Just Plain Rhetoric?

An Analysis of Mission Statements of Canadian Universities Identifying Their Verbal Commitments to Facilitating and Promoting Lifelong Learning

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, many government and policy documents have highlighted with greater urgency the need for lifelong learning. What do present mission statements of Canadian universities have to say regarding lifelong learning? In researching this question we analyzed the institutional mission statements of 58 Canadian universities to identify the extent to which these expressed commitments to facilitating and promoting lifelong learning. While mission statements

Résumé

Au cours de la dernière décennie, plusieurs documents gouvernementaux et d'orientation ont mis en évidence avec une plus grande urgence les besoins de l'apprentissage continu. Que disent les énoncés de mission des universités canadiennes en ce qui concerne l'apprentissage continu ? En faisant la recherche, nous avons analysé les énoncés de mission institutionnels de 58 universités canadiennes afin d'identifier jusqu'où elles expriment un engagement à la facilitation et à la promo-

cannot serve as proof of institutions actually enacting the goals and ideals by which they choose to portray themselves to the public, they still yield insight into the values institutions recognize as important.

This article first proposes a model of conceptualizing lifelong learning in higher education. It distinguishes three dimensions of lifelong learning (the adaptive, the personal, and the democratic) and two aspects (lifelong learning as a goal and lifelong learning as a process). From this three by two matrix we derive six categories of lifelong learning in or through higher education. We then use these six categories as a priori codes for our deductive analysis of mission statements. We present and discuss the outcomes of our study, note differences with regards to institutional type, and make some suggestions for future research.

tion de l'apprentissage continu. Bien qu'un énoncé de mission ne puisse pas servir comme preuve que ces institutions mettent en vigueur les buts et les idéaux par lesquels elles choisissent de se présenter au public, un énoncé de mission peut quand même offrir un aperçu sur les valeurs reconnues comme étant importantes.

Cet article propose d'abord un modèle de conceptualisation de l'apprentissage continu en éducation supérieure. Aussi distingue-t-il trois dimensions de l'apprentissage continu (la dimension adaptation, la dimension personnelle, et la dimension démocratique) ainsi que deux contraintes (l'apprentissage continu comme but et l'apprentissage continu comme processus). Nous avons dérivé six catégories d'apprentissage continu dans ou par l'éducation supérieure de cette matrice à trois dimensions et à deux contraintes. Ensuite, nous avons utilisé ces six catégories comme codes à priori pour notre analyse déductive des énoncés de mission. Nous présentons et discutons des résultats de notre étude, nous en avons noté les différences en ce qui concerne le type d'institution, et nous en faisons des suggestions pour des recherches futures.

Countries that succeed in the 21ˢᵗ century will be those with citizens who are creative, adaptable and skilled . . . By providing opportunities for all Canadians to learn and to develop their skills and abilities, we can achieve our commitment to economic growth and prosperity and demonstrate our social values of inclusion and equality. (International Labour Office, 2002)

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades society has witnessed drastic and rapid changes in its economic, technological, political, and cultural spheres (e.g., Boud, 1988, 1997; Candy, 1991; Faure, 1972; Knapper & Cropley, 2001), a phenomenon that has been observed both nationally and internationally and has recently been associated with the notion of "globalization" (e.g., Currie & Newson, 1998). Many governments and international agencies, for example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the European Union (EU), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), have responded to these developments by emphasizing the need for lifelong learning. The EU declared 1996 "The Year of Lifelong Learning" and virtually all UNESCO documents following the popular Delors (1996) report made reference to *learning throughout life* in one form or another.

The Government of Canada has emphasized that successfully responding to the skills and learning requirements of the 21ˢᵗ century will involve the building of a foundation of lifelong learning and the strengthening of accessibility and excellence in post-secondary education (International Labour Office, 2002). Discussing the role of Canadian higher education in supporting lifelong learning, Jones (2001) submitted that although universities and colleges "can be viewed as only one of many educational resources available to the lifelong learner, few would deny their importance as a key element in the societal infrastructure associated with promoting and facilitating lifelong learning" (p. 545).

While many contemporary documents emphasize creating more opportunities for people to become involved in lifelong learning (also through participation in higher education), others raise awareness of the importance of preparing people to be lifelong learners and the role of post-secondary institutions in that process. Baxter-Magolda and Terenzini (1999) noted that the challenges of the 21ˢᵗ century will require higher education institutions to prepare students as independent thinkers, productive citizens, and future leaders. Likewise, the widely cited National Panel Report (2002) *Greater Expectations*, published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, highlighted that in order to thrive in a complex world students

need to experience a solid liberal education. Specifically, the report suggested that students need to develop a mastery of intellectual and practical skills, knowledge about forms of inquiry underlying natural and social disciplines, and responsibility for both their personal actions and civic values. The latter point, in particular, was emphasized as well by a recent Carnegie Foundation report on undergraduate education (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003).

Certainly, lifelong learning conceptualized in this way is not a new concept. As early as 1852, Cardinal Newman argued that the university's major role should be to prepare people for work and life by providing a sound liberal education. About 60 years later, John Dewey (1916) discussed learning as a lifelong continuous process and explored the relationship between lifelong learning and civic responsibility. He considered helping students to develop the capacity for further educational growth to be a goal of education. Though obviously not a novel idea, lifelong learning is a key issue in contemporary educational theorizing and policy development (e.g., Aspin, Chapman, Hatton, & Sawano, 2001). A further indication of its current importance is found in the *Final Report* of the World Conference on Higher Education, entitled *Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action* (UNESCO, 1998); the report's purpose was "to lay down the fundamental principles for the in-depth reform of higher education systems throughout the world" (p. 7). It stated explicitly that institutions of higher education "must seek to educate qualified graduates who are responsible citizens and to provide opportunities for higher learning throughout life" (p. 7). Thus, to what extent, one might ask, have universities in Canada responded to this internationally perceived need for lifelong learning?

