Three jurisdictions’ progress towards universal postsecondary education

Gavin Moodie, RMIT

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# Abstract

This paper examines the policies to achieve universal participation in postsecondary education of 3 governments: those of Ontario, the UK (for England) and Australia. All 3 jurisdictions have high tuition fees and already have high access yet seek to further increase participation and attainment. But they do so in very different ways. The paper compares the governments’ policies on financing, relations between institutions, the involvement of community colleges and the role of private institutions in progressing towards universal postsecondary education. The paper finds two different approaches to achieving government goals in higher education – by formal planning and by constructing a market – and suggests that each is likely to achieve the goals government set for them.

# Introduction

The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario’s speech from the throne opening Parliament on 8 March 2010 stated –

Ontario has one of the highest rates of postsecondary education in the world at 62 per cent. Since 2003, your government has added 180,000 students to our colleges, universities and apprenticeships.

But we need to reach even higher, knowing that in the new world, 70 per cent of all new jobs will require postsecondary education.

So your government's Open Ontario Plan will raise Ontario's postsecondary rate to 70 per cent.

Your government's plan begins with increasing spaces in colleges and universities for 20,000 students this year.

That's the equivalent of a whole new University of Guelph.

Under your government’s Open Ontario Plan, every qualified Ontarian who wants to go to college or university will find a place.

(Government of Ontario, 2010)

This undertaking has been reiterated several times by Ontario’s Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (2012, 2013b: 5).

While the UK Government has no post compulsory education participation target for England, like Ontario it has expanded enrolments considerably and wants a place to be available to all qualified applicants. In its higher education white paper *Higher education: students at the heart of the system* (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011: 49) the UK Government stated –

4.15 We have no target for the “right” size of the higher education system but believe it should evolve in response to demand from students and employers, reflecting particularly the wider needs of the economy. Subject to expenditure constraints, we endorse the principle enunciated in the Robbins report that “courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so.”

(Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011: 49)

The Council of Australian federal and state governments (Coag, 2008) agreed to double the number of students completing short cycle higher education diplomas and advanced diplomas from 2009 to 2020. The former federal Government further aimed to increase the proportion of 25-35 year olds with a bachelor degree or above from 32% in 2009 to 40% by 2025 (Gillard, 2013). The new Government is unlikely to adopt a public target and has not yet stated its position on higher education participation or attainment.

Unfortunately the OECD’s *Education at a glance* indicator C3 on tertiary entry rates has too much data missing for the countries of interest to inform this paper. However, the OECD’s (2013) data on graduation rates are reasonably complete for the countries of interest to this paper, and show that tertiary education attainment has been steadily increasing since 1995 and is above 50% for Australia, Canada and the UK, and is 49% for the US and the OECD (Table 1). Tertiary type A programs are more theoretical, prepare graduates for entry into research degrees or elite occupations, and take at least 3 years’ study. Tertiary type B programs concentrate on practical, technical or occupational skills for direct entry into the labour market and normally take 2 years. These figures include attainment by international students which increases the rates markedly for Australia and the UK particularly.

Table : tertiary education graduation rates for selected countries by type of tertiary education and selected years, 1995-2010

| **Country** | **Tertiary type** | **1995** | **2000** | **2005** | **2010** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Australia** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Tertiary type A | NA | 36 | 50 | 50 |
|  | Tertiary type B | NA | NA | NA | 17 |
|  | **Total tertiary** |  |  |  | **67** |
| **Canada** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Tertiary type A | 27 | 27 | 29 | 35 |
|  | Tertiary type B | NA | NA | NA | 18 |
|  | **Total tertiary** |  |  |  | **53** |
| **UK** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Tertiary type A | NA | 42 | 47 | 51 |
|  | Tertiary type B | NA | 7 | 11 | 12 |
|  | **Total tertiary** |  | **49** | **58** | **63** |
| **US** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Tertiary type A | 33 | 34 | 34 | 38 |
|  | Tertiary type B | 9 | 8 | 10 | 11 |
|  | **Total tertiary** | **42** | **42** | **44** | **49** |
| **OECD** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Tertiary type A | 20 | 28 | 34 | 39 |
|  | Tertiary type B | 11 | 9 | 9 | 10 |
|  | **Total tertiary** | **31** | **37** | **43** | **49** |

Source: OECD (2013) Table A3.2a. Trends in tertiary graduation rates (1995-2011)

