Political ideology and Manitoba’s post-secondary education system:  
A look back at policy, legislation and governance since the Roblin Report

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Abstract Using a case study approach, I examine the connection between political ideology related to policy-making, legislation and governance in Manitoba’s post-secondary education (PSE) system since release of the Roblin Report in 1993. Based on a similar type of analysis conducted on PSE policies in BC, Ontario and Quebec, my thesis is that over the last two decades the adoption of this ideology has been a major cause of some dramatic changes in Manitoba’s post-secondary system. Through the analysis of key provincial documents, I identify thematic areas that dominated the PSE policy-making process. These themes are Institutional Differentiation, Accessibility, Affordability, Labour Force Development, and Accountability.

Keywords Political ideology, Case study, Roblin Report, Institutional Differentiation, Accessibility, Affordability, Labour Force Development, Accountability
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"The signal lights are flashing. Things that are, are not at all like things to come."

(University Education Review Commission, 1993, p. 7)

Introduction

Post-secondary education in Manitoba at the time of the release of the Report of the University Education Review Commission (1993) (Roblin Report) more than two decades ago was a very different entity from what it is today. Back then, post-secondary education was essentially a binary system comprised of universities and colleges. Since then however, the sector has become increasingly differentiated with new and different types of institutions such as the University College of the North, the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology (formerly Winnipeg Technical College), and Red River College's evolution as a polytechnic.

Manitoba's post-secondary student population has become increasingly diverse with greater numbers of the Aboriginal population, international students, mature and part-time learners entering and exiting the system than ever before. While the Roblin Report acknowledged the importance of things like the public good of higher education and scholarship; the link between education, the economy and the rising influence of technology and global competition was clear.

Among the Report's recommendations was the creation of the Council on Post-Secondary Education (COPSE), a system co-ordinating agency that was to replace the Universities Grants Commission (UGC), established in 1967. As the intermediary body between government and the post-secondary institutions, the mandate of COPSE was expanded to include significant oversight for both colleges and universities; an original recommendation from the Oliver Commission (Manitoba, 1973), as well as providing strategic planning, establishing an accountability framework, developing a tuition fee policy and allocating funding to the
institutions. In addition, as the proposed new system of governance of post-secondary education, COPSE was to play a key role in the development of policy and legislation.

In view of the many changes in Manitoba's post-secondary system since the Roblin Report (Rounce, 2013, Smith, 2011), a case study approach enables focus on specific examples of policy, legislation and governance directives within a single system over a certain time frame. Additionally, in this paper I identify thematic areas in higher education policy that reflect the political ideology of the current New Democratic Party (NDP) government since first elected in 1999.

Research Design – the Case Study

The case study method of inquiry covers the overall design, data collection techniques and data analysis and interpretation (Stake, 1995). The application of case study to this paper is primarily to observe, to explain, to describe, to illustrate, to explore and to evaluate. Case study can be used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group organizational, social, political and related phenomena (Yin, 2009).

For this paper, the case study approach enables analysis of a real-life case bounded by time using multiple sources of information, and identification of themes uncovered (Creswell, 2013). Through triangulation, several data sources were accessed to explain the case, including review of relevant literature, archival research (Hansard, provincial budget documents, legislation, news releases, policy papers, and media reports), and participant observation, drawing on my employment at COPSE from 2000 to 2013. My direct experience as a provincial government employee in the post-secondary education field has been an important factor in understanding and interpreting developments over time.
Conceptual Framework

It has been well-documented that the political ideologies of state and provincial governments have a substantial impact on post-secondary education policy-making (Dar, 2012; Fisher et al., 2006; Fisher, Rubenson, Jones & Shanahan, 2009; McLendon & Ness, 2003; McLendon, Hearn & Mokher, 2009; McLendon, Heller & Young, 2005; Tandberg, 2010). Differences in the policy-making process reflect particular government interests and can be seen as an attempt to influence the “rules of the game” through the structuring of the public policy process.

Using a comparative multiple nested case study approach, Fisher, Rubenson, Shanahan & Trottier (2014) present an analysis of post-secondary education policies in BC, Ontario and Quebec from the early 1980s through to 2010, with each of those provinces electing a wide array of political administrations over that time period. To examine the policy environment, Fisher et al., (2014) used a set of policy priorities grouped under three overlapping headings: political, economic and academic as sensitizing concepts to use as a screen throughout the research study. Based on the interplay between these concepts and the research evidence, the authors identify the following policy themes that emerged from their analysis: accessibility, accountability, marketization, labour force development, and research and development. From their analysis, Fisher et al., (2014) found there were marked differences between post-secondary education policies across and between provinces and observed that:

As post-secondary education is under the jurisdiction of provincial governments, so it is the combined influences of the history, demographics, politics and economies of the provinces in question that produces the policies shaping its post-secondary education system and the priorities assigned to it (p. 12).

