

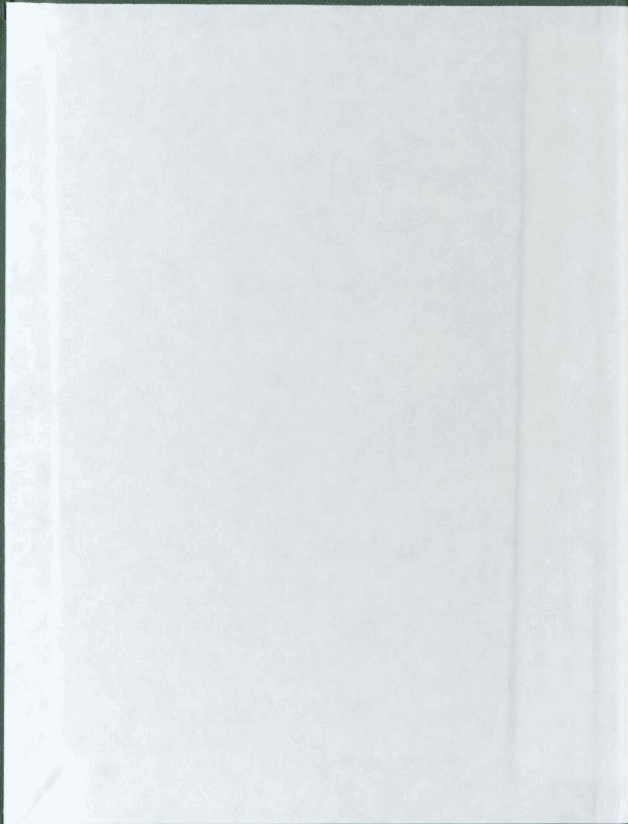
THE INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS IN SETTING
THE AGENDA IN EDUCATION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**THE INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS IN SETTING
THE AGENDA IN EDUCATION**

By

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ABSTRACT

This is a critical ethnographic study dealing with the business influence on education in Newfoundland. The economics of education dictates that business play a prominent role. Thus, education has been forced to adapt to changes in the economy and establish closer ties with business and the private sector. This thesis will delve into the relationship between education and business and its subsequent influence on our political, social, cultural, and economic reality. A greater emphasis is now placed on science, business and technology as compared to the arts and humanities which have traditionally played an important role in training the mind. The knowledge/information dichotomy which has emerged is the result of the greater influence of business in the realm of education. Consequences of this relationship will be discussed in reference to the Newfoundland example through an analysis of specific Newfoundland Government Documents, as well as, the responses of prominent members of the Newfoundland business community.

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INTRODUCTION

At the National level, some members of the business world have realized that the Canadian government funds education to the tune of almost \$60 billion per year. Since this realization, business sees education as "big business" and thus, views it as an economic commodity. A recent Gallup Poll found that 59% of Canadian CEOs believed the private sector should be actively involved in forming educational policy and shaping curriculum and standards. (Barlow and Robertson 1994). From this perspective, students are viewed two ways: as consumers and as workers. When viewed as consumers, the school system provides access to a captive audience, a specific target market and a group that is responsible for spending approximately \$18 million per week, as well as having influence over such major purchases as the family vehicle. This spending and influence is unprecedented. When students are viewed as potential workers, they are seen primarily as a human resource pool from which corporations can pick and choose for their workplace.

It has been generally affirmed that the purpose of education seems to be shifting towards improving the human resource pool for the economy and the onus has been put on schools to build the economic future of the country. Reports such as *Change & Challenge: A Strategic Economic Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* (1992); *Meeting the Challenge: Status Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan* (1994); *Status Report on the*

Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan (1995); and Adjusting the Course II (1995), have all suggested significant educational changes that echo the preceding thoughts.

Along with this, there is a large body of literature that makes the claim that business is having an increasing influence in our school system. We see evidence of this in the nation's classrooms by corporate sponsored curriculum aids complete with corporate logos and slogans and increasingly with corporate-school 'partnerships.' Dow Canada sponsors Partners Active in Resource Sharing (PAIRS) whose goal it is to help students and teachers to understand the chemical industry. They also want "...to influence decisions of the education system such that Dow's views are taken into consideration." (Barker 1991, p.37). "What they (Canadian teachers) should recognize is they must give us the raw material for us to create the wealth that creates their well being...they (Canadian teachers) must understand that they must provide us with the quality of people that we can market in the world" (Jack Pressey, CEO of Moneco, Canada's second largest engineering consulting firm speaking on an edition of CBC Radio's Sunday morning programme, Centre Point entitled: Put To The Test: Is Canada's Education System Failing The Grade?). Corporate agendas are being echoed in the hallways of our nation's schools as 'donations' of computers and audio visual equipment actually spit out corporate rhetoric under the guise of educational tools.

As a result of the North American Free Trade agreement, we are witnessing the beginning of privatization and corporatization of our school system. "NAFTA will

affect education by changing the overall social and political context in which educational decisions will be made and, more narrowly, by imposing a range of new, and quite specific, rules on the development of future educational policies and programs" (Calvert & Kuehn 1993, p.11). Privately run schools and colleges that are owned by Canadian and United States firms can now compete for Canadian government education dollars and set the curriculum without any interference from an increasingly distant Canadian government. Two examples of this competition are the fact that United States businesses can actually compete with Canadian companies for the right to develop public exams for our nation's provinces and Barlow and Robertson (1994) report that only 25% of publishers of educational books in Canada are now Canadian. Free Trade has made all of this possible as United States firms have the same rights and privileges as Canadian firms.

For my purpose in this study, I have localized the global trends being established in education. In the context of Newfoundland education, I have explored the extent of the influence of business in setting the agenda in education. In particular, the affect this relationship has on our political, social, cultural, and economic reality. I have explored how this affects the students that are in the school system and what agenda is being realized during the six hours each day that students are in the classroom and how business is increasingly influencing what is taught and how it is taught.

In this study, I interviewed members from the business community. Data from these interviews was analyzed in the context of current and relevant literature

and policy statements. I have examined the following Newfoundland government and education documents: Change & Challenge: A Strategic Economic Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador (1992); Meeting the Challenge: Status Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan (1994); Status Report on The Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan (1995) and Adjusting the Course II (1995).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Given the changing nature and climate of education, many agendas are being inserted into the discourse of education. One sign of this discursion seems to be the business agenda. As educators, it is crucial that we better understand how educational policies, programs and curricula, pedagogical practices, and evaluation schemes are influenced. If business does have the influence that I suspect it does, it is crucial that this influence be better understood in the context of educational reform. This business influence is called for in reports such as *Change & Challenge: A Strategic Economic Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* (1992); *Meeting the Challenge: Status Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan* (1994); *Status Report On The Implementation of The Strategic Economic Plan* (1995) and *Adjusting the Course II* (1995). The research in this study will be important in formulating educational policy, in planning educational reforms, and to educational administrators, and teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CORPORATE SPONSORED CURRICULUM AIDS IN THE CLASSROOM

There are a wide variety of examples of corporate sponsored curriculum that is making its way into the classroom, both in Canada and the United States. Packaged under the guise of educational tools, this curriculum is actually corporate propaganda with an agenda that is vastly different from the standard school curriculum. These aids are oftentimes too readily available, too easy to use, and are often produced by people whose interest in education is not compatible with traditional interests.

Calvert and Kuehn (1993) discuss how at a Boulder, Colorado high school, McDonald's supplies not only the food but the curriculum: pupils study McDonald's inventory, payroll and ordering procedures in math; McDonald's menu plans in home economics; and the company's marketing practices in business class.

Channel One is a news and advertising TV program in the United States that is shown in over 12,000 schools and reaches over 8 million students on a daily basis. In exchange for a wide variety of equipment, these schools allow commercial news and advertising to be broadcast to their students every day. The school signs a contract that states that 90% of the students must watch the program 90% of the time. The program must be watched in its entirety and the teacher cannot at any time turn the program off! This company has revenues of over \$100 million per year by charging \$195,455.00 per 30 second spot to advertisers that are more than

willing to pay for a captive audience. The company targets low-income communities of color (Barlow and Robertson 1994, p.182).

Perry (1992) discusses how Dow Chemical in Samia, Ontario has experienced job cutbacks in the past five years and has been under increasing pressure from environmental agencies. The media has targeted Dow as a notorious polluter; clearly this company would welcome improved public relations. Enter PAIRS (Partners Active in Resource Sharing) whose purpose is to help teachers and students understand the chemical industry and appreciate the value of entrepreneurs in the business world. Under this cooperative program, senior high school students spend part of their curriculum employed on the job at the plant. The student at the end of the term, will frequently produce a report of their experience that is very pro-Dow. One of Dow's stated goals for the program is to influence decisions of the education system such that Dow's views are taken into consideration.

Many teachers may offer the argument that such materials can be debugged in the classroom by verifying sources and viewpoints and discussing this with the students as part of the curriculum. Oftentimes though, teachers do not have the time or the inclination to carry out such an exercise and students have to pay the price through biased curriculum.

CORPORATE - UNIVERSITY LINKAGES

Corporations and other businesses can provide a wide variety of resources for universities. In the United States in 1990, corporate gifts to institutions totaled 2.2 billion dollars and until the economic slowdown of the late 1980's, this figure was one that was steadily increasing (Kourofsky 1992).

Many universities do not know where to begin when it comes to the idea of corporate funding, so they either do not begin or they randomly submit proposals and hope that one will be selected. There are many ways to tap into the vast resources that a company has to offer. Kourofsky (1992) believes that a university should be aware of the amount of donations that a corporation generally gives to universities. This is especially important information to know about the corporation that they specifically want to target. More and more, companies want to fund projects and programs that are well focused and will be of some advantage to the corporation. Corporate underwriting for university projects frees up valuable budget dollars to be spent in other areas of the university.

Corporations also have different ways of giving money to universities. Many large corporations have a direct giving program and a separate foundation. Generally speaking, direct giving accounts for approximately 60% of corporate donations and is usually comprised of a large number of small grants. Foundation gifts are larger and can support more projects. When many company foundations are set up, they make grants consistently, even when profits are not high (Kourofsky 1992).

A corporation's annual report provides important information as it can help identify people that may be interested in the various projects taking place in the university. It may be easier for the university to get a corporate donation if new products or new initiatives in the corporation have a link to a department in a university or a certain project. The annual report will also convey financial data. This is important to know because the hope is that the company will invest in the university, and an understanding of the company's financial situation can help in determining how much they can possibly invest in the university. When reviewing the corporation's annual report, it is important not to rely on a single figure to determine whether or not the company is financially healthy as a single sales figure alone can be meaningless. It is important to look at how this sales figure compares with statements over the last three years. It is also important to note that net sales can be going up while net income is going down. Winning corporate dollars is not simply a matter of making a phone call or filling out an application; cultivating a corporate relationship takes time and effort but often the results can be well worth it (Kourofsky 1992).

CURRENT LINKS BETWEEN BUSINESS AND EDUCATION IN CANADA

In Canada today, there is much support among government, industry and universities for the idea that people and knowledge are two of the main components to achieving economic growth (Bell 1990). Universities are creators and disseminators of new knowledge as well as a human resource pool. A number of important groups feel that it is essential to create linkages between the university and the corporate world. Bell (1990) gives three examples of this:

- 1.) The Science Council of Canada released a report in 1988 that was based on studies of corporate-university linkages. This report calls for the integration of people, ideas, opportunities, markets, and capital in new and effective ways. The links that are most needed are those between research communities within universities and the private sector. The onus is being placed on universities to transfer knowledge and results from laboratories and experimentation for commercial development in the private sector.
- 2.) The 1984 final report of the Commission on the Future Development of the Universities of Ontario called for closer links between corporations and universities. The report proposed that these links were essential to facilitate not only the production of more technology as a direct result of new knowledge, but also its diffusion and application within industry.
- 3.) The Corporate-Higher Education Forum is a Montreal based national coalition of university presidents and CEO's designed to merge goals and activities. It advocates closer business-education ties and promotes corporate-education

interaction by placing members on one another's governing bodies. The forum feels that universities should be more dependent on corporate funding and advocates that interested corporations should set up their own development offices to negotiate deals with universities as part of their business strategy.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is also supportive of business-education links as is evidenced in Change & Challenge, their Strategic Economic Plan of 1992, the two subsequent status reports of January 1994 and January 1995 and Adjusting the Course II (1995). In these reports, the government states that there should be stronger links between these two organizations because it is the responsibility of the educational system to provide the human resource pool to the business community.

WHY CORPORATIONS SHOULD SUPPORT EDUCATION

There are many reasons why corporations should offer financial support to our universities. The relationship can be equally rewarding for the corporation as well as the university and, as the literature shows, business is becoming more vocal about the expectations that they have upon our academic communities.

Global competition is a reality in the corporate world and corporate survival is dependent on remaining one step ahead of the competition. Investment in a university can aid a corporation in being a part of important technological breakthroughs.

Milheim and Bailey (1991), cite Melchiori and Tolbert (1984) in discussing the advantages of corporate investment in universities. These industry incentives include the acquisition of new personnel from within the university that may be an 'expert' in the research topic. The corporation now has access to new science and technology in addition to university facilities such as laboratories. The marketing of the product or the research has added prestige through the use of a university or a scholar's name. The corporation also has access to career-long training for technical personnel as well as insight into new developments in various fields.

DISADVANTAGES TO UNIVERSITIES ACCEPTING CORPORATE FUNDING

Brown (1985) provides words of caution about this corporate-university relationship. There may be differences of opinion concerning the availability of research results, and this can also extend to patent rights. The organizational structure of the two groups are very different. Universities tend to be horizontal while industry is traditionally hierarchical. There are also different time scales used by each organization; universities use a long range scope, while industry tends to focus more on a shorter return (Cited in Milheim and Bailey 1991).

Another discouraging side to corporate funding is the disparity between funding of chairs of science and technology at universities compared to corporate funding of chairs in the humanities such as English, philosophy and history. The unfortunate side of this reality is that the humanities are the very disciplines that may be devoted to critical thought. Science and technology, on the other hand, are

more likely to attract large research grants because breakthroughs in this field can be of commercial importance to the corporation.