The late Martin Trow’s (1973) stages or types of higher education are based on participation rates: where 0-15% of the higher education attending age group enrol in higher education the system is elite, 16-50% mass and > 50% universal or open. Attainment rates are lower than participation rates, 30 percentage points for the OECD as a whole. But even on attainment rates Australia, Canada and the UK are well advanced in introducing universal or open higher education. Trow observed that these transitions from elite to mass and from mass to universal or open participation in higher education changed 12 dimensions of higher education: its size, attitudes to access, functions, curriculum, pedagogy, the student ‘career’, institutional characteristics, public decision making, academic standards, access and selection, internal decision making and internal administration (see also Brennan, 2004 and Trow, 2005). A full comparison of higher education in the 3 jurisdictions would consider these and probably other characteristics. However, this paper concentrates on aspects of government policy and administration which seem most distinctive or malleable: the mechanism for coordinating higher education, financing, the role of the second tier such as community colleges and the role of private institutions. Comparing systems that are very similar allows one, at least in principle, to identify the distinctive factors which achieve any different results observed (Przeworski and Teune, 1970).

# Policy implementation mechanisms

The paper first considers the jurisdictions’ mechanisms for implementing government policy on higher education.

## *Ontario*

Education is a provincial responsibility in Canada – the federal government doesn’t have a ministry for education, altho the federal industry portfolio includes science and technology and funds much university research including the three major peer evaluated research granting councils. The Government of Ontario’s policy on higher education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and its research policy and funding is the responsibility of the Ministry of Research and Innovation. Because of the standing of universities in Ontario responsibility for key aspects of higher education policy such as quality assurance is effectively shared with universities.

The Ontario Government’s current policy on postsecondary education – *Putting students first: Ontario's plan for postsecondary education* (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2011) – was announced on 30 May 2011. The framework for this policy was established by the Rae report (2005) of its review of postsecondary education. *Putting students first* continues the Government’s expansion of postsecondary education and increased grants and loans for tuition fees and students’ living expenses, continues regulating universities’ tuition fees, develops an Ontario Online Institute and guides institutions to concentrate on their strengths (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2011). In December 2013 the Ministry (2013b) published its ‘Major capacity expansion policy framework’ and invited submissions from institutions seeking to expand. Municipalities were invited to express their interest in host a new or expanded campus thru an institution willing to participate.

The Ontario Government has 2 mechanisms for guiding institutions’ developments. Multi year accountability agreements with each college and university provide, amongst several other things, enrolment targets, student equity targets, undertakings to offer financial aid to students, undertakings to improve quality, they require each institution to administer the National Student Survey of Student Engagement and report other performance indicators, and set retention and graduation targets. They also require institutions to ‘provide details on how the institution consulted with faculty, staff and students on the content’ of their action plan (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and University of Waterloo, 2007: 19). ‘Strategic mandate agreements’ are to be agreements between the ministry and each college and university to increase ‘the differentiation of the Ontario postsecondary system by asking each Ontario postsecondary institution to articulate an institutional mandate statement identifying its distinctive strengths or aspirations and to identify key objectives aligned with that aspiration’, increase the system’s productivity and share innovations (Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2013: 5). However, an expert panel found that institutions’ submissions to begin developing strategic mandate agreements did not differentiate them clearly (Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2013: 13).

## *England*

Responsibility for education in England is shared between the national UK Government and the ‘home nations’ – [England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England), [Northern Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland), [Scotland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland) and [Wales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wales). Unlike the other home nations, England doesn’t have a separate national legislative and deliberative body: its laws and policies are determined by the national Parliament making laws and policies for England alone. England is 83% of the UK’s population so England is often conflated with the UK. This is particularly misleading for postsecondary education, in which the other home nations have quite different arrangements, especially for tuition fees. Postsecondary education in England is the overall responsibility of the Department for Business Innovation & Skills governed by a Secretary of State, but much of the lead for university education is taken by the [Minister of State for Universities and Science](https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/minister-of-state-universities-and-science-department-for-business-innovation-and-skills) who is responsible for the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Student Loans Company, science and research including research councils which allocate peer evaluated research grants. Further or college level education is the responsibility of the Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise who reports jointly to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and to the Secretary of State for Education.