One way to begin exploring this question is to review public documents that universities have drafted to describe their purpose and functions. Of these, institutional mission statements are particularly interesting. The purpose of the present study was to explore the extent to which Canadian universities, through their mission statements, express a commitment to facilitating and promoting lifelong learning. However, before proceeding with the details of the study, it is important to comment on the nature of mission statements, particularly whether they are worthwhile documents to study.

ARE MISSION STATEMENTS WORTHWHILE?

Clearly, there is a wide range of opinion regarding the value of university mission statements. Detomasi (1995) wrote: "It is widely recognized that most college or university mission statements are embarrassingly vague, and largely comprised of academic pieties, dull platitudes, and odes of self-congratulation" (p. 31). After conducting an analysis of 114 college and uni-

versity mission statements in the United States, Newsome and Hayes (1990) concluded that "most mission statements are amazingly vague, evasive, or rhetorical, lacking specificity or clear purposes" (p. 29). Carver (2000) also criticized college and university mission statements for not clearly articulating specific outcomes. However, Detomasi (1995) cautioned that increasing demands for accountability at the provincial and federal levels rendered the specification of institutional objectives a delicate if not difficult issue, a point that serves to explain much of the language used in mission statements. Barnett (1994), likewise aware of potential problems with clearly specifying educational outcomes, asserted: "So-called mission statements are either a statement of the trite and bland, failing to demarcate different activities of institutions, *or they are so detailed and specific that, if taken seriously, they would impede the autonomy of an institution's academic staff*" (emphasis added), concluding "(Fortunately they seldom are taken seriously)" (p. 14).

Although mission statements are easily (and frequently) criticized on such terms, a second look at the literature on college and university mission statements reveals more optimistic views regarding their merit. For example, according to Tierney (1999), mission statements are very useful as they "help people make sense of who they are as an institution and where they want to go" (p. 65). Similarly positive is Young's (2001) view that mission statements reflect the values of an institution and that these values, in turn, represent the institutional "self that is prized, chosen and acted upon" (p. 66). Bangert (1997) also observed that "mission statements are the most common way that organizations express their purpose, vision, and values" (cited in Young, 2001, p. 67). Even Barnett (2003), whose cynicism regarding mission statements was illustrated earlier, suggested in a recent book that universities have a moral responsibility to identify the values and ideals by which they choose to orient themselves. Young (2001) conducted a comprehensive study of 73 mission statements of Catholic colleges in the United States, analyzing their statements to determine the extent to which they expressed a set of core academic values. These values had been identified in an earlier study (Young, 1997).

Young's (2001) study is of particular interest to the study reported in this article for three reasons. First, Young approached his analysis *deductively* by using a priori codes for his analysis. Second, he explored *differences* in values with regard to *institutional type*. Third, although he acknowledged that "studies of what these institutions do are, ultimately, more helpful to our understanding . . . than studies of what they say they do" (p. 79), he provided a strong argument for why analyses of university mission statements are worthy of pursuit. He contended that mission statements are "public declarations of values, some manifested and some idealized" (p. 79), that they "condense the meaning and direction of institutions into a few

paragraphs or pages of writing" (p. 67), which are easily accessible, and that "they are road-maps for the high road that help institutions meet their goals" (p. 67). Furthering this argument, Newsom and Hayes (1990) suggested that if university mission statements specified the institution's distinctive role in society, "then they can be a proper beginning for activities like a planning exercise, program reviews, curriculum design, and admissions" (p. 30). This view has also been expressed by Detomasi (1995) and Carver (2000).

Thus, although mission statements cannot serve as proof of institutions actually enacting the goals and ideals by which they choose to portray themselves to the public, their exploration is still worthwhile as they allow a first glimpse into at least some of the values that institutions recognize as important. Indeed, we submit that mission statements are useful data from which to begin an inquiry into the extent to which institutions express commitment to facilitating and promoting lifelong learning. The study reported here was exploratory and, hence, qualitative in nature. The conceptualization of lifelong learning guiding our inquiry was drawn from a model that distinguishes three dimensions: the *adaptive*, the *personal*, and the *democratic*. Within each dimension, the model further distinguishes two aspects of lifelong learning when applied to higher education: lifelong learning as a *goal* and as a *process*. The resultant three-by-two matrix provided reference points, or a priori codes, for the analysis of mission statements. In the next section, the model is introduced and its theoretical foundation is discussed. A description of the study, a discussion of the results, and suggestions for further research follow that.

CONCEPTUALIZING LIFELONG LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Three Dimensions of Lifelong Learning

Three conceptualizations, or dimensions, of lifelong learning can typically be distinguished, although Aspin and Chapman (2001) were quick to point out that the three are interrelated. The first associates lifelong learning with personal self-fulfillment. The second links it to democracy, responsible citizenship, and social justice. The third links lifelong learning to economic development and progress (see, e.g., Aspin & Chapman, 2001; Chapman & Aspin, 1997; Griffin & Brownhill, 2001; Merricks, 2001). Similarly, Bagnall (2001) identified the individual progressive sentiment, the democratic progressive sentiment, and the adaptive progressive sentiment of lifelong learning ideology.