Barker (1991) suggests that there is an increase in the amount of corporate materials that are entering into the university classrooms and lectures. He feels that all materials that come from corporations are biased simply because they are corporate sponsored. Materials such as corporate sponsored environmental videos from Dow Canada are then legitimated simply because they are taught in a university classroom. Any materials paid for by corporations are usually produced to serve some existing corporate goal. Generally, the corporation's interest in education does not coincide with society's interest in education.

ADVANTAGES TO UNIVERSITIES ACCEPTING CORPORATE FUNDING

There are many ways in which the corporate-university relationship can be beneficial to the university. The corporation can help in the form of donations or funding. This can be helpful to the university, as a common situation in academia exists whereby there are limited budgets and limited contact with experts outside the academic realm. This gift can help the university remain current by providing new facilities and equipment. Increased university-corporate involvement can help students by providing contact with the corporate sector where many graduates will obtain eventual employment. Brown, Mai, and Tolbert (1985) said that there are a variety of ways in which this relationship can be advantageous to the university:

- 1.) gifts, grants and research contracts,

- 2.) faculty consulting,
- 3.) the use of various corporate materials in lecturing,
- 4.) the use of specialized corporate facilities,
- 5.) insight into current commercial concerns, and
- 6.) the possibility for summer or adjunct employment for faculty

(Cited in Milheim and Bailey 1991, p.40).

THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The North American Free Trade Agreement has had a significant impact on education in Canada, and as a result we are witnessing the privatization and corporatization of education in this country. There was very little consultation with the educational community as the federal government informed Canadians that this deal would have a minimal effect on our educational system. "NAFTA...treats many of our social institutions as service commodities that must be opened up to the competitive pressures of the marketplace. The assumption that educational services can, indeed should, be treated as economic commodities constitutes a fundamental break with our Canadian traditions and presents a clear and present danger to the educational programs we cherish" (Calvert and Kuehn 1993, p.5).

In Canada, we have traditionally viewed education as a public service and an inalienable right for our citizens. Education was never open up to competition from the private sector and it was never governed by the rules that are imposed on all facets of the commercial sector. Now that United States firms are able to

compete for Canadian educational dollars, we are having a change of attitude and now view our own educational system through a very different lens than we have previously. We are imposing a very different set of values onto our educational institutions that is in sharp contrast to those that have traditionally existed. "NAFTA will affect education by changing the overall social, economic and political context in which educational decisions will be made and, more narrowly, by imposing a range of new, and quite specific rules on the development of future educational policies and programs" (Calvert and Kuehn 1993, p.11).

NAFTA will have a profound effect at the university level as a result of the privatization and commercialization of Canadian educational systems. When we privatize and commercialize education, we treat it as a tangible property. This means that such things as research and laboratory findings simply need to be patented and these thoughts, ideas and information can actually be owned by somebody. This somebody is usually a large corporation who has provided funding to the project and these findings are usually in the field of science and technology. Once a corporation retains control of these findings, they can make a profit from this knowledge and can charge others for the right to use or to be aware of this knowledge (Calvert and Kuehn 1993).

Calvert and Kuehn (1993) discuss the behaviour of multinational firms in regard to granting intellectual property rights and believe that it mirrors the history of privatization of common property. They believe that granting intellectual property rights to large corporations that control the production and distribution of many

facets of the fields of science and technology is today's equivalent of the 18th century Enclosure Movement which appropriated land from the common peasantry in England and redistributed it to members of the nobility and gentry who had enough influence to have Acts of Enclosure passed by Parliament in their interest. Under NAFTA, Calvert and Kuehn believe that information and knowledge that is the cultural and intellectual right of all Canadians will become the right of only a few. This suppression of new ideas and knowledge can only be detrimental to our society as we are witnessing the creation of private property out of knowledge.

There will also be a cost imposed on our post-secondary institutions as a result of the intellectual property rights section as outlined in NAFTA. Corporations can derive increasing financial benefits from our Canadian education system through the form of royalties. For example, if there is a breakthrough in a Canadian university laboratory through a project that was funded by a 'donation' from a corporation, the university will have to pay the corporation for the right to utilize this material or finding. For the university, this means increased costs in the form of new staff to calculate royalties owing (for findings made on the university property!), to enforce patents, and to enforce these new rules on the students and faculty. Under NAFTA, Canadian educational institutions will be at the mercy of large multi-national firms as they give them the right to patent new findings simply for commercial benefit. "Many offices now have an office of 'intellectual property' with full-time staff who specialize in connecting patentable research with commercial firms. These spin off foundations provide a way for universities to engage in a wide

range of contractual business relationships without having to fully disclose the nature of the deal they sign. Under the guise of protecting proprietary knowledge or maintaining commercial secrecy, public accountability is restricted or denied" (Calvert and Kuehn 1993, p.124).

There are several examples of how we are witnessing the 'Americanization' of our Canadian education systems as there is pressure on Canadian schools to follow in the footsteps of our neighbour south of the 49th parallel and to make our school system one that is driven by business goals and privatized. Changing our school system to follow the American model will be an especially difficult task given the fact that traditionally, the reasons behind educating in both countries were vastly different. The American school system has traditionally educated students with the end goal in mind of creating the perfect American citizen to fit into the melting pot view of society. Individual thought was not in the forefront of this system as conformity to the American way was seen as desirable. Canadian educators, on the other hand, have always valued and recognized the rights of a wide variety of cultural groups under the Canadian mosaic view of society. The individual thoughts and the rich experience and traditions that these people bring to the classroom is something that is seen as desirable, enriching the schooling experience of all students in the classroom.

The Business Council on National Issues (BCNI) was formed in Canada in 1986 and is comprised of CEO's of major Canadian corporations. This council recently commissioned a \$1.5 million study by Michael Porter of Harvard University

regarding education in this country, his findings echoed that of the business community who want to 'Americanize' our education system. The report called for the creation of national educational standards and to have provincial governments agree to testing mechanisms to meet these standards, to put more emphasis on science, math and technology, and to transform universities into institutions to promote economic development (Calvert and Kuehn 1993).

A vast majority of post-secondary institutions in the United States are privatized, and these privatized institutions play a large role in the training of American students. This is unlike Canada where until recently most of our training programs were publicly funded. Under the North American Free Trade Agreement, we are witnessing the shift towards the privatization of our training institutions as American training institutions can compete for the federal government training dollars that traditionally were awarded to community colleges. Canada's institutions have come under attack for failing to meet the training needs of the business world so a large portion of federal government money is being diverted into private training programs. Beckerman et al. (1992) believe that an increase in education and training do not necessarily mean a bright economic future for Canada. Education and training are not seen as a cause but rather as a result of economic decisions whereby an emphasis on training and education would come about as a result of a healthy economy. This is a position that big business chooses to ignore.

The drawback with many of these training programs is that they take away students and funding from already existing community colleges. This funding then

goes directly into the hands of private employers. Calvert and Kuehn (1993) believe that this new system dramatically reduces public accountability for the amount of money being spent while giving more control over type, extent, and quality of training to private employers. As private employers are now the purchasers of this training, they can make demands for the kind of training that they need. The fault with this is that many of these programs are employer specific and the skills gained are not transferable. The only agenda that is being realized in these private training programs is that of big business while the needs of the students and workers are met only in the context of this specific business. This has major repercussions on what we have taken to be our basic beliefs about our educational system in this country.

THE SHIFT TAKING PLACE IN EDUCATION

Whether we agree with it or not, we must admit that big business has had a place in current educational reforms and most of the literature on the subject would admit that this influence is indeed present and is growing. I would tend to argue that to some degree this influence has always existed but not to the current extent and certainly not with the same intent. These ideas are echoed by Popkewitz (1991) who argues that business involvement in schooling is not new. From the 1870's, the language of business administration was applied to social affairs and cultural development to foster progress. At the turn of the century, business groups had the authority to support or reject the financing of mass schooling through local tax systems and national business groups that were represented by philanthropic corporations have responded in times of crisis to promote conservative interests and progressive changes. Particular concerns have been higher education, professional education, and curricula in public schools.

The shift in our school system is mirroring events that are taking place in the global economy. There was once a strong emphasis on knowledge, but there has been a shift and the emphasis is now on information. Pure knowledge and critical thinking skills are not as revered in our school system or in our new global economy for that matter as the pursuit of information has taken the lead in what is valued in our society. This shift was made with virtually no consultation with the education community. Business decided that schools were not meeting the corporate criteria of what a school should do. In order to meet the needs of the business community,

what was valued in the school system had to be changed. As a result, the business agenda is being realized in our school system today. Popkewitz (1991) feels that the interplay of education and big business can be detrimental to the school system. In terms of business and the economy, there is a shift of focus to what is happening on a global level as opposed to the focus being on the local level. When business becomes involved with a school, it naturally focuses on the global level. "The current level of multi-national corporations, however, focuses the agenda of schooling less on local economic assessments than on national production and internationally defined priorities. While traditional jurisdictions are maintained in school policy making, local assessment and the development of programs coincide with the priorities and assumptions determined outside the local area" (Popkewitz 1991, p.129).

The shift toward business involvement in education is linked directly to the government becoming less and less involved in education. With little debate beyond the issue of denominational control or criticism, education in Newfoundland is undergoing some very serious changes. The current provincial government views education as the key to economic development. As a result of this reality, our education system must adapt to the needs of the changing labour market and establish closer ties with the private sector. There has been a call to alter the curriculum so that the focus is on math, science, enterprise, co-operative and technology based education. It is felt that these subjects will provide students with

the basic skills that business feels that they need to function in the global marketplace (McCann 1995).

Somewhere in its evolution, a shift occurred in why we educate students. It seems that we no longer impart knowledge for knowledge sake or to teach students to think critically, rather school is becoming nothing more than a site for job training for business. This reality complies with the business agenda as they no longer have to pay for the training of employees themselves because the school system is altering itself to do this training for them. In essence, this saves the corporate world millions of untold dollars and it costs the Canadian government and the Canadian taxpayer millions of dollars annually instead. This then creates a cyclical relationship whereby business has more money and more control and can make even more demands on our educational system so that it better serves their needs (Beckerman et al. 1992).

THE NEWFOUNDLAND CONTEXT

The business influence in education can be evidenced in several Government of Newfoundland documents such as Change & Challenge (1992), Meeting The Challenge (1994), Status Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan (1994) and Adjusting the Course II (1995). What we are presented with is a totally new way of looking at education that is a strong break with how we have traditionally viewed our education system. The proposed new approach places the education system at the centre of economic revival in

Newfoundland. The writers of these reports apparently believe that there are certain weaknesses in our educational system that are responsible for the problems that corporations are facing on the international level.

As a result of this, there are those who believe that schools should have closer links with the private sector. The curriculum that will come about as a result of this union will place a greater emphasis on science, mathematics, computer services, and business courses. In *Adjusting the Course II*, it is stated that there should be a Primary Core area of subjects that will consist of mathematics, technology, and language; the Secondary Core area will consist of second languages, social studies, music, fine arts, and physical education. Subjects other than those mentioned are considered to be 'non-core' and are to be taught at the discretion of the school. This new core curriculum is designed to teach students a skill set that will turn them into a flexible, adaptive workforce that will re-vitalize the economy of the province.

The Newfoundland government is not acting alone when it decides on these new government policies as it has been influenced by the St. John's Board of Trade. This is a relationship that both readily admit to. "Basically the Board views the education system as critical to the diversification of the economy, but insists that it become more responsive to 'the skill requirements of the business community', and able to meet 'the future demands of the marketplace.' As 'skilled human capital' will ultimately fuel economic development, the province needs 'a more highly-skilled, better educated and more flexible workforce' willing to accept further education and

training" (McCann 1995, p.17). These skill requirements translate into an emphasis on the core subjects from Adjusting the Course II.

It is important to note that not all educators see as their mission the above goals. Giroux (1993) considers himself a radical educator and as such, he questions revered institutions and existing assumptions about our educational system. Giroux also argues that he can never conceive of an educational institution such as Harvard defining itself by a primary mission of the promotion of industrial growth. If such an elitist institution that we revere would never define itself in economic terms, how can we take an opposite stance when viewing education in this province and make economic returns the focus of education?

The linkage between corporations and universities is strengthening as economic forces draw the academic and corporate communities together. As most of the literature indicates, there seems to be more of a push from business and government interest for this corporate-university linkage. This point is made evident in several government publications calling for closer links. Though schools can stand to gain much from this marriage, a potential concern should be that corporations will want too much control over what is taught and researched.

Barlow and Robertson (1994), discussing Neil Postman's 1992 book *Technopoly* say "Postman sees schools as one of our primary means of socializing the young into technopoly, a culture that subjugates people to the interests of technology, elevates the pursuit of quantity of information over meaning, and divorces the population from belief systems, as information management has no

moral core....One wonders, however, how schools can create meaning among children bombarded with meaningless bits of information not attached to any organizing principle beyond devotion to more and better access to more information" (p.149). There is no doubt that the link between business and education is strengthening. This is an occurrence that cannot be prevented, but as educators, we would be negligent in our role if we were silently accepting.

METHODOLOGY

In formulating the methodology for this study, it is important to remember that methodology includes not only method, but theory and epistemology. Methodology is in fact the point where method, theory and epistemology coalesce in an overt way in the process of directly investigating specific instances within the social world (Harvey 1990, p.1). In a general way, the study will be influenced by critical theory of education and by a dialectical approach to knowledge.

In a more specific way, this work will be an educational critical ethnographic study. "What is important for critical ethnography, however, is that the probing of the subjects' meanings is not the end of the story. The group operates in a socio-historically specific milieu and is not independent of structural factors. Their meanings may appear to be group centered but are mediated by structural concerns" (Harvey 1990, p.12).

