

VOCATIONAL PREPARATION FOR THE NEW WORKFORCE: THE PRIVATE TRAINING OPTION IN MANITOBA

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Abstract

This article examines the preparation for and transition to work of students enrolled in Manitoba's private vocational training schools (PVTS). Issues involving equity and efficiency in the postsecondary system form the context of the study. Equity is discussed in terms of participation and accessibility. Students' reasons for enrolling in a PVTS and their expectations of the program are examined as are gender-related differences in enrolment patterns among the various PVTS programs. Efficiency issues of skill development in the Business Services and Personal Services program areas and their relevance to service sector work also are considered. Given the direction of government funding policies, and the possibilities of a two-tiered training system, the ability of PVTS to provide accessible and useful employment skills is explored from the students' perspective.

Résumé

Cet article porte sur la préparation des étudiants inscrits dans les écoles de formation professionnelle du Manitoba (PVTS), et sur leur transition vers le marché du travail. Notre étude se penche sur les enjeux d'équité et d'efficience dans le système éducatif post-secondaire. La notion d'équité comprend la participation et l'accès aux services éducatifs. Nous examinerons les motifs et les attentes des étudiants inscrits au PVTS, de même que les variations des taux d'inscription chez les hommes et les femmes dans les divers programmes PVTS. L'efficience, en termes de l'acquisition d'habiletés nouvelles, sera examinée pour les programmes de Services d'entreprise et de Services personnels. La pertinence de ces programmes pour l'industrie des services sera également analysée. Dans le contexte des politiques de compressions budgétaires et de l'émergence d'un système de formation à deux vitesses, nous discuterons de la capacité des PVTS à donner accès à des habiletés utiles sur le marché du travail, du point de vue des étudiants eux-mêmes.

Available accounts of proprietary school training are almost exclusively descriptions of institutions rather than analyzes of student characteristics or perceptions. Sweet (1993a) for example, found the literature on PVTS consisted largely of critiques of government policy or descriptions of the schools' organizational arrangements and governance structures. Few profiles of student attributes and behaviors have been constructed although the importance of better understanding the proprietary schools' clientele is generally recognized. More and better data on PVTS students—especially basic demographic information as well as a description of students' motivations for enrolling, their assessment of PVTS training programs, and the perceived value of acquired skills in the workplace—are

important to inform the on-going debate over private sector involvement in training.

Using Government of Manitoba data, this article constructs such a profile, employing selected perceptions of students to describe their training experience from program entry to workplace transition and skill application. This analysis of students' perspectives on PVTs training is made with reference to equity and efficiency elements of government training policies that directly affect the roles played in the post-secondary system by PVTs, the colleges, and business itself (Mahon, 1990). Describing the training experiences of PVTs students within this particular policy framework provides a unique view of the proprietary schools' response to government labor adjustment policies and a rapidly restructuring workforce.

The specific questions addressed in the article deal with issues of participation and access, students' experience of PVTs training and the relationship between the training received and its application in the workplace:

1. What are students' reasons for enrolling in PVTs programs?
2. What are the barriers to enrolment?
3. What are the implications of the predominantly female enrolment in Personal Services and Business Services programs offered by PVTs?
4. Does program quality meet students' expectations?
5. What is the relationship between skill sets acquired through PVTs training and their application in service sector employment?

Background

This background to the PVTs student profile outlines an employment and educational context for post-secondary vocational training by proprietary schools. A brief description of growth in the service sector indicates its significance as a source of employment for PVTs students, especially women. Federal government training policies are indicated and the equity-efficiency dimension of these policies as defined by Mahon (1990) is set out as a framework for interpreting the student profile.

The Service Sector

It is the service sector that has supplied most of the recent growth in new jobs in the Canadian economy, although not always in a form that offers opportunities for career development. In reviewing the service sector, Betcherman and his colleagues (Economic Council of Canada [ECC], 1991) identified three categories of work distinguished from each other by their ability to offer meaningful employment: *dynamic*, *nonmarket*, and *traditional* services. The dynamic area comprises transportation, finance, and business services; while the nonmarket category refers to education, health and social services, and public administration. The traditional services include retail trade, tourism and recreation (the hospitality industry),

personal care, and business services. Business services within the traditional retail and hospitality areas are different from those within the dynamic subsector. The former include lower-level clerical and basic administrative tasks while the latter typically entail some management responsibilities and technological expertise. This distinction between skill levels is discussed by Ashton, Maguire and Sung who contrast "routine" skills which involve the repetitive application of highly specific skill sets with "intermediate" skills whose application:

...relies on the internalization of a body of theoretical knowledge and its usage in variable contexts...that are transferable across a range of jobs...constantly evolving with developments in theoretical understanding and in the techniques utilized in the practice of such skills.(1991, p. 234)

Intermediate skills provide the flexibility and adaptability that facilitate workers' careers and job mobility and have obvious implications for the development of training programs for service sector employment. Prais, Jarvis, and Wagner (1991), for example, describe the training of hotel workers in "craft-level, broad-based skills" (p. 140) as essential to the efficient operation of housekeeping, reception, and management functions in the modern hotel.