England’s higher education policy is set by the higher education white paper *Higher education: students at the heart of the system* (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011). In addition to the big changes to financing described below, the policy and subsequent decisions relaxed the criteria for institutions to gain powers to award degrees and to be designated a university to increase the numbers of private providers and their proportion of enrolments. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce, 2013a) makes a financial memorandum with each institution which sets out conditions of grants which include governance and accountability, quality assurance, research integrity, financial viability and equality and diversity. The conditions also require institutions to provide and mostly publish information including the key information set which includes results of a national student survey, students’ costs and financial support available and graduates’ destinations (Hefce, 2013b).

In 2013 the UK Government announced that it will subsidise substantially more enrolments in 2014-15 and remove the caps on student numbers at publicly funded higher education institutions in England by 2015-16 (HM Treasury, 2013: 54, paragraph 1.202). Again, this follows Australia’s decision to relax the caps on publicly subsidised places at public universities from 2009 and to remove them from 2012. However, the UK Government will go much further than Australia and will remove caps at private providers also from by 2015-16 (HM Treasury, 2013: 55, paragraph 1.204).

The Government initially planned to make new legislation to establish the conditions for different types of institution, their registration and quality assurance and to establish the mechanics of a formal market in higher education. However, the Government has not introduced such legislation yet, reportedly because of the difficulties it anticipates within the Coalition, Parliament, higher education institutions, students and the public. The Government is therefore introducing its scheme piecemeal by regulation, changing funding conditions and executive decisions (Hillman, 2014).

## *Australia*

The Australian Constitution allocates responsibility for education to the 6 state governments. While the states and the 2 federal mainland territories retain residual powers over higher education, most power is effectively exercised by the federal government. Responsibility for higher education and most research affecting universities is held by the Minister for Education and their Department for Education, and responsibility for other aspects of science and research is held by the Minister for Industry and their Department. The Minister and Department of Industry is also responsible for vocational or college level education.

Arguably there is currently no formal federal Australian policy on higher education. The most recent formal policy statement is *Transforming Australia’s higher education system* (Commonwealth of Australia (2009). However, that statement was issued by the former Labor Government. A new Coalition Government was elected on 18 September 2013. The Coalition had no higher education policy in Opposition and the new Minister for Education has recently reversed many of the positions he stated in Opposition (Hare, 2014). The Coalition launched a review of the removal of enrolment caps on bachelor places at public universities (Pyne, 2013) and reportedly the review team has submitted its report to government, but this is not the occasion to add to the speculation on the review’s recommendations and the Government’s likely response.

However, extrapolating from current settings which seem likely to continue, the federal Department of Education will probably continue to monitor public universities’ performance through institutional performance portfolios which review each university’s finances, enrolments, teaching performance and research. The new Government is also likely to continue and may strengthen ‘mission based compacts’ which were introduced in 2011 to ‘provide a framework for universities to pursue their distinctive missions and strategic goals while contributing to the Australian Government's national objectives for higher education, research, research training and innovation’ (Department of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, 2011). Compacts have thus far not shaped universities’ developments as some would wish, largely because such government planning is inconsistent with the higher education market the government has constructed.

# Financing

Next the paper considers the jurisdictions’ financing of higher education teaching-learning.

## *Ontario*

There are, broadly, 3 sources of funds for higher education enrolments in Ontario. About 47% of colleges and universities’ operating revenues are from general operating grants from the Ontario Government allocated by a common formula based on program mix and a rolling average enrolment within bands or an ‘enrolment corridor’ (Drummond, 2012; Jones, 2013: 106-7). About 16% of institutions’ revenue is from research grants, interest from endowments and ancillary fees. About 37% of total institutional operating revenue is from tuition fees (Drummond, 2012). Average university tuition fees are approaching $7,000 per annum (£3,815, 6,386 USD, 7,922 AUD). College fees are somewhat lower. Trick (2013: 31) estimates the share of provincial operating grants and tuition for business programs from Ministry data and institutions’ web sites (Table **2**).

Table 2: average funding of business programs per year

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Tuition | Government | Total |
| Amount | % of total |  |  |
| College | 3,300 | 43 | 4,400 | 7,700 |
| University | 6,500 | 53 | 5,800 | 12,300 |

Source: Trick (2013: 31) Cost scenarios for college-to-university transfer programs in Ontario

The Ontario Government froze tuition from 2004 to 2006, supplementing institutions’ grants to compensate for the foregone increase in revenue. Currently the Government allows institutions to increase tuition by an average of up to 5%. Many students’ tuition and living costs are supported by grants and/or loans from the provincial and federal governments. Provincial and federal student financial aid for tuition and living expenses are integrated in the Ontario student assistance program. There are also Federal and provincial education tax credits from federal registered education savings plans. The Ontario student access guarantee requires institutions to allocate 10% of additional tuition revenue to bursaries and other forms of student financial aid so that no Ontario student is prevented from attending Ontario’s public colleges and universities due to lack of financial support (Deller and Oldford, 2011: 7). The federal government offers student loan forgiveness for family doctors and nurses who work in rural or remote communities.