Ethnography is "a method of fieldwork research...where the researcher attempts to enter into the culture of a particular group and provide an account of meanings and activities *from the inside*" (O'Sullivan et al 1994, p.109). Ethnography is not only a way of understanding and explaining how people make sense of their lives; it also amounts to a form of knowledge and meaning about cultures (Geertz 1993, p.6). The ethnographer is confronted with a myriad "of complex conceptual structures...which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" (Hammersley and Atkinson

1992, p.2). Geertz (1993) likens ethnography to the 'construction of reading' of a foreign manuscript. The ethnographer is faced with the problem of bridging the cultural distance between himself/herself and the culture or group under study in order to paint an accurate picture of that group. The written account of the culture under study by the ethnographer is expected to "...clarify what goes on in such places, to reduce the puzzlement...to which unfamiliar acts emerging out of unknown backgrounds naturally give rise" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1992, p.16).

Ethnography, as a method of cultural analysis, has traditionally been carried out within the field of anthropology. Ethnography is increasingly being appropriated by other disciplines, including education. Despite being a relatively new method of investigation, ethnography has developed as an increasingly important means of analysis. It has been argued that this trend has developed against a backdrop of growing unease with traditional qualitative and quantitative empirical research methods.

While it is the role of the ethnographer to enter into the natural setting and collect data through observations and interviews, the ethnographer still has to interpret and decipher this information. It is necessary, but very difficult indeed, to be able to interpret observed behaviour and recorded interview responses with a certain degree of distance as an ethnographer. The ethnographer must avoid speculation and unexamined assumptions. You have only the responses that interviewees choose to tell you. This causes certain issues to arise in interpretation because it is limited only to the responses of the subjects under study.

The interview method can be defended for its ease of interpretation and insight it gives to the conscious responses of respondents. "The interview method...is to be defended...not simply for the access it gives the researcher to the respondents' conscious opinions and statements but also for the access it gives to the linguistic terms and categories...through which respondents construct their words and their own understanding of their activities" (Morley 1992, p.181).

For this study, data was collected primarily through interviews with eight members of the business community in Newfoundland. Although this is a critical ethnographic study, the interview questions are open, but structured. They are built around concepts such as the aims of education and grounded in the notion of the influence of business in education. The specific questions that were asked were:

1. In Canada, we have traditionally viewed education as a public service that was a right for our citizens, do you see this view as changing?
2. Do you think that there has been a shift in our school system? Where there once was a strong emphasis on knowledge, there is now an emphasis on information?
3. Newfoundland government documents such as Change and Challenge and Meeting the Challenge, present a way of looking at education that is a strong break with how we have traditionally viewed our education system. We are actually looking to our school system to revive the economy of the province.

The implication is that there is a weakness in our school system. Do you agree with this?

4. Do you think that there should be an emphasis and focus on math, science, enterprise, co-operative education and technology based education as the Newfoundland government is calling for?

5. Does business have an influence in education?

Should business have an influence in education?

6. Is the business agenda compatible with traditional educational aims?

7. What is the value and need of corporate sponsored curriculum aids?

Do you think that students are presented with a biased curriculum?

8. Should the onus be on schools to build the economic future of the economy?

9. What do you see as the value of putting the emphasis on schools to improve the human resource pool for the economy?

10. Does The North American Free Trade affect education?

How do you see The North American Free Trade affecting education?

These extended in-depth interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis. All interviews were conducted in the subjects' business offices. Given the nature of critical ethnography, questions and categories were generated within the interview. The results of these interviews were compared and contrasted with the current literature as well as Newfoundland government reports. The reports that were used in this study were: Change & Challenge: A Strategic Economic Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador (June 1992); Meeting The Challenge: Status Report

on the Implementation Of the Strategic Economic Plan (January 1994); Adjusting The Course II (1995); and Status Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan (January 1995).

Over a two month period, I interviewed eight members of the business community in the province of Newfoundland. The eight interviewees consisted of two females and six males, ranging in age from early thirties to late fifties. All interviewees hold prominent positions within the business community. Data from these interviews was analyzed in the context of current and relevant literature and policy statements.

I have explored the consistencies and inconsistencies between actions and words in terms of structural factors; investigated how the subjects see group norms and practices constrained by external social factors; and noted how prevailing ideologies are addressed; and analyzed the extent to which subversive or resistant practices transcend prevailing ideological forms.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

For the purpose of this thesis, eight subjects were interviewed over a two month period. I chose to interview a cross section of members from the business community in the province of Newfoundland because I specifically wanted the feelings, thoughts, and points of view of the various members of the business community toward the state and role of education in the province of Newfoundland. I felt that the point of view of these business leaders was essential to capture the question of this thesis that I want to answer.

The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of those interviewed. The interviewees were asked ten specific questions and not all interviewees answered all questions. While questions were specific, each interviewee had their own interpretation of the questions they were asked. From the responses I received, eight separate categories emerged. The findings from the data will be presented in these eight categories along with direct quotations from the various interviewees. Interviewees will be identified by a number only. A profile of the interviewees follows.

Interviewee#1 Male, late fifties. President of a major Newfoundland corporation.

Interviewee#2 Male, late fifties. CEO of the Newfoundland branch of a National corporation.

Interviewee#3 Female, early forties. President of a Newfoundland business association.

Interviewee#4 Male, mid thirties. Vice President of an Atlantic Canada owned and operated business.

Interviewee#5 Male, early thirties. Owns and operates his own business. Is actively involved in municipal politics.

Interviewee#6 Male, early forties. Vice President of the Newfoundland branch of a National corporation.

Interviewee#7 Female, mid thirties. President of a Newfoundland branch of a National Corporation.

Interviewee#8 Male, early forties. Owns and operates a private business.

In conjunction with the findings of members of the business community, I also studied a number of Newfoundland government documents. All of these documents state specific recommendations for education in the province. The documents that I referred to were:

Change & Challenge: A Strategic Economic Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador (June 1992)

Meeting the Challenge: Status Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan (January 1994)

Adjusting The Course II (1995)

Status Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan (January 1995)

EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC SERVICE

In discussion with interviewees, I asked the question: In Canada, we have traditionally viewed education as a public service that was a right for our citizens, do you see this view as changing? All interviewees interpreted the word education to mean secondary and post-secondary education.

A large number of interviewees saw problems rising with regards to post secondary education. Many were concerned with increasing tuition costs and the large amount of students applying to these post secondary institutions.

"I see problems arising with student's access into post secondary levels. Colleges and universities will become more expensive, and secondly, there will be increasing pressures at the secondary level from business to produce the kind of students that they require for their workplace." (Interviewee #1)

Another interviewee said

"It is more difficult to get an education. It is not as accessible as it once was." (Interviewee #3)

Most recognize that a shift is taking place and believe that there should be reform to the education system. Interestingly enough, they did not offer concrete examples of exactly what this change should be. Many agree that there are increasing pressures from the business community to produce a 'better grade' of student specifically for the business community.

"Right now I think that the whole post secondary education system should change and is going to change to user pay basis. I think that when society had more money in the 50's, 60's and 70's it was a great thing to be handing out degrees and to be educating people for the general good, but I think right now it is shifting and it should shift." (Interviewee #5)

While another person said

"...the regular public system is a right and it is a right for people to be able to go to school. However, the post secondary system is becoming very elitist. There are many reasons for this, one is the physical amount applying will keep some out. Tuition hikes are making it impossible for everyone to go to school. The basics are a right, it is a buyers market for anything over and above this." (Interviewee #8)

Many believe that business is starting to have an increasing interest in education due to government cutbacks. Government does not have adequate amounts of funding to funnel into the education system, but business often does. Because of this increasing monetary contribution, business naturally feels that they should have a stronger voice in the curriculum. There was never any mention of business actually providing a training program for new employees. The onus for this seems to have fallen on the backs of educators.

"I think that education is changing probably because governments have limited resources, and often, education is an area they will look at for cutbacks." (Interviewee #4)

While another person said

"There is an obligation on the community to provide basic education to all those who want to avail of it. I think that overall the school has not done a particularly good job of filling the mandate, and that now other parties, such as business, want a vested interest." (Interviewee # 6)

Many interviewees feel that there will be increasing pressure on the government to allow business to have more of an influence in what is taught in the school system in this province. Many stated decreasing government cutbacks as a key reason for this increasing influence.

"We will start seeing more and more of it (business involvement in education) as governments find themselves in financial difficulty, they (schools) are not delivering the service or quality that the business community wants. I don't think that we are particularly good at delivering a quality product in education in Canada." (Interviewee #6)

Some interviewees were not worried about the increasing influence of business in the school system. They stated that it was a natural evolution that the

school system, like everything else, has to change to keep up with the overall changes that are occurring in our society.

"...our society in general terms is changing and education of course will change with it, but I still think that it is seen as a public service." (Interviewee # 2)

Many believe that the schools have not done a stellar job of educating students in this province. The interviewees stated that the Newfoundland school system is not producing the sort of student that the business community requires. This, coupled with decreasing government funding, is the reason why business feels that it should have a vested interest in education in this province. While all interviewees agreed that there would be an increasing business influence in education many saw it as a necessary evolution that will naturally occur in our society.

SHIFT IN OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM

The second question I asked was Do you think that there has been a shift from an emphasis on knowledge to an emphasis on information in our school system?

All interviewees generally affirmed that there has been a greater emphasis placed on math, science and entrepreneurial education in the school system. They further felt that because of this increase, there has been a decrease in the amount

of arts and languages being taught. Interestingly enough, many interviewees state that the one area where students are failing is in the area of language skills.

"What has been found is that students seem to have fallen behind in their communication skills, the abilities to communicate orally and written - there has been a definite reduction in language skills. (Interviewee #1)

Many interviewees said that in a general sense business has noticed a shift in the skill set that students possess upon graduation from both high school and post-secondary institutions. They felt that the students are the ones losing out because schools are not equipping students with the necessary skills to function effectively in today's business environment .

"...there's more emphasis on technical knowledge rather than on communication skills, language skills, and simple grammar. I find that there are a lot of people straight out of university that simply do not have these skills. That is because they have fallen by the wayside and are not seen as important. But they really are important in the business world and the schools and universities do not see this and they have a continuing focus on technical knowledge." (Interviewee #2)

A specific area was cited as needing improvement.

"...business in general feels there is a lack of critical thinking skills particularly in the areas of math and science. Applied skills are somewhat lacking as well. Our society is becoming more information based and students need to have the tools to be able to deal with this." (Interviewee #1)

The interviewees claimed that the very subjects that our universities were founded on are slipping to the background. These are the very subjects that give students their critical thinking skills and encourage them to be independent thinkers. Because of the increase in business and technical courses, students are getting a

very narrow education. The interviewees felt that the goal should be to produce very well rounded students that have a knowledge about a variety of subjects.

"I would certainly say that there was a shift towards information. A shift toward skills acquisition. Students do not know the classics anymore - this is knowledge based. We are definitely moving away from this." (Interviewee #3)

While another stated

"The spectrum (of courses) should be as broad as possible, but we can't let our traditional subjects fall by the wayside - these subjects being general arts, history, geography, language, etc. In particular, we have to concentrate on instilling a love of learning and research and thinking skills so that no matter what job they go into, we know that they have the ability to learn." (Interviewee #7)

Furthermore another interviewee felt that there was a definite emphasis being placed on information and technology.

"There is a strong shift to information. Absolutely, the things that I hear about the most are computers, very information specific courses - there is rarely any emphasis on English, the classics. The emphasis seems to be in technology courses." (Interviewee #7)

There were those who felt that the shift was occurring as a direct result of changes in the economy .

"The product has changed greatly, the product is now more market driven and a bit more economy driven." (Interviewee #5)

Many interviewees say that they feel that students should have a well rounded education with an equal amount of language and math and science skills. Many expressed some concern that schools are losing their ability to teach arts courses.

"There should be more options available in the school system for the pragmatic, for those who want to have more business related skills, so it's safe to say that I would like the best of both worlds. We have to put that against the backdrop of decreased funding for education. If somebody said to me that they were going to collapse the present day high school structure and we can give the students either market driven courses, such as entrepreneurial skills, or more rounded foundation where students focus on the arts, I would pick the latter, I would love to have an option for both, but I would pick the latter." (Interviewee #5)

Many blamed the education system itself for the type of students that are graduating from educational institutions, going as far as placing the blame on the school boards.

"There is a shift, not from changing technology but from a never ending quest by the functionaries in the system for change for change's sake and I think that we have gone off in a lot of tangents just trying to make sure that curriculum development people have a job." (Interviewee #6)

Interestingly, there was only one interviewee who felt that a shift from a focus on knowledge to a focus on information had not occurred in the school system. He felt that the integration of computers into the school system does not necessarily signify a change in the curriculum.

"There hasn't been that great a shift from liberal arts to technology based education. I think there is an attempt to bring computers in, but use of technology does not imply that the content is technology. The medium is almost irrelevant, sure technology makes things more accessible but that has little bearing in my mind to the actual subject matter." (Interviewee #6)

There were interviewees who felt that there will eventually be a shift back to languages and arts. They think that the honeymoon with computers and math is ending and there will be a change of focus.

"...I think that you are going to see at this stage of the game that there's an emphasis on math because of computerization. It's a factor given that the things they (computers) have been able to accomplish are with numbers, spreadsheets...but now, the focus is turning to the creativity of the content, so the focus will turn and it will even out with more of an emphasis on creativity, languages and arts. It's certainly going far away from the math." (Interviewee #9)

Another felt that computers will lead to a decrease in certain skills.

" It would be a mistake for the school system to link computers with math because math skills are being lost, computers are different from books. Computers are a great idea for anyone who has a natural curiosity to teach themselves." (Interviewee #8)

Only one interviewee felt that there had not been a shift from an emphasis on knowledge to an emphasis on information. This interviewee stated that computers were simply the medium by which to teach and they would never become the entire curriculum.

All other interviewees were concerned about the increasing emphasis on information and computers in our school system but they felt that it was a sign of the changing times. They believed that this emphasis on technology over the arts will mean a decrease in language skills, and thus critical thinking skills. They felt that the real challenge on the school system in light of this shift, is to emphasize the arts, languages, and critical thinking skills.