The number of jobs created in the more highly skilled dynamic and nonmarket sectors has been less than anticipated. Employment gains in traditional services, however, have been significant. At the end of the 1980s, the service sector accounted for 89% of all employment in Canada; and about one half of all jobs in that sector were of the traditional type (EEC, 1991). Unhappily, many of these jobs are "non-standard" in that they are part-time, poorly paid, and have few or no benefits. The dynamic and nonmarket domains generally require greater skill, offer more stable and attractive working conditions, and are better compensated than jobs in the traditional services. This bifurcation gives rise to a distinction between "good" and "bad" jobs in the service industries (EEC, 1990). Traditional service work in the retail, clerical, hospitality, and personal care fields is further characterized by the very high proportion of women employed. And individual employees in this sector are given little opportunity to upgrade their skills through training as small firms typically possess few training resources.

Government Policy

The Federal government has for many years and by various means attempted to bolster private sector involvement in training. These efforts may be seen in the Canadian Job Strategies established by Employment and Immigration in 1985 and the more recent Labour Force Development Strategy. Although designed to help those who were disadvantaged in the labor market—youth, women, social assistance recipients, and the long term unemployed—the Job Strategies method of achieving this through subsidies to employers failed to alter the situation of most such groups. The Labour Force Development Strategy was intended as a more active labor market intervention involving direct training initiatives rather than employer support payments. There was a renewed emphasis on supporting those who are

employed but in need of new skills. And equity was to have been further enhanced with greater attention given the training needs of First Nations, minorities, women, and disabled groups (Employment & Immigration, 1989).

The Canadian Job Strategies and the Labour Force Development Strategy then were attempts to redistribute training responsibilities among the colleges, the proprietary schools, and the training facilities of business and industry itself. Basic goals of both programs were a greater degree of involvement and financial commitment from the private sector and a higher level of innovation and productivity from the publicly funded college and university system (Dennison & Levin, 1988; EEC, 1992). Innovation in colleges presumably would be enhanced in a more competitive education and training market, and a stronger PVTS presence in the postsecondary system presumably would contribute to this environment.

An important element in discussions surrounding the impact of these policies on the postsecondary system concerned the financing of private vocational training schools. For example, the dissenting paper in the Canadian Labour Market Productivity Center (CLMPC) report argued for a policy of greater openness and diversity in postsecondary institutions, including financial support for alternative programming, such as offered by PVTS (Hatton, 1990). In contrast, the majority report concluded that such assistance threatened operation of the existing system of community colleges and technical institutes. Based on their analysis of the Canadian Job Strategies experience, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC, 1986) and the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) (Wismer, 1988) have expressed concern with the diversion of funds to proprietary schools through government sponsored student loans and training contracts. Nevertheless, the notion of a market or consumer-oriented model of postsecondary provision remains an integral part of the Labour Force Development Strategy and similar provincial government policy initiatives.

Influencing all educational policy developments was the Federal Government's restriction on postsecondary budget allocations throughout the 1980s. These forced provincial governments to reduce formula funding for the community colleges with the result that enrolments were curtailed and, in some provinces, programs were eliminated. In the case of vocational programming, these policies effectively transferred responsibility for training in many personal care and business service areas to the proprietary schools.

Despite the Federal Government's recognition of diversity in the workplace, women's interests may not have been especially well represented in the formation of Labour Force Development Strategy policies. Butterwick (1992), for example, pointed out the difficulties women encountered in making their views known in the initial Labour Force Development Strategy committees. From the perspective of the many female participants in training programs—especially those preparing for employment in the service sector—current government training policies bring into question the balance between equity and efficiency.

Policy Perspective

Mahon (1990) viewed the Labour Force Development Strategy as an attempt to alter the equity-efficiency tradeoff¹ in training which for many years had favored improved accessibility (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1981). This shift in emphasis from access concerns to the development of skills required for improved productivity follows the more general ideological move to greater deregulation and privatization. Mahon (1990) is concerned with the emergence of a two-tiered labor force and with similar developments in training programs. The latter involve the distinction between intermediate and routine skills training programs described by Ashton, Maguire, and Sung (1991). Further complicating this structural difference in employment and training is the gendered nature of the workforce (Employment & Immigration Canada, 1989). To the extent PVTs enrolments in programs that supply the service industry are mostly female, the skills acquired through training are important in altering or, conversely, further contributing to gender divisions in the labor force.

Equity

Research on equity issues, although directed toward special needs groups, draws on a more general literature describing the antecedent social, psychological, and demographic characteristics of students. These typically are treated either as motivations to participate or as barriers to access (Cross, 1981; Houtkoop & van der Kamp, 1992).

Participation. Motivation has been conceived as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Attempts to elaborate the internal sources of motivation include attributional analysis (Weiner, 1985) and the role of goals or task values in setting achievement-related patterns of behavior such as persistence, attending, and concentration (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). These notions have both theoretical and practical value. For example, attribution theory attempts to explain an individual's perception of the bases for achievement and allows him or her to redirect causal interpretations to the essential relationship between effort and outcome. Similarly, goal theories as applied to achievement situations such as education or training have been elaborated from a developmental perspective (Dweck & Elliott, 1983).

