Assistantships
Clinic	Post-Credential Internship
Curricular Community Service Learning	Teaching Assistantships
Co-op	Co-Curricular Community Service Learning
Internship	Volunteer
Field Placement	Work Study
Practicum / Clinical Placement	Externship
Work Experience	Students as Staff

Source: ACCE 2016.

It may be said that community colleges are perceived to be at the top for career development, especially as it pertains to questions of whether they contribute to students' employability needs and a strong workforce. Indeed, jobs are not regarded as jobs, but more like occupations or careers that provide meaning for the individual along with financial benefits. Further, careers develop over the course of one's life, create status, and connections to community (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005).

In order to prepare and educate a highly skilled, job-ready workforce, "colleges are increasingly oriented to the marketplace, more responsive to public demands and preferences, and increasingly more directed by provincial governments to serve both political and economic priorities" (Levin, 1999). Research that focuses specifically on college issues, outlines the effect of global forces, such as globalization, international economics, international politics, and global communication systems. This area of research explores how all of these influence the change of college behaviours, such as the creation of strategic plans, institutional missions, and organizational structures based on corporate principles (Levin, 1999; Levin 2002; Levin 2003; Levin, Kater and Wagoner 2006). These authors argue that colleges organize themselves to respond to economic needs and employer demands. Structural policy then changes and these institutions begin to operate in a corporate way, implementing business-like practices.

Colleges in British Columbia are funded through two main streams, tuition fees, and government grants. Over the past few decades, the difference between the two has shifted. According to the British Columbia Tuition Limit Policy, higher education institutions may raise tuition fees for existing programs by up to 2% per year. In the meantime, income from government grants is substantially declining, while tuition fee income is substantially increasing, as seen in the table below. In 2013, the government grant to Langara College was \$46,337,373, while in 2016 this grant declined by \$7.5million to \$38,760,377. Meanwhile, the difference in income from tuition from 2013 to 2016 was almost \$23million, from being \$41,910,384 in 2013 to being \$64,753,786 in 2016.

Table 1.2. *Langara College Income from Government Grants and Tuition Fees*

Year	Government Grants	Tuition Fees
2013	\$46,337,373	\$41,910,384
2014	\$46,582,999	\$44,728,796
2015	\$45,226,115	\$50,723,958
2016	\$38,760,377	\$64,753,786

Source: British Columbia Government website, Audited Financial Statements.

In British Columbia, public colleges are mandated by legislation. Langara College, in fulfilling its mandate must consider the government’s strategic priorities which for 2017/18 are:

- Develop and implement an updated Skills Gap Plan, in alignment with priorities of the BC Skills for Jobs Blueprint;
- Continue to deepen BC’s talent pool, in support of the #BCTECH strategy, ensuring opportunities for students in the technology sector;
- Work in partnership with the Government and Aboriginal communities, organizations and institutes to implement the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework and Action Plan to increase the participation and success of Aboriginal learners;
- Continue to deliver on provincial priorities for international education, including pursuing opportunities to advance the two-way flow of students, educators and ideas;
- Continue to actively encourage and promote the development and use of online resources and open textbooks to support post-secondary affordability for students;
- Continue to actively participate in the development and implementation of a common application system for all public post-secondary institutions in the province and develop a strategy to fully onboard to Education Planner BC application services at your institution;
- Promote safe campuses by developing policies and actions to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct and assault of all forms;
- Meet or exceed the financial targets identified in the Ministry’s three-year Service Plan as tabled under Budget 2017, including maintaining balanced or surplus financial results; and
- Continue to maximize the efficient use of public post-secondary administrative resources through participation in the Administrative Service Delivery Transformation initiative. (British Columbia Mandate Letter to Langara College, 2017).

To summarize, the structural policy has changed in favour of higher education institutions “earning” their own income, as government grant subsidies decline. As shown in Table 1.3, the Ministry full time enrolment (FTE) target for domestic students had remained the same since the 2013/2014 year, however the target percentage which was actually achieved had dropped year over year due to increases in international student enrolments and overall changing demographics.

Table 1.3. *Ministry Domestic Student Enrolment Targets and Percentage of Target Achieved*

Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/2016	2016/2017
Ministry FTE Target (Domestic Only)	7,056	7,056	7,056	7,056
Percentage of Target Achieved	102.5%	100.0%	97.1%	94.5%

Source: Langara College Enrolment Reports.

The 8% drop in domestic enrolment over four years may not seem significant yet as shown in Table 1.4, Langara College has experienced a loss of 563 full time domestic students over the same period. While there has been a loss in full time domestic enrolment, the Institution gained 2,314 international students that were enrolled full time.

Table 1.4. *Domestic and International Student Enrolment Comparison*

Year	Domestic Student	International Student	Total
2013/14	7,232	1,148	8,380
2014/15	7,054	1,538	8,592
2015/16	6,854	2,333	9,187
2016/17	6,669	3,462	10,131

Source: Langara College Enrolment Reports.