University Education Review Commission

The University Education Review Commission (1993), led by former Manitoba Premier Duff Roblin was created to review the role and mission of the universities, the governance structure for post-secondary education in the province, access, northern and Aboriginal education, as well as internal changes to universities in order to improve accessibility, efficiency and accountability. The Roblin Review created a blueprint for higher education and training that ultimately contributed to the reshaping of Manitoba’s post-secondary system (Smith, 2008).

Established under the Gary Filmon Conservative government, the Commission’s work took place within a distinctly neoconservative political environment characterized by the centrality of the economic paradigm in which post-secondary education was viewed as an integral component. There were close ties with business and industry; globalization was on the rise, and the approach towards the province’s post-secondary institutions was characterized as a “market-driven ideology” (Saunders, 2006).

The drive for higher education reform in Manitoba was undertaken amid a time of significant fiscal pressures, economic recession, budget deficits, rising debt and shrinking revenues. The Commission was frank about the financial pressures facing the post-secondary system, “It is wise to accept the evident probability that public financial constraints will continue for the medium term planning horizon. Universities must so order their affairs so as to make the best use of present resources” (1993, p. 1).
The financial constraints notwithstanding, the Report’s 41 recommendations ranged from the need for a greater accountability system in the university sector to the identification of strategic priorities by each post-secondary institution, and for greater system coordination between university and college sectors. The subtitle of the report conveyed a subtle message: “Doing Things Differently” where universities were, in effect, advised to do more with existing funding while colleges were to move to a doubling of enrolment over the following five years (and enjoy first claims on any available funding) (Gregor, 1997).

More controversial for the universities was that in the midst of financial constraint, post-secondary institutions could approach the prospect of limited resources as a “challenge” rather than a detrimental factor to their progress. In addition, the Commission’s call for a new governance structure, COPSE, to replace the UGC raised serious concerns among the universities about its impact on institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Rather than striking a more balanced relationship, the Commission appeared to give greater government control over the universities and the power to micromanage their affairs.

The Response of the Government of Manitoba to the Roblin Review (Manitoba, 1994) reflected the government’s desire to promote change in higher education in response to fiscal pressures and new ideas of public management. The Response left no doubt about the Government’s expectations;

the challenge, therefore is for our institutions to change the way they do business: establishing program priorities, transforming the learning and research environment. . . To meet the fiscal challenge and simultaneously respond to the demands of the community will require nothing short of re-engineering and redesigning the education enterprise . . . (p. 1).

While the Roblin Report and the Government’s Response set an ambitious agenda for reform, Smith (2004) argued that over time, the impact of the changes on the University of
Manitoba (UM) had enjoyed little success, noting that government needed to consider how change can and/or should occur in a university and that “governments’ expectations with respect to reform in the university enterprise were not congruent with the nature and pace of change typical at universities” (p. 31).


The Filmon government endorsed the idea of a new governance model, and following a few years of transitional planning, COPSE was established in legislation in 1997. While the UGC, established in 1967 under the former Roblin government had general oversight of the province’s universities, COPSE was profiled by the government as a powerful intermediary body with both advisory and executive powers, and the only one of its kind in Canada (Gregor, 1997; Saunders, 2006). In 2014, the government abolished COPSE, folded it back into the Department, and created an expanded ministry combining responsibilities for K-12 and post-secondary education.

At the outset, COPSE was mandated to achieve greater coordination, articulation and planning by bringing universities and colleges together under a single body, thereby inferring a system perspective to post-secondary education in the province. COPSE was to function as an arm’s length agency by maintaining a “buffer” between the post-secondary institutions and the political will of the government.

Operational reviews of COPSE (Mallea, 2002; Prairie Research Associates, 2009) however, revealed that the role of COPSE was poorly understood by post-secondary stakeholders. Additional concerns identified in both reviews suggested confusion and a general
absence of transparency in the relationship between COPSE and the government, and lack of success in strategic planning and coordinating the system.