Beaty & Morgan (1992) distinguish between the task-specific focus of most motivational analyzes and the more general reasons or arguments given by individuals for engaging in postsecondary study. The latter—motivations for

¹ Mahon's (1990) use of the equity and efficiency tradeoff concept in her critique of federal government training policies and its adoption as an organizing framework in this article are considered appropriate given the policy arguments of successive federal governments which continue to contrast debt-deficit and social spending priorities. An alternative view of the relationship between equity and efficiency is presented by Osberg (1995) who points out the necessity of viewing both as complementary.

participating in a course or program—referred to as “orientations to study” include academic, vocational, personal development, and social reasons. The first two serve obviously instrumental purposes while the personal development category includes those who are not interested in accreditation. Social enrolment reasons typically are expressions of a desire for companionship. People do, however, enrol for a variety of reasons and these often intersect. Social and personal goals frequently overlap or complement academic and vocational pursuits. And personal development motivations can imply an intellectual curiosity that translates into important differences in study behavior while an inclination for the company of others facilitates cooperative group learning. Of course there are qualifications to a simple prediction of program participation from intrinsic motivational variables. Individuals’ choices in enrolling and persisting in courses often are determined by the requirements of employers, status or seniority expectations, or other social or individual constraints (Pervin, 1992; Stalker, 1992).

Accessibility. Initial definitions of access employed a ratio of post-secondary enrolments to the number of eligible persons in the population (Anisef, 1985). The concept of access has since expanded to reflect the influence of changes in attitudes toward adult learning, student characteristics—especially the presence of many older students—and the growing responsiveness of institutions to these differences. Cross’ (1981) distinction between predispositional, situational, and institutional barriers to postsecondary participation remains a useful framework in assessing the limits placed on accessibility. This is seen in analyses of college enrolment patterns in specific Canadian institutions and program areas (Barriers Project, 1989). More recently, the ethnic diversity of the Canadian postsecondary student body has been recognized and researched in relation to improved access and institutional support (Grayson, 1995). Similarly, women’s participation in construction trades or engineering apprenticeship programs has been examined in relation to policies aimed at enhancing access to non-traditional employment (Skof, 1994). These broader definitions of accessibility—frequently applied to Canadian community college and university programs—appear appropriate to the analysis of PVTS training.

Efficiency

Analysts employ process and product indicators in reviewing postsecondary training efficiency. Reviews of research on college programs indicate the frequent use of student course evaluations and dropout rates as indicators of efficient and effective instructional processes (ACCC, 1993; Wolfe, 1989). But in many of these studies, efficiency also was equated with curricular relevance and best indicated by successful placement of students in jobs closely related to their training programs.

Program quality. While dropout rates have been a particularly visible indicator of postsecondary institutional quality they have limited value in determining relationships between program features and the workplace. Recent analyses of training relevance tend to look more at the integration of job features within the curriculum itself. Pullin (1994) describes attempts in the United States to link

education and employment through assessment and curriculum reform. The influence of public demands for accountability in the initial preparation of the workforce is clearly seen in recent major US policy statements that propose national standards and elaborate testing mechanisms. In Canada, calls for reform of the training system along similar lines have been made in publications by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (1989) and the CLMPC (1990).

The approach to curriculum evaluation and development employed by most PVTs (and colleges) is based on the instructional systems design model with its sequence of specified objectives together with corresponding conditions of learning and assessment (Dick & Carey, 1985). More recently, there has been a recognition that conceptually different curriculum designs are needed, at the public school as well as postsecondary level. For example, Globberman (1991), Johnston (1993), and others have argued that changes in the organization of work and occupational roles have significant curricular and pedagogical implications. These relate most directly to the need to change from teacher-centered to student-centered instructional approaches. Recasting the relationship between students, teachers, and the curriculum, these approaches rely on a constructivist perspective on the acquisition of knowledge and problem solving that emphasizes personal understanding acquired in collaborative and meaningful learning contexts (Wilson & Cole, 1991). Alternative approaches to curriculum design involving cooperative goal structures, situated learning, and an emphasis on problem solving are seen by many as essential to instructional reform of post-secondary training programs (Cervero, 1990; Sweet, 1993b). But as Berryman (1993) and Candy & Crebert (1993) have pointed out, discussions about higher-order thinking skills have only recently been framed in the context of meeting vocational training needs.