The Rae (2005: 79-81) report recommended universal income contingent loans but as yet income contingent repayment is available only upon application by low income borrowers under the repayment assistance program. Lochner, Stinebrickner and Suleymanoglu (2013: 19-21) found from data from the Canada student loans program that more than half of low income students continue with their loan repayments from personal savings and family support. Making income contingent loan repayment universal would halve the amount of loans repaid by low income students without any commensurate increase in repayments by students currently in default, and would thus threaten the sustainability of the Canada student loans program.

## *England*

*Students at the heart of the system* (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011) just about tripled maximum fees at English universities to £9,000 (16,590 CAD, 15,048 USD, 16,630 AUD) and removed grants to institutions for most subjects. However, subsidies were retained for medicine, experimental sciences, engineering and other so called ‘strategically important and vulnerable subjects’: [modern foreign languages](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/crosscutting/sivs/mfl/) and [quantitative social science](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/crosscutting/sivs/qss/). Nonetheless, most universities charge the maximum or close to the maximum fee for most subjects. The UK government introduced universal income contingent loans for tuition fees for students undertaking their first baccalaureate, following their successful introduction in Australia in 1989, and extended loans to living costs, thus making the loan scheme much more expensive than Australia’s. The government also increased grants for living costs for students who satisfied a means test. Income contingent loans are not available for second and subsequent degrees, thus considerably inhibiting people retraining or upgrading their qualifications. Several analysts have doubted that the Government’s current financing of higher education is sustainable (Thompson and Bekhradnia, 2012 and 2013; Brown, 2013; Hackett, forthcoming), largely because loan repayment conditions are so generous that much of the debt isn’t collected (Hackett, forthcoming).

## *Australia*

Financing for coursework undergraduate and graduate places subsidised by the Australian Government comprises a contribution from the Australian Government and tuition fees up to maxima set by the Government. All universities currently charge the maximum fees for all subjects except for a few merit scholarships. The financing rates for 2014 are set out in Table 3.

Table 3: maximum resourcing for government subsidised places, 2014

| **Subject** | **Maximum student contribution** | **Student as % of total** | **Australian Government contribution** | **Total resourcing** | **Relativity** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dentistry, medicine or veterinary science | 10,085 | 32 | 21,273 | 31,358 | 2.7 |
| Agriculture | 8,613 | 29 | 21,273 | 29,886 | 2.6 |
| Engineering, science, surveying | 8,613 | 34 | 16,762 | 25,375 | 2.2 |
| Allied health | 8,613 | 42 | 11,790 | 20,403 | 1.8 |
| Nursing | 6,044 | 31 | 13,163 | 19,207 | 1.7 |
| Mathematics, statistics, computing, built environment or other health | 8,613 | 47 | 9,587 | 18,200 | 1.6 |
| Clinical psychology, foreign languages, or creative arts | 6,044 | 34 | 11,790 | 17,834 | 1.6 |
| Education | 6,044 | 38 | 9,974 | 16,018 | 1.4 |
| Behavioural science or social studies | 6,044 | 39 | 9,587 | 15,631 | 1.4 |
| Law, accounting, commerce, economics, administration | 10,085 | 84 | 1,951 | 12,036 | 1.0 |
| Humanities | 6,044 | 53 | 5,419 | 11,463 | 1.0 |

Source: derived from Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (2013)

Table : conversion of key amounts into Canadian, UK and US currencies, 2014

| **AUD** | **CAD** | **GBP** | **USD** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 6,044 | 6,035 | 3,282 | 5,493 |
| 10,085 | 10,069 | 5,476 | 9,165 |
| 11,463 | 11,445 | 6,224 | 10,417 |
| 31,358 | 31,310 | 17,025 | 28,497 |

Source: XE Currency Converter, 6 March 2014 http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/

The Australian Government offers tuition loans to all students at approved private providers up to a lifetime maximum of $120,002 (119,894 CAD, £65,153, 109,056 USD) for medicine, dentistry and veterinary science students and $96,000 (95,957 CAD, £52,130, 87,255 USD) for all other students. All tuition loans are universal and income contingent. That is, they are all available to all Australian students without a means test provided they are enrolled in an approved institution and they are repaid thru the tax system at a scale that varies according to (former) students’ income. Repayment rates are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Australian tuition loan repayment rates, 2013-4