The figures in the above tables demonstrate the change in structural policy and show how by increasing the number of international students paying international student fees, the Institution increased revenue from tuition.

Below, in Table 1.5, we can see how instruction fees increased in order to service international students. During the same timeframe, professional development expenditures for people working in the college decreased. Student scholarships also decreased. Both of these facts contribute to understanding the financial sense of urgency to raise money that the Institution was facing due to structural changes. In 2017, we see that there had been an effort by the college to invest slightly more into scholarships. The tiny investment in 2017 in employee professional development, however, does not reflect that fact that there has been a substantial growth in the number of people working at the College.

Table 1.5. *Expenditure Changes in Instruction, Professional Development, and Scholarship*

	Instruction	Professional Development and Travel	Scholarships and Bursaries
2013	94,746,994	2,138,580	734,186
2014	99,134,927	2,103,212	679,876
2015	101,625,594	2,040,234	510,388
2016	107,387,075	1,794,927	657,609
2017	116,738,113	2,255,967	984,825

Source: Langara College Annual Report Data.

In the Annual report for 2013, the heading for “Professional Development and Travel” was “Meetings and Travel”, and the “Scholarship and Bursaries” heading was “Student Awards”.

Christensen, Raynor, and McDonald (2015) found that until recently higher education has been successful in resisting disruption, however, in the past years’ new types of programs and institutions have been created to address the needs of different population segments. To lessen the burden of education on government, higher education in British Columbia has been mandated to increase private sector participation through what Mackinnon (2013) calls marketization. Metcalfe (2010) found evidence of marketization through changes in postsecondary funding and emergence of new policy initiatives which prompted a suggestion that Canada was “no longer, or perhaps never was the “exception” to academic capitalism”. Marketization and *Walmartization* are happening across higher education in Canada (Potter, 2015), with a serious roll-back on services. Marketization of higher education is often described as switching from being relatively autonomous to implementing structures that are more business and market-oriented. In a 2014 issue of the *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, an article titled, “UK higher education viewed through marketization and marketing lenses”, Nedbalová, Greenacre and Shultz (2014), discussed how academics viewed marketization as an “evil practice” that was damaging education. In contrast, they also compiled research from a marketing management point of view, which showed that when marketing theories are used to, for example, strategically position an institution or determine student needs, they enable better decision making and better outcomes.

The reason why international students find the PDD programs attractive is due to Government of Canada policy regarding immigration. Any student that completes a two-year degree such as the Post Degree Diploma program, may upon successful studies apply for a Canadian three-year work permit. Once this three-year work permit expires, these previous students may be eligible for permanent residency in Canada (Government of Canada, Canadian Immigration & Citizenship). International education is regarded as an industry according to British Columbia provincial government strategic rhetoric, and further reinforced by the federal government’s International Education Strategy that promotes the doubling of international student recruitment by 2020 (Canada, 2017). According to latest reports, Langara has exceeded this target (BCIEE, 2018).

Table 1.6. *Number of International Students Studying at Langara College per Academic Year*

Academic Year (AY)	Total Number of International Students
AY 2017-2018 (partial)	6,301
AY 2016-2017	6,159
AY 2015-2016	4,188
AY 2014-2015	3,105
AY 2013-2014	2,189

Source: Langara College Enrolment Reports.

For this College, internationalization has been a way to create financial resources and fulfill one of the mandates given to it by the government. There are growing

concerns in the literature that internationalization is taking place merely for economic purposes (de Wit, 2002; Garson 2016) as many institutions focus on increasing international student recruitment.

Higher education institutions increasingly demonstrate characteristics of globalizing, market-driven behaviours (Marginson & Considine 2000; Levin 2002; Giroux 2008; Connell 2013) and they appear to be effectively responding to mandates by their governments to contribute to the economy through the training of a workforce. When researching the effects of the “globalized community college” Levin (2002) determined that “community colleges in both Canada and the United States exhibited educational and work behaviours,” and that they were oriented to the marketplace by integrating the needs of industry into educational programming. As a consequence of these actions, community colleges have become globalized, that is they perform actions in lines with what Apple, 2001; Connell, 2013; Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2015 refer to as neoliberalism, and what Bakan (2004) refers to as the rise of the corporation and corporation influences.

There are scholars that argue that engaging in market-driven activities enables higher education institutions to contribute to the economic development of their communities (Shane, 2004). Scholars that are critical of academic capitalism say that it has moved the public good of postsecondary education towards a model of corporatization and consumerism (Bakan, 2004; Kirp, 2003). In the college space, there has been less research specifically related to academic capitalism, although many have mentioned that colleges also use entrepreneurial strategies to better compete in the student marketplace. At the community college level, the focus of research is concentrated more on resource constraints and administrative organization (Levin, 2004, 2005; Roueche and Jones, 2005; Mars and Ginter, 2012).