NEWFOUNDLAND GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS LOOK TO THE SCHOOL SYSTEM TO REVIVE THE ECONOMY OF THE PROVINCE

Interviewees were asked to comment on the following statement. Newfoundland government documents such as Change & Challenge, Meeting The Challenge, Adjusting the Course II, and the 1995 Status Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Economic Plan, present a way of looking at education that is a strong break with how we have traditionally viewed our education system. We are actually looking to our school system to revive the economy of the province. The implication is that the weakness is in our school system.

Most interviewees agreed that a quality school system is essential to a healthy and thriving economy. Many expressed concern that our system, as it now exists, is not producing students that are adequately prepared to meet the demands of our economy and the challenges of living in a global village.

"...a good education system is key to economic development." (Interviewee #1)

Many were concerned about the quality of education that our students are receiving.

"I think that it's important that we continue to try and make sure that our system keeps up with other provinces so that the value of the education that our children receive is comparable to other provinces, and globally because of the challenges of the marketplace and we want to help our economy...I'm concerned that we may be falling behind." (Interviewee #4)

A vast majority of the interviewees felt that there was a definite weakness in our school system but they did not blame the school system for the state of the provinces economy.

"Yes, there are weaknesses in the school system, but not necessarily to the final goal of reviving the economy of the province. It is not necessarily a fault of the school system." (Interviewee #9)

Not surprisingly, many interviewees felt that there was a definite weakness in the area of mathematics.

"...there is a weakness in our school system, especially in mathematics." (Interviewee #4)

They felt that this weakness was prevalent in both secondary and post secondary systems and the blame was placed on teachers, parents, and students.

"I think that there is a desperate shortcoming on the part of our educators. I don't think that we can blame it on our kids, I think the blame has to fall on teachers and parents." (Interviewee #3)

Many blamed the secondary education system for the lack of skills and knowledge that students bring to the post secondary system.

Memorial University has had to employ at least a dozen foundation math and English teachers. That is absolutely ridiculous...they are supposed to be educated by their high school teachers. There should be no such thing as a foundation year. That is what grades 10, 11, and 12 are for. That's scandalous, so there is something going wrong somewhere. They (the students) should come to university with a university rating, that product should already be made. I don't know why we have to spend a year with these kids to bring them up to first year status. It is a waste of resources and shows a terrible shortcoming on part of the teachers and the parents." (Interviewee #5)

Other interviewees gave very specific examples of where the weakness exists.

"The two biggest weaknesses are funding, and the system is probably grinding to a halt over the debate over the last two or three years in terms of reform. I think reform is important, I can't say I have a strong feeling on what that should be ...but I think it is grinding to a halt and there seems to be a

general consensus that there are inefficiencies in the school system and I would like to see that exposed and hopefully changed to efficiencies, that may be more books, more computers, more teachers...I guess that generally everything could be improved." (Interviewee #4)

Many interviewees were concerned about the most important component of the entire educational organization - the students. They seemed to be the least important aspect of the whole system and, as a result, the quality of student is decreasing.

"The thing that we have lost sight of is that the educational system is designed with everyone in mind but the kids who are the recipients of the service...I think most people would agree that the quality of kids coming out of school today is a whole lot worse than it was a generation ago." (Interviewee #2)

There were interviewees who did not feel that the province should look to the school system to revive the economy of the province.

"Any reworking of the curriculum will not kick start the economy of the province." (Interviewee #7)

Many agreed with the above quote. They felt that the school system was producing bright capable students but because of lack of opportunity in Newfoundland these young people were leaving the province.

"...students will want to go and explore away from Newfoundland because they know more of what is out there. Our education system is producing bright, qualified students, but they always move away because of better opportunity." (Interviewee #9)

Conversely, many felt that there was a direct correlation between education and the economy. They felt that a strong school system is an essential ingredient in a healthy economy. There was some concern about the poor quality of students

that our system is producing and the affect that this is going to have on our economy.

"Yes, I think that the future of Newfoundland is reliant on our secondary education system to feed the economy. We need a good solid secondary education system." (Interviewee #5)

Many feel that students are the most important factor.

"...the correlation is there. We have to start with the kids, it's a necessary but not sufficient condition, you have to have it as well as a number of things to have a strong economy." (Interviewee #6)

Furthermore,

"Our system of education is not creating a population that understands business. Our system has failed miserably, all you have to do is look at other societies where kids come out of the system and are rearing to go, they understand business, they are ambitious - we just don't have it." (Interviewee #8)

One interviewee said that in developing countries it has been shown that a solid and thorough education is essential to a prosperous economy.

"There have been a lot of studies done in Asia, where you have many developing countries ...and you try to find a correlation between their growth and prosperity and other factors including education, and you'll find that the single strongest correlation is with primary school, good basic schooling to start...growth is driven by the residents that live there, not by foreign capital...it requires the citizens themselves to drive the economy, for that you need people who are well educated, people who are entrepreneurial driven and people who understand business." (Interviewee #6)

Many interviewees feel that because education is so closely related to the state of the economy, business should have a say in the school system.

"Some element of commercialization has to be brought into the school system, that accountability of the education system to the business community has to be established here." (Interviewee #4)

One interviewee offered his view of what the ultimate outcome of educating students should be.

"In our educational mission, the focus should be to give every child the opportunity to fully develop to their own expectations. As I see it, an ideal mission statement is to take a child and develop that child to contribute to the province and the provinces economy...if we are going to live in this economy and in this society, we have to contribute something to it." (Interviewee #3)

A majority of the interviewees agreed with the Newfoundland government documents that state that the school system, if properly reworked, can revive the economy of the province. Most agreed that there is a definite weakness in the school system because the schools are not producing the caliber of person who possesses a strong entrepreneurial drive and who can take on the challenges of business in the province.

AN INCREASING EMPHASIS ON MATH, SCIENCE, ENTERPRISE AND COOPERATIVE EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY BASED EDUCATION

All interviewees were asked: Do you think that there should be an emphasis on math, science, enterprise and cooperative education and technology based education as the Newfoundland government is calling for?

Many agreed with this statement saying that it is a necessary requirement.

"Absolutely, particularly in math and science skills and especially in the high school system." (Interviewee #1)

"Yes, it has to be emphasized because the wave of the future is for these types of jobs..." (Interviewee #8)

As well, many felt an emphasis in these subjects absolutely essential in our changing economy.

" There has to be an emphasis on math and science because it is so important in the modern economy..." (Interviewee #6)

Though essential, not all interviewees agreed with this emphasis.

"I think that's a part of what we have to do to keep abreast of our children and our citizens so that they can contribute to our economy and our province because we are a global village. It may be unfortunate but it is necessary." (Interviewee #3)

Many felt that the dilemma in the school system will not be solved simply by increasing the emphasis in these subject areas. The length of the time that students spend in the classroom was cited as the real problem.

"Part of the problem is that we are not doing enough of anything. The school day is too short, the school year is too short. Too much time is wasted doing nonsense thing. Sure there should be more math, but there should also be more music and art." (Interviewee #1)

As well many felt that

"We are not challenging the students enough, we are wasting a lot of time. If you add up the number of school days that a child is actually in the classroom studying - there is not enough." (Interviewee #6)

Several also said that math and science were not the only skills that should be emphasized. Communication skills were cited as a definite area for improvement.

"I notice it when I am in meetings or when interviewing recent graduates, the communication skills are not what they were a generation ago." (Interviewee #4)

Teachers were blamed for students lacking this skill.

"I think that the number one skill is still communication . I don't think that we do a very good job of teaching it at all." (Interviewee #2)

Many interviewees felt that the school system should change with the economy to give business the kind of employees that business requires.

"...take a look at how our economy is changing and the education system is not changing and equipping students with the skills and the knowledge that they need to meet the needs of the business community." (Interviewee #1)

It was felt that increased efficiency was essential for students to function in a changing business environment.

"The economy is changing, it's far more technologically intensive, more knowledge and information based. The business environment is moving more to a service oriented business community and it's more knowledge and information based. As this transition is occurring, kids coming out of school are going to have to be more technologically proficient, they will need good critical skills in the areas of math and science." (Interviewee #1)

Several interviewees felt that entrepreneurship is definitely lacking in new graduates.

"The students have to be more enterprise focused, more adaptable, more entrepreneurial, they have to understand the economics of business." (Interviewee #1)

Furthermore, several felt that entrepreneurship is something that you cannot teach because it is something that you have inside you - you either have it or you don't. They also felt that there was a definite problem with how enterprise and cooperative education are taught in the school system.

"If these subjects are going to be taught, they should be taught by those people who actually are. Unfortunately, it is not. It is taught by teachers who really have no experience to teach these subjects." (Interviewee #8)

There were interviewees who did not agree with this focus. They felt that putting an emphasis on these subjects was not necessarily in the best interest of the students.

"High school should leave students with a generalized sense of education... Over the years, our university system has changed from being a generalized arts and science philosophically based institution to being market driven." (Interviewee #5)

Many also wondered what the expense would be to the student.

"I'm not entirely sold to that new dogma.... Whether not being more pragmatic and being more market driven, which seems to be what they are getting at, is better for the greater student, can only remain to be seen." (Interviewee #2)

Many felt that high school should leave students with a generalized sense of education. The curriculum should be well rounded and give students a good foundation on which to build.

" I really look at high school as a foundation, as a broad based liberal education. It is nice if you can throw in some electives that are teasers for university, teasers for the more entrepreneurial and market driven courses." (Interviewee #5)

"The classics and philosophy, the things that university was built on are receiving little funding. Universities have taken care of the shift from philosophy to pragmatism, so I don't think there is any need to do it in the high schools. (Interviewee #1)

Several felt that all subjects including music and sports should be fostered.

" We should encourage them to study all lessons, be active in sports, to study music and to be involved with as many things as possible rather than put too much emphasis on just one thing...The emphasis should be on the well rounded individual to give them many options " (Interviewee #6)

Many thought that it was more important for students to have an overall knowledge.

"We shouldn't be pigeonholing students into finite streams, we should be producing well rounded students who know a lot about everything and a little about one or two things." (Interviewee #7)

There were those interviewees who stated that there should not necessarily be a focus on math and sciences now because it may be too short term. It is important to look into the future.

"The real thing especially in the early grades is to create a well rounded person because you don't know what that person is going to be good at. You don't know what skills they will need thirty years hence. What we are trying to do is to give that child as many options as possible." (Interviewee #6)

There were those who worried about the type of student that high schools will produce by focusing on these subjects. They felt that a more broad based liberal education was essential in creating a well rounded person.

"We shouldn't just have to deal with science and math because for a lot of kids, they are just not great in these subject areas." (Interviewee #4)

" You cannot build a good house without a good foundation and I think that high school is where we get this foundation. You will create a nice short term

product by focusing on math and the sciences, but I don't know what type of person it will create. In the long term you will not create a better society on that." (Interviewee #5)

As well, several interviewees cautioned about this increasing emphasis.

"Hopefully this (emphasis on math, science, enterprise and cooperative education and technology based education) will not happen at the detriment of all the arts and science courses. I would be extremely concerned from a system point of view that we concentrate on these too much, clearly some people are adept at things other than math and science. All courses and subjects have importance in the big picture, math is important, science is important, but they are not the be all and the end all." (Interviewee #9)

There were those who felt that government should not allow business to have any real influence in high school curriculum.

"Government is trying to cater to business. Business is saying to government, and they have a great say in government, the student output is not up to scratch, it should be geared more toward this and that. I don't agree with that and, in fact, I read somewhere that there was a trend more toward liberal education in universities." (Interviewee #5)

Most interviewees believed that proficiency in math, science, enterprise and cooperative education are essential tools for students to have so that they can contribute to the global economy. They cautioned however that it should not be at the expense of other subjects. Interestingly, it was stated that schools should be focusing on language and communication skills as a proficiency in these skills is also required in the business environment.

BUILDING THE ECONOMIC FUTURE AND IMPROVING THE HUMAN RESOURCE POOL OF THE PROVINCE

Interviewees were asked the questions:

Should the emphasis be put on schools to improve the human resource pool for the economy?

Do you think the onus should be put on schools to build the economic future of the province?

A majority of the interviewees said yes to both these questions. They felt that it was the role of schools to prepare students to enter into the workforce.

"...schools should be getting people ready for today's economy. Getting ready is the emphasis." (Interviewee #2)

Many wondered what the role of the school would be if it was not to prepare students for the future.

"Sure it should because it is a self defeating practice if you keep graduating people that have no use, no mind toward the future..." (Interviewee #4)

Furthermore, several interviewees felt that schools had to prepare students for tomorrow's workforce and teach the skills that are necessary to achieve this goal. If this end is not achieved, it will have a detrimental affect on the province's economy.

"Yes...because if people come out of schools and cannot support themselves, the state has to support them and this means less revenue in the economy..." (Interviewee #7)

Several suggested that there was a shift in emphasis from natural resources to human resources.

"We cannot pump enough money into education, and the only way that we are going to be able to win here is to not base our economy on natural resources." (Interviewee #5)

Finally, there were interviewees who stated that business was the direct benefactor of the educational system, therefore, it was essential that there be a secure marriage between the two communities.

"It really is the business community that is going to reap the investment in education. We have to make sure that the proper linkages exist between the business community and the education community." (Interviewee #1)

There were those interviewees who foresaw a change in the role that schools will have to play in the future. Because of the provinces changing economy, it was generally felt that it was necessary for schools to consult with business in order to meet their requirements.

"They (educators), have the responsibility to respond on a timely basis and on an appropriate basis to the needs of the economy and business. Maybe that means that education has more of an obligation that they have in previous years. Maybe they should have more of a connection with The Board of Trade or other business associations." (Interviewee #1)

"Young people are going to have to be ready to delve into a changing economy, so there is not much choice." (Interviewee #5)

Furthermore, it was felt that a touch of realism needs to be applied to the big picture.

"Schools and industry are operating too independently. I think there has to be an outside opinion and view brought into the picture. I think, to a degree, the emphasis should be put on schools, and I think that we have to be realistic about it." (Interviewee #5)

Other interviewees had very definite ideas of what the role of the schools should be.

