

ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION*Robert A. Gordon*

ABSTRACT

This article approaches the issue of organizational growth and development from the perspective of the ACCC per se, and focuses upon the role the ACCC plays in assisting institutions in their search for renewal. It is the writer's thesis that, with an office and staff located in Toronto, the ACCC represents a valuable asset to complement developmental activities pursued by the community colleges of Canada. Not only does the ACCC provide diverse services to the colleges, as will be described, but it links an expanding network of mutually supportive personnel who work in their respective colleges across the country. The national association promotes institutional renewal through its activities.

SOMMAIRE

Cet article étudie le problème de la croissance et du développement des établissements dans l'optique de l'ACCC et se concentre sur l'aide apportée par l'Association aux établissements dans leurs tentatives de renouvellement. L'auteur exprime son opinion personnelle, c'est-à-dire qu'avec ses bureaux et son personnel à Toronto, l'ACCC représente un outil des plus valables pour aider les collèges communautaires de tout le pays à poursuivre leurs activités de développement. Non seulement l'ACCC assure divers services aux collèges, comme l'article l'indique, mais elle sert de lien entre tous les membres d'un réseau de plus en plus étendu, regroupant des établissements de tout le Canada. L'association nationale, par l'entremise de ses activités, encourage le renouvellement des divers collèges.

Robert A. Gordon

Introduction

In the fall of 1970, at a National Congress on the Community Colleges held in Ottawa, the objectives of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges were articulated and adopted as follows:

- "1. To set up 'Clearing House' services for the Colleges of Canada;
2. to provide liaison between and among the Colleges and with other related institutions, associations and organizations;
3. to initiate research for the Colleges of Canada."

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges thus created as a national non-profit voluntary grouping of non-degree granting post-secondary institutions, currently is in its ninth year of operation. Despite difficulties of late in attracting Francophone colleges from Quebec due to Canada's political problems generally, the Association is presently represented in every province and has some 68 member colleges. With the recent acquisition of several substantial grants from governmental and external agencies, the Association has never been in healthier position to be of service to its members. The ACCC is, in fact, increasingly more accepted as a major vehicle in attending to the needs of the colleges of Canada.

This factor is particularly important at this point in time. While the institutions are generally solidly established in serving their communities, and demonstrate clearly defined missions, they also are struggling to avoid a certain stagnation which has followed the

enthusiasm and dynamic thrust of the opening years. Beset by problems relating to a declining pool of high school graduates, stringent budgetary measures, and a population no longer convinced that higher education is the panacea to the serious issues facing Canada in the 1980s, there exist noticeable feelings of anxiety and apathy in the ranks of the teaching corps. In most cases, teachers are faced with limited mobility, and even with the outright loss of jobs. This retrenchment, while understandable, presents a scenario hardly designed to encourage confidence or motivation amongst those most directly involved with the students' learning process.

To preserve and to maintain institutional health many colleges are turning to their own programs of professional development. With little opportunity to rejuvenate through an infusion of new blood, a serious rechanneling of resources has been undertaken to prevent the institutionalization which threatens to become a permanent symptom of the teaching staff. Indeed, it can be forcefully argued that only with a sound program of professional development can the colleges hope to cope successfully with the rapidly evolving issues now propelling them into the 1980s. Financial and human limitations, however, make it difficult for any institution to provide totally, and in many cases even adequately, for its own development program. The ACCC can provide a significant supplement to a college's own resource capability at modest cost.

In Canada, particularly of all the western industrialized nations, a national association takes on added significance. Basically, aside from some financial assistance (e.g., Manpower programs) in specialized areas, and some research and statistical data provided through such governmental agencies as Statistics Canada, there is no

Federal presence, or even influence, in policy planning and implementation of educational matters concerning the activities of the community colleges. Increasingly, each province zealously guards its prerogatives. There exists no coordination among the various college systems, which, while being based on similar philosophical under-pinnings, have in fact major differences of structure and purpose. (Compare the CAATs of Ontario and the CECEPs of Quebec, for example, which are fundamentally different, with the colleges of Alberta and British Columbia, which tend to be designed more along the lines of the American two-year community college). Rather than encouraging coordination and cooperation, in many ways the attitudes of the various provinces militate against a national sharing of activities. As a result, to a certain extent they actively deprive colleges, especially in the "have not" provinces, of resources that otherwise could be available.

This situation is in direct contrast to that of the United States. Although theoretically the framework is the same as for Canada in the way individual states relate to each other and to Washington in educational affairs, the practice is quite different. In the first place, all states operate within similar educational systems, which allows better coordination in terms of curriculum exchange, accreditation, etc. Secondly, the influence of the Federal Government, by the controls which it can exert over colleges through the constitution and through the largesse of special direct grants emanating from the budget of the department of Health, Education and Welfare, is immense. Added to this, the Americans enjoy wide access to the funds of many foundations specializing in grants for educational projects, a resource which we in Canada generally do not possess.