Institutional change happens where entrepreneurial opportunities have initiated a redesign of courses, programs, delivery, communities and industrial involvement. An important strategy in institutional transition and reform is changing mindsets, practices, and policies to encourage entrepreneurial action. Success in institutional entrepreneurialism involves a culture change since culture shapes both vision and strategy (Hrabowski, 2014; Mintzberg & Westley, 1992). Entrepreneurship includes invention, renewal, or innovation that occur within or outside of an institution or organization. Being entrepreneurial traditionally relates to creating a new business, but it also relates to creating new ideas and opportunities, improving conditions, taking risk, and producing new products or services (Hornaday, 1992; Huber, 1991; Slaughter & Leslie, 2001; Sharma & Chrisman, 2007). Entrepreneurship, when discussed in the educational context, has been a strategy for overcoming resource barriers (De Silva, 2015; Levin, 2005; Mars, Slaughter, & Rhoades, 2008; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

A limitation of existing literature on entrepreneurship in educational settings is that most research has focused on teaching entrepreneurship, leaving other areas of entrepreneurialism mostly unexamined by scholars. This is especially evident in the college setting, where there is a lack of research. Literature has concentrated on the demand side of entrepreneurship programming, rather than the supply side which relates to the opportunities that drive academic entrepreneurship (Katz, 2003; Kuratko, 2005; Mars & Ginter, 2012). Due to lack of scholarly consensus on the

definition of entrepreneurship, and after explaining the various existing definitions ranging from a resource acquisition to creating social value and generating innovation, Mars and Metcalfe (2009) defined entrepreneurship as “those activities that combine *risk*, *innovation*, and *opportunity*, particularly in times of uncertain resources”.

Academic entrepreneurs may have different reasons for being entrepreneurial. Academic entrepreneurs are also what Slaughter and Leslie call academic capitalists. These individual faculty members engage in market-like activities, and are typically involved in contracting-out services, patenting, and spin-offs that generate revenue or provide students with a market-type benefit such as employment. Academic entrepreneurship may happen by chance when seizing opportunities that present themselves, such as developing PDD programs for incoming international students that want an educational work experience component. We live and work in a complex, chaotic system; hence there could be a relationship between being entrepreneurial, becoming a learning and reflective institution, developing shared visions, as well as motivating individual academic entrepreneurs (Kirp, 2003; Hayter, 2011; Mars, 2007; McGrath and MacMillan, 2000; Nejad, Seiid, Hassani and Berbousi, 2012; Pryor and Bright, 2011; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). A review of theories of academic capitalism and resource dependency (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004) provided a useful framework for understanding the research study’s external environment and dependencies.

Methodology

A methodology is the strategy, plan of action, or design that influences the choice and use of particular methods (Crotty, 2010). I analyzed document data, observed how people acted, asked open-ended questions in interviews and developed a case study that brings together these elements of data. Through a constructivist view, the goal of this study was to rely on participants’ lived experiences of new educational programming and strategic plan visioning. I engaged in practitioner-based research as the case is based out of the Institution where I am employed.

Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that is used in various academic disciplines to understand meanings. In the past it has been employed in the social sciences, in market research, and other further contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Qualitative research is employed in natural settings, where human behaviour and events occur and can be observed. The goal of this type of research is to understand the meaning of a particular social situation, event, experience, or interaction (Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman, 2013). Qualitative research encompasses using of an assortment of empirical methods such as interviews, case study, observation, focus groups, and personal experience that help describe meanings in individuals’ lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Framing the methodology helped lead me throughout this study and develop an essential roadmap that guided towards the accomplishment of this mission. The way I have framed the methodology informed my work, and helped situate me as

a researcher and practitioner. My interest in understanding the impact of a trend in post-secondary education that may have contributed to reform processes at Langara College through the perceptions and lived experiences of faculty and administrators directed me to the choice of qualitative research.

A case study context was used to design the study (Creswell, 2007, 2013, 2014, and Maxwell, 1992, 2005, 2013), with all participants being recruited from the one case institution. All research participants are employed by Langara College, and the interviews occurred between December 2016 and March 2017. The interview participants held either a faculty or administrator position. All of the interview participants were at the same hierarchical level as myself or higher. The gender distribution was almost equal with seven female participants and six male participants. Qualitative data was collected using open-ended questions, and a total of thirteen people were interviewed, either one-on-one or in a focus group setting. Interview data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed as soon as a new interview was conducted. This enabled immediate learning of the data and provided information that confirmed when the data was saturated. Once the thirteenth interview was conducted it became clear that no new data was emerging. I immediately transcribed each interview and the focus group session and analyzed the data. Through this analysis, I was able to capture emergent themes and I continued with interviews until the point at which no new information or theme emerged. This thematic saturation is considered an important conclusion so as to ensure relevant information is not missed if data collection were to stop prematurely (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007, Creswell, 2007, 2013, 2014, Crotty, 2010).