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Income AUD** | **Income CAD** | **Income GBP** | **Income USD** | **Repayment** |
| < $51,309 | < 51,257 | < 27,854 | < 46,637 | Nil |
| $51,309 - $57,153 |   |   |   | 4.0% |
| $57,154 - $62,997 |   |   |   | 4.5% |
| $62,998 - $66,308 |   |   |   | 5.0% |
| $66,309 - $71,277 |   |   |   | 5.5% |
| $71,278 - $77,194 |   |   |   | 6.0% |
| $77,195 - $81,256 |   |   |   | 6.5% |
| $81,257 - $89,421 |   |   |   | 7.0% |
| $89,422 - $95,287 |   |   |   | 7.5% |
| > $95,287 | > 95,200 | > 51,732 | > 86,618 | 8.0% |

Source: Australian Taxation Office (2013)

The Australian government provides grants towards living expenses to all students enrolled at all approved institutions. The conditions are the same as the unemployment benefit: they are heavily means tested, amounts vary according to (parents’) income and even maximum amounts are very low. About a third of students receive some income support.

# Institutions

Next the paper considers institutions in each jurisdiction.

## *Ontario*

Postsecondary education in Ontario is provided by 22 public universities including Dominican University College and the federally funded Royal Military College, 17 private religious universities with restricted degree granting authority, 21 public colleges of applied arts and technology, 3 public institutes of technology and advanced learning, 3 agricultural colleges affiliated with the University of Guelph, a school of horticulture, an applied health science institute, about 570 registered private career colleges and many more unregulated private non degree granting private institutions offering postsecondary education (Weingarten and Deller, 2010: 8).

Ontario postsecondary public policy is dominated by the 20 standard public universities and the 24 public community colleges. Table 6 lists Ontario’s standard universities by the rough order of status I perceive them to have. Universities’ research intensity classification but not labels are from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario’s data set on university differentiation (Weingarten and colleagues, 2013: 14-17). University type is as ascribed by Macleans (no date), altho as Weingarten and colleagues (2013: 17) observe, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and OCAD (Ontario College of Art and Design) University would in other jurisdictions be categorised as special purpose universities.

Table : Ontario’s universities, in rough order of status

| **University** | **Research** | **Maclean’s type** | **Full time students** | **Census metropolitan area** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Intensity** | **SHJT rank** |
| Toronto | Very high | 28 | Medical/doctoral | 67,271 | Toronto5.6 million |
| McMaster | High | 92 | Medical/doctoral | 24,328 | Hamilton0.7 million |
| Queen’s | High | 201-300 | Medical/doctoral | 19,576 | Kingston160,000 |
| Ottawa | High | 201-300 | Medical/doctoral | 31,789 | Ottawa1.2 million |
| Western | High | 201-300 | Medical/doctoral | 32,078 | London0.36 million |
| Waterloo | High | 151-200 | Comprehensive | 30,501 | Waterloo0.5 million |
| Guelph | High | 201-300 | Comprehensive | 20,730 | Guelph122,000 |
| Carleton | Developing | 401-500 | Comprehensive | 21,438 | Ottawa1.2 million |
| York | Developing | 201-300 | Comprehensive | 44,325 | Toronto5.6 million |
| Ryerson | Developing |  | Comprehensive | 20,775 | Toronto5.6 million |
| Laurier | Niche |  | Comprehensive | 15,382 | Waterloo0.5 million |
| Windsor | Developing |  | Comprehensive | 13,181 | Windsor320,000 |
| Brock | Niche |  | Comprehensive | 15,321 | St Catharines390,000 |
| Trent | Niche |  | Primarily ugrad | 6,114 | Peterborough 119,000 |
| Lakehead | Niche |  | Primarily ugrad | 6,999 | Thunder Bay120,000 |
| Laurentian | Niche |  | Primarily ugrad | 6,741 | Sudbury 160,000 |
| Nipissing | Niche |  | Primarily ugrad | 3,910 | North Bay64,000 |
| Algoma | Niche |  | Primarily ugrad | 921 | Sault Ste. Marie79,000 |
| UOIT | Niche business, IT, soc sci | Primarily ugrad | 7,752 | Oshawa356,000 |
| OCADU | Niche visual arts | Primarily ugrad | 3,328 | Toronto5.6 million |
| **Total** |  |  |  | **392,460** |  |

Source: Weingarten and colleagues (2013: 9), enrolments from Common University Data Ontario.