Program relevance. Job placement is an initial indicator of program relevance. However, the basis for most such analyses is the degree of fit between skills obtained in training and those required on the job, usually expressed in terms of generic or domain-specific qualities. Technology complicates the specification of cognitive requirements in the emerging service economy (EEC, 1991; Elam, 1990; Levin & Rumberger, 1989). Skill development is not simply a question of whether more generic training would better equip students for technologically involved tasks over the course of their careers. Changes in the organization of work have equally important implications. Most discussions of the relevance of training assume a traditional form of work organization which typically is hierarchical, authoritarian, and demands conformity and compliance on the part of the employee. Alternative positions on the nature of relevant workplace skills are, however, emerging and reflect to a significant degree the reanalysis and redefinition of traditional management forms. In these settings, individual autonomy and initiatives in the service delivery process are encouraged as is understanding the total operation of the organization (Spencer, 1983). To the extent this collaboration among employees is required for effectiveness and productivity, cooperative interpersonal skills are a necessary part of the employees' skills repertoire (Kern & Shumann, 1987; Streek, 1989). Both technology and management style then determine the relevance of

workplace skill and have important implications for training designs and indicators of their effectiveness. The literature on the definition of workplace skills and the measurement of skill sets is extensive but difficult to translate directly into educational and training requirements (Bailey, 1991; Davies, 1986; Vallas, 1990). The data employed in this article do, however, include students' perceptions of the quality of PVTS instruction, the workplace relevance of their training, and the applicability of acquired skills to specific employment outcomes.

Data Sources

The profile developed in this study is based on a secondary analysis of survey data collected by the Manitoba Ministry of Education and Training (Oepkes, 1990). That data file comprised responses from 1,469 students drawn from all the programs offered through schools registered with the Ministry. The Manitoba data set represents one of the few available files of PVTS student-level information. The National Association of Career Colleges conducted a national student survey in 1993 and has recently made the data available for research use (Sweet, 1996). Similar surveys, sponsored by the Commission on Private Postsecondary Education, are anticipated in BC.

Respondents

Respondents were students enrolled in a Manitoba PVTS as well as students who had graduated from or completed a PVTS program. The original Ministry file included a sample of students taking correspondence courses; however, they were not considered in this analysis as this group typically enrolled in single courses rather than a program of study and their learning occurred under a very different set of study conditions than those of the classroom, lab, or worksite (Sweet, 1991). On the other hand, students enrolled in short-term training such as the Income Tax Preparation Program were retained. Although the classroom training period in such courses is brief, intensive programming is characteristic of the PVTS approach to instruction in all fields.

The respondents were enrolled in a wide range of courses and programs including fashion design, business services, personal services, community services (health), technology, various construction trades and transport areas, hospitality, tourism, and retail sales. Students in programs offering training for employment in the service sector were organized into two groups: Business Services and Personal Services. Students enrolled in other PVTS programs also were included in an aggregate third "group" to provide an overall profile of persons enrolled in the Province's PVTS and against which the profiles of the Personal Services and Business Services groups might be compared. A further distinction among respondents also was made for some of the analyzes. Those who were enrolled in a PVTS program (26%) at the time of the survey were differentiated from those who had graduated, completed a program but did not obtain a diploma, or dropped out.

There were four distinguishing characteristics of students enrolled in Manitoba PVTS in 1989-90: (a) age, (b) gender, (c) previous education, and (d) level of income

(Oepkes, 1990). The average age of PVTS students was 27. This is higher than the "traditional" 18 to 24 year old postsecondary student but is consistent with the observation that increasing numbers of older individuals are returning to study. Three quarters of all students enrolled in PVTS programs were women. This reflects the generally high female enrolment in Canadian PVTS (Sweet, 1993a) although there was considerable variability in the number of females enrolled in the various PVTS program areas. Some 78% of the enrolment had graduated from high school and—on this criterion, at least—were well qualified to undertake training in a PVTS or a community college.

Program Focus

Information about PVTS programs was taken from descriptions supplied by the Ministry and from data collected in 1989-90 by Sweet (1992). For this study, Business and Personal Services were selected not only because they train for the service sector but also because they contain significant enrolments and reflect traditional PVTS fields of training and expertise (Moreland, 1977). The Business Services program area in Manitoba PVTS consists of three categories each of which involves more specific sub-programs: Secretarial-Clerical; Information Systems; and Administration-Management. With 75% of the total, Secretarial-Clerical work attracts the largest enrolment in the Business Services area. The Personal Services area consists of four categories: (a) Personal Care, (b) Community, (c) Hospitality, and (d) Health. Like the business category, each Personal Services area includes more specific programs. For example, Personal Care subsumes hairstyling, cosmetology, electrolysis treatment, and manicure-pedicure programs. Personal Care also has the largest enrolment in the Personal Services area with 69% of the total, most of which is in hairstyling.

PVTS Student Profile

The profile parallels the equity-efficiency distinction used by Mahon (1990) in her analysis of training policies and discussed in the previous section. Equity is developed in terms of participation and access while efficiency is related to program quality and the workplace relevance of the skills acquired.

Participation

Two questions were asked of the respondents: the first dealt with their choice of a proprietary school; the second explored their reasons for choosing a particular course or program.

Enrolling in a PVTS

Students' motivations for enrolling in a PVTS are extremely varied. They include such reasons as the convenience of a nearby institution, tuition costs and the eligibility of the program for government financial support, the relatively short duration of courses, and the job placement record of the institution. Recent research suggests that program length is one of the principal reasons students enrol in a PVTS (Sweet, 1996). The same research indicates tuition is not a major factor in

students' decision to enrol although PVTS tuition fees typically are considerably higher than those charged by colleges. Consistent with this pattern, tuition was not salient in Manitoba students' enrolment decision. Only 2% mentioned this as a matter of concern. Program duration, however, was not seen as an important reason. Only 7% mentioned this as a factor in selecting a particular school.