The main goal of my interviews was to understand how participants conceptualize the impact of the strategic priorities at Langara College that might be rationalized as academic capitalism by revealing their perceptions about career development and its role in educational programming. The individual interviews were conducted in-person at the college site and lasted between 60-90 minutes. The in-person interview occurred at a time and location of the participant's choosing. Each interview was audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. This research project brought an opportunity for the Institution to engage in the process of curriculum deliberation (Hannay, 1989; Schwab, 1983). Interview questions were open-ended, sometimes semi-structured and at other times unstructured. During the session, I would use probing questions as they came up, which Bogdan and Biklen (2007) called "probes".

An interview protocol was used as a guide, however, it was important to allow the participants expression of thought which is why while listening to an interviewee, new probes appeared. Initially, my fear was that there would be a challenge getting an adequate number of participants to honestly talk about their perceptions, but discovered participants were happy for this opportunity to express their thoughts. Participants were eager to share their stories, ideas, and frustrations. One research participant said, "*The journey over the past three years has been one big roller coaster ride,*" and everyone wanted to tell their side of the story.

It is important to recognize that this study was limited in its scope and examination of a single institution, and yet there was a large amount of collected data due to broad, open-ended questions, which were sorted, coded, and from which common themes emerged.

All of the interviewees responded as individuals, representing their own experience, and not as representatives of particular groups. These individuals represented a number of smaller communities of practice that came together dependant of the strategic goal they were trying to accomplish. A delimitation of my choosing was the number of interviewed participants. I interviewed thirteen research participants. My intent was to develop a better understanding of my own institution. I did not think that there was a limitation for me being a practitioner and the researcher on site as I had acknowledged my own pre-existing thoughts and any potential threats to validity. I mitigated risks to participants by ensuring anonymity and by not performing any off-campus interviewing. Due to the minimal risk to participants of being part of this study and their desire to voice their thoughts, interviewees were keen to talk honestly about their experiences.

Findings/Results

A qualitative study was conducted to better understand the faculty and administrator perceptions through an in-depth and descriptive examination of changes taking place at the College. It has been said that around the world, higher education institutions are experiencing change, and Langara is making efforts to respond to increasing market pressures, declining government support, and changing demographics.

The federal government's International Education Strategy, supported by provincial strategies promote the doubling of international student recruitment by 2022 (Canada, 2017). The government has said that due to an increasingly turbulent global environment, many people intend to immigrate to Canada, and one of the quickest and most cost-efficient ways to achieve this is to study at a Canadian institution. A major finding was that Langara College fully took advantage of situational factors by focusing on creating new forms of program delivery, integrating career development programming, and achieving growth through the recruitment of international students. As one of the interview participants commented, Langara's choice of strategy was one of growth rather than stagnation and a reduction in size.

This second issue, the increased workload off the side of people's desks, was acknowledged by every single participant, either in the form of them having this extra work or in the form of senior leadership recognizing that this may indeed be an issue. Gary, who was about to leave for vacation, emphasized this through the following quote: "*Fried [referring to himself], first real break in three years, ridiculously lean, need more people to do stuff, everything off the side of the desk, so many meetings.*"

Others offered similar observations when talking about their workload and how they determined what their priorities were.

“I’m stretched in too many ways...and this has had a big impact on the amount of time [spent on various duties]. Which of my children do I love the most? (Candy).”

People have to realize that we are in the business of education now...” (Doug).

What he meant by the term *business of education* is articulated through perceptions of culture, core values, and how those notions tie into the academic and strategic plans of the Institution guiding the newly acquired entrepreneurial direction. This may directly relate to Bergquist and Pawlak’s (2008) explanation that many colleges shift cultures and may exhibit characteristics of a managerial culture. On page 43, they define managerial culture as:

“A culture that finds meaning primarily in the organization, implementation, and evaluation of work that is directed toward specified goals and purposes; that values fiscal responsibility and effective supervisory skills; that holds assumptions about the capacity of the Institution to define and measure its goals and objectives clearly; and that conceives of the Institution’s enterprise as the inculcation of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes in students so that they might become successful and responsible citizens”.

Culture “provides a lens through which its members interpret and assign value to the various events and products of the world” (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008, pg. 10). From observation of people in various situations, it seems to me that people at this institution pride themselves on being part of a collegial culture, and during meetings “collegial leadership” is often a reference. It may be said that by *referencing* a collegial culture, people are actually achieving an individual and collective sense of purpose or attempting to team build rather than *participating* in an actual collegial culture.

In practice, this college environment shows a culture where educational outcomes are planned and specified. Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) refer to this as an element of managerial culture along with clearly specified criteria for judging performance. “Community colleges...in Canada grew out of the elementary and secondary school systems and their communities. They were managed like other educational institutions in the local school system. Faculty members were trained as teachers rather than scholars or researchers” (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008, pg. 44). Research scholarship holds a very low priority at Langara College, in comparison to typical collegial settings. In essence, these authors state that in higher education, community colleges have been the main source of managerial culture, especially with the delivery of vocational programs.

