AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA
BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM, 1875 - 1990

By

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Abstract

This study describes the evolution of the British Columbia business education curriculum from 1875 to 1990. Since the 'official' curriculum document at any particular time represents the central focus of formal educational endeavours, it and related ensuing specific business subject curricula were the central objects of analysis for this study. The primary or "parent" document of the general curriculum for each important revision period was examined first for such clues as its language, purposes, aims, emphases and concerns gave to its philosophy and general orientation. Next, each of the commercial/business programmes that issued from that major revision was examined in order to determine its relationship to the "parent" document. Individual courses within the programmes were then analyzed. Finally, each curriculum was examined to ascertain its relationship with its social, economic, political and historical contexts.

Some important themes have emerged: a shift in the clientele for business education, a series of changes in the focus of the programme, and some related changes in the status of the field. The evolution of commercial education from a course of study for 'gentlemen' into one for an almost exclusively female clientele by mid-century, into one for both genders by 1990 greatly affected the contents and emphases of prescribed programmes. The contents and emphases of those prescribed programmes were also determined by the broader social, political
and economic contexts in which they operated. During certain periods, the programme presented an image of business as "office work", and thus utilitarian, functional, nonacademic, and of primary interest to female students. Emphasis on "entry-level" skills for office employment characterized the programme. At those times its prestige within the school subject hierarchy tended to be low. At other times business education was a more general course, theoretical, and fairly academic in nature, presenting a broad conception of the business world. In those periods business education included theories and practices related to owning, directing and conducting business as well as office skills and routines. During these times, business education enjoyed high status within the school subject hierarchy, and appealed to both male and female students. In addition, the status of business education depended on the attention it received from such influential entities as strong business interest groups, and the federal and provincial governments.

While more tentative than some of the other considerations, the thesis does examine the interrelationships amongst such elements as curriculum, academic and nonacademic streaming, gender roles, employment training, and political and economic agendas of government. Although the exact impact that each had in determining business education curricula is not yet entirely clear, their central role in the process is made amply clear in this descriptive study.
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Introduction

This study examines the evolution of the British Columbia business education curriculum of the public schools from 1875 when the first high school was opened in the province, to the recent 1990 revision. Its purpose is to record the curricular events in British Columbia business education, describe and interpret the changes that have occurred during the period 1875--1990, and to identify some of the major reasons for these changes. In doing so, this thesis examines the content, objectives and rationales of each major revision of the curriculum between 1875 and 1990. It also surveys the wider context in which changes were made, giving appropriate attention to social conditions, political climate, economic issues, philosophical inclinations, changes in learning psychology and other significant ideas both from within the province and imported into it from elsewhere.

The study approaches curriculum analysis from the perspective of social history. Ivor Goodson asserts that socio-historical curriculum studies may assist in clarifying current situations and perhaps provide a context for contemporary inquiry.¹ The provision of contextual information through curriculum historical studies may assist in developing and substantiating theoretical frameworks for viewing curriculum and

in uncovering new areas for further study, maintains Goodson. His British research on the way subjects become part of official curriculum and how subject groups attempt to gain status and legitimacy for their disciplines provided one comparative framework for looking at the business education curriculum in British Columbia in this study and assisted in the interpretation of certain events.²

Goodson's work, three historical case studies, traces the manner in which certain subjects became entrenched into the British curriculum. In Goodson's view as well as that of most educators, a subject's "high status" within school subject hierarchy or becoming "established" as part of curriculum, is generally regarded as a good thing, since it becomes legitimated and therefore deserving of a portion of educational resource allocation. Goodson illustrates that the system of resource allocation which supports "high status" subjects in Great Britain is, in fact, an effective system for perpetuating the dominance of certain types of subject entities over others. This dominance ultimately produces inequities, in social status and material gain, to students of the low status subjects. Goodson's study appears to prove that a subject's ability to appeal to powerful proponents, in Great Britain's case the university, to speak to its "rigour" or value grant it status and legitimacy within the school subject hierarchy. High status and legitimacy means

official attention and an often disproportionate share of financial and other resources. The history of the development of the British Columbia business education curriculum illustrates some of the conclusions Goodson makes in his study.

Public school business education as an entity comprised of a group of subjects has received its share of attention within the professional literature with respect to discussions of teaching techniques, methods of planning, questions of emphasis and the like. Comparatively few studies, however, deal specifically, with its history. There are a number of British and American general histories of business education and many journal articles have been written relative to specific aspects of it. In the last twenty years, for example, some Canadian criticism has been levelled at the nature of business education programmes and the inequities they have generated or perpetuated for students over time. Historians with feminist and neo-Marxist perspectives have criticized its socialization aspects and its mechanisms of "social control". Graham Lowe's study examined the history of

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women in the office occupations.\textsuperscript{6} Paul Moreland and John Hewson wrote brief and very general histories of business education in Canada\textsuperscript{7} while Eleanor Bujea traced the history of the training of Canadian business education teachers.\textsuperscript{8} Robert Heywood and Harold L. Weeks evaluated British Columbia commercial programmes in their time.\textsuperscript{9}