Duration is one of the more contentious issues in the debates that surround government support for PVTS. Where college Career-Technology programs typically run over two years, comparable PVTS programs are 12 to 18 months in length, with the result that students' foregone earnings are less. Program duration is not, in some respects, a useful comparison as the PVTS appeal to a different training philosophy and many of their modularized courses are especially short (Sweet, 1993a). The argument is further complicated when dealing with part-time students who often distribute their studies over a number of semesters or even years.²

While program duration, with its financial implications, is a rational, logical reason why individuals might choose to enrol in an institution, over 50% of students indicated they enrolled because advertising brought the PVTS to their attention. Simple awareness then appears to be a significant element in the participation decision and indicates the critical role played by marketing in the success of the PVTS. Advertising functions not only to inform potential students of training possibilities but also to direct them to the PVTS option. The relationship between student choice and the management of enrolment appeals by institutions (whether public or private) requires more study.

Enrolling in a Program

The reasons participants gave for enrolling in a particular program area were as varied as those given for selecting a PVTS. Table 1 lists the reasons students gave for their program choice.

Table 1

Reasons for Enrolling in a Program

Reason	PVTS Group		
	Personal Services (%)	Business Services (%)	All PVTS (%)
Employment Related	20	57	35
Improve Skills	4	12	11
Advance Position	8	33	15
Find Job	8	12	9
Program Interest	67	26	50
Other	13	17	15
Number of Respondents	341	373	1357

² Appropriate course duration is difficult to assess but it almost certainly is not defined by the semester. Increasingly there is a need for innovative and flexible instructional modules in the field of training (Sweet, 1993b).

When grouped as being either "job-related" or "personal interest," the latter was chosen by 50% of the students. This is consistent with the findings of recent research on program preferences of PVTS students (Sweet, 1996). Table 1 illustrates the differences in the Program Interest category across PVTS groups: the Personal Services group's preference (67%) was higher than the overall PVTS figure of 50%, while the Business Services group figure of 26% was very much lower than either but especially low when compared with the Personal Services group. An intrinsic interest in the program area, then, appears as the most salient factor in the program choices of Personal Services students, while Business students select programs more for their instrumental value. As previously indicated, respondents' program interests and their assessment of a program's employment value are not necessarily mutually exclusive and a comparison of interest or instrumental value is not straightforward. Where these broad motives are broken down into finer categories, comparisons within groups are perhaps more revealing of purpose. In the case of Employment Related responses, it appears that 33% of Business Services students were especially interested in obtaining training that would improve their positions in their current employment.

Access

The basic set of demographic variables that describes the respondents—age, gender, income, previous education, and employment status—is presented in Table 2. These are discussed in terms of their effect on accessibility to PVTS institutions generally and more specifically to the Personal Services and Business Services areas.

Table 2

PVTS Student Characteristics

Characteristic	PVTS Group ¹		
	Personal Services (%)	Business Services (%)	All PVTS (%)
Age (Medians)	21	24	27
Gender (Female)	90	88	75
Income ²			
Enrollees	85	50	64
Grads/Completers	94	87	60
Education ³	74	82	78
Employment			
Full Time	48	40	41
Part Time	40	13	21
Number of Respondents	345	375	1357

¹ Entries are column proportions with the exception of Age (Medians).

² At or below \$1000.00 per month for currently enrolled students (n= 287) and at or below \$1500.00 for graduates and completers (n=716).

³ Grade 12 or higher.

Personal Finances

Students often are expected to assume some financial burden in support of their studies, either through direct tuition costs or through foregone earnings. As previously indicated, Manitoba students did not see tuition costs as a significant deterrent to enrolling in a PVTs despite the fact they are generally higher than fees for comparable college programs; nor was course duration a significant factor. Yet the respondents in this study were not affluent. As shown in Table 2, 64% of enrolled students had incomes at or below \$1000 per month. Using the same index of monthly income, there was considerable variability in the proportions of the Business Services group (50%) and the Personal Services group (85%). Overall PVTs enrolment was predominantly female and especially so in the Personal and Business Services. Student finances then likely reflected gender differences in provincial incomes in Manitoba: men earned an average of \$2,189 while the average income for women in the workforce was \$1295 (Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, 1990).

The apparent lack of concern with tuition and program duration may be explained in part by the relationship between age, employment, and family obligations, and the flexibility of the training institutions (Employment & Immigration Canada, 1983). Flexible program scheduling allows mature students to combine study and work—either part time or full time. Some 21% of students worked part time. A significant number of others (41%) retained full time jobs and attended school on a part-time basis. Flexibility more than program duration appears to benefit the older student. Younger students in full-time attendance do, however, benefit from intensive training as they acquire employable skills in a relatively short time.

Students drew on a variety of sources for their tuition. Some 21% utilized the Canada Student Loan program.³ This is less than the university or college utilization levels but higher than the national level for PVTs students. The only other significant contributors were parents, who paid 11% of fees; Employment & Immigration Canada, which paid 8%; and employers who contributed 3%.