I like being here. Like the culture. Like the people, I work with. I’ve worked in a toxic environment before. It’s a pleasure to work with smart people. We have lots of education, and we can actually talk about stuff intelligently. In the corporate world, people with more education are often seen as threats (Gary).

Interview participants believe that the Langara culture is different than everywhere else. As a comprehensive pathways institution serving a large community of people, it was seen as a large university, yet small enough to ensure support and sense of community. Interview participants described this difference.

[Different in] how it delivers programs as at Langara, it is very much a transfer institution...as a pathways institution, getting people where they want to go and that's primarily to one of the research universities to get a degree. What that means culturally is that the link – the pure academy experience – is more so at Langara than at [other BC colleges]. The pure academy experience means that Langara is more university-like... and that means that the feeling within the academy of being a broad-based institution is very much the underlying mantra here (Christine).

The culture at the Institution may be seen as entrepreneurial and people seem happy to stay here until retirement. Those people that have an interest in innovation gather support from different areas and the College is open to new initiatives. “At Langara, everything grows organically, that's the way life is here” (Doug).

The institutional vision statement:

Langara College is Canada's pathways college. We provide students with the academic and experiential foundation to chart their course to further education, professional and personal development, and career success (Langara College, 2020 Strategic Plan).

The mission, core purpose, and mandate:

Langara College provides accessible, high-quality undergraduate, career, and continuing educational programs and services that meet the needs of our diverse learners and the communities we serve (Langara College, 2020 Strategic Plan).

When the plan was created, there existed a threat to the Institution in the form of declining government resources as well as declining enrolment due to shifts in demographics. This greatly influenced the prioritization of financial sustainability.

While all outcomes in the plan are important, the thematic priority is an area of particular focus for the first two years: Supporting our mission for academic excellence by prioritizing financial sustainability (Langara College, 2020 Strategic Plan).

Participants in this research study emphasized collegiality and a student-centric attitude, despite resource dependency and the need for resource attainment. Few people were not familiar with the academic and strategic plans, and the majority of interviewees, although recognizing the strategic plan, made clear that the academic plan was what they referred to when developing new programming.

...6 years ago there was the threat of layoffs and some people jumped on board. It's a bit worrisome that some people do not know what our vision is...that came out in our engagement survey...the college strategic plan was done before [participant had no input]. If you ask me what's the vision of Langara College – I wouldn't refer to any metrics. "We've decided to be Canada's premier pathways institution and that means in and out, and that means that we have to help our students come from different parts of the world, different parts of life, different parts of society, and we've got to funnel them in and [help them to] open up a whole world of opportunities. We're going to help these students try and get through here to be able to ultimately get to where they need to get to. That's the value proposition that Langara has, and its' always had that value proposition (Doug).

Some faculty members did believe or align with the strategic plan. Below are a number of perceptions regarding the strategic and/or academic plan(s) and it was clear that interview participants were divided on thoughts about their commitment to the plan(s). A few interviewees did not feel any attachment to the strategic plan,

"I don't feel like I was part of the development of it" (Catherine). Other participants acknowledged partial commitment to the strategic plan, "...current strategic plan, there are probably a number of faculty and staff that are committed to it, and there are a number of people that have never read it" (Doug).

Some interviewees felt that they were not part of the development of the strategic and academic plans. They used them when writing proposals in order to obtain more points for their proposals thereby creating a better chance of gaining approval.

...the academic plan has no money behind it, the strategic plan has money behind it...so whenever I'm writing a proposal that's when I'll consult these things because I want to make sure this proposal "fits here and it fits here, and it fits here". That's when I look at it. And so the more points you get from the strategic and the academic plan into your proposal, the better (Catherine).

Interviewees treated the strategic and academic plans as checklists. *"I've done this, oh look, I got points here, I got point 3, I got point 5, okay, we're good" (Catherine).*

An especially important finding was the career development definition that interview participants offered. When referring to their own "faculty or administrator" career development, they thought of professional development, career paths, and counselling. When referring to student career development, interviewees were talking about work-integrated learning and work-integrated education. It was fascinating that the same term had two different meanings based on the stakeholder, and based on my analysis, my assumption is that this is due to the lack of college commitment towards employee career development. Table 1.5 demonstrated how despite increasing the number of faculty to accommodate instruction, professional development spending

had decreased. An important academic capitalism observation is the relationship with time. People at Langara were struggling with keeping up with the work, educating students, and providing students with career development solutions. Financial resources were not provided for employee career development, and there was not enough time to attend to Langara employee professional development and career development needs. In Cantwell and Kauppinen's (2014) book, *Academic Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, chapter 4 explores the "...Academic Capitalism Time Regime", the argument is that we assign time to learning, to being, and as such our societies increasingly struggle with working longer hours and spending less time on tasks. Faculty at Langara increasingly teach more, with less secure contracts. As an example, regularized faculty (pre-PDD) usually teach in blocks of 4 courses per two terms, and then use the third term for non-instructional duty, professional development activities, and holidays. Most PDD faculty are hired on term contracts, meaning that since early 2015, these faculty members did not have access to professional development or non-instructional duty time. With a never-ending teaching workload, the *time needed* to engage in one's own career development is unfortunately lost. As part of the strategic plan, there is an expectation *to take the time to think* about student career development, yet this same outcome for Langara College employees isn't part of the academic capitalist framework or Langara's strategic plan. According to interviewed participants, encouraging their own career development would be a welcome new strategic priority.