The history of British Columbia business education curricula has been largely ignored. There is no one single work in which the curriculum is examined or analyzed over extended periods of time. Graham Bruce's Master's thesis touches on curriculum among other issues between 1875 and 1935, and gives a brief overview of the "state" of commercial programmes in British Columbia.\textsuperscript{10}

George H. Green, who wrote both a Master's thesis and Doctor of Paedagogy dissertation on the development of the entire

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} Paul A. Moreland, \textit{A History of Business Education} (Toronto: Pitman, 1977) and John C. Hewson, "The History of Commercial Education in Canada" (M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1940).
\item \textsuperscript{8} Eleanor Bujea, "The Development of Business Teacher Education in Canada" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Dakota, 1973).
\item \textsuperscript{9} Robert H. Heywood, "An Evaluation of the Training Programme for Commerce Teachers at the University of British Columbia College of Education" (Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1960) and Harold L. Weeks, "Organization, Administration and Supervision of Business Education in British Columbia" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1943).
\item \textsuperscript{10} Graham Bruce, "Business Education in British Columbia" (M.A. thesis, University of B.C., 1941).
\end{itemize}
elementary and secondary school curricula in British Columbia to 1944, devotes a short chapter to "the development of Manual Training, Industrial Arts, Technical Education, Home Economics, Commercial Education, and Night School Courses".11 His chapter provides a cursory look at commercial programmes, giving little attention to aims, objectives or philosophy of the curricula.

Mhora Zelter's research examined the "status" of business education in British Columbia in 197812 and Ebenezer's 1981 study examined the "status" of business education in the public secondary schools of the Okanagan and Kamloops/Cariboo regions.13 The word "status" as employed in these works refers to the condition or "state" of business education at the time the works were written in reference to business education student and teacher demographics, course loads, and business equipment inventories. Scrutiny of curriculum and content, historical or otherwise, is not the scope of either of the "status" studies.

For the purposes of clarity, this study employs the term "curriculum" to signify "the official course of study, ...constituting...a set of rules, regulations and principles to

11 George H. Green, "The Development of the Curriculum in the Secondary Schools of British Columbia" (Doctor of Paedagogy diss., University of Toronto, 1944), 224-269.


guide what should be taught". It therefore includes guides, documents, materials and texts used for teaching but excludes other conceptions of curriculum such as "the hidden curriculum", the "curriculum-in-practice" and so on.

The term "business education" is an updated one for expressions used in the past, as for example, commerce or commercial education, vocational business, or occupational commerce. Those terms essentially refer to the same entity, that is, that body of skills, attitudes, knowledge and experiences related to schooling associated with consumer, commercial, and/or business activity. The terms, "commercial programmes", "commerce courses", "business education subjects" all refer to these activities. In order to be consistent with the nomenclature of the time periods under study, discussions of the early programmes will use the term "commercial education" in this thesis, while references to the latter-day programmes (after 1978) will employ the term "business education".

This study consists of eight chapters. Following the introduction, chapter one traces in chronological order the early roots of commerce education curricular events from 1876 to 1906, and analyzes the important changes that occurred within those years. Chapter two continues tracking the evolution of the programme from 1907 to the advent of the Putman-Weir Survey of 1925. A short description of the Putman-Weir Survey findings and

political and economic events leading up to a major revision in 1937 make up the contents of chapter three. Chapter four encompasses the years 1937 to 1960. It examines the 1937 programme in great detail, and describes several feeble attempts to revise it between 1944 and 1960. It was a time of entrenchment and stability in commercial curricular affairs. The Chant Royal Commission in 1958 begins chapter five, while the rest of the chapter continues describing curricular events during the modern years to 1975. It reviews the role teachers played in effecting curriculum change. Chapter six begins with details surrounding the issuing of the 1978 "Core Curriculum" and recounts the increasingly assertive role of government and other educational constituents in determining the course of British Columbia curricular events. The mandatory consumer education courses established during the early 1980's and the reasons behind their initiation are examined. Further events leading up to a Royal Commission on Education in 1987 round out the chapter. Chapter seven surveys the recently written and adopted business education curriculum of 1990. This curriculum's congruence with issues, philosophies, and recommendations from the report on the 1987 Royal Commission are explored. Chapter eight summarizes the salient themes in the evolution of British Columbia business education curriculum history and concludes with a few brief general remarks. Following chapter eight, a "Note about Sources" and a bibliography completes the study.
Chapter 1

Early Academic Roots; 1876-1906

As early as 1861 commercial education was already occupying a place in British Columbia school programmes. In a letter to W.A. Young, (Acting Colonial Secretary), which accompanied his Third Report on Colonial Schools, the Reverend Edward Cridge, Superintendent of Colonial schools, referred to four (elementary) pupils making very satisfactory progress in bookkeeping exercises at a Victoria school. The annual reports issued by the Department of Education of the province attest to the fact that from 1871 to 1897 the official curriculum included bookkeeping as an optional subject in the elementary school programme. After August 1876, when the first British Columbia High School opened in Victoria, the secondary school programme also included the subject. Indeed, until 1906 bookkeeping was an examinable subject in the elementary programme, meaning that it was a mandatory course for high school admission. After 1907, it was dropped from elementary offerings, but became an examinable subject in the high school programme along with typewriting, shorthand dictation, business forms, laws of business and shorthand theory. Being an "examinable" subject in British Columbia curriculum has always conferred particular status to it.