Bagnall's first progressive sentiment, with its commitment to individual growth and development, is aimed at liberation from ignorance, dependence, constraint, or inadequacy, thereby drawing on the work of scholars in

the field of adult and continuing education such as Knowles (1980), Mezirow (1991), and Brockett and Hiemstra (1991). The second is characterized by a commitment to "social justice, equity and social development through partic-ipative democratic involvement. It seeks liberation from inherited authority of all forms . . . in the creation of a truly civil society" (Bagnall, 2001, p. 37). The purpose of education is to inform social action, which would be directed at liberating marginalized groups or sectors of society, and to promote cul-tural change. This line of thinking is associated with the work of scholars who have advocated a critical or emancipatory philosophy such as Freire (1970) or Aronowitz and Giroux (1991). Finally, the third progressive senti-ment concerns responsiveness to cultural change. Through adaptive life-long learning, individuals can keep up with all kinds of cultural changes and find liberation from deprivation, as well as from poverty and dependence; the result would be a healthy society that constantly grows and progresses as it adapts to its environmental or cultural changes. A major function of educa-tion for lifelong learning is to provide opportunities for individuals to learn how to learn. This view of lifelong learning draws on the work of scholars such as Knapper and Cropley (2001), Hiemstra (1976), and Smith (1992). Yet, although this adaptive orientation has very optimistic undertones, Bagnall (2001) cautioned that, in a culture of advanced capitalism, economic considerations may become dominant and the "health" of the economy may become the overriding concern that drives all social agendas, including edu-cation. If the goal of education is seen principally as serving the economy, vocational skills become a desired form of knowledge and there is a risk of reducing education to training (see Rubenson, 2001).

These three dimensions of lifelong learning also apply to lifelong learning *in*, or *through*, higher education. When applied to higher education, two differ-ent aspects of lifelong learning can be distinguished within each dimension.

Two Main Aspects of Lifelong Learning in Higher Education

The first aspect involves institutions of higher education as *providers of life-long learning opportunities*. As institutions provide such opportunities, they facilitate the *process* of learning throughout life (see, e.g., Jones, 2001). The second aspect involves institutions of higher education as places where life-long learning is promoted as an educational goal and where students *are prepared to become lifelong learners* (see, e.g., Boud, 1988; Candy, 1991). This sec-ond aspect is the main concern of Knapper and Cropley (2001), who stated in their book *Lifelong Learning in Higher Education*:

> We are concerned principally with the implications of lifelong learning for conventional universities and traditional students. We see a role for uni-

versities not only as providers of lifelong learning opportunities but also as an important preparation for lifelong learning in other settings. (p. 4)

Each aspect is now discussed separately in relation to the three dimensions noted above: the personal, the democratic, and the adaptative (Bagnall, 2001; Chapman & Aspin, 1997).

The Process Aspect of Lifelong Learning: Higher Education Institutions as Providers of Lifelong Learning Opportunities

How do these three dimensions—the personal, the democratic, and the adaptative—apply to higher education institutions as providers of lifelong learning opportunities? When conceptualized as a *process*, lifelong learning has traditionally been associated primarily with the work of faculties of extension, with the understanding that the other faculties within the academy will contribute little to providing students with lifelong learning opportunities. Indeed, much of the literature on the *process* aspect of lifelong learning is typically linked directly to continuing education, which is a direct function of extension faculties. However, as many have argued, the academy as a whole needs to become an advocate of lifelong learning if society is to subscribe fully to a lifelong learning philosophy. For example, the democratic dimension of lifelong learning is addressed when institutions allow for greater access by under-represented groups and offer courses on social issues that are accessible to those groups. This is how the higher education system becomes "democratized." Eventually, such practices are seen to heighten the potential for the further democratization of society. At the same time, increased access helps people to adapt more easily to cultural change. Initiating partnerships between universities and workplaces is another way to help people adapt to ongoing changes. As colleges and universities offer part-time study, engage in prior learning assessment, encourage transferability of credits between programs and institutions, and acknowledge life experience as a program prerequisite, they contribute to the personal dimension of lifelong learning. And as institutions open their doors to people who do not intend to earn a degree or diploma but choose instead to participate because they are motivated to learn about matters of interest to them, these institutions might become sites of critical thinking (Aronowitz, 2000), addressing both the personal and democratic dimensions.

The Goal Aspect of Lifelong Learning:
Higher Education Institutions as Places Where People
are Prepared to Become Lifelong Learners

Generally speaking, when we think of lifelong learning as a goal of education, the key question becomes: What curricular and co-curricular experiences should colleges and universities provide to promote development within the personal, democratic, and adaptative dimensions of lifelong learning? Candy (1991), in his book *Self-direction for Lifelong Learning*, provided some helpful suggestions for how to respond to this question. The author made an important distinction between two different forms of self-direction, which he called *self-management* and *personal autonomy*. Although Candy saw both of these as important educational goals, he suggested that they address very different capacities in the learner. We suggest that it is self-management in learning, or having the willingness and ability to engage in continuous learning through planning and evaluating one's own learning endeavours, that speaks primarily to the adaptative dimension of lifelong learning. When delegates to the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (1998) suggested that universities should offer a "broad general education as well as targeted, career specific education, often interdisciplinary, focusing on skills and aptitudes, both of which equip individuals to live in a variety of changing settings, and to be able to change occupations (p. 23)," it could be interpreted as addressing the adaptative dimension of lifelong learning when conceived of as a goal of higher education. At the core of these delegates' recommendation was their desire that students be able to engage in continuous *adaptative* learning. This is what Candy meant by *self-management*. Self-management has been discussed extensively in adult education literature, as well as in higher education literature, where developing students' commitment to learning and to taking greater responsibility for their learning are frequently discussed themes (e.g., Boud, 1988; Donald, 1997; Garrison & Archer, 2001).

Personal autonomy, Candy's second form of self-direction, is achieved as students, through critical reflection, become aware of the full range of alternative interpretations open to them and then make informed choices. At its core, personal autonomy involves exercising freedom of choice and using one's capacity for rational reflection. The notion of personal autonomy is helpful in understanding the goal aspect of lifelong learning within the *personal* or *individual* dimension. Studies in developmental psychology conducted within higher education settings have suggested that students' personal autonomy, or self-authorship, is fostered by deliberate efforts to bring about personal, intellectual, and moral development (e.g., Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; King & Kitchener, 1994; Kohlberg, 1984; Perry, 1970). An important element in the development of personal autonomy is the capacity

to reason critically (although the interrelatedness of epistemological development and development of *self* has been noted by Kegan, 1994, and Baxter-Magolda, 1999, 2001). The need to develop the capacity to reason has been emphasized by educators and philosophers throughout the ages. Martha Nussbaum (1997) provided a compelling rationale for why critical thought needs to be cultivated in our times and encouraged educational institutions to "produce citizens who have the Socratic capacity to reason about their beliefs . . . This failure to think critically produces a democracy in which people talk at one another but never have genuine dialogue (cited in Axelrod, 2002, p. 56)."