Educational programming at the Institution has fundamentally changed in order to include some type of career development. During the focus group session, one participant suggested that faculty were not really sure how to attach programming to career development.

[Throughout the College there is a] ton of work integrated learning...lot of great things happening here... what I am hearing from faculty is that they don't know necessarily what to do... there's huge engagement for a lot of program areas that believe in this stuff, but there's a disconnect between how it's attached to the programming and what happens with career development (FG, Christa).

Sergio was keen to add that, "...it's meeting the needs of the marketplace" (FG). All voices in the focus group agreed to this one, especially in regards to preparing students to find work in Canada.

One person noted how new companies in the education marketplace were competing for students, charging large fees for programs, and guaranteeing work placements, for example, "*Red Hat [a private educational company] guarantees a work placement*" (FG: Christa).

Another focus group participant questioned why people went to colleges and universities, and then answered his own question, "*To get a job!*" (FG, Karim). This prompted everyone else in the focus group to agree, with one participant adding, "*To get a job! To get careers*" (FG, Christa).

When developing new programs, career development is considered at this Institution, as evidenced by the multiple comments below:

Yes, I think we do [consider career development when developing new programs]...we definitely talk to our advisory committees to see what's happening in the real world. Offering courses that are relevant that will somehow maybe give the student the edge when they graduate (Sue).

I think it [career development] should be threaded in everything that we do...so you are standing up there, you have to explain to students what you are teaching and how it fits where their personal goals are and so that's no.1. But there is another layer of complexity. We know that people now with an education, by the time they have graduated, we need to prepare them for something we don't know exists, and so how am I in my day to day teaching going to accomplish [this]. So that whole global awareness piece, I think it's important for us to make sure that the curriculum has that threaded through the student's entire academic journey...I think that career development is absolutely important and it shouldn't be this stand-alone thing that kind of sits out there. It's just like when we talk about cultural competencies, indigenous learnings, these things now need to be threaded through people's curriculum and be part of people's learning outcomes. I don't think it's just Langara College – I think Academia, in general, is going to have a really hard time with this because there are some people that are believers that we shouldn't [think of career development] (Doug).

I think career development is going to be important. The other piece is whatever we are teaching domestic and international students – they need to understand how that's relevant to where they are going to go in their personal and professional careers and we sometimes forget that personal, professional careers are not Metro Vancouver. Could be BC [British Columbia], Canada, North America, China, India, somewhere else where they could end up landing. And I think its [career development] absolutely critical (Doug).

If you finish your degree, your odds of getting a job and being employed are actually very high because you have proved over the four years [in school] that you can do a sustained amount of work for a long time...and those are good things attractive to any employer (Candy).

Students do need to think about “what does my future look like” ... need to be focused and be able to say “why do I want to work for Telus or the Royal Bank” or whatever, beyond just “I need a job” (Candy)

The overall findings were that participants believed that career development has an increasingly important role in educational programming as it relates to the strategic plan and should be considered when developing new programming in order to help the students learn-by-doing, as well as better prepare them for the challenges of our global environment.

One participant stated that it is a “...lifelong endeavor... it shouldn't be just at the transition points of the students' life...it's not linear, it's all over the map and it's continuous...” (FG Ray).

In this case, interview participants perceived that many students need career development in order to continue their education, pay for various expenses, and obtain meaningful employment during and/or at the end of their programs. Sue agrees

with Catherine on the aspect of connecting theory to practice and also voices her opinion on what career development should be like for people working at the College.

I think that career development is providing the resources and the time, which I guess is part of the resources, and the support for people to grow in their careers. So it could be in-house workshops, seminars. It could be really supportive of people wanting to go to college here or take courses elsewhere, and it's providing the funding to be able to do that. But it also means having those opportunities for people to move into, to have a sense that "it's worth it for me to do A, B, or C because I can see that there is, within this organization, there's a place for me to go." ... For students...it's ensuring that our courses are very applied, that they're learning the theory obviously...but they have to also have the understanding of how this gets applied in the real world (Sue).