1 Edward Cridge, letter to W.A. Young, 1861, Archives Collection, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, B.C. folder 395, no. 24.
The fact subjects held that status meant they carried acceptance and legitimacy from official provincial educators. This status ensured educational and financial support for the subjects, which in turn led to their expansion and longevity throughout British Columbia curriculum history.

In these early years commercial education was hardly a major issue that required legitimation, justification or struggle for inclusion in British Columbia public secondary schooling as was the case of other subject areas. Neither the general Canadian nor the specific British Columbia literature reflect any occasions of the need to justify or lobby strenuously for commercial subjects to be included within the British Columbia curriculum. In comparison, other vocational subject groups supporting fields such as industrial education and home economics have a fairly lengthy history of difficulties in achieving some recognition or legitimacy for their subject areas and consequently their inclusion in British Columbia curriculum.¹ In fact, much of the final success of groups promoting the inclusion of their subjects in British Columbia school curriculum

can be attributed to their relationship with the vocational movement.³

The reason for the acceptability of commercial education as a public school subject area probably lies in its obvious links to business and economic matters. The history of business as a middle class endeavour has likely ensured its legitimacy in public schooling. Since early times business, trade and commercial pursuits of all types have been the province of the middle classes, while manual and domestic occupations were customarily associated with the working classes. Middle class pursuits and education for them required less energetic promotion than others, especially with respect to public funding, since they were the pursuits and occupations of an increasingly dominating class in society.

Commercial education, therefore, was not the object of resistance. Because of its somewhat lengthy and already proven worth in the schools of Great Britain, United States, and Eastern Canada, and its clear connection to economic matters, the introduction and gradual expansion of commercial education within the secondary schools of British Columbia was almost natural. In fact, the commercial subjects often had good "official" support.⁴ Moreover, until the advent of the curriculum of


1937, the commercial programme in secondary schools appeared to enjoy virtually the same high status as academic subjects within the school subject hierarchy. Even when the character of commercial education began to change in the early twentieth century, and emphasis shifted from a general education for business to specific training for office work, newly evolving commercial subjects had little difficulty in being included within the provincial curriculum.

As early as 1885 an officially prescribed or sanctioned business programme was already in place in the high schools of British Columbia despite the fact there were less than 200 regularly attending high school students in the entire province and few students, if any, were actually taking the full "Commercial" programme. The annual reports describe the British Columbia high school curriculum as a three-track programme from which students could choose the "English Course", the "Commercial Course" or the "Classics Course". These "Courses" were curricular "packages" which required certain constants, mandatory variables, and free electives. These "packages" were often employed in grouping courses for various specializations throughout British Columbia curriculum history. To all appearances, the "Commercial Course" was a challenging

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5 British Columbia Department of Education, Annual Reports of the Public Schools from 1885 to 1906 (Victoria: King's Printer, various).

programme, listing bookkeeping, banking, commercial correspondence, commercial law "together with all subjects prescribed for the English Course". The "English Course" prescribed reading, writing, spelling, dictation, mental arithmetic, written arithmetic, geometry, English grammar, English history, composition and letter writing. In addition to the above, the subjects of anatomy (physiology and hygiene), natural philosophy, mensuration, algebra, and euclid(ian) geometry were required. The "Classics Course" encompassed all the above-listed subjects with the addition of Latin, Greek and French. Clearly, the "Commercial Course" was as comprehensive, if not more difficult than the "Classics Course". The "Classics" Course disappeared early in the new century, but a commercial programme has continued in various forms and capacities until the present day (1990). The place of the commercial programme in the very first official curriculum and its comprehensive nature spells out the value educational officials attached to commercial education.

The initial programme, described above, corresponded closely with the offerings in business training of the earliest public schools in Eastern United States. Historically, the influence of American educational practices on the Canadian scene have been considerable. It is important to emphasize, however, that

8 Tomkins, 253
throughout most of the early history of the British Columbia commercial curriculum, the academic ("English") programme was at its core, to which was added the commercial subjects.

The addition of subjects to an already existing academic programme to produce commercial curricula, rather than the construction of entirely new business-focused programmes is a practice that developed early in British Columbia and continued to be supported to a greater or lesser degree until midcentury. The tendency to add to an already academic focus was clearly reflective of a dominating and recurring reverence for the academic disciplines, a trait likely inherited from the British tradition which has been the origin of many of our programmes. The close connection of the commercial programme with the academic probably gave it much of its legitimacy and status within the provincial curriculum in those early years. In later years, as the British Columbia commercial curriculum gradually reduced its academic emphasis, and became more utilitarian, it lost considerable "status" among educators and students.