Previous Education

Students bring quite different educational backgrounds to their training. As shown in Table 2, some students had previous postsecondary experience while others had attained less than Grade 12. Most, however, had graduated from high school. The level of education of Business Services students was somewhat higher than that of Personal Services students but not a great deal: 82% as opposed to 74%. Prerequisites do not seem to present a great barrier, at least in terms of formal requirements for entry to these programs. If one considers age in conjunction with education level, it appeared that a considerable number of women took Personal

³One of the interesting debates among proponents and critics of PVTs is the contention that PVTs students are more likely to be delinquent in their repayment of Canada Student Loans (CSL). Nichol (1990) has argued otherwise: for academic year 1988-89 the distribution of defaults among postsecondary institutions was: Universities (33%), technical institutes and colleges (40%), and PVTs (26%). However, as a proportion of CSL subscribers in that period PVTs defaults were considerably higher (Meloche, 1991). CSL recipients in 1987-88 were: Universities (56%), colleges and institutes (32%), and PVTs (10%).

Care training upon high school graduation or relatively soon thereafter. The Clerical option in the Business Services area also attracted younger students. Like the colleges, PVTs cater to students with varied educational backgrounds. These include not only direct admissions from high school but also the older, so-called "non-traditional" student.

An important issue surrounding participation in postsecondary training is the relatively strong effect of initial education on the likelihood of postsecondary enrolment and on the benefits received from participation. Tuijnman (1991) documented the greater probability of enrolment in continuing education by those with higher levels of previous schooling. Dougherty (1992) indicated the importance of the quality of initial, basic education to subsequent participation in specific skills training. Globberman (1991) similarly suggested the ability to benefit from post-secondary education and training was an outcome of the quality of early educational experience. A significant instructional development in British Columbia public schools noted by Globberman is the adoption of child-centered learning models with presumed positive effects on learning attitude and continuing motivation. Although the Manitoba survey (Oepkes, 1990) did not gather information on the nature of respondents' early schooling experience it seems likely that most attended traditional elementary and secondary schools.⁴ The importance of considering different models of education in defining the quality of early instruction looks beyond a simple linear relationship between level of education attained and future income and status. Understanding the classroom conditions experienced by early learners is especially important in calculating employment returns to investment in education for women (Leiper, 1993).

Enrolment Patterns

One of the striking features of PVTs training is the number of women enrolled. Three quarters of enrolments across all PVTs are female, and in the Business and Personal Services areas the proportions are even higher. As indicated, earlier assessments of accessibility policies concentrated on simple participation rates. Specific groups who are disadvantaged in some way have been the focus of recent attention. And participation rates now are considered in relation to particular training programs. Questions of access and gender, for example, now are directed toward women's representation in many different areas of training, especially those leading to employment in non-traditional work areas (Gaskell, 1992). Table 3 includes program information as well as gender divisions in enrolment.

The enrolment data in Table 3 suggest an established and stereotypical gender pattern as regards women's participation in the Personal Care and Clerical areas. It is further reinforced by the relatively low participation rate for women in the Community category (43%) which, for the most part, comprises security programs,

⁴Globberman (1991) referred to the Year 2000 initiative in BC schools which, at the Primary level, is a child-centered, constructivist approach to instruction. Fundamental changes to the public schools have been made in other provinces but not on the scale of the BC program.

a typically male career direction. An important consideration in assessing gender differences in attendance at PVTs—69% and 75%, respectively—is the contribution of the Personal Care (largely hairdressing) and Clerical categories to the total enrolments in the Personal Services and Business Services areas.

Table 3

Proportion of Females Enrolments in Program Areas

<u>Personal Services</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>Business Services</u>	<u>(%)</u>
Personal Care	95	Clerical	97
Community	43	Administration	68
Hospitality	75	Info Systems	62
Health	100		
Number of Respondents	345		375

The policies and practices of training institutions generally reflect the state of affairs in the workforce. Where job categories are characterized by an unusually high proportion of female workers, training programs are similarly structured. In striving to be responsive to Labour-market employment patterns, the PVTs' market or consumer-demand approach to enrolment reinforces stereotypical conceptions of women's work and training. However, there is some evidence that women's vocational program choice is influenced by perceptions developed at an earlier age. The way in which work, and particularly women's work, comes to acquire meaning through socialization processes in the home and school is well documented. Explanations for girls' employment expectations may be found in the norms of families and of schools as these are acted upon in classrooms. But part of their perception of "limited possibilities" involves a rational assessment of structural barriers to women's advancement in the labor force. An account that acknowledges this complexity in career decision-making is found in Gaskell (1992). In examining the basis for teenage girls' choice of business education in BC high schools, Gaskell reports that the girls were aware of both restrictive domestic responsibilities and employment barriers they would face upon graduation. These perceptions grew out of experiences at home and at school; and they were firmly anchored in the reality of relations with family, friends, and the anticipated world of work:

Changing their minds would have meant changing the world they experienced, not simply convincing them of the desirability of a new set of ideals about equality of opportunity and of a different world. (1992, p. 52)

Explanations for women's job expectations in the area of clerical work have been extensively explored as have the socialization processes that operate in business school classrooms. The Personal Care field, however, has not been studied in such detail despite the fact that it is predominantly female and appears to exemplify both

a traditional pattern of socialization to work and an employment category with career or entrepreneurial opportunities for relatively few individuals.