Participants' thought that integrating career development into the curriculum, transition, and reform may encompass doing an assessment of both funding needs and student needs. "[Career development] I think it's here to stay. It's just part of the core student learning experience that students need to be successful. The challenge is that it's not funded. So how do you fund it?" (Christine). Christine acknowledged that funding is an issue as government grants decline despite the growing need for career development. "Career Development should be looking at the whole person as opposed to just the job you're going to get at the end of it" (Catherine).

In answering the question of how the curriculum is developed, this is what Catherine had to say in regards to the development of one course that many students take in their first year. She emphasized that it was a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) that works on developing curriculum.

When asked what influenced the development of new programming – whether it was free will, a "Band-Aid" solution, or whether it was handed down by someone, the response was the following: "I proposed it, together with [XYZ person from a different department]. We wrote the proposal...So I don't think it was a "Band-Aid", it was more "we don't have anything, we need to develop something" (Catherine).

I think it's all about the money, and about saving our butts, because we were in a hole (FG, Sergio).

Sergio echoed perceptions that many of his colleagues had regarding the bottom line. The College may have been at a serious risk of downsizing, but then figured out a way to create programming that satisfied international students' needs. The fees they collected from these international students eliminated immediate risk and also grew revenues. "The program just exploded, and it was unexpected, the dollar signs showed, and nobody was taking the time to actually put all of the supports in place" (FG, Mike).

Supporting this incredible growth may have been a challenge. "There was no operational budget. They [the College] moved this programming through the system and there's no awareness of the impact on the system" (FG, Sergio).

The system Sergio is referring to is staffing, student support services, and outdated operational systems. Many employees feel that they are at the end of their rope in terms of how much more can be added to their plate.

They are getting more internationals that are bringing in more dollars... Those dollars are making up for deficiencies that the provincial government is continually defunding, so it's not like there is extra money because they are bringing in international students, they are just closing gaps because of the defunding (FG, Chelsey).

*What has influenced new programming at the Institution?"*The response had been similar among participants and the one below seemed to summarize best what general perceptions were around the College.

I'd say over the last 5 years definitely we've had a lot of influence on a lot of the programming that has happened at this Institution, service-wise, given the realities with international students. Some of that has been driven by international students, some of it by leadership...this is a decision that we [Institution] made if you go back 3-4 years ago, we were in an economically difficult situation, so we had two choices: 1) we were either going to contract our way out of this, 2) grow our way... We decided not to contract, and try to grow... the first thing is: we need more product, we need new programs. People don't realize the benefit of some of these new programs may have been the intention of the international student, but have resulted in a net benefit of the Institution as a whole. Our institutional growth whether you have more security, or more people cleaning facilities, all the growth is triggered by international students but benefiting the whole Institution. We still have ways to go, but it's about finding balance (Doug).

It may be that people understood that, yes, initially, it was about the bottom line, and now there was evidence that the entire college was benefitting from the new institutional direction designed to meet student needs.

Discussion

The lack of resources and the need to generate new programming which would attract paying international students may have created an entrepreneurial opportunity for Langara College and the subsequent transition impacted the traditional systems within the Institution.

The literature suggests that colleges and people within them, have been relatively insulated from the market, and have yet to become academic entrepreneurs (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Levin, 1994, 2002, 2005; Mars 2007, 2008, 2010). This study supports existing literature that claims that there are inconsistencies in how academic capitalism is experienced in higher education (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). In other words, academic capitalism is not universal in universities and colleges, or even amongst the varied educational departments within a single institution. Instead academic capitalism is *uneven* as Slaughter and Leslie said, "Movement toward academic capitalism is far from uniform, indeed, it is characterized by unevenness" (1997, pg. 12).

An unexpected finding emerged in regards to a shared career development definition. The faculty and administrators used the term *career development* differently for themselves and for students. When discussing their own career development, faculty and administrators' referred to it as the *professional development necessary for them to perform their jobs effectively*. This may encompass targeted individual professional development, career path exploration, and career counselling. Both faculty and administrators' responses suggested that they would benefit from more intentional career development. In their opinion, this was an opportunity that the Institution should invest in and develop. The faculty felt that many times group professional development sessions were not targeting their professional needs, and administrators' felt that they would benefit from outside mentoring or 360-degree feedback.

Six themes emerged and kept reoccurring so I organized this data first into similar groupings of data, and then went back and forth reading and learning my data until these six themes were deemed as the most frequently repeated themes. These themes summarize the data and are seen in Table 1.7.

Table 1.7. The Six Emergent Themes

Theme 1: Potential Influence of Provincial and National Mandates (Structural Policy)

Theme 2: Academic Capitalism and Resource Dependency at Langara College

Theme 3: Significance of Internationalization

Theme 4: Growing Role of Career Development

Theme 5: A Corporate Approach to Transition and Reform

Theme 6: Examination of Entrepreneurship through Curriculum Deliberation

Source: Mrkic, N. (2018).