A national association in Canada thus moves naturally into the

void created by the absence of federal involvement, the autonomy of the provinces and the lack of "soft" money support from foundations. Despite these realities, and the regional disparities which are a vital force in Canadian education, there remain many similarities of purpose and problems faced by the colleges of every province. Without the ongoing presence of the umbrella provided by the national association and its accompanying liaison function, the college's responses to current issues would be more parochial and limited than need be the case.

INFORMATION

Precisely, then, what can the ACCC provide which can assist institutions to gain greater effectiveness over-all, and meaningful growth experience for staff members? First, and perhaps most obviously, there exists a **w**ealth of information available to all. The Association itself publishes a good deal, including a monthly magazine, College Canada which is sent to everyone who works at member colleges, the Journal of Canadian Community Colleges, and there is projected a Journal of Canadian Studies. These publications serve two essential purposes: they provide information on a wide variety of topics peculiar to community college readers, and the publication of such materials allows people working in the field to describe activities in which they are engaged.

A follow-up activity naturally flows from this initial phase as people gather more information, share their own perspectives and set up a continuing network for future reference in mutual interest areas. In this way, a national dialogue can be fostered by people up-dating their knowledge and programs, and changing their approaches in ways they had not previously considered. The beauty of this sharing

activity is that no one need be defensive in providing his or her ideas to others across Canada. Educational ideas should and can be non-competitive and thus willingly shared by peers to adapt to their local conditions. There is no monopoly on creativity or alternative methodologies, and in fact, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery in this context. Much growth can be gained from information exchange. With a modest expenditure of time and effort, certainly everyone is in a position to profit.

In addition to its own publications, the Association acts as a national clearing house for a myriad of professional information and educational materials. The range is wide and virtually limitless, subject only to the Association staff's ability to respond. Such helpful items as lists of personnel in various categories (e.g., nursing educators, teachers in Canadian Studies), current data regarding conferences and reference works on specific topics, and aid in approaching governmental and non-governmental agencies (e.g., Secretary of State, Canadian Bureau for International Education) represent just a small sample of the potential.

EXCHANGES

Staff exchanges can be a valuable dimension in the development of programs of institutions. The exchange avenue presents a distinct way of gaining an injection of new ideas into a college, while allowing staff members on exchange to profit from their exposure to a new setting. In the general absence of sabbatical leave provisions across much of the country, exchanges are proving to be an effective way of dealing with the revitalization of staff.

Although considerable effort is required to get an initial exchange off the ground, once logistic problems have been cleared,

possibilities are promising. A second exchange between two colleges can be carried out by different people in a subsequent year with far less trouble. It is important to remember that because exchange programs can be intra-provincial, inter-provincial or international, the central clearing house of ACCC is in an excellent position to facilitate the initial and follow-up contacts. With recent staff additions, the Association intends to pursue these activities with vigor.

Several successful exchanges have already been accomplished, notably the year long ones between Malaspina and Nelson & Colne in England, Grant MacEwan and Brevard in Florida, St. Clair and Bunker Hill in Boston, and Dawson and Lanchester Polytechnic in England. Several Canadian colleges are in the process of cementing the "twinning" concept, and the future will see increased evidence of colleges taking advantage of the exchange mechanism. Many, in fact, are well into the final planning stages, including such disparate environments as Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, England and the United States. As one example, Dawson College in Montreal anticipates the exchange of at least three teachers with Florida Junior College in Jacksonville and two with Leeward in Hawaii for the 1979-80 academic year. The ACCC, which provided the initial impetus for these exchanges, played an important planning and coordination function in bringing them about.

If year long exchanges are not feasible, short term visits of a semester, a few weeks or even days, can also be very beneficial. (Dawson College has one political science teacher who exchanges one class with a francophone faculty member at Collège Brébeuf, whereby both teach the course in their respective second language.) Such visits have the added advantage of not having to be conducted simultaneously. In some cases they never have to be reciprocated if the personality mix or

the logistic problems present hurdles too difficult to overcome. Even if their own travel budgets are limited, there are few institutions unwilling to share their resources on their home ground and to engage in productive dialogue with visitors.

Study tours present another interesting exchange possibility, and several persons have recently profited from these. The ACCC, together with such organizations as the Department of External Affairs, the Commonwealth Foundation and the British Council, has provided leadership and itinerary assistance for Canadians visiting countries abroad and for people from overseas who wish to study Canadian college education. With "packages" being readily available especially in the off-season, groups of faculty can easily visit almost any country and receive a warm reception from educators of the host country only too eager to show and share. Dawson, in fact, sent twenty-two people to Israel in January of 1978, and seventeen to Hungary in 1979 for two-week visits, and the consensus was that both were magnificent learning experiences. As another example, the successful Horizon '78 program, funded by a Secretary of State grant and involving the exchange of some two hundred people between all other provinces and Quebec, was jointly organized by the ACCC and the Canadian Bureau of International Education.