Several scholars have questioned a concept of personal autonomy that does not take into consideration the social context. Ranson, Rikowski, and Strain (2001), for example, submitted that "we can only develop our agency as persons with and through others in membership as citizens of communities. Autonomy and well-being, therefore, depend upon the quality of cooperative interdependence that recognizes and values the plural identities which compromise communities" (p. 147). They further suggested that "many of the problems which confront society can only be resolved by people working together to identify what is the public good" (p. 147). Thus, personal autonomy, one could argue, needs to be accompanied by a third educational goal—*social responsibility*—to be truly valuable to a community. Social responsibility is linked to moral development (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1984).

Delegates to the World Conference on Higher Education (1998) emphasized that, next to educating and training students, undertaking research, and providing service to the community, higher education institutions "must seek to educate qualified graduates who are responsible citizens" (p. 7). Their report recommended that higher education institutions should produce people "who can think critically, analyse problems of society, look for solutions to the problems of society, apply them and accept social responsibilities" (p. 34). When Martha Piper (2003), president of the University of British Columbia, recently argued that, "We need to develop an integrated approach that relates academic study to the needs of society; that encourages in our students a stronger sense of social purpose and instills an awareness of one's responsibilities as a citizen and a member of the global community" (pp. 125–126), she recognized explicitly that the purposes of higher education cannot be reduced to job preparation and students' cognitive or intellectual development within the discipline alone. Boyer (1987) must have acknowledged this, too, when he proposed that, "When all is said and done, the college should encourage each student to develop the capacity to judge wisely in matters of life and conduct . . ." (p. 284). The capacity to judge wisely is not merely a matter of cognitive sophistication, but one that requires moral and affective complexity as well.

In summary, we first distinguished two educational goals, based on Candy (1991). The first goal, *self-management*, refers to students acquiring the skills, abilities, and attitudes they need to engage in learning throughout their lives, a goal that primarily involves the adaptive dimension of lifelong learning. The second goal, *personal autonomy*, is a well-researched construct in developmental psychology, primarily concerning the personal dimension of lifelong learning. Several scholars have pointed to the need to balance personal autonomy with a sense of *social responsibility*. This third goal, they argued, primarily involves the democratic dimension of lifelong learning.

Thus, lifelong learning, when discussed within the context of higher education, can be conceptualized as both a *process* and a *goal.* Higher education institutions address the process aspect when they facilitate lifelong learning by providing opportunities for people to engage in the process of learning throughout life. They address the goal aspect when they promote the skills, abilities, and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning by cultivating self-management, personal autonomy, and social responsibility through curricular and co-curricular activities.

The personal, democratic, and adaptive dimensions apply to lifelong learning both as a goal and as a process. The resulting six different features of lifelong learning, as illustrated in Figure 1, served as this study's reference points for analyzing and interpreting the mission statements.

	LIFELONG LEARNING as a *process*	**LIFELONG LEARNING** as a *goal*
	Universities and colleges *provide opportunities* for people to engage in *learning throughout life* by	Universities and colleges *prepare* people *for lifelong learning* by
Adaptative Dimension	• encouraging partnership between institution and workplace	• promoting learning about how to become a successful learner able to adapt to new contexts (*self-management*)
Personal Dimension	• offering uncredentialed courses and programs	• promoting personal and intellectual development (*personal autonomy*)
Democratic Dimension	• opening the doors to under-represented groups ("democratization" of higher education) • offering courses on social issues and making these accessible to anyone interested	• promoting moral and affective development, learning for social justice, democracy and civic responsibility (*social responsibility*)

Figure 1: Conceptualizing lifelong learning in higher education:
Three dimensions and two main aspects of lifelong learning
resulting in six features of lifelong learning in higher education

METHOD

Locating the Mission Statements

From the 73 Canadian universities and colleges listed in the Telecommunications Directory (2002) of the University of Alberta, mission statements from 58 institutions were obtained.

The primary tool for accessing the mission statements was the Internet, specifically, for locating the homepage, if available, for each institution. Only the word "mission statement" was used in the search; no related term(s) were used. In fewer than 10 instances, the university had to be contacted to locate its mission statement. The statements ranged from one paragraph to over seven pages.

Once these statements were located, they were sorted according to institutional type. Typically, universities in Canada are differentiated in terms of institutional types, but Statscan, the AUCC, and *Maclean's* use somewhat different definitions and consequently arrive at different number counts. This study followed the *Maclean's* classification system, which distinguishes between primarily undergraduate institutions (universities with few graduate programs and usually no doctoral programs), comprehensive institutions (many master's and doctoral programs but no medical school), and so-called medical/doctoral institutions (research-intensive institutions with many graduate programs and large medical/doctoral faculties). Mission statements were also obtained from various colleges that either operate as sub-components of an existing university or have independent degree-granting powers as a function of being federated with a degree-granting university. Furthermore, some institutions that had recently moved from college to university-college status were included. All institutions in this latter category had a religious/ Christian affiliation and, for the purpose of this study, were labelled "university colleges" (recognizing that university colleges in some provinces are very special institutions). To provide the fullest disclosure, Appendix 1 offers a complete list of institutions whose mission statements were included in this study. Anonymity was not a concern as mission statements by their very nature are public documents easily accessible to anyone interested.