A major benefit of creating a Strategic Plan and using a corporate approach to reform was that by creating programming to generate financial resources, nobody was laid off. In fact, many people were hired in the process, and the various departments increased substantially. An example is the Langara School of Management that grew to two-thirds of its original size. This growth approach made people work together as a community of practice and/or as smaller communities of practice, depending on the specific need, and these groups were able to learn-in-action, often by continuously adding Band-Aid solutions. Finally, it made the College and people within it entrepreneurial and willing to critically think, problem solve, innovate and create.

The growth in international students has been unprecedented and has increased by over 50% in less than three years. In the 2014 summer term, there were 1,061 international students attending Langara, which was 13.8% of the total student population. By the 2017 spring term, there were 4,485 international students studying at the Institution which represented 27.9% of the total student population (Langara College, 2017). Unofficial, and yet to be confirmed data state that the current 2018 summer term is comprised of 47.9% international students.

Revenue generated did not officially increase profits, as Langara is still a public institution. The revenue that came into the College was enough to cover expenditures and all other programming on campus. The issue though is the risk. What happens when international student funding stagnates or dries out? Participants in this study acknowledged that such a risk exists. When referencing recent history with international student markets in the UK or Australia the conclusion is that a real risk exists.

In order to maintain and promote a collegial environment, and one where communities of practice will naturally form to innovate and solve problems, there needs to be an ongoing investment in people. The findings showed that career development was not something that faculty or administrators' perceived they had access to for themselves.

All of the interviewees expressed concerns about side of desk work. They felt that there had been a sense of urgency which is what created the drive to work hard and long hours, and that they had succeeded in preventing the sky from falling at Langara. Interviewees also expressed concerns about being at the end of their ropes in terms of how much more can be added to their plate and the system in general. The system they are referring to is insufficient staffing, student support services, and outdated operational systems. Many interviewees believed that senior administrators lacked awareness about how over-worked they were, and due to a severe lack of time to cover one's own work, there had been no time to invest in self-promoting this concern to senior leadership. This is reminiscent of Levin's (2017) findings on the effects on community colleges under neoliberal pressures. Since resources that the College provides are now attached to outcomes through the strategic plan, it has been more difficult to attach justification for additional resourcing for work performed on the side of the desk.

Conclusions

I made the decision to focus on faculty and administrators' perspectives of career development and looked at the impact of a trend that may be rationalized as academic capitalism, but it would be interesting to take this research wider and look at government and outside influences.

Academic capitalism is a wide-reaching and multidimensional topic. My original contribution to knowledge is that this research chose to focus on one area of academic capitalism, further informed by entrepreneurialism and resource dependency theory and specifically looked at the role of career development at a time of transition and reform. This study contributed to research by providing a detailed focus on a comprehensive college setting, specifically Langara College, and by exploring the perceptions of its faculty and administrators'.

If there was anything that I learned and would like to reinforce, that would be the importance of investing in people. We work in education as we believe that we are helping people. It is all about people, starting from students but also taking into account the entire staff at the College. The College has dedicated faculty, administrators', and staff that work tirelessly to make learning and education happen.

In the process of transition and reform, I believe that when on this path of transitioning from A to B, the Institution needs to continually invest in its people. The notion of bringing people along for the ride in (corporate) reform is of utter importance. The people in this case have not challenged academic capitalism or corporatization. These movements may be non-negotiable elements of present day life and it may be that we are in the business of providing education. Internationalization, globalization, and corporatization will not go away, and people were not blaming these concepts even at the threat of layoffs, rather they were behaving in a manner that said: let's make the most out of what we have. This to me signals a quality staff that strives to provide quality to students. If providing high-quality service is to continue as a strategic objective, then the College needs to invest in its people and bring people along for the ride.

Further research needs to be done in terms of looking into academic capitalism influences on people and their work lives during the process of strategic change.

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Web Links

- BC Colleges website: <http://www.bccolleges.ca/>
- BC Jobs Plan 2017 <https://bcjobsplan.gov.bc.ca/>
- British Columbia Government website – Tuition Limit Policy (2017) <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/tuition-limit-policy>
- British Columbia Website – Audited Financial Statements <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/financial-reporting/audited-financial-statements>
- Canada 2017 – Canada’s internationalization strategy <http://international.gc.ca/global-markets-marches-mondiaux/education/index.aspx?lang=eng>
- Canadian Immigration & Citizenship website (2017) <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/>
- Government of Canada – Canadian Immigration and Citizenship –Post Grad Three year work permit <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/work-postgrad.asp>
- Langara College FTE Enrolment Report 2015 <https://langara.ca/departments/financial-services/pdfs/board-fte-report-2014-15-final.pdf>
- Langara College FTE Enrolment Report 2016 <https://langara.ca/departments/financialservices/pdfs/Board-FTE-Report-2015-16-Final-Mar-31-2016.pdf>
- Langara FTE Enrolment Report 2017 <https://langara.ca/departments/financial-services/pdfs/LC%20FTE%20Report%202017.pdf>