In a detailed analysis of the relationship between COPSE and the government, Smith, (2014) argues that while COPSE had been successful with its operational activity such as program approval, funding and budgetary processes, and the tuition fee policy, it had experienced much less success in exercising its role as a strategic actor due to the locus of government control shifting away from COPSE and more towards a direct role by the minister responsible. Smith (2014) concludes that COPSE was “side-stepped” by government resulting in a general erosion of university autonomy.

Manitoba’s long tradition of post-secondary system governance by an intermediary body came to an abrupt end when the government announced in its spring 2014 budgetary address (Manitoba, 2014a) that COPSE was being eliminated. In response to questions from the Official Opposition, Premier Greg Selinger told the Legislature “the general idea is to bring COPSE directly back into the department . . . to bring all the resources closer together for more co-ordination and the ability to more rapidly develop a system that can allow us to meet our skills agenda . . . .” (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2014a) suggesting the need to streamline resources for better efficiency.

Initially, when news of the elimination of COPSE broke in March 2014, it did not register much reaction from the university community (Winnipeg Free Press, 2014a). But when government unveiled its proposed legislation for replacing the COPSE Act in May 2014, reaction was swift and strong. Members at the highest level of the university community voiced concerns that the proposed bill was a “power grab” and would give the Minister new powers to decide what courses and programs are taught at universities and to develop mandates for the
institutions to avoid unnecessary duplication (Brandon Sun, 2014a; Winnipeg Free Press, 2014b).

The Council of the Presidents of the Universities of Manitoba (COPUM) wrote to the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning James Allum describing the bill as “an infringement on our autonomy” and requested that the bill “remain consistent with current legislation and limit the authority of the Minister to provincial funding” (Brandon Sun, 2014b, p.2). The harshest criticism however, came from James Turk, former Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), explaining that “this you would expect in a totalitarian state . . . It's appalling that any government in Canada, especially an NDP one, would do what this government is doing. This is a naked attack on universities” (Winnipeg Free Press, 2014b).

Colleges, on the other hand, seemed pleased with the announcement, with Assiniboine Community College President Mark Frison describing the recent development as “eliminating a layer of bureaucracy that would speed up things like program or regulatory approval” (Winnipeg Free Press, 2014b, p.2). Ultimately, the government backed down in the face of rising opposition and amended the proposed legislation (Globe and Mail, 2014). In explaining the government’s position on the reworked legislation, the Education Minister James Allum told the Legislature,

we believe that there should be no wrong doors in education and we’re trying to make sure that our institutions work more seamlessly for our students. By eliminating COPSE and removing a layer of bureaucracy, we’re allowing program approvals to be more streamlined. . (Legislature Assembly of Manitoba, 2014b, p. 3205)

suggesting that the government may have viewed COPSE as being in the way of institutions being able to work more closely together.
Legislation and Policy Priorities

Ideology helps shape political decisions and serves as a useful reference point in a rapidly changing world. Through case studies, researchers (Fisher et. al., 2009; 2014) have demonstrated that political ideology of provincial governments has a substantial impact on post-secondary education policy-making. Through analysis of key pieces of legislation, policy and other government documents, I identify themes in this paper that have dominated the post-secondary education policy-making process under the NDP government. Since its first electoral victory in 1999, the NDP government has been free to pursue an ambitious reform agenda that has substantially altered the structure of Manitoba’s post-secondary system.

Institutional Differentiation and Accessibility

One of the most important priorities in development of post-secondary education policy has been the desire to increase the level of institutional differentiation mainly by increasing the range of options available to students and creating more access within the system. With the ongoing demand for post-secondary education through rising enrolment, institutional diversity has played an important part in expanding access and addressing labour market needs. In pursuit of these ambitious goals, the government has prioritized the need to address under-representation of under-served groups, particularly Aboriginal youth through strategies such as the Aboriginal Education and Employment Action Plan: 2008-2011 (Manitoba 2008a).

Following a series of consultations and strategic planning reports, (Manitoba 2003, 2004) the government passed the University College of the North Act establishing the University College of the North (UCN) in July 2004, the first and only institution of its kind in the province. Replacing the former Keewatin Community College, UCN was created to increase access to Aboriginal people and northerners by offering a blend of university degree, diploma and
certificate programs. More importantly, UCN was created to represent the diversity of the north, to embed Aboriginal traditions, values and beliefs, and deliver programming in 12 regional centres, while supporting economic development and labour market activity. UCN’s unique governance features provides for Aboriginal representation on the Governing Council and establishment of a Council of Elders.