Analyzing the Mission Statements

Two investigators independently read each mission statement at least twice and then engaged in a process of coding. The six categories from the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) were used as a basis for developing more specific labels (codes); hence, the codes were derived from the three dimensions and two aspects of lifelong learning. These codes were then used for assigning units of meaning to pieces of data. In other words, the codes were the

tools for categorizing various phrases from the data that described a specific concept in relation to lifelong learning.

The codes were developed from five concepts. The concept of "goal aspect" included personal autonomy (*auto*), social responsibility (*socre*), and self-management (*selma*). The concept of "process aspect" included diversity (*div*), partnership (*par*), and accessibility (*acc*). The concept of "personal dimension" related to personal growth/development (*gro*), while the concept of "adaptative dimension" related to economic development (*econo*) and learning how to learn (*learn*). The fifth concept, "democratic dimension," related to responsible citizenship (*citi*) and social justice (*soju*). Twenty-nine labels or codes were developed from these five concepts, the interrelated nature of which is apparent (see below).

1. Personal dimension/goal aspect = *auto-gro, socre-gro, Selma-gro*

2. Personal dimension/process aspect = *div-gro, par-gro, acc-gro*

3. Adaptative dimension/goal aspect = *auto-learn, auto-econo, socre-learn, socre-econo, selma-learn, Selma-econo*

4. Adaptative dimension/process aspect = *div-learn, div-econo, par-learn, par-econo, acc-learn*

5. Democratic dimension/goal aspect = *auto-citi, auto-soju, socre-citi, socre-soju, Selma-citi, Selma-soju*

6. Democratic dimension/process aspect = *div-citi, div-soju, par-citi, par-soju, acc-citi, acc-soju*

Content units in the mission statements that pertained specifically to any of the six features of lifelong learning were identified and listed verbatim, and the institutions making reference to them were then counted and later translated into percentages. The mission statements were grouped according to the four institutional types described earlier in order to compare the emerging themes across different types of institutions (see Tables 1 to 7). Some examples of the phrases (statements) related to the six categories of lifelong learning are found in Tables 1 to 6.

RESULTS

Verbal Commitments to Facilitating the Process of Lifelong Learning

As discussed earlier, higher education institutions address the *process* aspect when they provide opportunities for people to engage in learning throughout life. By doing so, they may address the adaptive, personal, or democratic dimension of lifelong learning.

The Adaptative Dimension

Mission statements that referred to partnerships between institutions, as well as between workplaces and institutions, could pertain to the process aspect and the adaptive dimension of lifelong learning. Table 1 shows that 7% of mission statements from medical/doctoral institutions, 8% of those from comprehensive institutions, and 6% of those from primarily undergraduate institutions referred to this aspect of lifelong learning. Interestingly, this feature of lifelong learning was not addressed in the mission statements of any of the "university colleges" considered in this study.

The Personal Dimension

In this study, the provision of uncredentialed courses and attempts to make higher education available to as many people as possible were perceived as allowing individuals to be involved in the process of lifelong learning. Table 2 reveals that 7% of medical/doctoral institutions, 15% of comprehensive institutions, 6% of primarily undergraduate institutions, and 15% of university colleges included this feature of lifelong learning. Mission statements that referred to the provision of non-degree programs and programs of continuing education or individual courses for the continued personal development of alumni and members of the general public fall under this category.

The Democratic Dimension

In this study, institutions opening their doors to under-represented groups were perceived as democratizing higher education. As indicated in Table 3, 14% of the mission statements from medical/doctoral institutions and 11% of those from primarily undergraduate institutions referred to this feature of lifelong learning. Examples include mission statements that made reference to offering programs to address the needs of visible minorities. Surprisingly, none of the mission statements from comprehensive institutions and university colleges seemed to refer to this feature of lifelong learning.

Table 1: *Percentage of institutions speaking to the process aspect of lifelong learning affecting the adaptative dimension and examples of the individual concepts they mention for this feature of lifelong learning*

Medical/Doctoral Institutions	Comprehensive Institutions	Primarily Undergraduate Institutions	University Colleges
7%	*8%*	*6%*	none
1. Establishment of new linkage with business, industry, art, organizations, and government designated to contribute directly to the economic life of the people in this province and provide lifelong opportunities for them.	1. Enter into partnership and other co-operative arrangements with individuals and firms and with governmental and governing organizations, to the benefit of the university, of its partners, and of the broad community.	1. To develop, in the pursuit of the advancement of learning, mutually beneficial partnerships and linkages with universities, colleges, schools, and other public and private sector institutions and organizations, including our alumni.	

Table 2: *Percentage of institutions speaking to the process aspect of lifelong learning affecting the personal dimension and examples of the individual concepts they mention for this feature of lifelong learning*

Medical/Doctoral Institutions	Comprehensive Institutions	Primarily Undergraduate Institutions	University Colleges
7%	15%	6%	15%
1. Increasing accessibility to university education by offering non-degree credit courses.	1. Offer distance education to special students' population and students with limited access.	1. Delivers non-credit courses in off-campus centres to meet rural needs.	1. Offers non-degree programs.
2. Offers residential educational programs for seniors.	2. Offer individual courses for continued personal development of alumni and members of general public.	2. Offers diploma and/or certificate packages in response to identified community needs.	2. Offers an after-degree diploma.
	3. Through distance education, the institution meets the educational needs of the workplace.	3. Offering courses through its office of extension.	
	4. Offer non-credit continuing education courses.		

Table 3: *Percentage of institutions speaking to the process aspect of lifelong learning affecting the democratic dimension and examples of the individual concepts they mention for this feature of lifelong learning*

Medical/Doctoral Institutions	Comprehensive Institutions	Primarily Undergraduate Institutions	University Colleges
14%	none	11%	none
1. To advance education equity and to address needs of Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, and women. 2. Offer programs more accessible for First Nations people and minority groups that are under-represented.		1. Dedicated to working with Aboriginal peoples in furthering their educational aspirations. 2. Facilitate accessibility for lower-income students, mature students, part-time students, students from visible minority groups, Canadian Native peoples, international students, students with disabilities, students with unrealized potential.	