Although the British Columbia commercial programme retained its high status over all of these early years, it did not remain unchanged. Between 1885 and about 1900 many influences, national and international, began to transform these subjects in the public school British Columbia commercial curriculum. A number of inventions, particularly the typewriter, as well as a shorthand system useable for commercial office purposes affected office practices. In addition, enormous increases in commercial
activity and the concomitant need for trained office personnel demanded change in commercial education. While public schools in British Columbia were offering only bookkeeping and business correspondence in their early commercial programmes, the private business colleges, already serving an important educational and economic function in the United States and eastern Canada, were quickly becoming training sites for many business-oriented students. There was an increasing "market demand" for certain kinds of training, and the private colleges were attempting to fill it. The demand for bookkeeping, typewriting and other commercially-related skills became so great private schools could not accommodate all students. Moreover, many potential students could not afford the fees private schools were exacting. At the same time, changes in employment patterns of increasingly industrialized cities were resulting in the demand for other work-related training. The notion that certain kinds of schooling could be of economic value to the student and the society, and furthermore should be accessible within the public school to all students who wished it, was rapidly becoming part of a movement for vocational education.

At the same time that public demand for work-related

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9 see Dunn, "Work, Class and Education," and Foster, "Education and Work in a Changing Society". Both authors provide differing reasons for the demand for industrial and occupational training, emanating from increasing mechanization and industrial development.

education in secondary schools became more assertive, the nature of business and office occupations were changing. Up to about the late 1880's business and office occupations were almost exclusively male occupations and preparation for business "trade" activity, like many other trades, was accomplished predominantly through the apprentice system. This system was rapidly breaking down for a number of reasons, one of them being it could not fill the constantly increasing demand for trained office personnel. Until then, business activity and office activity was synonymous and was usually performed by men who owned businesses. Following the increase of commercial activity accompanying industrialization (after 1860), business activity was increasingly divided into those tasks associated with "owning and doing business" and those connected with "office work". This division of business labour occurred for a number of reasons along gender lines--the "owning and doing" of business becoming the male role, and the tasks of recording, organizing, and reproducing business documentation that of women. Chapter four explores this phenomenon in more detail.

The influence of these events became evident in the first "semi-official" document discussing a British Columbia business education curriculum in 1905-06. The Department of Education's

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Manual of School Law for 1906\textsuperscript{13} describes in great detail the revised commercial course. In the subjects of reading and orthoepy (pronunciation), English grammar, English literature, British history, Canadian history, algebra and geometry, the commercial course was the same as the previous one. In the subjects of writing and spelling, composition, geography, and arithmetic, the course was slightly altered to ally it more closely with business practice. The subjects of bookkeeping, business forms and business law were retained from the original programme. At its core, it remained more or less the same as the originally conceived, very academic programme of 1885, with one important difference—the addition of two more subjects, typewriting and stenography.

The addition of stenography and typewriting was significant for a number of reasons. First, it was a clear indication of silent approval by the department of education, for truly practical, vocationally-oriented business or commercial knowledge to enter the public school. This "approval" became clearly apparent later when the government established several exclusively commercial high schools in the province. Second, it was a hint of admission by the government, that responsibility for employment training might be one of the roles of public education, even though it appeared reluctant to accept this notion prior to this time. Third, was that it occurred as result

of public pressure and "market" demand, because of the public's growing perception of the relationship between schooling and their economic circumstances. It was the first manifestation of external pressures on commercial curriculum content. Adopting typewriting and shorthand courses had important implications for the future of commercial education and other "practical" schooling.

The addition of typewriting and stenography had a number of apparently unexpected effects on the students of the commercial programme and the development of the future business education curricula. It was primarily designed to provide students who "must leave school" with entry skills to the work of the office. It, however, overloaded the "Commercial Course" to the point where students were unlikely to complete the full programme. Moreover, in this "overloaded" business curriculum of 1905-06 lay the roots of a gradual division of commercial education into "business" education where the emphasis rested in business and financial management theories, and their attendant

14 See, for example, "Would reorganize school system here", Colonist, 7 July, 1917, p.6. Board of Trade calls for Technical Schools--planned to meet with J.D. MacLean, Minister of Education to discuss changes; "Vancouver wants technical school," Colonist, 20 August, 1919, p. 1. Engineering and Technical Institute of B.C., representing professional businessmen, supported moves to gain a technical school for Vancouver; and "Country's Youth Needs training," Colonist, 10 June, 1920, p. 5. Manufacturers' Association addressed on technical education.