Access to educational opportunities has also been expanded through development of adult learning centres providing opportunities for more individuals to improve literacy skills in order to participate more fully in the knowledge economy. Following the investigation by the Office of the Auditor General (2001) of an allegation of financial mismanagement at an adult learning centre, the government passed the Adult Learning Centres Act in 2003, recognizing the need for legislation and a policy framework for adult learning in Manitoba. Concerned with the literacy challenge and the need to boost literacy skills in Manitoba, the government passed the Adult Literacy Act in 2009. This was followed by a public consultation (Manitoba, 2008b) that provided the foundation for developing an adult literacy strategy. In 2011/2012, government funded 37 agencies offering adult literacy programming serving a total of 11,515 adults (Manitoba 2011/2012).

Expanding institutional diversification is also evident with the increasing integration and acceptance of Manitoba’s faith-based institutions (Canadian Mennonite University, Providence University College, Booth University College, Steinbach Bible College) into the mainstream post-secondary system (Smith, 2013). In addition, Red River College’s membership with Polytechnics Canada enables it to brand itself as an applied research-intensive, publicly funded, industry-driven college. Earlier in 2014, government passed legislation renaming the former Winnipeg Technical College to the Manitoba Institution of Trades and Technology as a unique
hybrid institution, with an expanded mandate of providing jobs and skills training to Manitoba high school and post-secondary students.

**Affordability**

Another main thrust of NDP post-secondary education policy has been to promote affordability, mainly through the tuition fee policy early in its mandate. In 2000, tuition fees for colleges and universities were reduced by 10% and maintained at that level for almost a decade. A number of professional programs however such as medicine, dentistry, law, business, engineering and architecture were considered exceptions to the policy and were allowed to increase tuition fees based on meeting specific criteria. Government then struck a Commission on Tuition Fees and Accessibility to Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba led by a former Deputy Minister (Manitoba, 2009) for direction on the tuition fee policy. With respect to next steps in the province’s tuition fee policy, the report concluded that “Manitoba ought not to focus on reducing tuition, but ought instead to allocate resources to targeted measures to support accessibility” (v). Following on the advice of the Commission, government announced the freeze would be lifted and fees would increase incrementally over time.

In the Protecting Affordability for University Students section under the *Advanced Education Administration Act*, (which replaced the COPSE Act in 2014) university tuition fee increases are restricted to a calculation based on the rate of inflation. Government has also placed controls on increases to course-related fees (library, technology, lab, etc.) and on the criteria for determining fee increases for specialized degree programs. As a result of the government’s tightly managed tuition fee policy, Manitoba’s college and university tuition fees have remained the second and third lowest, respectively, among the provinces and territories for several years (Statistics Canada, 2014).
While the government has made post-secondary education affordable to most Manitobans, the reduced revenue and lack of funding is forcing institutions to become more entrepreneurial. The university community base, especially senior administration has often been critical of the tuition fee policy because as they see it, they are caught in a double bind. On one hand, government expects the institutions to expand capacity by increasing enrollment but has been unable to provide adequate funds. On the other hand, government has tied their hands by tightly controlling their ability to increase student fees.

Total enrollment in Manitoba’s colleges and universities has increased by 40% between 2000/01 and 2010/11 (Council on Post-Secondary Education, 2013), adding more than 21,000 seats to the system. Government however, has not provided sufficient core funding to cover costs associated with enrollment growth. In an announcement that the UM would be bracing for a four percent cut to its budget for the 2015-2016 year, President David Barnard explained, “in Manitoba, many years of low provincial grant funding and frozen or controlled tuition rates have resulted in severe stresses on the capacity of our post-secondary institutions to deliver on their mandates” (Cabel, 2014, p.1) suggesting that cuts would be contingent on available provincial funding. At about the same time, President Barnard announced the UM’s Front and Centre public capital campaign with the goal of raising $500 million including $350 million in private fundraising to upgrade facilities, increase support for students and research, and for indigenous achievement (Winnipeg Free Press, 2014c).

In conjunction with the regulated tuition fee policy, the government has maintained its commitment to affordability through a generous mix of grants, loans, bursaries and scholarships. In 2010/11, only 18% of Manitoba university students received a Canada Student Loan (CSL), the lowest in Canada (Manitoba 2012/2013). In addition, the amount of CSL that Manitoba’s university students borrowed, on average was the second lowest ($4,364) compared
with $4,311 for Newfoundland and Labrador, largely due to lower average tuition fees (CAUT, 2013-2014). Post-secondary education has become even more affordable in Manitoba in view of the government’s announcement in 2014 that it was eliminating provincial interest on all Manitoba student loans, and removing vehicle ownership on vehicles worth over $10,000 as an eligibility requirement for a student loan application (Manitoba 2014b).