"The education system is responsible to the extent that it can make sure that a baseline is established in core skills, and get as many kids as possible through, minimizing the drop out rate, maximizing their potential, and elevating the expectations in terms of math and science." (Interviewee #8)

Furthermore, it was generally affirmed that to some extent schools are a human resource pool.

"In reality, the ultimate goal of schools is to take someone and make them a functioning, contributing member of our society. To that degree, they are a human resource. We have to emphasize somehow that we have to work and we have to live in this society." (Interviewee #3)

There were those who felt that the school system was in need of guidance. It was felt that there were so many groups wanting a say in the educational system that unfortunately, no one group was being heard.

"I think that the schools should get people ready but the unfortunate part in my mind is that the schools do not know what they are getting students ready for. There are so many groups putting pressure on the school system that at times, the school system does not know who to listen to." (Interviewee #6)

There were those interviewees who were more sympathetic to the pressures being placed on the education system.

"They (the school system) cannot be everything to everybody. They can be generalists and get people ready for society." (Interviewee #9)

Conversely, there were those interviewees who felt that it was not the role of schools to cater to the needs of business. They felt that the school's role was to give students an overall, general education and instill in students the ability to learn.

"That's not their role. A school in doing its job, will lay the necessary foundation for our future if they create a well rounded, highly educated individual. That's as far as their mandate goes." (Interviewee #6)

Furthermore, they felt that the school system should not be held accountable for the economic future of the province.

"I don't think that educators are in any way in that position where they can make that connection. They are educators, they are not economists or business people." (Interviewee #3)

A number of interviewees felt that all groups should be working together to determine the best course of action for the school system and the economy.

"Someone has to come up with an agenda somewhere in the community, it has to be a multi-leveled approach, it has to be business and industry and education and the general public. There has to be some kind of consultation done as to what is needed out there in business and industry." (Interviewee #6)

There were those who felt that the system is producing quality students.

"Our school system, thus far, has been producing quality students and it has not helped our economy in any way. Revamping a good system will not make this proposed turn around happen." (Interviewee #7)

The fault was placed on the economy for not providing jobs for these qualified young people.

"The problem is that there are no jobs in this province, that is why young people are moving away." (Interviewee #7)

One interviewee stated the problem succinctly when he suggested that all parties take ownership and responsibility.

"We all share that responsibility. Schools should not be immune from sharing some of the responsibility. School plays a role, business plays a role, parents play a role. You cannot put the entire pressure on the school system." (Interviewee #4)

The changing role of the school system was deemed a major factor in the revitalization of the province's economy. It was generally affirmed that the school's role is to prepare students to enter the workforce and to become functioning members of our society. It was also strongly suggested that business should have an increasing influence in the curriculum that is taught in the school system. It was felt that this should happen because the province's economy requires a corporate influence.

NAFTA'S EFFECT ON EDUCATION

Interviewees were asked if they saw the North American Free Trade Agreement as having an affect on education. Interestingly, the majority of interviewees did not comment on this question. Those who did comment, felt that the North American Free Trade Agreement and education were entirely divorced from each other. They failed to see how NAFTA would affect education.

There was a small quantity who did feel that education would be affected and it would in fact be seen as a commodity.

"Yes, NAFTA will affect education. What free trade does is open the playing field in all areas and trade is in people as well as products and services." (Interviewee #1)

There were those who felt that the affect on education would be positive. They cited a changing global economy as a key reason.

"NAFTA will affect education in a good way, we have to come to grips with the idea that it is a global world." (Interviewee #4)

This interviewee further thought that NAFTA will have a positive affect and be beneficial to the students in the long run.

"I think that it is important for our children to have appreciation of the international nature of business. The more open minded our education is in that respect - then everyone is a winner. Free trade will change the way that Canada exists." (Interviewee #4)

There were those who felt that NAFTA would present a challenge to our existing system from a competitive point of view.

"NAFTA will affect education the same way it has impacted business. Our competition is not just those companies in the province, but competition has become national and international. In terms of this, we may have a competitive disadvantage in the students that are coming out of our school system and the knowledge that they have. So, I guess that the impact that NAFTA has had is that it has made it more challenging to our education system." (Interviewee #1)

This same interviewee felt that the school system should provide students with a basic education. Education was cited as being different from training.

"Many businesses will say that the education system is important in providing education, providing some skills and training, but mainly education. People will not be working for the same company for the rest of their lives and they will need constant retraining. The business community has more and more of the training role of education." (Interviewee #1)

There was one interviewee who felt that NAFTA will be detrimental to education and to the Newfoundland economy in general. It was felt that the acquisition of education skills in this province are not up to par with the remainder of North America.

"NAFTA will have a negative affect in Newfoundland. When the free trade agreement gets translated into the free movement of people, I think that we will be left out in the cold. I do not think that we have the skills to compete with the rest of North America. Overall skills are lacking." (Interviewee #2)

It was generally affirmed, by those who answered the question, that the North American Free Trade Agreement will have a tremendous impact on both business and education. It is going to open up the playing field in all areas and add an unprecedented degree of competition to all areas.

BUSINESS INFLUENCE IN EDUCATION

Interviewees were asked a two part question: Does business have an influence in education? and Should business have an influence in education?

A vast majority of the interviewees felt that business should have an influence in education. It was suggested that business, in fact, should be more influential in the school system. The major reason for this was to ensure that students are employable when they leave the school system. There were interviewees who cautioned about the extent of this influence and a small number of those who felt that business had no place influencing the school system

There were interviewees who suggested that the education system is changing. They say that the education system is altering its curriculum to equip students with the skills they need to secure jobs when they are ready to enter the workforce.

"I'm not sure if business is starting to influence education or if the education system is becoming more pragmatic and smart. I think the education system is starting to measure their customers and saying we have to match the needs of the community with the curriculum so that students are better able to get jobs when they graduate." (Interviewee #4)

This same interviewee said that the business influence is just beginning at the university level.

"I think business is starting to have an influence in education. You are starting to see more programs at Memorial geared toward the business community, especially because of Hibernia." (Interviewee #4)

There were those who suggested that the business community is the ultimate consumers of the final education product, therefore, they deserve a say in the curriculum.

"Business are the ultimate clients and they are concerned about the level of the students that are coming out of the school system, they were not meeting their needs, they were not equipped." (Interviewee #8)

Several interviewees said that business probably does not realize the influence that it currently exerts over education. It was also stated that educators are open to suggestions from the business community and are willing to alter courses to ensure students are equipped with the necessary skills.

"I don't know if business really understands the fact that they have a big influence in education. When I sit down with educators, they say to me 'I didn't realize that you needed these specific types of expertise, we can gear programs toward this.' There is a lack of awareness in terms of what influence business can have on education." (Interviewee #4)

Universities, as well, are willing to change their course offerings to provide students with the skill set required for the business world.

"Business never directly asked for this influence, universities naturally evolved to this because of the poor economy. Universities want students to be able to get jobs when they graduate, and to ensure this they alter programs that will hopefully give employers what they want." (Interviewee #2)

It was also felt that business should have an influence over university course offerings because many of the courses that students have to complete are not necessarily aimed at preparing students for today's workplace.

"Business should have an influence. I think that universities put students through a lot of needless courses that are not always necessary. I think educators think they are necessary but they are not particularly relevant in the workplace and they do not always help students. If business has an influence they can gear courses toward what is necessary and relevant for the workplace." (Interviewee #3)

It was also noted that technology course offerings were on the increase.

"It does have an influence and we can see this in the huge push in recent years toward technology based courses." (Interviewee #7)

The skill set of students was also brought into question. It was felt that consultation with the business community was essential to ensure that the skill set of graduating students was current for today's marketplace.

"There has to be consultation with business because may say there is no need to flood the marketplace with a certain set of skills because there is already an overabundance." (Interviewee #9)

As well,

"There has to be ongoing discussion between business and industry. Oftentimes the technology will advance so quickly within business and industry that sometimes these colleges are not keeping up with this pace and they are graduating students with an archaic set of skills. These skills obviously have to be market driven" (Interviewee #3)

Several interviewees felt that business does have a large influence mainly because of economic reasons.

"I think it has a huge influence because governments more and more are finding themselves financially strapped. They are setting up advisory councils on the economy and task forces on educational training and these groups are all populated by the business community. Very rarely do you find somebody liberal minded on these councils as they are exclusively populated by high profile businessmen." (Interviewee #5)

There were those who were cautious about the extent of the influence that business should have in education. Though these interviewees felt that there should be a business influence, there should be safeguards in place to ensure this influence is kept in check.

"Business should have an influence but not in an overt fashion, not so it dictates...not so we are saying we are going to influence the system this way because we can directly benefit from it for a very short term. The influence should be more long term, big picture." (Interviewee #4)

Furthermore,

"Business should have an influence, but there is a fine line that you do not want to go over. You can bastardize the education process if there is too much influence." (Interviewee #8)

It was suggested that the education system is producing good quality students but because of the province's economic reality, these students are leaving the province to pursue job opportunities elsewhere.

"There are a lot of business people that criticize the education system because they say that we are graduating really good people and they are leaving the island to get work, so they will criticize the system and they will want to have a say in this system. The business influence should be big picture, what is in the best interest for the province for the long term." (interviewee #4)

It was felt that the real aim of educators is the preparation of students for entrance into the workplace. For this reason alone, business wants to have an influence in the education system to ensure students have the proper skill set.

"Business should have an influence because part of the aim of educators is to produce students that are ready for society and part of being ready for society is the ability to contribute to society." (Interviewee #7)

Furthermore,

"The greatest contribution a person will make to this society is in the workforce so educators will have to make sure that students are prepared." (Interviewee #8)

There were interviewees who stated that there was no evidence of the business influence in our school system.

"I don't think that business has any influence in education at all. We have endeavored to have some." (Interviewee #6)

It was also said that business should not have any more of a say than any other group who has a vested interest in education.

"Business should not have an influence in education at all." (Interviewee #1)

As well,

"Business should not have more influence in education than any other group, any society should be well balanced." (Interviewee #6)

There were those who felt that business should not have any influence.

"...business people are not educators, they are entrepreneurs. I would not want to see business have more of a role in education than they already have." (Interviewee #1)

It was also suggested that business wants this influence over education for financial reasons. If we are graduating students with a specific skill set for today's marketplace, business does not have to spend their own time and money training for their own specific requirements.

"Businesses do not train anymore and they should. Fifty years ago, almost every job had a training program in place, now they rely on universities to do this job for them. Because of this, universities are losing their focus." (Interviewee #2)

There were mixed views on whether or not business does, and indeed should, have an influence in education. However, a majority of the interviewees affirmed these views. It was felt that the goal of education was to prepare people for society and the workforce. The skill set that students graduate with was seen as the ultimate product of the education system, and a skill set that will enable students to enter smoothly into the workplace was seen as essential. Increasing government cutbacks was also cited as a reason for an increasing business

influence. There were interviewees who agreed that there should be some influence, but who cautioned about an overt influence.

CORPORATE SPONSORED CURRICULUM AIDS

Interviewees were asked the question - What is the value of corporate sponsored curriculum aids?

Several felt that corporate sponsored curriculum aids are increasing and inevitable.

"Corporate sponsored curriculum aids are the wave of the future."
(Interviewee #5)

Corporate sponsored curriculum aids were seen by those in business as having a tremendous benefit to the company. It is viewed by business as a gesture of good will toward the community and as being beneficial to the education system. The feeling is that business has the means to offer these resources to the school system.

"...the benefit that we get is that we are viewed as a company in this community that is a good community player and trying to help out, that we have resources available that the schools can use and it is not really costing them anything." (Interviewee #4)

It was also felt that

"What it does for us is that it creates goodwill for us and educators see our industry as being proactive and helping. We are not just there to advertise." (Interviewee #4)

"Corporate sponsored curriculum aids can be beneficial to all groups. The students have a lot to gain from this." (Interviewee #5)

"I think that business sponsored curriculum aids are an asset all around."
(Interviewee #3)

It was stated that these partnerships are needed in our changing economy.

"I think that there is a tremendous amount of value in these relationships...It goes back to the state of our economy, we need more of those kind of partnerships." (Interviewee #1)

"I do not see a problem with it, particularly in light of the educational cutbacks." (Interviewee #7)

Though it was generally affirmed that these curriculum aids can be beneficial, it was felt that the business influence should not be too prevalent.

"Yes. It can be a mutually beneficial relationship. I don't think that business should have the ultimate influence in education." (Interviewee #3)

There were interviewees who did not see sponsorship as an issue.

"Whether they are corporate sponsored or paid by for the student, what difference does it make? Who sponsors is irrelevant. Everything has bias in this life..." (Interviewee #6)

Certain interviewees who cautioned against business sponsorship.

"The thing that we have to prevent here is a company becoming more of a player by using the school as their vehicle to promote the use of their particular product." (Interviewee #1)

There were those who felt that business has the best interest of the students in mind, but the onus falls on the shoulders of educators to ensure that the material remains unbiased.

"It is up to the school board or the teacher to make sure there is no bias in the curriculum, and that some sort of standard is in place. I do believe that most businesses out there would approach this legitimately and very few would see this as an opportunity." (Interviewee #1)

Many suggested that while these curriculum aids are an asset, there should be safeguards in place to keep business interests in check.

"I think that the business influence would be an asset all around. I think there has to be safeguards in place, there has to be a buffer to make sure that not any one single business is not taking over any one single college." (Interviewee #3)

There was some concern about an overt business influence.

"I think that there has to be safeguards in place. There has to be a buffer to make sure that not any one single business is not taking over any one single school or college." (Interviewee #3)

Many placed the responsibility of 'debugging' in the hands of the teachers.

It was felt that teachers should be able to view the curriculum aid with a critical eye and determine what is in the best interest of the student.

"What we need in place is a safety net. You have to be able to say to business just because you are expanding our horizons and providing a school with equipment, you do not automatically bias our view. The crucial part in my view is a professionalized teacher class. The teacher has to be able to say thank you for your donation of a computer, but students there are five other computers that do the same thing." (Interviewee #5)

There were interviewees who felt that the business agenda and the education agenda were not at all compatible.