decision-making functions and practices; and "office" education, in which emphasis was placed on practical training in routine tasks and procedures associated with office work. In this gradual division, the "office" branch would become less and less academic over time, while the "business" branch maintained its more academic emphasis. These differences in academic emphases had much to do, in later years, with determining the status of not only the offered subjects within the school subject hierarchy, but of those who elected to take them. The lines between the two branches became more clearly defined as time passed.
The first decades of the twentieth century were a period of unprecedented economic growth for the Canadian nation. As Canada became more industrialized toward the end of the nineteenth century, factories replaced cottage industry and population shifted from rural to urban centres. Increasing urbanization and rapid economic development changed the character of many social institutions. An increasingly apparent social dislocation occurred and particularly affected were role distinctions within the family. Some social problems became acute, and many people looked to the schools as a way of working towards resolution of them. Schools gradually came to be viewed as the agent which could shape the homes [and lives] of the next generation.¹

Economic growth, characterized by rapid increases in manufacturing and other business activity, resulted in the need by business and industry for more and better trained employees. Traditionally, this need was filled by immigrants, mostly from Great Britain.² Indeed, one of the major reasons vocational education in public schools was delayed was because of Canada's immigration policy—it seemed to be more cost efficient to


² See for example, J.K. Foster, "Education and Work in a Changing Society," 46.
"import" skilled workers rather than train the existing unskilled and displaced populations of workers.

With the increase in all commercial enterprises, office organization became more complex, and the need for employees with more commercial training than the apprentice system or immigration could offer became more pressing. Entrepreneurs recognized the demand and attempted to fill it with the establishment of private commercial schools. The educational importance of private commercial colleges had already been realized by Great Britain, United States and eastern Canada in the late 1880's and 1890's. These colleges produced graduates who filled positions in the business offices of their respective nations and many of them became teachers of the next generations of Canadian and American business graduates in both private and public schools. In Vancouver, British Columbia, Miss Eveline Richards, an immigrant from Great Britain and recent graduate of Isaac Pitman's College in that country, opened Pitman's Business School in 1898. Shortly after that, many more private business schools were opened in British Columbia, to take advantage of the ever-increasing "market demand" for "office education". The curriculum offerings in the early public school commercial programmes were said to be influenced by these schools.\(^3\)

In the area of educational philosophy, a dichotomous view of the relationship between the academic and utilitarian

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\(^3\) Graham Bruce, "Business Education in British Columbia" (M.A. Thesis, University of B.C., 1941), 28
orientations toward curriculum became evident in writings about public schooling. Educational reformers of the time proposed two approaches to changing the schools. One group supported a practical focus in schooling, in order to prepare children for a vocation in the new industrial workplace. Some of these reformers were part of an influential movement advocating 'efficiency' in all aspects of life. Another group, with academic inclinations, promoted a more child- and family-centered orientation to schooling through which childhood was protected and the family strengthened. These two groups gradually came together in what Canadians called at first, the "New Education", then later Progressivism. This "New Education" was partly a manifestation of American and European philosophical influences, promoting the idea that practical subjects and vocational preparation through schooling could assist in creating a prosperous and contented society. Those notions of education for work life, as well as education of the whole child including body, mind and spirit, embodied the hopes for the preservation of Canadian cultural standards at this time of enormous social upheaval created by industrialization.

A leading influence in the spread of the "New Education"

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4 See, for example, Franklin Bobbitt, The Curriculum (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918) or by the same author, How to Make a Curriculum (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924).

5 Many of these educators worked out of a context suggested by Froebel and Rousseau regarding early childhood education.

6 Sutherland, 216.
during the early years in Canada and particularly British Columbia, was the 1910 federal Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education chaired by J.W. Robertson. The Commission's recommendations reflected the philosophy of the New Education and supported the introduction of subjects with a practical orientation. It reported that education "should be provided...to meet the needs arising from the changes in the nature and methods of occupations..." and criticized high schools for their academic emphasis:

...The secondary school has been organized and conducted chiefly to prepare for college and the learned professions and does not give good preparatory training for the life and occupation of those who have had to leave school at about 16 or 18 years of age.  

Although they did not mention it specifically, the Commissioners would have considered the 1906 British Columbia curriculum as one that produced immature young people ill-equipped for employment in business. J.S. Gordon, High School Inspector, in his report for 1910-1911 alluded to that fact in a statement about the negative aspects of the two-year high school programme that purported to prepare students as specialists.  

Graham Bruce, who researched that era suggests that part of

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7 Canada, Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, Report of the Commissioners, Parts I-IV (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1913), 364

the problem lay in the length, two years, of the overloaded programme. It was not long enough for the students to grow up or complete it with any depth or proficiency. As it stood, students as young as fourteen years of age could complete the programme, if successful, and then join the labour force. Rate of success was another source of concern about the programme to inspector J.S. Gordon who remarked in 1911 that, of one hundred one students registered in it, only forty seven completed the work, and of those, only twenty-nine successfully passed the examinations.