Table 4: *Percentage of institutions speaking to the goal aspect of lifelong learning affecting the adaptative dimension and examples of the individual concepts they mention for this feature of lifelong learning*

Medical/Doctoral Institutions	Comprehensive Institutions	Primarily Undergraduate Institutions	University Colleges
21%	none	16%	15%
1. Assist students to become committed to learning throughout their lives. 2. To inspire a passion for learning. 3. To inspire love of learning.		1. To prepare students to fall in love with the process of learning. 2. To engender a continuing love of learning and lifelong desire to strive for excellence in any endeavour. 3. To prepare students for advanced study by developing a passion for lifelong learning.	1. To develop and enhance their students' desire for knowledge. 2. To develop genuine love for learning.

Table 5: *Percentage of institutions speaking to the goal aspect of lifelong learning affecting the personal dimension and examples of the individual concepts they mention for this feature of lifelong learning*

Medical/ Doctoral Institutions	Comprehensive Institutions	Primarily Undergraduate Institutions	University Colleges
21%	54%	56%	69%
1. Promoting both personal and intellectual growth.	1. We cultivate the critical intellect.	1. Committed to educating students who are recognized for leadership and critical thinking.	1. Fostering the intellectual, moral, and spiritual development of its members.
2. We inspire critical thinking and personal growth.	2. Engage students to in creative intellectual work, creativity, and problem solving combined with a broad critical appreciation.	2. Encourage students to think critically, creatively, constructively and communicate their ideas effectively.	2. Dedicated to the formation of the whole person.
3. Promoting personal autonomy (creative inquiry and critical thinking).	4. Fostering creativity and critical thinking.	3. To encourage intellectual and cultural sensibility, leadership, mutual respect, an ethical conscience.	3. Encourage students to develop intellectually, spiritually, and socially.
4. Value creativity, intellectual curiosity, and critical thinking.	5. Develop the intellectual, moral, and spiritual potentials of the campus and wider community.	4. Fosters personal growth as well as the development of excellence.	4. Graduates leave with communication, research, and creative thinking and decision making skills.
		5. Encourage and assist people to acquire skills, knowledge, and understanding necessary for critical and creative thinking.	5. Enable people to come to full measure of their humanity.
			6. To develop their students' intellectual skills.
			7. Encourage the personal and intellectual growth of its members.

6. Facilitate the development of thoughtful, creative, contributing, and human citizens.
7. Provide people who have the ability and the desire to learn with opportunities to realize their intellectual potential.
8. Foster creativity, skill development, critical inquiry, and active learning.
9. Aspire to intellectual and moral leadership in society.

6. Provide education that shapes the whole person.
7. Development of powers of empathy, critical thinking, and communication.
8. To prepare students for advanced study by developing the abilities to think creatively and critically and to communicate clearly.
9. Encourage intellectual growth, social and spiritual well-being.
10. Promote growth in self-esteem to experience joy of intellectual accomplishment.
11. Promote intellectual growth with moral integrity.

8. Encouraging continuing intellectual, moral, and spiritual development.
9. Foster highest possible intellectual achievement.
10. To prepare women and men intellectually, morally, and spiritually.
11. Promote critical thinking and good judgement, with creativity and originality.
12. Committed to and concerned with the development of the whole person.
13. Develop critical awareness existing or emerging from modern cultures and society.
14. Fostering intellectual, personal, and spiritual growth.

Table 6: *Percentage of institutions speaking to the goal aspect of lifelong learning affecting the democratic dimension and examples of the individual concepts they mention for this feature of lifelong learning*

Medical/Doctoral Institutions	Comprehensive Institutions	Primarily Undergraduate Institutions	University Colleges
29%	54%	44%	46%
1. Graduates will value diversity, work with and for their community and as agents for positive change. 2. Commitment to principles of equal opportunity, equity, and justice. 3. Prepare students to help people of this province with the economic and cultural benefits.	1. We encourage and value tolerance and diversity. We are committed to social justice. 2. Strive for providing environment embodying the principles of equity, mutual respect. 3. We prepare our students to participate fully in society. 4. Promote values of equality, non-discrimination, and tolerance of diversity. 5. Prepare its graduates to live as informed and responsibly critical citi	1. Committed to educating students who are aware of social and environmental responsibilities. 2. Encourage respect, tolerance, and sensitivity. 3. Recognize the significance of the Native peoples. 4. Uphold human dignity. 5. To provide, through its policies and administration, an atmosphere free from sexism, racism, and all other forms of stereotyping, harassment, and discrimination.	1. To nurture a sense of community respectful of individual differences and responsive to individual needs. 2. We are committed to values of love, truth, and justice. 3. Promote social justice and peace. 4. Committed to the urgent task of extending justice, freedom, and dignity to all people. 5. To foster a sense of social responsibility in its students within

zens who are committed to learning and to the spirit of inquiry.

6. Provide learning and working environment that is not only free of discrimination, injustice, and violence but that is filled with tolerance, understanding, respect, trust, openness, fairness, and joy.

7. Committed to creating an environment that is hospitable, safe, supportive, equitable, pleasurable, and intellectually challenging.

8. Celebrate diversity, committed to ensuring fairness in matters relating to gender and social equity.

6. To prepare students to address societal and environmental issues.

7. Provide atmosphere that is free of discrimination, injustice, and violence.

8. Committed to social responsibility, ethical concerns, and service to the community.

9. Empowers people of developing countries through economic and social action.

the context of a culturally diverse community.

6. Develop the insight and skills for loving and working in community.

7. Promote acceptance of responsibility as a member of human communities.

8. We value social justice; committed to develop justice.

9. Foster the study of human excellence expressed in men and women of right principles, in touch with their times and in time with their culture.