"I can see the fear in it by all means. Business has an agenda which is bottom line based and education, we like to think, is not bottom line based but is quality based. These two agendas do not mesh and there is often conflict." (Interviewee #5)

"The business agenda is to create wealth for the people...Education is there to facilitate individuals creating wealth...So to that degree, the agendas are the same, it's the development of individuals to create wealth for themselves and others." (interviewee #6)

"I don't think that there's a conflict." (interviewee #2)

similar. and compatible.

Many felt that the business agenda and the education agenda were very similar.

Interviewees were asked if they felt that the business agenda was compatible with traditional educational aims.

BUSINESS AGENDA VERSUS TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL AIMS

to ensure that no bias enters into the classroom.

It was suggested that a professional teacher class have a say in the final curriculum.

affirmed that business was approaching this relationship honestly and legitimately.

mutually beneficial alliance between education and business. It was generally

Most interviewees felt that corporate sponsored curriculum aids offered a

"If you are referring to specific curriculum that is taught in the classroom then absolutely no. Business is setting a very specific biased agenda, this is a notch above brainwashing and has no place in the public school system." (interviewee #7)

curriculum aids applied to actual lessons taught in the classroom.

One interviewee was totally against the idea of corporate sponsored

There were those who felt that the agendas were very different and were leery about the influence that business wants to have over the education system.

"Whether or not business should have direct influence over education...I don't think so because the agenda will be set toward their own aims which is the fulfillment of their own market needs." (Interviewee # 5)

Many interviewees suggested that although the agendas were not compatible, traditional educational aims are bound for change in this economy.

"Not necessarily, but I don't think traditional educational aims are working in this society. I don't think that we can maintain traditional values if we want to flourish in this marketplace." (Interviewee #3)

Several cautioned that because of this increasing business influence, the scope of courses being taught is narrowing.

"No. Before we were trying to produce well rounded students. Now we are simply producing very field specific students who seem to know one thing only." (Interviewee #7)

There was the prevailing thought that a controlled influence was the ideal. Business should be treated the same as any other group whose voice has a right to be heard in the curriculum.

"Peripherally, yes, I would like to see a minor influence as I feel an environmental group should peripherally affect a biology course that is being offered." (Interviewee #5)

There were words of caution that the business influence should not be an overt one.

"They (the schools) should be influenced, but you do not want to see the educational agenda totally controlled by the business people because they have an agenda..." (Interviewee #6)

As well, it was thought that there should not be a direct influence.

"I would like to see enough room there for conflict between the two agendas, but not for business to directly influence education." (Interviewee #5)

While this interviewee agreed that the business and education agendas were compatible, he was cautious about too much influence.

"I don't think that they are all that far off...but I think it's extremely dangerous to have curriculum that is designed specifically for business." (Interviewee #4)

Several felt that the school system is too concerned with upholding a democratic ideal that can be a detriment to those students who do not fall into the median.

"Many business people would say that education is so caught up in accommodating everyone and treating everybody the same that the really intelligent or those below average suffer as a result." (Interviewee #1)

The interviewees seemed to be divided on whether the business and education agendas were compatible or not. Regardless of their point of view, many cautioned that there should not be an overt influence by the business community. Almost all felt that some influence was essential to ensure students receive a well rounded education and understand all points of view.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

There are a variety of Newfoundland government documents that have been produced in recent years that present a new way of looking at the role of education that is a strong break with how we have traditionally viewed education in this province. For the first time in the history of this province, the government is demanding an unprecedented, vigorous educational reform. As stated in these documents, members of government believe that education can revitalize the flailing economy of Newfoundland. There is a call for government, business, and educators to work together to achieve this economic reform. As is stated in these documents, business is increasingly playing a role in what is being taught in our school system and how it is being taught.

CHANGE & CHALLENGE: A STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN FOR NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR (1992)

The most prevalent view among members of government is that it is essential for the province to create a competitive edge in order to maintain, and even increase, the standard of living in the province. It is felt that this is necessary in the face of a changing global economy. There is a call for government, business, and educators to work together to achieve this goal.

"Government recognizes that it has a responsibility to work with other orders of government, business, labour, and academia to create an environment which supports enterprise and economic development. Consequently, support policies will focus on developing the Province's entrepreneurial base; educating and training our labour force..." (Page 21).

In a strategy statement, the government documents indicate that the province will undertake measures to introduce students to the benefits of entrepreneurship. In order to achieve this strategy, there will be a provincial campaign to develop an enterprise culture, as well as an increasing government support of entrepreneurship. There is a plan to implement this strategy at the secondary and post secondary levels.

"...expanding enterprise education throughout the school system; encouraging Memorial University, through the Faculty of Business Administration, and the Community Colleges to expand business skills training to entrepreneurs in the Province;... (Page 23)

Members of government believe that education can turn around the economy of the province. It is felt that it is essential to teach students the skills necessary to function and compete in today's marketplace.

"Education is the key to economic development. Studies have shown conclusively that skills, qualifications, innovation and the adaptability of individuals are critical determinants of economic performance and the success of enterprises." (Page 25)

It was generally affirmed that the education system as it exists, has to change in order to meet the challenges of the economy.

"The public generally perceived education to be the single most important element in facilitating a change in attitude, but indicated that they had serious reservations about the ability of the education system, as it is currently structured, to meet the challenges." (Page 25)

In this document, the government calls for a merging between education and business in order to make the curriculum that is taught in the school system more pertinent.

"There is also a general belief that the education curriculum should be more focused, more relevant and more challenging; that there is a tremendous need for better guidance and career counseling; and that there should be better links between the school system, the post-secondary system and the private sector." (Page 25)

It was felt that there has to be changes and improvements in the school system. It was also affirmed that there was a need to improve equipment and facilities in our schools.

"People want to see increased efficiencies in the system and they want to see the savings realized from increased efficiencies reallocated within the education system to address its most urgent needs, such as improved facilities and equipment, laboratories, libraries, computers, books and other learning materials." (Page 25)

In another strategy statement, the government calls for a closer link between education and business in order to meet the demands of the marketplace. It is felt that the education system must be willing to change in accordance with the provinces labour needs.

"The Province will undertake initiatives to ensure that the education and training system is more responsive to changing labour market demands for a highly skilled, innovative and adaptable workforce. Special initiatives will be pursued which allow governments, business and labour to work together to improve the level and quality of education, training and re-training." (Page 25)

The government has plans to review the curriculum that is currently being taught at all levels in the province's education system in order to ensure its relevancy to society and the economy. There is a call for a new focus to be placed on science, technology based education, as well as an increasing use of computers and computer based technology.

"...introducing new programs at the intermediate and secondary levels which focus on the sciences, enterprise, cooperative education and technology based education; expanding the provision and use of computers and computer based technologies within the school system and developing a comprehensive information technology plan for the Department of Education and the school system; and expanding the current post-secondary cooperative education program by including additional designated occupations and exploring the application of work/study concepts to the pre-apprenticeship programs." (Page 26)

Change & Challenge also cites the education system as the key factor in recognizing areas of weakness in the human resource pool. The education system must be adaptable to the changing requirements of the workplace and the economy.

"Develop a dynamic post-secondary education system which is capable of meeting the education and training needs of all citizens, which can identify and address areas of weakness in our human resource requirements and which can respond quickly to changing requirements and which can respond quickly to changing requirements of the workplace and the economy...." (Page 26)

This government document offers specific examples of this new partnership between the education community and the business community:

"Specifically the Province will mobilize business, labour and the education community through

- implementing a provincial "Adopt a School Program";
- supporting expansion of the Junior Achievement Program;
- expanding cooperative education programs;
- recruiting high-profile community individuals to be "Partnership Champions";
- promoting community education by establishing a province-wide system of community-based "Partnership Action Teams";
- developing and implementing a process for evaluating education and training programs;
- establishing measurable objectives against which to evaluate the strategy's success and prepare an annual report card to track the progress being made towards achieving the Province's educational goals; and
- strengthening the links between the education system and private industry by initiating a formal exchange program whereby individuals from industry would work in the Department of Education and departmental employees in private industry." (Page26)

It was felt that there must be a new Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system established that can meet the needs of the provincial society and the changing economy. In this instance, the document refers to students as workers.

"...establish standards of performance in the core areas of literacy, numeracy and science. This will assist school districts and schools to improve their assessment of students in the classrooms and ensure that all workers have the foundation they need to pursue the retraining to meet changing economic conditions;" (Page 27)

This government report calls for a constant upgrading of teacher skills and the uniting of these teacher skills with the requirements of the economy.

"...in consultation with the appropriate agencies, implement a professional development program for teachers which requires that they participate in in-service training as a condition of continued certification, and which ensures that matching of teacher training with the actual needs in the education system and the workforce;" (Page 27)

In Change & Challenge, it was generally affirmed that the education system must be altered and improved upon to meet the changing needs and economic requirements of the province's economy. It was felt that the skills being taught in the school system must be relevant and necessary to the workplace. In several instances in this government document, students were referred to as workers. It was also stated that students in the classroom are viewed as a human resource and they must have the skill set to meet the needs of the workplace.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE: STATUS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN (1994)

Two years after Change & Challenge was released, the government released Meeting the Challenge, their status report on the implementation of recommendations suggested in Change & Challenge. It was re-affirmed that the Newfoundland government had strongly held beliefs that education and training are crucial to a strong provincial economy. There has also been a call for stronger ties between the business and education communities. The following are the initiatives

that the government has implemented since Change & Challenge was first introduced.

The government has established a Human Resource Development Cooperation Agreement whose purpose is to aid the province in improving its' economic base and aiding in educational reform.

"This \$42.9 million Agreement is helping the Province build a stronger economic base and improving competitiveness through a variety of human resource initiatives. To date, more that \$9 million has been committed to various projects under four main program areas: learning and enterprise culture, strategic knowledge and skills, capacity building, and learning together. Government will use the funding provided through this agreement to initiate programs, services and projects which support the Province's priorities for educational reform." (Page 15)

The government has also started the development of targets, workshops and standards necessary to evaluate the education system to ensure that students have the necessary skill set for the workplace.

"These standards and related workshops will assist school districts, schools and post-secondary institutions to improve the assessment of students in the classrooms and to ensure that all future graduates have the educational foundation and retraining they need to meet changing economic conditions." (Page 16)

Under the heading of Educational Technology, the government has prepared an Information Technology Plan identifying information technology requirements for the education system.

"A number of projects have been initiated under this plan, including the School Operations and Student Profile (SOSP) system, a school-level database of student information, and the Technology in Learning Environments (TILE) project, which is designed to investigate the application and integration of technology within the curriculum. In addition, \$560,000

has been approved for the acquisition of technology education software within the school system. ..." (Page 16)

In the areas of primary, elementary, and secondary schooling, curriculum has been reviewed to make certain that what is being taught in the classroom is relevant to the needs of the provincial economy. As a result of this review, there has been course offerings that focus on science, technology, enterprise education, and cooperative education. At the high school level, there have been attempts to focus on enterprise and economic education. These major curriculum initiatives include:

"Implementation of a number of initiatives in economic/enterprise education and cooperative education at the senior high school level, including the addition of the Global Economics and Business Enterprise courses to the provincial curriculum, expansion of the number of sites offering locally developed enterprise education or entrepreneurship courses, and expansion of the Co-operative Education program."

In the area of post secondary education, steps have been taken to develop an education system that meets training needs of the marketplace. It is also the goal of this new system to be able to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of an ever changing marketplace and economy.

"Within the college system, the harmonization of Business Education programming is largely complete, and similar efforts in the area of Engineering Technology are progressing. A common first-year for provincial technology programs has been implemented, and the Provincial Programs Committee - made up of representatives of the Department and the Colleges - has been requested to proceed with projects to harmonize Applied Arts programs and Apprenticeshipable Trades programs. " (Page 18)

There has also been some progress in the forming of new partnerships and alliances between business and education.

"To achieve the Province's educational goals and objectives, several initiatives have been taken which foster new partnerships between partnerships between the public and private sectors as a means of mobilizing business, labour and education interests. The HRD (Human Resource Development) Agreement will provide more that \$6 million over a five-year period to develop and support collaborative efforts such as the Adopt a School Program, the Junior Achievement Program, and Partnership Champions." (Page 19)

Meeting the Challenge has re-affirmed the objectives that were originally set out in Change & Challenge. There have been steps taken to re-vitalize the economy of the province through changes to all levels of the education system. These changes include making the curriculum more relevant to today's economy as well as ensuring that it is easily changeable and adaptable to the needs of a changing economy. Along with this, there has been an attempt to strengthen the ties between business and education through a number of province wide initiatives such as the Adopt a School Program.

STATUS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN (1995)

This status report was prepared one year after the Meeting the Challenge, the governments first status report of the Strategic Economic Plan. When this report was introduced in 1995, the government was at the half way point in achieving the objectives set out in the five year Strategic Economic Plan.

Enterprise education continues to be implemented in all schools in the province. And by 1995, was available in 153 high schools throughout the province with plans to offer it in the remainder within one year. There have also been two new courses developed in the area of Global Economics/Enterprise and Social Studies/Economic Enterprise. The focus in these new courses is economic issues and enterprise development in the Atlantic region.

- There has been a constant updating and review of school curriculum at all levels to ensure that the course offerings are applicable to the provinces changing economy and to the society in which these students will enter. The government plans to do this by introducing a variety of new programs that focus on the sciences, enterprise, cooperative education and technology based education.

"The province's curriculum is monitored on an ongoing basis through testing and program research to determine how well objectives are being achieved and how that achievement compares with national and international norms." (Page 9)

As well,

"Computer Technology 3200 has been expanded to 45 new sites in 1994-95 bringing the total schools offering the program up to 88." (Page 9)

There have also been attempts to bring more computers and computer based technologies into the school system. The Information Technology Plan is being developed for the Department of Education and Training and the provincial school system. This plan includes integrating technology in the classroom as an effective learning tool.

"The Technology in the Learning Environment (TILE) Project has been completed and a final report submitted which includes a strategic technology plan for the integration of technology in the classroom as an effective learning resource. " (Page 10)

There has been an extension to the existing post secondary cooperative education program by additions to the list of designated occupations and attempts to integrate work/study concepts to pre-apprenticeship programs.