As result of those conditions and concerns, in 1914 the Department of Education revised the commercial curriculum. The time required to complete the "Commercial" programme was extended to three years. This addition of another year's work allowed students more time to mature and to work through the programme. The new curriculum addressed the objections to an overly academic emphasis by the addition of civics and economics-type courses, along with accounting theory, accounting practice, statute law and penmanship. Geometry as a required course was dropped

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9 Bruce, 32-34.
10 Bruce, 33.
11 Sheila Cameron, telephone interview with author, 17 March 1991. Ms Cameron, an eminent Vancouver business education teacher, entered the work force as a secretary in the offices of the Vancouver superintendent of schools after completing the commercial programme at King Edward School. She was fifteen years old.
altogether, and business correspondence replaced composition in attempts to provide a more "useful" writing course. In addition, subject matter pertaining to business forms was separated from business law and grouped with bookkeeping instead. The introduction in 1914 of accounting theory and practice and statute law as separate entities from bookkeeping and business law was the genesis of the hierarchical stratification of business courses into an academic and a nonacademic stream. The new subjects, together with those already in the programme, seemed to provide a far more comprehensive vocational training in the needs for effective business service than did the content of the previous programme. Moreover, the inclusion of economics gave recognition for the first time to the need for a subject which would supply general business knowledge and principles rather than strictly vocational or academic knowledge and skills.

By the 1914 revision, a distinct tension in the balance of academic disciplines with those of a vocational nature clearly appeared in all the high school programmes. One upshot of the growing interest in commercial education was that in 1918 Vancouver opened Cecil Rhodes Commercial High School in a few rooms attached to Cecil Rhodes Elementary School. Soon Cecil Rhodes became the Vancouver School of Commerce, and later other commercial schools like Grandview and Fairview were opened.

The Technical Education Act, introduced in 1919 by the federal government as a response to the Royal Commission of 1910, heightened acceptance of practical education across the nation.
Ten million dollars was designated for a joint provincial-federal plan to build and maintain technical schools for the next ten years. Although only three million was actually spent, the commercial schools, trailing on the coattails of trades and industrial subjects, benefitted from this plan. Not only did they receive funding for their programmes, commercial education programmes were now also being offered in technical and vocational schools as well as a few public schools as result of this funding. Vancouver Technical School and King Edward High School were examples of such schools.

By 1920, British Columbia adolescents interested in taking the commercial course had a fair range of options. They could attend one of the private business colleges in Vancouver, New Westminster, Victoria or Trail, British Columbia. Alternatively, they could enroll in the Vancouver High School of Commerce, or one of the public high schools that offered full or partial programmes in commercial studies.

Between 1914 and 1923 only minor revision in the commercial curriculum accompanied the substantial expansion of services. In 1918 the department eliminated algebra and grammar from the first and second-year requirements and they were substituted with Canadian history and civics. The attention paid to Canadian history and civics reflected a renewed sense of nationalism which

13 Tomkins, 111, 128.

had developed over the war years, and also indicated the interest for education of the "whole child". Removing algebra and grammar requirements continued the gradual shift away from purely academic offerings which had begun with the inclusion of typewriting and shorthand early in the century.

In the 1923-1924 school year the department made important changes to the commercial curriculum. The course of study was continued as a three-year programme but required of the students concentrated study in one of two clearly separated areas: a secretarial option or an accounting option. These two separate commercial streams were established in an attempt to meet public and business demands for "specialized" employees. Students choosing the secretarial option were given special training in shorthand, typewriting and stenographic practice; while those choosing the accounting option were obliged to learn the theories of accounting, higher arithmetic functions, and commercial law.

The division of commercial knowledge into two distinct streams or "strands", which began with the separation of accounting and bookkeeping in 1914, exemplified an era of specialization and increasing compartmentalization of knowledge in all British Columbia curricula.\(^\text{15}\) During the early 20's, content and subject matter was organized following "scientific" methods in education. Curriculum development was guided by traditional assumptions that knowledge or organized bodies of subject matter, carefully prescribed and diligently acquired,

\(^{15}\) Green, 180-181.
would achieve planned personal and social ends. It resulted in
the division of the broad areas of disciplines into smaller and
smaller units. "Thus there was engendered a kind of
specialization in the various subjects that was common in
practically all secondary schools".¹⁶

The division of business knowledge into two distinctly
separate groups had important effects on the development of
commercial programmes and the career opportunities of their
students in future years. It began dividing students, teachers,
and the allocation of educational resources into differing status
groups in the school community. The academic, theory-laden
information-using accounting and statute law courses became
attractive to able students pursuing further post-secondary
education and management careers. These courses enjoyed a higher
status within the school subject hierarchy both because of their
academic content and the calibre of students they attracted. The
more practical bookkeeping and other information-manipulative
courses drew the interest of students less academically able,
and/or in need of rapid entry skills for employment because of
economic circumstances. These less academic, more practical
courses ranked lower in the school subject hierarchy. Students
who elected to take the job-entry preparatory courses, were
preparing for office occupations. They were predominantly girls,
and they were being offered knowledge limited to learning the

¹⁶ H.L. Caswell and D.S. Campbell, Curriculum Development
skills and duties associated with routine office tasks. The students of the accounting and law specialties, mostly boys, were being offered knowledge that would prepare them for careers in business, rather than office work.