Ontario’s public colleges are shown in Table 7. The table shows grants from the federal government’s college and community innovation program which funds colleges competitively to strengthen their applied research and conduct applied research and technology transfer in collaboration with, and to the benefit of, industry, particularly small and medium sized enterprises (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, 2014). Half of Ontario’s public community colleges offer baccalaureates, altho in small numbers.

Table 7: Ontario’s public community colleges

| **College** | **Innovation $** | **Students** | **Census metropolitan area** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Full time** | **Degree** | **Apprentices** |
| Humber | 0 | 18,489 | 1,982 | 2,439 |  Toronto5.6 million |
| Seneca | 1,374,113 | 17,240 | 1,144 | 2,920 |  Toronto5.6 million |
| George Brown | 1,298,052 | 15,446 | 614 | 1,545 | Toronto5.6 million |
| Algonquin  | 250,000 | 15,324 | 262 | 2,566 | Ottawa1.2 million |
| Sheridan | 1,195,499 | 15,012 | 1,814 | 418 | Toronto5.6 million |
| Fanshawe | 774,984 | 13,191 | 117 | 3,331 | London0.36 million |
| Mohawk | 1,000,000 | 10,016 | 0 | 3,501 | Hamilton0.7 million |
| Centennial | 250,000 | 9,923 | 87 | 3,691 | Toronto5.6 million |
| Georgian | 100,000 | 9,192 | 281 | 1,095 | Barrie187,000 |
| Conestoga | 49,998 | 8,375 | 628 | 3,364 | Waterloo0.5 million |
| Durham | 100,000 | 8,252 | 0 | 1,134 | Oshawa356,000 |
| Niagara | 900,000 | 7,840 | 138 | 3,083 | Niagara430,000 |
| St Clair | 0 | 7,752 | 0 | 2,061 | Windsor320,000 |
| Fleming | 549,999 | 6,370 | 0 | 260 | Peterborough119,000 |
| St Lawrence | 250,000 | 5,000 | 172 | 697 | Kingston160,000 |
| La Cité  | 648,956 | 4,339 | 73 | 379 | Ottawa1.2 million |
| Cambrian | 164,450 | 3,338 | 0 | 367 | Sudbury160,000 |
| Confederation | 0 | 3,123 | 0 | 430 | Thunder Bay120,000 |
| Loyalist | 0 | 2,625 | 0 | 2,960 | Belleville92,500 |
| Canadore | 0 | 2,621 | 0 | 613 | North Bay64,000 |
| Lambton | 859,433 | 2,443 | 0 | 611 | Sarnia89,600 |
| Sault | 0 | 2,155 | 0 | 553 | Sault Ste. Marie79,000 |
| Boréal | 0 | 1,366 | 0 | 1,863 | Sudbury160,000 |
| Northern | 0 | 1,180 | 0 | 762 | Timmins43,000 |
| **Total** | **9,765,484** | **190,612** | **7,312** | **40,643** |  |

Source: Hicks and colleagues (2013:9) Table 1: Overview of Ontario’s colleges

Ontario’s community college system was established in 1966-7 with little support if not antagonism from universities. As a result colleges were established with very different if not segregated missions from universities – hence their formal name ‘colleges of applied arts and technology’ to emphasise their role in vocation preparation and not in preparing students to transfer to university. Colleges are Crown corporations and thus have far less autonomy than universities which are autonomous, not for profit ‘provincially assisted’ private corporation (Jones, 2014: 103). However, this demarcation is eroding. The Rae report (2005: 3, 29) used ‘higher education’ and ‘postsecondary education’ interchangeably to describe apprenticeship, college, and university programs and institutions and the Ontario Government has recently started to foster community college transfer.

A very important principle of Ontario public policy which seems to be shared by many US states is that there should be preferably no but at least minimal duplication, overlap or competition between public colleges and universities. However, Higher Education Strategy Associates (2012: 27) observes that while competition might matter within the greater Toronto area it is largely irrelevant elsewhere in Ontario because many universities have trouble filling their quotas. The Ontario Government is currently seeking to differentiate its public colleges and universities apparently mainly to contain the costs of its ambitious expansion plans (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2013a: 5b), but this is strenuously resisted by many universities and their staff. The most recent ‘data set to inform the differentiation discussion’ does not seem to take enough account of regions’ aspiration to be served by a full service university (Weingarten and colleagues, 2013).