This potential of the study tour has been barely tapped, but its benefits for growth and learning, especially as more developing countries seek to use Canadian colleges to educate their citizens, make it an important area for expansion. As the contacts and experiences of the ACCC increase in this domain, Canadian college personnel will be able to take increasing advantage of the network being established. The ACCC is steadily building an inventory of college programming and personnel throughout the world, and this resource is available to its members.

SEMINARS & CONFERENCES

In a very tangible way, the ACCC plays an increasing role in the sponsorship, coordination and organization of workshops, seminars and conferences. Spurred by a grant from the Kellogg Foundation specifically for the purpose of supporting "mini-conferences" in the Canadian context, a growing array of professional activities has been mounted.

Several take place in changing form at various locations on an annual or bi-annual basis; others are held regionally or uniquely as the occasion and subject matter warrant. Some are held as separate events in their own right, and usually last about a week; others are held for shorter periods as adjuncts to the national conference in order to keep travel costs to a minimum by "killing two birds with one stone."

Two excellent examples of mini-conferences take place on a more or less permanent basis. One is the Cultural Identity Seminar, which has already been held in such interesting venues as Banff, Mount Oxford, Cape Breton, Vancouver and Olds. The second is that for Health Educators, which is held bi-annually in major urban areas and attracts over two hundred practitioners each time. To give some example of the diverse nature of other offerings, since 1976, autonomous mini-conferences have been held, some more than once, relating to planning, boards of governors, women, student services, collective bargaining, literacy and the non-traditional student. They have been held all over the country in tune with the wealth of ideas which emanate from the personnel of colleges, who wish to provide a learning experience wider than simply an in-house workshop.

There is no monopoly or restriction on potential mini-conferences, and any group can receive financial and organizational assistance as long as they are prepared to adhere to some relatively simple

guidelines related to the constitution of the ACCC. Grants of up to \$3,500 are available from the ACCC for the organizing committee of a mini-conference. The Board of Directors of the ACCC has struck a committee (The Mini-Conference Support Advisory Committee) especially for the purpose of encouraging the development of grants for mini-conferences. The grant money, which theoretically will be recycled by repayment by the organizing committee of a mini-conference from the revenues, should thus be available indefinitely to support similar activities in the future. Conferences of the past have been most beneficial both for their content value and for their contribution to the bonds of professional interaction. They have also provided interesting experiences for individuals to improve their administrative and organizational skills without the threat of being accountable to their own college's hierarchical structure.

Presently, the ACCC sponsors its own annual national conference. This activity has grown significantly over the years to the point where about 1000 registrants can be expected. Organized by local groups on behalf of the ACCC, this year's conference was held in Montreal in May, and plans are already underway for the 1980 conference to be held in the Maritimes. At the meeting of the Association's general assembly in Edmonton in the fall of 1977, it was agreed that succeeding conferences would be held in late spring for the principal reason that more college faculty would be able to attend because classes for the regular semester would be over. This represented a practical move to ensure that all constituent groups, but especially the teachers, would feel that the national association was responding to their needs. While conference programs per se have tended to be eclectic, careful attention has been given to providing professional activities for college faculty and

support staff members. In short, unlike the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, the ACCC has seriously attempted to have the national conference cater to the interests of all staff members and students, and to avoid making it just a forum for senior administrators.

RESEARCH & LEARNING MATERIALS

Increasingly, the Association will be able to provide a research capability to supplement its already established publications. As in other areas, this type of service is generally beyond the financial means of many colleges, and coming from a national perspective, it can reach a wider audience while avoiding a duplication of effort. Over time, the ACCC will be able to provide detailed data and information on such diverse topics as dropouts, cooperative programs, curriculum development, governance trends and the like. This is not to denigrate the efforts of Statistics Canada or the universities, but to suggest that the ACCC can complement their activities while providing alternate and practical approaches from the specific viewpoint of the colleges. As the national office staff expands, it is anticipated that the core people, working closely with contacts in the colleges, will create vital linkages for essential research data. Ideally, an inventory bank will eventually be "on line," updated annually, to provide current data upon which colleges can study trends and plan accordingly.

In addition, funding now being made available will allow the development of learning materials for the use of classroom teachers. As a case in point, the Secretary of State has provided monies for the creation of specific materials for Canadian Studies. Regionally based materials, for example, will serve a dual purpose, providing the internal consumption (as in Quebec or British Columbia), but also for the

use of teachers in other areas of the country. The ACCC's project officer can coordinate the content and style of the materials being created to account for the nuances of Canada's various regions. With many community college students enrolled in terminal programs, it is important that such materials be presented in the most objective and meaningful ways possible, and national coordination can be helpful in this regard.