Efficiency and Skill Development

In the training literature, discussions of efficiency in skill development most directly concern the relevance of training to employment. Relevance may be gauged by statements of perceived "fit" between acquired skills and the demands of a particular job category or, as Pullin (1994) suggests, from a curricular standpoint. In general terms, this division between job requirements and curricular features parallels development of product and process indicators of efficiency for the national training effort at the college level (ACCC, 1993).

Process: Curriculum Quality

Indicators of program quality are generally defined by the relationship between training and work. However, from the student's perspective an institution's reputation for quality is not always considered as important an element in successful job search or advancement as it might be in a fully credentialed workplace—one in which formal training was valued above incidental or informal skill acquisition (Hunter & Leiper, 1993). Nevertheless, student evaluations are regularly collected by all schools as an important element in the development of quality programming. These evaluations are based on a traditional training model that emphasizes clearly specified goals and a teacher-directed instructional format. Objections to this approach to curriculum have been raised. For example, Gaskell (1991) and Jackson (1991) have critically assessed the objectives-based instructional designs employed in the preparation of (female) clerical workers. Similarly, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1987), and others, have argued that such models do not create congenial learning conditions for women. For most adult students, however, the instructional model they experienced in their public school education is the one they have come to expect from a post-secondary educational institution and expressions of satisfaction may be seen as indicating the degree to which their expectations were met.

In the Manitoba survey (Oepkes, 1990), respondents assessed their training programs along dimensions typically used in post-secondary evaluations: teaching quality, practical training, equipment and books, and school facilities. Overall, students and graduates considered their training to have been a positive experience. But there were some areas of concern: Personal Services students were less pleased with their training equipment than were those enrolled in Business while the latter were dissatisfied with their school facilities. This seems to be a general concern among PVTs students. Only a little more than half were satisfied or very satisfied with their school facility.

Product: Relevance of Training to Work

Attempts to assess the utility of training involve prediction or at least a matching of acquired skills to the requirements of the job as determined indirectly by income and other career advancement indicators or by the perceptions of participants

and other career advancement indicators or by the perceptions of participants regarding the degree of fit and specific applications of their acquired skills (Berryman, 1993). The latter are presented in Table 4 for graduates and completers.

Table 4

Relevance of Course/Program to Work¹

Statement	PVTS Group		
	Personal Services (%)	Business Services (%)	All PVTS (%)
Related to Job	55	57	42
Improve Skills	10	12	15
Advance Position	14	12	9
Help Find Job	39	36	26
Number of Respondents	158	154	799

¹ Entries are column proportions for graduates and completers.

The training received in both Personal Services and Business Services appears to be more relevant to the work of graduates than is the case overall in PVTS programs but nowhere was there a particularly strong endorsement of the relevance of the program. This is somewhat surprising given the generally practical and applied nature of PVTS programming. However, the degree of fit between program learning and job requirements provides only a global indicator of relevance. There are other outcomes which assess the extent to which individuals are able to translate acquired skills into improved income or status in the workplace. For those already employed, skill application contributed to career mobility. Similarly, the possession of skills acts as an aid to finding employment for those who do not have jobs. Table 4 shows the perceived utility of PVTS training in meeting the particular purposes of the graduates. For the employed, these included an improvement in skills and career advancement. For the 30% of graduates and completers who were unemployed at enrolment, training was seen to enhance the probability of their finding work.

While employment opportunities were improved for graduates the data do not allow a determination of income increases as a direct consequence of training. However, the monthly earnings of 87% of Business Services graduates, and 94% of Personal Services graduates were at or below \$1500, only somewhat above the \$1295 average monthly income for women in Manitoba. This pattern is not surprising given the fact that Personal Care (hairdressing) and Secretarial-Clerical programs enrolled the greatest number of trainees and employment in these service jobs remains almost exclusively female.

Assessing the utility of training to job and career mobility necessarily assumes current forms of work organization as a criterion. Employment in the lower-end service sector more than most job categories reflects traditional, hierarchical work arrangements. To the extent that work conditions in the service sector change to accommodate the demands of technology and personalized (rather than mass) marketing approaches, the skill requirements of employees also will change, as will their employment opportunities (EEC, 1991). This will signal the need for a rather dramatic shift in the skills taught in most private training schools and, for that matter, in community colleges.

Conclusion

This article has outlined the training experiences of students enrolled in proprietary schools in Manitoba. The profile detailed students' reasons for enrolling, evaluation of their training programs, and assessment of the relationship between training and employment. The responses of the students surveyed reinforce concerns of equity and efficiency expressed in the policy literature. In this particular case, the salient equity issue involved the gendered nature of training, while matters of efficiency in skill development involved their relevance to employment in the traditional service sector.