## *England*

England has 151 universities ([Department for Business, Innovation & Skills](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-innovation-skills), 2013) and 42 members of the Mixed Economy Group (2013) which are further education colleges with ‘a significant, established, strategic and developmental role in the provision of higher education’ and thus are the closest analogues to community colleges. There is a clear hierarchy of university status closely related to the age at which each university gained its university designation, which is also related to research performance and income. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills states that ‘The boundaries therefore between the university sector and the FE sector are becoming blurred, and deliberately blurred’ (Mathews, 2013). The Government is seeking to expand the role of further education colleges and private providers in providing higher education. At the moment it is minor and concentrated in diplomas and foundation degrees.

## *Australia*

Some 95% of Australian higher education enrolments are in 37 public universities. There are 3 small private universities and about 170 private colleges, most of which are also small. Australia’s universities may be considered in 5 groups, in order of status:

*Group of Eight*: the oldest universities in their mainland capital cities with the biggest research budgets and the biggest accumulations of academic, cultural and socio economic capital;

*technical:* 6 institutions, most of which originated in the 19th century as technical institutes in a capital city and formally designated a university after 1987;

*1960s-70s*: 8 universities that were established from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s as distinctively different from the older capital city universities and which have medium sized research budgets;

*new generation*: 7 institutions based on former colleges of advanced education that were designated as universities after 1987, whose research is still developing, and which have most of their student load in cities of more than 250,000 people;

*regional*: 10 universities with most of their student load in centres with a population of less than 250,000 people (Moodie, 2002 [2012]).

There are unusually deep demarcations between vocational and higher education which are the main responsibility of different levels of government and have markedly different curriculum, quality assurance, financing and tuition.

# Discussion

Ontario, England and Australia are each well advanced in introducing universal or open higher education. More than half of their populations are expected to graduate from tertiary programs; rather higher figures are reported for Australia and the UK but these include substantial numbers of international graduates. All 3 jurisdictions are further expanding their higher education, but they are doing so in rather different ways. The Ontario Government has set itself a target and is planning to achieve that by inviting submissions from institutions and deciding them in a bureaucratic-rational way. The governments of England and Australia have not set targets but wish to respond to peoples’ aspiration, while at the same time seeking to shape those aspirations towards technical and vocational education and careers. Accordingly, England and Australia have decided to remove controls on student enrolments while Ontario maintains targets for the province overall and for each institution. England and Australia seek to expand the role of private providers, altho with limited success so far, while Ontario largely ignores them. This pattern is broken by the jurisdictions’ approach to colleges. Ontario and England are seeking to expand the role of community and further education colleges, while Australian governments apparently prefer the public technical and further education colleges to concentrate on vocational education.

The 3 jurisdictions’ approaches to higher education may be summarised thus (Table 8).

Table 8: summary of 3 jurisdictions’ approaches to universal higher education

| **Characteristic** | **Australia** | **England (UK for OECD stats)** | **Ontario (Canada for OECD stats)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Tertiary graduation rate | 67 | 63 | 53 |
| Type A as % of all tertiary | 75 | 80 | 66 |
| Growth target? | No | No | Yes |
| Policy implementation | Government market | Government market | Government planning |
| Financing | Open ended | Planned open ended | Planned increase |
| Average fees AUD | 7,713 | 15,480 | 6,945 |
| Average fees CAD | 7,781 | 15,608 | 7,000 |
| Average fees £ | 4,197 | 8,425 | 3,779 |
| Average fees USD | 7,023 | 14,094 | 6,321 |
| Relations between institutions | Regulated competition | Regulated competition | Differentiation |
| Involvement of community colleges | Mostly excluded | Unrealised goal | Planned expansion |
| Involvement of private institutions | Encouraged | Encouraged | Marginal |
| Participation of under represented groups | Small increase | No change | No change |
| Outcome | Competitive restructuring | Adaptive competition | Accommodating change |

While the Ontario Government seeks to achieve its goals by planning the governments of England and Australia seek to meet their goals by constructing a market. However, rather than considering government planning (‘regulation’) and ‘free’ markets (‘deregulation’) to be opposites (Birnbaum, 1983: 149-182) they are better understood as different factors shaping institutions’ and systems’ development. Fairweather (2000) observes –

From an American perspective, postulating markets and government policies as alternative, distinguishable approaches to achieve academic ‘diversity’ (a phrase wrought with potential for misunderstanding) where one force tends to result in greater diversification than the other presents a false dichotomy. Instead, the development and evolution of approximately 3500 traditional 2- and 4-year colleges and universities along with a growing number of accredited industry-based institutions and more than 5000 proprietary organizations offering some form of post-secondary education is best understood as a complex interaction of various forms of markets, governmental policies, disciplinary associations, and institutional actors.