Table 7: *Percentage of institutions whose mission statement referred to any of the six features of lifelong learning*

Institutional type/ Feature of lifelong learning	Medical/Doctoral	Comprehensive	Primarily Undergraduate	University Colleges
1. Process Aspect/ Adaptative Dimension	7%	8%	6%	0%
2. Process Aspect/ Personal Dimension	7%	15%	6%	15%
3. Process Aspect/ Democratic Dimension	14%	0%	11%	0%
4. Goal Aspect/ Adaptative Dimension	21%	0%	16%	15%
5. Goal Aspect/ Personal Dimension	21%	54%	56%	69%
6. Goal Aspect/ Democratic Dimension	29%	54%	44%	46%

Verbal Commitments to Promoting
Lifelong Learning as a Goal

As discussed above, higher education institutions address the goal aspect of lifelong learning when they cultivate self-management in learning, personal autonomy, and social responsibility through curricular and co-curricular activities. In doing so, they may again address the adaptive, personal, or democratic dimensions of lifelong learning.

The Adaptive Dimension

In this study, promoting self-management in learning, that is, learning how to learn and developing a willingness and capacity to engage in further learning (Candy, 1991), was perceived as an educational goal associated with the adaptive dimension. Table 4 notes that this feature of lifelong learning was addressed by 29% of medical/doctoral institutions, 16% of primarily undergraduate institutions, and 15% of university colleges. Phrases such as "assisting students to become committed to learning throughout their lives," "inspiring a passion for learning," and "inspiring love of learning" were found frequently and illustrate this feature of lifelong learning.

The Personal Dimension

Promoting personal autonomy was perceived in this study as a goal affecting the personal dimension. Table 5 indicates that 29% of the mission statements from medical/doctoral institutions, 54% of those from comprehensive institutions, 56% from primarily undergraduate institutions, and 69% from university colleges mentioned this feature of lifelong learning. Phrases such as "to encourage students to develop intellectually, spiritually and socially" or "we inspire critical thinking and personal growth" are good examples of this. Interestingly, Table 5 has many more examples of statements expressing commitment to the personal growth dimension of lifelong learning than were identified for any of the other features.

The Democratic Dimension

In this study, promoting learning for social justice, democracy, and civic responsibility was perceived as an educational goal affecting the democratic dimension of lifelong learning. Table 6 shows that 29% of the mission statements from medical/doctoral institutions, 54% of those from comprehensive institutions, 44% from primarily undergraduate institutions, and 46% from university colleges included this aspect of lifelong learning. Phrases such as "we promote social justice and peace" and "we prepare our students to participate fully in society" are good examples of the statements that were made.

A summary of the analyses presented in Tables 1 through 6 is found in Table 7.

DISCUSSION

Three main observations can be made with respect to what the study findings suggest in relation to lifelong learning.

First, the "goal" aspect of lifelong learning was referred to far more often in these mission statements than the "process" aspect. This indicates that although institutions emphasize, through their mission statements, their commitment to preparing people to become lifelong learners, they put less emphasis on how to provide people with opportunities to engage in lifelong learning. This finding is somewhat surprising considering the strong history of continuing education offered through faculties of extension in Canadian universities. Indeed, this failure to mention the important role fulfilled by Extension faculties may be expressing, albeit indirectly, an institutional value. It should be noted, too, that it is far easier for an institution to state something general about its commitment to the development of, for example, critical thinking skills and civic responsibility than to state specific measures for providing opportunities to do so. Nevertheless, the low percentages for the process aspect of lifelong learning for all three dimensions in this study suggest that few institutions, *through their mission statements*, express commitment to facilitating the *process* of lifelong learning.

Second, it was immediately striking that, when the personal and democratic dimensions of lifelong learning were perceived as *goals*, they were emphasized much more often than the adaptative dimension. Across all four institutional types, the adaptative dimension was addressed by only a few universities. This could indicate that, despite a certain commitment to lifelong learning, most institutions have not recognized helping students "learn how to learn" as a responsibility. Perhaps it is assumed that somehow, over the course of their university years, students will inevitably acquire the skills necessary for lifelong learning without ever having been taught these explicitly. However, many scholars (e.g., Boud, 1988; Candy, 1991; Kreber, 1998) have argued that this is not necessarily the case. Furthermore, what institutions need to do to promote lifelong learning skills has been documented in the educational literature (e.g., Knapper & Cropley, 2001).

Third, among the mission statements of medical/doctoral institutions, only about one fifth of them referred to the personal dimension of lifelong learning, whereas more than half of those of the other three institutional types referred to this. The fact that the highest percentage was identified for "university colleges" (more than two thirds) may not be unexpected considering that, in this study, these were religious schools with a strong liberal arts component. Perhaps more significant is the observation that only one third of medical/doctoral institutions made verbal commitments to the democratic dimension of lifelong learning when it was perceived as a goal, whereas

such references were found in about half of the mission statements of each of the other institutional types. Why the personal and democratic dimensions were addressed less frequently in the mission statements of medical/doctoral institutions is a question of interest. This finding may reflect the general perception that large research-intensive universities tend to pay less attention to the education of students than other (usually smaller and more teaching-oriented) types of institutions.

CONCLUSION

Earlier in this article, it was suggested that, although mission statements are often perceived as vague, evasive, or rhetorical, they are also believed to state the values, ideals, and goals of an institution. However, it is important to recognize that university mission statements are limited with regard to the conclusions they permit about institutional practices. Even though this limitation applies no matter the length of a mission statement, the concern was magnified in cases where statements were less than a paragraph long. In these instances, it would have been desirable to obtain a fuller description of the mission or purpose of these institutions through other venues. Any future study, as suggested below, should not rely exclusively on mission-statement documents but include data from a variety of sources.