In the time periods considered here, the gender composition of the school population, including teachers is important. Overall average enrollment figures between 1900-1930 indicate that almost 55% of the student population in the secondary schools were female.\(^{17}\) Of the students who took the commercial course, well over 75% were female.\(^{18}\) At the same time, more than 90% of all secondary teachers were male including those of the Commercial courses.\(^{19}\) Interviews with students and teachers of that time indicate that of the relatively few female teachers in the high schools during that time, most of them were home economics or secretarial instructors. These demographic characteristics, which remained substantially unchanged until well into the 1970's, most certainly had the effect of promoting and perhaps intensifying the partitioning of business knowledge


\(^{18}\) Male-female breakdown of students enrolled in specific courses is unavailable, but evidence provided by teachers and students of the times through interviews indicates that this is a fair approximation.

into gender divisions by example and socialization. It is very probable that these divisions affected the future opportunities of the students who took the courses.

The stratification of different kinds of knowledge was already apparent in the academic vs vocationalism debates earlier in the century, but it became clearly manifest in ensuing commercial education curricula of British Columbia.

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Chapter 3
The Putman-Weir Survey and New Directions for Change; 1924-1937

The twenty years of the inter-war period were quite different from the preceding decade in terms of economic development and the reasons advanced for an increased economic orientation in education. Unlike the 1900-1914 years of sustained economic growth, the Canadian economy during the 1920's and 1930's witnessed periods of both depression and growth. From the postwar recession of 1919-1923, the Canadian economy entered a period of growth for the rest of the decade until the crash in 1929 heralded the protracted depression of the 1930's. On the surface, the new justification for a greater vocational orientation in education during the 1920's and 1930's appeared to be in the benefits that would accrue to the individual.¹ This justification was in keeping with the New Education's philosophy of child-centered learning. Stamp suggests that underlying the concern for the individual was a strong concern for preserving traditional values in society, after a time of social, economic and moral upheaval in the post-war years, and like Sutherland, argues that "educators and politicians sought to use schools in their search for a return to 'normalcy'".² Educators believed that the "right" kind of education, including suitable moral and

¹ Stamp, Robert M, "Vocational Objectives in Canadian Education: An Historical Overview," Canadian Higher Education in the 70's (1972), 253.

² Stamp, "Vocational Objectives", 254.
vocational foundations, would provide the growing number of adolescent students with appropriate vocational preparation and an upright moral attitude, thereby deterring them from engaging in radical political action. The demands of both the labour and women's suffrage movements were becoming particularly loud during these years and increasingly attractive to rebellious youth.

In May 1925, a report of the most extensive Canadian school surveys ever attempted to this time was issued by Dr. J. H. Putman, Senior Inspector of Schools, Ottawa, and Dr. G. M. Weir, Professor of Education, the University of British Columbia at the request of the Liberal government of John Oliver. Its many recommendations affected British Columbia curriculum construction and content until well into the sixties.

The Commissioners recommended the establishment of middle schools, or junior high schools, for students between the ages of twelve and fifteen years of age, encompassing the grades seven and eight of the elementary programme, and grade nine of the high school. They also suggested that a more flexible programme of studies needed to be provided for those grades as well as for senior high school classes. Putman and Weir found that the strongest influence on forming high school curricula to that time was the Canadian university. Since the high schools provided the university with students, the university attempted to fashion the high schools into preparatory schools. High ideals of scholarship and a wholesome respect for the traditional cultural
subjects resulted from this practice, claimed the Commissioners, but they also resulted in a decidedly undemocratic institution which served the needs of only a limited group of students. The Commissioners questioned the legitimacy of the high school's curriculum "being dominated by the real or fancied needs of the university" since the high school was supposedly an agent of popular education. The curriculum, they found, was narrow and rigid in its practical outcome, since it prepared students for one of two streams; those who expected to enter university, and those who intended to teach.

To alleviate these problems they recommended a curriculum which would suit the needs of students of differing natural abilities. Putman and Weir were opposed to tradition as the determinant of subject selection for curricula and decried the formal discipline theory guiding the current high school programmes: "So long as the present widespread allegiance is...paid to the formal disciplinary theory of studies, there can be little prospect of substantial improvement, academic or professional, in the school system of British Columbia".  

A major survey recommendation was the institution of a "common" or core curriculum made of English, history and civics, science and health education which was intended to occupy the student for approximately fifty percent of school time. The other half of school time was to be composed of subjects related

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to a course of study or "stream" of the students' choosing. For example, if a commercial course was chosen, the student would of necessity take commercial subjects; if the university course was elected, then subjects attached to that course were required. The commissioners also recommended that the high school programme be based on a system of promotion by subjects, and suggested high school diplomas be granted when the necessary credits for a particular course had been earned. They believed that each principal and staff might safely be left the responsibility of granting such high school diplomas and encouraged the reduction of the number of mandatory formal examinations demanded of exiting students.