"The Department is proceeding with the "Youth Internship Initiative" developed in partnership with the ERC (Economic Recovery Commission), HRDC (Human Resource Development Commission) and the Industry Associations in the province. The Newfoundland Council of Industry Associations (NCIA) is seeking funding to hire a Program Coordinator to meet with the 23 participating companies to document training needs, outline skill standards, and develop training plans and pathways for each internship position. " (Page 11)

There has been a call for the post-secondary system to meet the human resource requirements of the province.

"Develop a dynamic post-secondary education system which is capable of meeting the education and training needs of all citizens, which can identify and address areas of weakness in our human resource requirements and which can respond quickly to changing requirements of the workplace and the economy." (Page 12)

At the post secondary level, there has been a departure with traditional educational aims and there are now plans to link the training of students to the needs of business.

"The ERC, in cooperation with the Department of Education and Training, has been given the mandate to develop a post secondary education and training strategy. A strategic approach to education and training that links the education of people in regions of the province to business and labour force development in a regional economic development context will be produced." (Page 14)

The province has put in motion specific plans to cement the links between business, labour, and education. These partnerships are to be based on common interests and a mutual interdependence. The specific interests that the province will initiate are:

- "implementing a provincial "Adopt a School Program;
- supporting expansion of the Junior Achievement Program;
- expanding cooperative education programs;
- recruiting high-profile community individuals to be "Partnership Champions." (Page 14)

As well, the province is attempting to:

"strengthening the links between the education system and private industry by initiating a formal exchange program whereby individuals from industry would work in the Department of Education and Training and departmental employees and private industry." (Page 16)

The Department of Education, the federal government and private business are working together on a program called Computers for Schools. This program was developed in an attempt to secure computers for the province's school system.

"Funding has been provided by the HRD (Human Resource Development) Agreement to staff a coordinator's position. The project is called "Computers for Schools" and is considered a partnership initiative with the business community." (Page 14)

There were also goals to alter the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system so that it has the capacity to respond to and change in accordance with the needs of Newfoundland society and economy.

"Grade 12 graduation outcomes are being developed in cooperation with the Atlantic Provinces. A first draft of the outcomes was circulated for discussion in each of the participating provinces. These outcomes are based on seven categories of knowledge, skills and attitudes considered necessary to succeed in the workplace and in further education. " (Page 16)

There is a call for an increased level of teacher professionalization.

"...in consultation with the appropriate agencies, implement a professional development program for teachers which requires that they participate in in-service training as a condition of continued certification, and which ensures the matching of teacher training with the actual needs in the education system and the workforce." (page 17)

In association with the federal government, human resource development initiatives are in place to focus on the improvement of skills so that they are able to fit with the needs of the province's economy.

"A comprehensive "Strategic Initiative" agreement has been negotiated between Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) and a partnering of provincial departments including Employment and Labour Relations, Education and Training, and Social Services. This \$20 million agreement, encompassing interventions in the training and employment domain, is funded 50%/50% by the federal government and the province and includes initiatives for Student Work/Services, Graduate Employment, Self Employment, and Strategic Employment Opportunities." (Page 19)

Through continuing seminars, the links between business and education will continue to strengthen.

"Ensure there is a partnership between business and labour to provide information on the role, importance and mechanisms for positive labour relations at the secondary and post secondary educational institutions." (Page 22)

The Newfoundland government is also fostering the development of an education related information industry.

"The Department of Industry, Trade and Technology is assisting companies to determine if they have products and services they can market in the education related information industry. Companies are also being informed

as to the opportunities that exist in this area and how they can adapt to take advantage of these opportunities." (Page 41)

The government is increasingly attempting to secure the links between business and industry. It has in place a number of human resource development initiatives that will focus on the improvement of student skill set to match the needs of the province's economy. To aid in this goal, there is also a call for an increased teacher professionalization and the development of an education related information industry.

ADJUSTING THE COURSE II (1995)

Adjusting the Course II is a Newfoundland government document which outlines their position on the restructuring of the province's education system and the changes that will ensue from this restructuring. The government believes that a restructuring of the system will result in a higher level of achievement for the student class.

The government outlines the aim of Adjusting The Course II as:

"...to increase our current low student achievement to a level which ranks with the best in Canada. This goal is based on the belief that high levels of education are essential to the economic and social well-being of the province, and that the people of the province are ready to meet the challenge of improving our educational performance. (Page 1)

The government envisions a healthy society and economy that can be accomplished through increased educational achievement. Education is the one area they believe they can control and even alter its' course.

"The overriding objective in all of our attempts to reform the system is to transform this society from one of persistent under-achievement to one whose achievement ranks with the best in the nation." (Page 2)

It has been validated by the Province's Strategic Economic Plan and the Royal Commission on Education that:

"Higher levels of educational achievement have become ever more important in the face of changing economic and social conditions." (Page 3)

The role of the school system in our society as it has been clearly laid out is to prepare students to enter into our society. The students, in turn, are expected to be able to adapt to an ever changing economy.

"Public education exists primarily to prepare students for their future role as contributing members of society...Many of the children in school today cannot be expected to enjoy stable careers and life styles but must be prepared for the major transformations in economic and societal conditions which are now well under way." (Page 3)

It has been generally affirmed that education is the key to both the economic and social well being of the province.

"...there is little doubt that the economic potential of the province cannot be realized without a substantial increase in its educational performance...Education must become a core element of our strategy for both economic and social development." (Page 5)

Furthermore,

"A highly educated society is likely to be more adaptable to changing economic conditions, less likely to be content with low levels of economic activity..." (Page 5)

The documents state that education is strongly linked to the economic prosperity and social well being of the province. There are calls to alter the current structure of the province's education system in order to achieve the objective of economic prosperity. It has also been affirmed that when students enter into the workforce, they will have to become highly adaptable to changing economic conditions.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC SERVICE

Education has been traditionally viewed as a public service. It is the right of every citizen in a population to be educated to the best of their ability as it has been generally agreed that an educated populous is the key to economic prosperity.

Post secondary education in Canada is undergoing a change. Most of my interviewees affirmed that a basic education in elementary, primary, and secondary education is easily accessible, widely available and availed of by the population in this province. The same is not true of post secondary institutions.

The interviewees felt that there are two changes taking place in post secondary institutions across the province. The first is increasing tuition costs and the second is a changing curriculum that is increasingly influenced by the needs of the provinces economy. It has been generally affirmed that tuition fees are on the rise and it is not inconceivable that one day post secondary education institutions will serve only an elite few. Along with this, there has been an increasing influence on education from the business community. The reasons for this are increasing government cutbacks to education, and business, which has always had a tremendous amount of influence over governmental decisions, believe that the schools are not producing the quality of students that they desire. While government may not have the desired funds to funnel into education, business

certainly does. If they are willing to give generous amounts to the education system, they expect to be given the results they require.

There are many who agree that because of the societal and economical changes that are occurring in the province, this increasing business influence is a natural evolution. They did, however, caution about an overt influence. While a basic Kindergarten to Grade 12 education is taken for granted as a natural right for all citizens living in this province, it was felt that post secondary institutions are a buyers market and will continue to become elitist.

SHIFT IN OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM

"The face of change throughout the world has been so rapid in recent years that few can predict its consequences. Knowledge and information are the new currency...The introduction of new technologies into the workplace, into our schools and eventually into our homes is becoming an increasingly important dimension of structural change. We have drifted from an industrial society, based on individuality, order and linearity, to an information society, based on integration, interdependence, and nonlinearity. Information is changing how we work, how we play, how we relate to one another, and how we react to our environment." (Our Children Our Future, Page 42).

Most interviewees felt that there has been a shift in our school system from an emphasis on knowledge to an emphasis on information. It was generally affirmed that there has been increasing school hours being given to the subjects of math, science, and entrepreneurial education. Because of this increase, there has been decreasing class time given to the general arts and language skills.

There was concern about the lack of communication skills possessed by students entering the workforce. It was felt that communication skills are essential

and unfortunately this is one area where students were seen as lacking. Those interviewed felt that schools and universities were continuing their focus on technical knowledge while communication skills, grammar, and language skills, skills viewed as being essential in the business community, seem to be falling by the wayside.

It was generally perceived that the education students are receiving is narrowing because of the increasing focus on technical skills. It was felt that the schools should strive to produce well rounded students who are proficient in many subject areas. There was some concern that traditional subjects such as history, geography, language, and general arts, are not viewed as being important in our school system today. It was stated that the aim of schools should be to instill in students a love of learning and the ability to become independent thinkers.

AN INCREASING EMPHASIS ON MATH, SCIENCE, ENTERPRISE AND COOPERATIVE EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY BASED EDUCATION

Education in Newfoundland, and Canada as a whole, is confronted with a paradox. There is an increasing demand on our school system for increased class time in the areas of math, science, enterprise and cooperative education and technology based education. According to interviews, most of my interviewees believe that this increase in class time will be instrumental in bringing about a revival in the Newfoundland economy as they perceive these skills to be essential in today's global economy.

At the same time however, it was stated that students were lacking in a variety of other skills, especially in the area of communication. Teachers were criticized for this. The length of time that students spent in the classroom was cited as a problem as well. It was felt that the school day and the school year were much too short and did not allow students the class time that they deserved.

It was felt that because our economy is becoming a global one, education has to change to give business the type of worker to function in this new economy. Students need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to function effectively in a global economy and they must be technologically proficient.

Along with this, there were interviewees who did not agree with the increasing focus in math, science, enterprise and cooperative education and technologically based education. They felt that it was the goal of the schools to produce students who have a generalized sense of education. It is in the best interest of the students to instill in them the ability to learn and to give them a solid foundation on which to build.

BUILDING THE ECONOMIC FUTURE AND IMPROVING THE HUMAN RESOURCE POOL OF THE PROVINCE

It would be a self defeating practice if we graduated students who lack the skills to function in both society and the workplace. We need to graduate students who have a generalized skill set and more importantly, the ability to learn. Should the school system be held solely responsible for the economic prosperity of the province? Members of Government and the business community feel that it is the responsibility of educators to respond to the needs of the economy and business and to prepare students to enter into the workforce. Interviewees wondered what was the role of the schools if not to prepare students for the workforce.

Interestingly, there was one interviewee who felt that the school system was doing a great job in preparing students for the future. This interviewee placed the fault on the province's economy for not providing opportunities for graduating students. It was felt that qualified students are leaving the province because they do not see a bright economic future on the horizon.

It was generally affirmed that if schools did not prepare students for the workforce, this could have a detrimental affect on the province's economy. It was felt that education is the key to economic prosperity as it is the goal of the school to produce students who are functioning, contributing members of our society. It was felt that because of this goal, there has to be closer links between the education and business communities.

There were those interviewees who believed that the role of the school is to equip students with a basic skill set, while maximizing their potential. Specifically, to ensure that all students complete the basic secondary program while raising expectations in the areas of math, science, and technology. The school should lay the foundation for the economic future of the province. These interviewees felt that the mandate of schools did not involve catering to the needs of business, their role was to give students an overall general education. Furthermore, it was felt that educators should not be held accountable for the economic future of the province because they are educators, not economists or business people. It is not their position to ensure a prosperous economy, their goal is the education of the province's students.

It was felt that the key to a prosperous economy is a multi-leveled approach. All groups, business, industry, educators, government, and the general public working together to ensure a prosperous and efficient school system and provincial economy. The entire responsibility should not be placed on the shoulders of the school system.

THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT'S AFFECT ON EDUCATION

A majority of those I interviewed did not comment on this question. Interestingly, most did not believe that the North American Free Trade Agreement would have a profound affect on our education system even though much literature on the subject would indicate otherwise.

There were those who stated that education would increasingly be seen as a commodity as NAFTA encourages the idea of a global economy. Trade is encouraged in all areas, in people, products, and services. A small number of interviewees believed that NAFTA would have a positive effect in that it would give students access to a broad global perspective that had in the past, been lacking.

Free trade will change the way that Canada exists. Competition will no longer be on a provincial level, or a national level, but on an international level. It was felt that Newfoundland may have a competitive disadvantage because the knowledge and skill set that students are graduating with will be inferior if placed on a global stage. In this vein, NAFTA has presented a challenge to the Newfoundland education system.

There were interviewees who felt that NAFTA will have a negative effect on education and the Newfoundland economy in general. It was believed that overall, Newfoundlanders are lacking in skills that will enable them to compete on an international level. One interviewee stated that when NAFTA is translated into the free movement of people, geographically, Newfoundland will be at a disadvantage, as well, there will be a large number of talented young people leaving the province for more prosperous destinations.

BUSINESS INFLUENCE IN EDUCATION

A vast majority of those I interviewed felt that business should definitely have an influence in education. The business community believes that students do not possess the skill set necessary to function in a business environment and as a result are not employable upon graduation. It is widely believed that school curriculum should be altered to correspond with the needs of the economy. There were those who believed that the school system is beginning to modify the curriculum to provide students with the skills that the business community requires, uniting community needs with student proficiency.

There are those who see change occurring in post secondary institutions in the province. Interviewees cited the example of Memorial University altering its course offerings to furnish students with the expertise required to work on projects such as Hibernia. It was also felt that post secondary institutions are willing to change course offerings to ensure that students have the necessary knowledge to secure employment upon graduation. Interviewees believe that business never directly asked for this influence, it was a natural evolution because post secondary institutions wanted their graduating student to be employable. They also stated that educators are more than willing to gear programs towards specific types of expertise that are required.

Some members of the business community stated another reason for the increasing business influence in education. They believe there are instances where the market has been inundated with a skill set and there are simply not enough jobs to accommodate all students with this particular skill set. As well, technology is

advancing so quickly that oftentimes, graduating students are equipped with a set of antiquated skills that business no longer requires.

The idea was also brought forth that as the Government of Newfoundland continues to find itself financially challenged, education is the one area where cutbacks will continue to occur. Government will require outside funds to finance education in the province. Enter the business community that has the means to supplement funding to the education system. Because of this increased funding on the part of business, they want a voice in how these funds are spent and in the curriculum that is taught.