What conclusions can be drawn from these data? The number of institutions that referred to the personal and democratic dimensions of lifelong learning when they were perceived as goals, thereby expressing their "verbal commitment" to promoting students' intellectual, personal, and moral development, suggests that universities, regardless of institutional type, generally value these aspects of lifelong learning. As noted earlier, this is the case to a lesser extent within medical/doctoral institutions. The extent to which the institutions actually pursue these goals or values is uncertain, however. How could these goals be pursued or, put differently, how might higher education positively affect the personal and democratic dimensions of lifelong learning? The report of the 1998 UNESCO world conference cited earlier supported the view that colleges and universities could enhance students' potential to develop personal autonomy and social responsibility by offering curricular and co-curricular experiences that directly involve students in learning tasks requiring them to address real-life problems, make difficult decisions, work with others, address community needs, and take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. Some scholars writing about experiential education, service learning, or community-based education have suggested ways to restructure the higher education curriculum that sound very promising for achieving such goals (e.g., Eagan & Orr, 1992; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Lempert, 1996; Rhoads, 2000; Rhoads & Howard, 1998).

How might future research build on this study? This study relied exclusively on a textual and descriptive analysis of mission statement documents. Future research could explore whether, and, if so, to what extent, the goals, ideals, and values expressed in mission statements are actually enacted in the institutions' various units and departments. A series of institutional case studies relying not only on various sources of data for triangulation purposes, such as different kinds of printed documents, but also on extended observations and interviews with various stakeholders, such as policy-makers, senior administrators, department chairs, teaching faculty, including those directly involved in curriculum review committees, student affairs personnel, and student representatives, might hold the greatest promise for shedding light on this question. It would also be interesting to conduct a similar analysis of mission statements in other countries, preferably those with national policy documents that make strong statements in support of lifelong learning (e.g., *Dearing Report*, 1997, in the UK) and compare the findings to those obtained in this study. Finally, a future study might explore the extent to which the mission statements reviewed in this study, specifically the values expressed in relation to lifelong learning, echo the values that higher-education scholars have identified as essential for guiding the academy in the 21st century (e.g., Barnett, 2003; Young, 1997).

At a time when the need to provide lifelong learning opportunities (the *process* aspect) and to educate for lifelong learning (the *goal* aspect) has been recognized and emphasized in government documents (International Labour Office, 2002), the extent to which universities express commitment to lifelong learning, at least through their official statements, warrants some discussion. If statements such as those drafted by UNESCO (e.g., the *Final Report* of the World Conference on Higher Education, 1998) are to have a stronger impact on the delivery of higher education, then encouraging institutions to reflect on their values and the extent to which their values support lifelong learning seems critical.

APPENDIX

Institutions Whose Mission Statements Were Included in this Study

Medical/Doctoral Institutions (N=14)

- McMaster University
- Dalhousie University
- University of Western Ontario
- University of British Columbia
- Université de Montreal
- University of Toronto
- McGill University
- OISE/UT
- University of Ottawa
- University of Alberta
- Queen's University
- University of Saskatchewan
- University of Manitoba
- University of Calgary

Comprehensive Institutions (N=13)

- Simon Fraser University
- York University
- University of Waterloo
- University of Windsor
- University of Regina
- Memorial University
- Concordia University
- University of New Brunswick
- University of Victoria
- Carleton University
- University of Guelph
- Ryerson Polytechnic University
- Athabasca University

Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (N=18)

- Bishop's University
- Brock University
- St. Mary's University
- St. Francis Xavier University
- University of Lethbridge
- Lakehead University
- Trent University
- Wilfrid Laurier University
- University of Prince Edward Island
- University of Sudbury
- Mount St. Vincent
- Brescia University
- University of Winnipeg
- St. Thomas University
- Acadia University
- Brandon University
- Université de Moncton
- University of Northern British Columbia

*University Colleges (N=13)**

- St. Paul University, federated with University of Ottawa
- St John's College, member college of the University of Manitoba
- St Paul's College, member college of the University of Manitoba
- Trinity College, federated with the University of Toronto
- St. Michael's College of the University of Toronto
- St. Jerome's University of the University of Waterloo
- The King's University College (AB)
- Campion College at the University of Regina
- Luther college at the University of Regina
- St Thomas More College of the University of Saskatchewan
- Huron University College of the University of Western Ontario
- Augustana University College (AB)
- Concordia University College of Alberta (AB)

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* **Note:** This category includes various institutions that operate as sub-components of an existing university or hold independent degree-granting powers as a function of being federated with a degree-granting university. Furthermore, it includes some institutions that have recently moved from college to university-college status. All are religious institutions.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Carolin Kreber was a faculty member in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta from 1997 to 2004. Currently, she is professor of higher education and director of the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests focus on teaching and learning in higher education, particularly conceptions and realizations of the scholarship of teaching; educational development; the relationships between teaching and research; the role of reflection in the pedagogical growth and development of teachers; and relationships between teacher learning and development, teaching practices, and student learning. She also has an interest in the values that guide academic practice.

Carolin Kreber était membre du corps professoral dans le Département des études des politiques pédagogiques à l'Université de l'Alberta de 1997 à 2004. Présentement, elle est professeur d'éducation supérieure et directrice du Centre pour l'enseignement, l'apprentissage et l'évaluation à l'Université d'Edinburgh. Ses intérêts de recherche se concentrent sur l'enseignement et l'apprentissage en éducation supérieure, plus particulièrement les conceptions et les réalisations de l'érudition de l'enseignement ; le développement de l'éducation ; les relations entre l'enseignement et la recherché ; le rôle des réflexions dans l'épanouissement et le développement pédagogiques des enseignants ; et les relations entre l'apprentissage et le développement des enseignants, les pratiques de l'enseignement, et l'apprentissage des étudiants. Elle s'intéresse aussi aux valeurs orientant la pratique académique.

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