

Brief Summary of Doctoral Dissertation: Polish Post-Secondary Vocational Schools and Canadian Community Colleges

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation was to compare Canadian community colleges with post-secondary vocational schools in Poland. The comparison concentrated upon programs in nursing, tourism and information technology delivered by the following three Polish schools: Krakowska Szkola Medyczna, (Cracow, Poland), Policealne Studium Zawodowe, (Cracow, Poland), Cracow School of Information Technology and four Canadian community colleges: Red Deer, (Red Deer, Alberta) Centennial (Scarborough, Ontario), Durham (Oshawa, Ontario) and Confederation (Thunder Bay, Ontario).

Two research approaches were used in this dissertation: qualitative and quantitative mixed research methodologies. Moreover, the theoretical framework was supplied by the general notion of the school as an organization and social institution.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected both at the institutional and system level, and involved:

1. Visits to the Polish Ministry of Education and post-grammar vocational schools.
2. Using the Internet and libraries in Cracow.
3. Open-ended interviews.
4. Semi-structured interviews accompanied by an interview guide.
5. Telephone conversations.
6. Contacting community colleges.
7. Administering a program evaluation form to learners in both Poland and Canada.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The investigator tried to answer the following research questions:

- 1. Are post-secondary vocational institutions meeting the requirements of the labor market as well as Canadian community colleges?**

The predicted answer was ‘no’ because it is easier for colleges to form articulation agreements with schools of higher education than it is for their Polish counterparts. Community colleges in Canada are part of the same post-secondary system of schooling as schools of higher education whereas post-secondary vocational institutions are not—they are part of a secondary school scheme. Articulation agreements allow learners to begin their vocational or academic training in one institution and continue it in another. Labor market requirements are better addressed with comprehensive course transfer agreements.

- 2. Do Canadian college students have a higher perception of their programs than their Polish post-secondary vocational school counterparts?**

The predicted answer was ‘yes’ because colleges are higher up in the school structure ‘pecking order’ than post-secondary vocational schools in Poland: post-secondary as opposed to secondary. It was hypothesized that college learners ought to place more value on their programs than their Polish counterparts.

RESULTS

The results of the investigation partially supported the predicted answer “no” for question 1—Centennial College’s program in tourism has more articulation agreements than their Polish counterpart (Policealne Studium Zawodowe). The predicted answer “yes” was fully confirmed, with regard to question 2.

No individual or group commissioned this dissertation; therefore, the investigators were unrestricted in this work. Since this study consisted of a close examination of only seven programs, the results obtained are limited in their scope and applicability. The findings are perhaps more important to the participating post-grammar vocational institutions than to the Canadian colleges because of the changes that are expected to occur in Poland's post-secondary vocational school system by the end of 2005. It is recommended that additional research be carried out in the future involving a larger number of institutions.

EXAMINERS:

External: Andrzej Janowski, former Deputy Minister of Education, Republic of Poland.

Internal: Rafal Piwowarski, Institute for Educational Research in Warsaw

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