In 2007, the government introduced non-fundable tax credits through the Manitoba Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate where a 60% rebate on eligible tuition fees up to $25,000 is available to all post-secondary graduates living and working in Manitoba. As of 2010, students could apply for the rebate while still attending school to help offset the costs of their education. The impact of this policy is questionable however, since individual benefits are obtained long after the initial expenditure. In addition, it is unknown if the rebate is having any effect on attracting and retaining people in the province (Rounce, 2013).

**Labour Force Development**

A defining feature of the NDP government has been its unwavering commitment to vocational and skills training. This initiative can be linked directly to the Roblin Report that recommended new investments in college programming as well as a doubling of the college participation rate over the ensuing five years. The rationale behind the recommendation was so that “colleges can respond quickly to labour market demands by providing workers with new or additional skills in relation to new processes or techniques” (University Education Review Commission, 1993, p. 41). The recommendation was also based on the tacit acknowledgement that Manitoba had the lowest college participation rates among all provinces at that time.

As envisioned in the Roblin Report, the exigencies of globalization and structural adjustment had heightened the urgency for a vocational training system that could, on one
hand, accommodate a highly diverse learner population (including traditionally under-served groups) and, on the other, offer relevant instructional and efficient pathways to employment and/or further education.

Early in its mandate, the government hosted the Manitoba Century Summit (Manitoba, 2000) that brought together leaders from business, labour and industry to develop strategies for economic development. Among the main topics of discussion were suggestions related to development of the labour force, including training and education needs, integration of Aboriginal people into the workforce, and attraction of immigrants and skilled workers. Following the Summit, government launched the Manitoba Training Strategy in 2001, establishing clear links between education, training, apprenticeship, trades and need for a skilled workforce to meet labour market demand (Manitoba, 2001).

The College Expansion Initiative was a major component of the Strategy, specifically designed to invest in the colleges through new programming in areas of aerospace, nursing, digital and information technology to increase participation rates, with focus on Aboriginal people, to address skill shortages, and contribute to economic prosperity. As part of the government’s 1999 election platform, access to education and training would be achieved by expanding opportunities for northern and rural Manitobans, supporting low income earners, and by developing skills and enhancing inclusion of Aboriginal and youth into the workforce. To that end, government pledged to “double enrolment” by increasing funding estimated to cost $6 million per each in each of the next four years.

In 2007, the government-appointed Apprenticeship Futures Commission (AFC) (Manitoba 2008c) released its report with significant implications for expanding Manitoba’s apprenticeship training and recommendations related to future strategic direction for enhancing
skilled trades in the province. Based on the need for skilled workers, the Commission established the four themes of access, engagement, innovation and effectiveness. In conjunction with 23 recommendations, the AFC acknowledged that the apprenticeship system needed to enhance its flexibility, increase responsiveness and effectiveness, improve quality of training, provide incentives to employers and apprentices, provide opportunities for other trades and occupations to participate, and to improve the profile and perceptions of apprenticeable trades (Manitoba 2008c).

In 2009, government amended *The Colleges Act* by extending the powers of Manitoba’s publicly funded colleges to grant baccalaureate (bachelor) degrees with an applied focus, reflecting the labour market approach. The degree-granting authority to colleges was largely the result of a lobbying effort led by Red River College (Smith, 2011). In 2010, Red River College was successful in receiving COPSE approval to offer the province’s first college degree, the Bachelor of Technology in Construction Management program.

In ongoing pursuit of its skills agenda, and the government’s often-repeated goal of adding 75,000 new workers to the province’s workforce by 2020 to ensure growth and global competitiveness, the Premier’s Economic Advisory Committee (PEAC) hosted the Skills Summit in February 2013. Invited participants discussed strategies related once again to the need for more skilled trades training, building Manitoba’s Aboriginal workforce, expanding Manitoba’s immigration strategy, and ensuring accessibility to training and good jobs. Feedback from the Summit was summarized in a report (Manitoba, 2013) and presented as strategic advice to the Premier on reaching the workforce target.
Accountability

Accountability in post-secondary education is another underlying theme of the NDP government, with general focus on institutional accountability, and to the general public interest. Accountability in other provinces such as BC, Alberta and Ontario, has often been expressed in the form of key performance indicators, performance-based funding, reporting of learning outcomes and quality assurance councils (Fisher et. al, 2014; Clark, Moran, Skolnik, & Trick, 2009).