There were those who felt that business should have an influence, but certainly not an overt one. It was felt that business should not directly influence the curriculum and moreover, there should be safeguards in place to ensure that it does not dictate.

Certain interviewees felt that the Newfoundland school system is creating capable and proficient students. Unfortunately, it is felt that because there is little opportunity in the province, the brightest students leave for career opportunities elsewhere.

Overall, it was felt that business does and should have an influence in education. The aim of the school system was viewed to be the preparation of students for society and the workforce. It was generally affirmed that business should have an influence in education because students must be equipped with the

necessary set of skills upon graduation to function effectively in a business environment

CORPORATE SPONSORED CURRICULUM AIDS

Corporate sponsored curriculum aids were seen as being of tremendous benefit to both the school who is receiving the donation and the business that is donating. It is clear that corporate sponsored curriculum aids will continue to creep into our educational institutions. Many stated that because of increasing government cutbacks to the education system, school - business partnerships have a tremendous amount of value and are essential in maintaining a proficient and effective Newfoundland school system.

There were interviewees who felt that these aids can be beneficial to the school system while, at the same time, strengthening the relationship between business and education. According to those that I interviewed, donating aids to the school system is a great way to forge the links between business and education. The business community feels that they are viewed as being actively involved in the community and concerned about the education system. The education system benefits by receiving donations of things such as audio visual equipment, computers, and a variety of teaching aids.

There were words of caution about the use of corporate sponsored teaching aids. There was one interviewee who felt that the business agenda is very different from the education agenda. He felt that business had no place in

determining or offering curriculum to the schools as this was one notch above brainwashing. It was felt that these two agendas do not often blend. Other interviewees felt that these aids should not be a medium through which business promotes its own interests. It was also believed that the school boards and teachers should take steps ensure that there is no bias in these materials. To accomplish this, there were calls for an increasing teacher professionalized class to ensure the curriculum is, at all times, in the best interest of the student.

THE BUSINESS AGENDA VERSUS TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL AIMS

Many of my interviewees felt that the business agenda and the education agenda were very similar and even compatible. One interviewee felt that business and education have the common aim of "...the development of individuals to create wealth for themselves and others." (Interviewee #6). It was felt that the purpose of the business agenda is to create wealth for the people and that the purpose of education is to facilitate individuals creating wealth, therefore the aims are very much alike. There were those who felt that if the aim of education changes to accommodate the needs of business, we will be narrowing the focus of the course curriculum to the detriment of the student body. The fear is that school curriculum will become too technologically based. There were interviewees who cautioned against an overt business influence and felt that all courses deserved equal class time. It was felt that business should have an influence but not an overt voice. There must be measures in place to

ensure that the school system does not become a training ground designed to meet the needs of the business community.

Business is increasingly attempting to impose its aims on our education system. The reason they cite for this is we are now living in a global economy and as such, we must have the ability to compete on an international level. This level of competition is unprecedented. Because of this, it has been generally affirmed that we must have a work force that has the skills and abilities to conduct business on a global level. Business has identified certain skills and abilities that will be advantageous in realizing this goal. This is the reason there has been an increased call for more class time in the areas of math, science, and technology based education.

NEWFOUNDLAND GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS LOOK TO THE SCHOOL SYSTEM TO REVIVE THE ECONOMY OF THE PROVINCE

There is no doubt that there are many groups who are concerned about the state of education in the Province of Newfoundland. Documents such as Change & Challenge along with the two subsequent status reports and Adjusting the Course II all present a way of looking at education that is a strong break with how we have traditionally viewed education in this province. The government believes that a strong school system is the key to a healthy and prosperous economy. The focus has been placed upon the school system to revive the economy of the province.

It has been widely affirmed that the economy of the province of Newfoundland needs to be revived. The government believes that education can certainly aid in this revival, but it will not, on its own, bring it about. The government has undertaken initiatives to ensure that our education system is responsive to the needs and requirements of the business community, while the needs and requirements of the students are being ignored.

CONCLUSION

"The role of education, in some, must be dictated by those who realize that education is important, ...not because of its money value, but because - if of the right kind - it develops the spirit in man, the spirit which values literature, science, art, in a word, all truth, for its own sake" (Smith 1979, cites Grant 1902).

The maintenance of Canada's education system falls under provincial jurisdiction. It is a product of the economy, society and culture in which it exists. Education in the province of Newfoundland has, since its inception, been left mostly to its own devices. In recent years, however, there have been a number of groups who desire to influence the provincial education system. The most prominent group has been the business community. Business desires this influence because they feel schools are not producing students with the necessary skill set to function in today's ever changing economy.

It has become apparent that there is a shift taking place in our society in general, and in education. This is the shift from knowledge to information. Information technology is changing the very face of the society in which we live. This change can be seen in our education system. The very subjects that our universities were founded on, such as the classics and philosophy, have become increasingly less important, while subjects such as business and engineering are becoming increasingly more important. The concern here is that there will be a loss in critical thinking skills that are essential in graduating well rounded students from

our educational systems. Students are being inundated with information but are lacking in knowledge.

Students will not be proficient in a subject area that receives decreased class time. The business community and a number of Newfoundland government reports call for an increase in class time in the areas of math and science. Most of my interviewees stated that they have noticed a definite reduction in the communication skills that graduating students are bringing from educational institutions, even though language skills were labeled primary core subjects in a variety of Newfoundland Government documents. This is a very troubling sign.

Traditionally, the goal of our schools, both secondary and post secondary, has been to graduate students that have a variety of skill sets. Students should be well rounded with a knowledge in all areas. The business community is calling for an increase in math, science, and technology skills and are then wondering why other skills, such as communication skills, are not as proficient. We need to give our students as broad an education as possible. If we continue to focus on math and technology, the may students emerge with a very narrow education. We may not be equipping students with the abilities to manage the constant changes occurring in today's economy.

Students at all levels should be instilled with a desire to learn. If we empower students with knowledge, we give them the ability to learn. Critical thinking skills are essential because this equips students with the necessary skill set to function effectively and prosperously in our society and economy. There is no doubt that

there is a definite shift occurring in our school system. Many interviewees stated that we should eye this shift with caution and place the needs of students in the forefront.

The interviewees believe that a knowledgeable student body is, in itself, a resource and an asset to any economy. Are we naïve if we believe that a focus on math, science and an increasing business influence will lead to a strong economy? This focus may yield a favorable return for a short period, but already, we are witnessing a negative result of this focus. Interviewees were concerned that students are losing valuable skills and are suffering from decreased class time in certain subject areas. It is time that the focus has shifted from science, math and technology back to a well rounded education where students are exposed equally to all areas of curriculum. What may not be realized is that if students have a well rounded education with a focus on critical thinking skills, we automatically instill in them the ability to learn. It has been stated that the real problem exists not with the school system, but rather with the economy of the province, and the education system has merely become a scapegoat.

These research findings raised a number of issues such as a greater emphasis on math, science, and technology based courses in today's school system. Many interviewees believe that this will not bring about a better grade of student or a revival of the Newfoundland economy. Does society really want to graduate students who are proficient in the areas of math and science only? Most interviewees said no. They felt that the skills learned through arts and languages

are also an important asset in any economy. It may not always produce students who have a technological aptitude but it is more likely to produce students who have a critical mind and a broad skill set.

It was affirmed that students should graduate from any educational institution with a generalized sense of education and learning. Schooling is the foundation on which business training programs should build. A broad based liberal education is more of an asset to a business because students are equipped with a broad knowledge base and are given a chance to explore a variety of subject areas to find their niche. School curriculum should not be exclusively market driven. The skill sets that may be an asset in our economy today, will not necessarily be an asset in tomorrow's economy. Instead of teaching specific skills, it was felt that the primary mandate of schools should be to instill in students the knowledge and the ability to learn.

Certain interviewees believe that it is the responsibility of educators to respond to the needs of the province's economy and business. The business community is demanding a strong voice in our education system today. It was felt that the business community should have a say in what is taught in our schools, but not one that is greater than any other special interest group whose voice deserves to be heard. It was stated that one group should not dominate school curriculum because it is possible to distort our curriculum in favor of that group.

Schools are not a human resource pool from which businesses can pick and choose. They are also not a training ground for business. Schools are institutions where our young people deserve a broad based liberal education. The ultimate goal of the school system is to produce functioning, contributing members of our society. The school system cannot expect to be everything to everybody. If government continues to concede to the pressures of one specific group, they ultimately are ignoring the needs and requirements of a variety of other groups.

It can be said our school system is producing bright, qualified students but there are simply no jobs or career opportunities available for them in this economy. It was believed to be the responsibility of all parties in our society, students, parents, government, and business to play a role in educating our students. But these parties should play a role, not determine solely the curriculum that is taught.

Literature on the subject, indicates that the North American Free Trade Agreement will indeed have an effect on education, some literature indicates a detrimental affect. It is stated that NAFTA opens up the playing field so that we are operating on global basis. This extends to the education system as the objective of NAFTA is that the market dominates and it limits the ability of governments to regulate the economy. According to the literature, this domination will extend to education as well. It is not inconceivable that our government will one day loose the ability to regulate and control education.

There is also a body of thought that suggests that NAFTA opens up all areas of an economy to competition, including education. What this means is that educational tools and curriculum are open to competition from United States firms. Under NAFTA, they now have the ability to compete for Canadian and Newfoundland government funds for the task of writing textbooks for our Canadian classrooms. Along with this, post secondary educational institutions can open branches in Canada and compete equally for funding from our provincial and federal governments. Under NAFTA, they enjoy the same rights and privileges as Canadian firms. This may be detrimental to Canadian firms because they often do not have the funds or the ability to compete with United States firms. There were interviewees who did not comment on this question because they did not feel that NAFTA would affect education. Of those who did feel that there would be an effect on education, they stated that NAFTA will present a challenge to the Newfoundland education system because we have to ensure that students are graduating with a knowledge base that can compete on an international basis in a changing global economy. This was seen by some as being extremely positive because students will be exposed to a vast array of new ideas and points of view.

It was stated that the business influence should certainly not be overt. If it is, the concern here is that we will have universities that cater entirely to business, and a school curriculum that is entirely dictated by business. There are those who

say that universities offer students a wide variety of courses that are not necessarily relevant for the workplace.

Many believe that business is the ultimate consumer and education is the product. In this line of thinking, business assumes that it deserves an influence in shaping curriculum. They are concerned that graduating students will not have the abilities to meet the needs of business.

It is inevitable that corporate sponsored curriculum aids will continue to make their way into the classroom at both the secondary and post-secondary level at an ever increasing rate. Under the umbrella name of 'corporate sponsored curriculum aids' these aids can range from donations of audio visual equipment and computers to a curriculum program that was actually developed by a business.

These aids are often readily accepted by educators because increasing government cutbacks to our education system leave schools and universities with little funds left for these purchases after the basics have been taken care of. Curriculum programs are accepted because they are readily available programs for teachers that are often sleek and polished productions that are easy to teach. Unfortunately, they are often biased towards the views of the company that produced them. Though many will argue that teachers can discuss these programs with students and draw attention to the bias and offer differing points of view, there is often not the time in the school day, and sadly, there may be teachers who do not have the inclination or the ability to do so.

There is no doubt that there are businesses who donate equipment, time, and money simply as a gesture of good will and with no alternative agenda. Cable Atlantic readily provides schools with educational programs through commercial free access to A&E In The Classroom. Cable Atlantic readily offers this to schools because they have an important resources that schools can definitely use. A&E In The Classroom is an important and available resource that schools can utilize without incurring any cost. It is also very good public relations for the company because they are viewed as a concerned community player.

Unfortunately, there are instances of business links with education that are not as stellar as the Cable Atlantic example. Barlow and Robertson (1994), state the example of the Toronto Board of Education and their three year million dollar deal with Pepsi. In this deal, Pepsi has total control over all vending machines in Toronto schools, selling, of course, only Pepsi products. Pepsi also produces and distributes its own videos on topics such as substance abuse that are shown regularly in the schools. The school also gets a healthy dose of Pepsi paraphernalia in the form of hats, T-shirts and student-of-the-month plaques.

Pepsi, in return, gets both brand loyalty and a chance to be seen as a caring corporation with a good dose of community good will. Barlow and Robertson quote Allan Fotheringham's views on this deal:

"The Toronto Board of Education has signed a contract with the devil, the devil going by the name of the Pepsi-Cola gurglers, makers of things that make your teeth rot...The people who run the Toronto Education system

have decided that their students are marketable qualities...Corporations, who have lots of bucks, will pay lots of bucks if compliant and naïve school trustees will lie down with their legs open" (Barlow and Robertson, 1994 p.163).

Ron McEachern, president and CEO of Pepsi-Cola Canada's views on the Toronto Board of Education and the Pepsi deal:

"An initiative like this demonstrates the fruitfulness of enterprising, innovative partnerships between the public and private sectors. Regarding Canadian education, we are proud to be part of the solution" (Barlow and Robertson, 1994 p.163).

There are instances where this relationship and these curriculum aids can be an asset to the school system, there are far too many instances where, as in the Pepsi deal, students are viewed as consumers. By entering into this deal, Pepsi is able to ensure brand loyalty by having a monopoly. The Toronto Board of Education is giving Pepsi access to a captive audience who watch their videos regularly during valuable school time. The Toronto Board of Education claims that because of decreasing funding, they had no choice but to enter into this deal.

Ideally, there should be safeguards in place so that students are not viewed as potential consumers, so that business does not control our curriculum and our school system. School is not a place to ensure brand loyalty to a large corporation. School is where we educate our students to their maximal ability. We must be sure not to lose sight of this goal.

Throughout my inquiry into the state of education, in the form of interviews, researching Newfoundland government documents, and reading

relevant literature, I have generally affirmed that the direction of education in the province of Newfoundland is undergoing a transformation. Government and business are actually looking to the school system to revive the flailing economy of the province. The aim of education is shifting towards improving the human resource pool for the economy and the onus has been put on schools to build the economic future of the economy. This change will have a profound affect on all facets of education in the province of Newfoundland for years to come.

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