(Fairweather, 2000: 79- 80, references omitted)

Neither markets nor government policy alone is sufficient to explain the substantial between- and within-institutional variation in American higher education. Instead diversification (or lack of it) stems from a complex interaction of market forces and government interventions as ameliorated by the pursuit of prestige and status. The differential effects of markets and government policies can only be understood by delineating the specific system level or levels of interest and tracing the differential effects of markets and government policies on that level or levels.

 (Fairweather, 2000: 96-97)

Teixeira and colleagues (2012: 350) similarly conclude that ‘although competition is a powerful force in stimulating institutional behaviour, its effects may be modulated by other factors such as student demand and regulatory effectiveness’ and that therefore there is a hybrid relation between government and market forces in Portuguese higher education. Jongbloed (2003: 131-4) found that Dutch higher education is explained not by a shift between the forces of Burton Clark’s (1983) ‘triangle of coordination’ of state authority, the market and the academic oligarchy, but by their dynamic interaction. A dichotomy between market forces and government regulation seems particularly inappropriate inasmuch as students’ market choices are financed by grants and loans determined or even regulated by government policy. Rather, governments’ explicit planning and construction of markets are complementary mechanisms for achieving government goals which are chosen partly for their efficacy and partly by ideological preference (Moodie, accepted).

This helps explain apparent inconsistencies in the governments’ approaches. Ontario caps enrolments but ostensibly not fees, while England and Australia cap fees but not enrolments. It also explains the jurisdictions’ different approaches to student loans. Ontario’s loans mimic a market but with many interventions to compensate for market failures. In Ontario, like much else of Canada and the US, students have access to federal and provincial loans that are at least partly means tested. Most loans are like mortgages in that a real rate of interest is charged, tho this may be discounted, and former students make their own repayment arrangements. Fees are received by a government agency or often by private financial institutions in the US but collected by private agencies. In contrast, in England and Australia loans are much more like income tax levies with adaptations to make them more market like. Loans are universal: they are available to all qualified students enrolled in all approved institutions without means test or other qualification. Their repayment is thru the income taxation system and is contingent upon (former) students’ income. Interest and repayment rates are set not in relation to market rates but by government policy to make them progressive.

It is not yet clear that the jurisdictions’ different approaches to universal or open higher education are generating markedly different outcomes: all 3 are increasing tertiary education attainment strongly and despite their rather different fees and loans access for under represented groups in each jurisdiction hasn’t changed much over the last decade. One possible difference may be emerging in institutions’ positioning, restructuring and differentiation. The governments of all 3 jurisdictions are seeking to differentiate their universities, all 3 with limited success so far. Yet there are signs that Australia may be entering a period of substantial institutional restructuring. Since 2009 there have been 2 institutional amalgamations, 2 universities are establishing ‘polytechnic networks’ to franchise their degrees at collaborating colleges, at least 1 is trying to go fully on line and at least 2 others have established separate online units (Norton, 2013: 19; Australian Catholic University, 2013: 18-22).

Australia’s changes may be described as competitive restructuring, that is, a restructuring of several institutions and a radical transformation of some institutions’ teaching mode as a response mainly to the competition structured by government, but also in response to technological and other broader changes. This was set in train by a centre-left government in Australia, altho it is the change sought but not yet achieved by the UK’s centre-right government. Instead, England is achieving adaptive competition – institutions adapting their strategies but probably not their missions and certainly not their structures in response to the competition structured by government. This may change once enrolment caps are removed in 2015-16. Ontario is achieving accommodating change: institutions accommodating government goals in response to the policy and funding changes introduced by government. Each of these different approaches may in their different ways change higher education much as Trow anticipated for universal or open access systems.

Gavin Moodie

Honorary professor of education

RMIT, Australia

22 Sussex Avenue

Toronto, ON M5S 1J5

Canada

gavin.moodie@telstra.com

<http://rmit.academia.edu/GavinMoodie>

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