Accountability in Manitoba’s post-secondary sector has generally been in the form of legislation. For example, passage of the Degree Granting Act (DGA) in 2006 spells out the criteria under which institutions including public and privately funded from outside the province would be authorized to grant degrees and offer degree programs, thus reducing the possibility of fraudulent operators such as diploma mills and degree factories from setting up shop in Manitoba. While the DGA has little direct impact on existing institutions which have degree-granting authority under their own charter legislation, it requires that any out-of-province or any new private institution must seek or obtain government approval to offer degree programs in Manitoba. Out-of-province institutions that wish to establish satellite campuses in Manitoba must provide evidence of program quality and societal need.

The International Education Act, (IEA) having received Royal Assent in December 2013, but not yet in force, is an example of the government’s increased concern for the safety of international students coming to study in Manitoba, and the need for increasing consumer protection and institutional accountability. Directly linked to changes to Citizenship and Immigration, Canada’s Immigrant and Refugee Protection Regulations (Canada Gazette, 2014), Manitoba’s IEA is the first of its kind in Canada. In addition to the safety concerns for
international students, the legislation requires all institutions to follow a Code of Conduct and Practice and gives government the power to cancel, suspend and fine an institution’s right to enrol international students should they be in violation of the Code. The IEA also requires agents hired by institutions to recruit international students to comply with the Code.

Finally, with the repeal of the COPSE Act and replacement with the Advanced Education Administration Act (AEA), post-secondary institutions must now be directly accountable to the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning. Under the AEA Act, the Minister now has the authority to develop, administer, monitor and evaluate programs, as well as to advise institutions on developing their mandates to enhance coordination and reduce duplication. In the absence of an intermediary body between the Minister and the institutions, the legislation gives government a direct monitoring role, making the system more responsive to the government’s agenda, and in its eyes, more accountable.

Conclusion

In Manitoba, as in the rest of Canada, post-secondary systems have undergone significant change since the time of the Roblin Report. The province’s traditional binary structure has become increasingly blurred by an expansion in the range and type of institutions with the authority to grant degrees and with the increasing role of the economy and labour market focus in post-secondary education policy-making.

At the same time, the ideological perspectives of provincial governments have had a substantial impact on post-secondary education policy. This line of thinking is reflective of former University of Winnipeg President Lloyd Axworthy, in his strong reaction to a Conference Board of Canada Report (Grant, 2014) referring to post-secondary institutions as “franchises”;
“now, it appears the role of higher education is to follow, like any other franchise operation, the uniform decisions of provincial governments – decisions too often driven by political goals, and not by the interests of higher education” (Axworthy, 2014 p. 1).

When the NDP took office in 1999, the increasing focus on the need to expand college programming to meet labour market needs and create economic development as envisioned in the Roblin Report became a cornerstone of its post-secondary policy platform. The review of legislation and policies suggest that the government’s policy has been dominated by its commitment to skilled trades training, and a shift away from academic education. In response to increasing demand for post-secondary education and subsequent enrolment expansion, accessibility and affordability have been key policy themes (Manitoba, 2014c).

These policy goals have largely been achieved through expansion of institutional types, extending degree-granting authority to colleges, the integration of faith-based institutions, a tightly regulated tuition-fee policy, and continual improvements to Manitoba’s student financial assistance program. The government has paid attention to the increasing participation of under-represented groups, especially Aboriginal youth, through ongoing support of the Access programs, and UCN. In addition, the passage of recent legislation such as the AEA Act and the IEA has increased institutional accountability to government, and, in turn, accountability to the public.

From this case study covering the past two decades, the NDP government has exerted a strong influence on Manitoba’s post-secondary system. While there has been for the most part, reactive institutional expansion and diversity, we have also seen a raft of legislation brought forward to impose the government’s agenda and increased centralization of power and decision-making with the elimination of COPSE. Ultimately, this case study has found that since
first elected in 1999, the Manitoba NDP government's impact on the post-secondary system largely reflects a political ideology that is quite consistent with the agendas of NDP administrations found in BC, Ontario and Quebec between the 1980s and 2010.
References