Gender

The profile focused on the personal services and business services program areas, both designed to prepare students for work in the service sector. Personal Services comprise a number of programs with a predominance of female students: daycare, hospitality, health care, and the personal care field of hairdressing which enrolls the highest proportion of females. The Business Services area similarly is made up of various programs with the clerical or secretarial program enrolling the greatest number of females. The gendered pattern of enrolment in PVTs reflects the restrictions on women's occupational choice in the labor market. A great many nonstandard jobs in the service sector are filled by women and these jobs offer few incentives or opportunities for further training, either on the job or through formal instruction at a college or PVTs. To the extent training programs are available, they often fail to impart the generic skills needed for job and career mobility (Jackson, 1991). Women nevertheless have been most active in calling for and establishing improved learning opportunities and conditions in the Canadian postsecondary system (Burge, 1990; Gaskell & McLaren, 1991). The initial focus for most advocacy was improved accessibility to training. And although this continues to be a priority, the feminist literature now includes a broader view of the contingent relationship between training and work. To a considerable extent, narrowly defined sex-role or socialization explanations have given way to a more complex view that includes women's experience with the processes and structures of institutions in the workplace as well as the educational system. For example, Jackson & Gaskell (1987) in their history of vocational education in British Columbia and Ontario argue that failure to acknowledge differences between

commercial and general vocational education in the early 1900s masked the feminization of office work and a consequent increase in the number of women enrolling in programs designed to prepare them for employment in the lower levels of commercial work. Women still occupy the majority of positions in an office environment lacking in initiative and responsibility. Clerical work has, however, become a less important source of employment for women as offices automate (Kuhnin, 1994; Menzies, 1988). While clerical work has diminished as a job option for women, its place has been taken by Personal Services work such as health care, tourism, and hairdressing and cosmetology. These too are occupations which for the most part possess limited possibilities for stable remuneration or advancement. Gender therefore remains a central issue in the on-going debate over linkages between PVTS training, job entry, and the development of a career path in the service sector.

Program Relevance

Mahon's (1990) concern with the balance between equity and efficiency in government training policies is directly related to the emergence of a two-tiered labor market in Canada; and the distinction between upper and lower tiers necessarily applies to the training systems that support the workforce. Efficient skill development assumes a relationship between training curricula and the immediate and future job demands of the labor market. Despite difficulties in predicting the availability or nature of future employment, postsecondary institutions—public and private—must reconcile and balance the immediate employment needs of business and industry with the career development requirements of their students. New curriculum and instructional priorities have to be directed toward preparing students to intermediate skill levels for job entry in areas of the labor force that offer career paths and not just immediate employment. Upgrading and retraining programs similarly must be guided by considerations of mobility. In general, individuals with intermediate skills—those with applied knowledge, involving some conceptual as well as practical understanding—are better positioned to acquire and maintain employment as well as being able to seek more advanced and responsible levels of employment, when desired (Ashton, Maguire & Sung, 1991).

In the absence of detailed curricular data it is difficult to determine whether or not PVTS offer sufficiently advanced programming in these areas. However, the mixed reactions of students involved in this study suggest that relevance may be a limitation of PVTS training. In terms of overall skill utility, respondents saw only a moderate link between their training and employment. For those employed in full time work, training contributed only minimally to skill improvement or their advancement in the firm. Assessments of training relevance were, however, higher for those seeking employment. These results are neither an absolute nor relative determination of the contribution to skill training by PVTS although the value of such information is essential to program improvement and policy planning (EEC, 1992). At the present time, few studies have compared the programming of

proprietary schools and the community colleges (Gallagher & Sweet, 1996). More immediately, perhaps, the inclusion of PVTS in the postsecondary training system highlights the need for research on their effectiveness in preparing students—especially women and other equity group members—for career mobility rather than a sequence of contingent work experiences (Butterwick, 1993/94).

Policy

A concern with the balance between equity and efficiency in government adjustment policies has particular relevance to the situation of PVTS and their students. The tensions between various groups in establishing a voice in the policy planning process and in securing some share of the resources for training are apparent in critiques of the federal government's labor adjustment initiatives (Breault, 1986; Scott, 1994). In Mahon's (1990) view, effective partnerships have not been established between business, labor, and government that would benefit the individual desirous of developing or re-establishing a career path. Instead, these policies have encouraged an approach to training that reinforces the polarization that exists in the Canadian workforce. Yet the evolution of the Labour Force Development Strategy continues through provincial Labour Force Development Boards.

A specific role for PVTS within the Canadian postsecondary system has yet to be decided. To some extent this will be determined by the unique historical relations between private and public training providers in Canada (Moreland, 1977). Government policies certainly will influence the shape of provincial postsecondary systems and the activities of their constituents, especially the formal training institutions comprising colleges, technical institutes and PVTS. Although the analysis presented in this article deals only with the Province of Manitoba, matters of equity and efficiency are central to developments in all Provinces (Gallagher & Sweet, 1996). An understanding of policy in these terms is better informed through improved knowledge of PVTS student characteristics and expectations as well as their personal accounts of school experiences. Toward this end, and within the limits of the available data, this article has profiled students' selection of the private postsecondary option, outlined their training experiences, and gauged the success of their subsequent transition to the workplace.

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