The creation of Canadian Studies material is the most tangible example of coordination nationally, but over time this can be expanded to include many aspects of the community college curriculum. In the Canadian context, one can foresee materials being jointly produced on such diverse topics as "the North," "the environment," "energy" and "language." An obvious side effect is that cooperative ventures will allow teachers to share and to examine diverse methodologies as they work together.

CHANGE AGENT

The ACCC is in a good position to conceptualize and to bring to fruition some innovative ventures which can have lasting impact on the growth of college personnel. Acting as a broker for all colleges in Canada, the ACCC can effect change in ways that the individual colleges cannot. Two exciting examples, currently in the final stages of planning, would attest to this.

First, the Kellogg Foundation is interested in pursuing with the ACCC the possibility of funding a program which will allow the creation of a national network of staff development centres. Drawing on the extensive resource base available at the University of Texas for technical assistance, but remaining uniquely Canadian in its perspective,

this elaborate proposal would facilitate the establishment of centres in six regions, and the training of specialists in the field capable of spreading their expertise to the various colleges in the region. It can be seen that for a project of such wide implication, only the national association can negotiate for the colleges of Canada collectively, even though if it is successful, many individual colleges can benefit. In this sense, the ACCC is thus not only providing service to member colleges, but is also acting as a change agent.

The projected Transatlantic Institute is another illustration of how the national association can function. The first session of the Institute will take place in Lancashire, England this August. It is a serious professional development seminar for college personnel jointly organized by the British, Americans and Canadians. The two-week session will combine academic and theoretical presentations from practitioners and policy makers from the three countries, with field work application appropriate to the interests of the participants. The Institute, carefully negotiated by the Executive of ACCC on behalf of its members, will undoubtedly become an annual event at changing locations simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic. Clearly, this variation on professional development activities can have wide impact due to its comprehensive international curriculum and the diverse backgrounds of the participants themselves. Exposure to this type of broad program could well produce some long term benefits in home campus application, or at least in verifying the value of procedures already in force.

HUMAN RESOURCE BANK

With the vast pool of talent and experience now available within the total framework of the community colleges of Canada, it follows that

it is vital to harness this in the most effective ways possible. A human resource inventory is being built up by the ACCC to provide colleges with a list of experts who can be utilized for in-house workshops, consulting, feedback, international visitation teams, etc. This can be developed in a number of ways, and can be coordinated by the national association.

Firstly, human resources can be tapped on a voluntary basis, especially if the expert happens to be in the vicinity where the workshop is held. Secondly, human resources can be used on a reciprocal basis, where services required can be worked out to mutual acceptance, and costs kept to a minimum. Finally, for top level consultation, a straight fee can be established between the two parties. Although it is to be hoped that this course might not be the norm, for reasons of cost (if members of the ACCC are involved), it must also be accepted that payment is a recognition of professionalism in our society. Conversely, it is important to remember that while there are many people across Canada who have much to offer in the way of new perspectives, solutions to problems, etc., money is frequently not the greatest motivator. Many would sincerely like to be asked to perform a service for a group of colleagues outside their own environment for their own growth and morale.

One should not underestimate external exposure as a strong motivator for improvement and growth. Recognition by the peer group outside the college does wonders for instilling confidence and initiative in college staff who so often are taken for granted at home. Approaches which may seem to presenters as somewhat dated can be most refreshing to those who have never seen them, and in return new advice can be gained. Generally, any form of such participation can only have

a healthy effect for both parties, even if on occasion it is only to discover what not to do. Although sometimes the blend is not successful, those who understand Canadian community colleges are usually desirable as resource persons because they are more devoted than outsiders who have little personal commitment to the mission of the college.

CONCLUSION

In closing, one word of caution. The ACCC is not an infinite body with unlimited financial assets and resources. True, it has grown immeasurably since the embryonic founding meeting in Ottawa in 1970. Considering the odds against maintaining such organizations, it has done remarkably well in its first decade of existence. Its services are widespread and becoming more effective with each year. But members must remember that, like their own colleges, the ACCC is an organization, and it requires attention in order to retain its own vitality and effectiveness. Despite supporting grants and its dedicated staff, the Association in the final analysis is simply as strong as its members. The ACCC will only flourish because its members care enough to put energy into ensuring that it will.

Fortunately they do, and there is considerable reason for optimism for the future. The track record to date would suggest significant progress. Success builds upon success. More colleges are joining the Association every year, and few are dropping out. The second decade should and will be better than the first.

*Robert "Squee" Gordon,
Director General of Dawson
College, serves presently as
the president of ACCC*