An immediate effect of Putman-Weir's Survey on British Columbia commercial education was the establishment in 1927 of the junior high school and the offering of a general "Junior Business" course. This subject had a number of aims and purposes reflective of the Putman-Weir concern for the need for education of all kinds of students. The subject was to "give some definite business training to the boys and girls who must leave school and seek junior positions", supply the student with an opportunity for a general knowledge of business principles, and offer a convenient try-out course for purposes of vocational

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guidance. In commercial education for British Columbia, these three objectives appeared to be the first concrete manifestations of an increasingly child-centered ideology, in which the needs of the child became at least as important as those of society or the demands of business and industry. Jean Mann and others take a somewhat opposing view, and suggest these courses were less a result of child-centred motives and perhaps more of social engineering.

Changes were made to other subject groups in the British Columbia curriculum. They presaged a trend for all courses of study except commercial education. For example, a course in general science was offered for grade nine students in the newly organized junior secondary programme in 1927. This was the beginning of the trend toward the unification or integration of subjects into general courses designed to give the student a view of a whole field of knowledge and an understanding of important principles rather than a somewhat narrow knowledge of one or more of the specialized subjects. Thorndike's "atomistic theory" which for a time influenced British Columbia curricula seemed to have lost ground except in commercial education. An overall "unification" of many of the subjects didn't actually occur until

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5 British Columbia Department of Education, Programme of Studies for the Junior High Schools of British Columbia, 1927-1928, 87.

the comprehensive curriculum revision of 1935-39; however, the years following the Putman-Weir report saw a gradual development toward it in all areas except commercial education.

The years between 1930-1937 were difficult years for governments in possession of a "blueprint" for renewing and revising education in the form of the Putman-Weir report, but also facing a deepening depression. Many of the recommendations of the Putman-Weir Report involved extra financial expenditures at a time when "it was contended in many quarters that education costs were too high as the result of inefficient administration, the inclusion of too many "fads and frills" in the curriculum and too high a level of teachers' salaries". The "fads and frills" referred to manual training, domestic science, and technical education but not business education! In 1932 the government of the day, bewildered by a huge provincial debt and massive unemployment, sanctioned the appointment of a committee of business executives to look into the financial affairs of the province. George Kidd, a prominent businessman, was chairman of that committee and authored the ensuing report, termed the Kidd Report. The report was criticized by large numbers of the public, as well as professional educators as a reactionary, anti-democratic, unenlightened document that promoted an elitist, conservative, non-progressive view of education. Its

7 Jean Mann, 103.

8 George Kidd, Report of the Committee Appointed by the Government to Investigate the Finances of British Columbia (Victoria: King's Printer, 1932).
recommendations in respect to education were, for the most part, rejected outright.

In 1933, when the Liberal government of T. Dufferin Patullo was elected, Weir (of the Putman-Weir Report) was appointed Minister of Education. One of the Liberal election promises was to make changes to the educational system, the most important of which was to raise the age limit of free education from 15 to 18 years of age, or until the student had completed grade 12. Another was the frequently promised revision of the entire curriculum. Stymied by the depression and recurring problem of financing public schools, Weir first set up a Commission on School Finance headed by H.B. King as technical advisor. King not only made recommendations regarding the financial aspects of reorganizing public education, he also brought to his report an educational philosophy much in agreement with that currently espoused in the United States. The conviction that social problems could be alleviated by "modern business methods and efficiency" had grown among reformers in the United States for quite some time. The ideals embodied in the concept of scientific management had gained such prestige that they were applied by some to schools. Franklin Bobbitt, an educational administrator at the University of Chicago fathered the

5 H.B. King, School Finance in the Province of British Columbia (Victoria: King's Printer, 1935).

10 See, for example, Raymond E. Callahan, Education and the Cult of Efficiency (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) for detail about the importance of "social efficiency".
scientific administration movement in the United States. Many of Bobbitt's ideas were enthusiastically approved and supported in King's report.

Until the 1937 revision the formal process of curriculum change appeared to be somewhat sporadic, and determined largely by officials at the Department of Education upon recommendations from school administrators. Weir instituted a formal process which was followed more or less faithfully until well into the 1970's.11 A Central Committee, headed by an "Advisor" of Curriculum was appointed from the ranks of eminent administrators of large elementary and high schools in Vancouver and Victoria. Under the Central Committee a number of General Committees encompassing elementary, junior high and senior high school interests were selected. Beneath those, subject committees to formulate the courses of study for each subject were chosen. Although Weir actively invited the co-operation of all teachers, school trustees, parent-teacher associations, industrial leaders, service clubs, local councils of women and similar organizations ...[only] teachers who have had extended teaching experience and advanced professional training, as well as all other persons who have made a serious study of curriculum problems are urged to forward their suggestions for the careful scrutiny and sympathetic consideration of the Department.12

It appears that "experts" rather than the practices of "ordinary" classroom teachers carried the most influence for curriculum


change during those times.

The central revision committee for a new curriculum included H.B. King and its direction was clearly charted by Weir. He emphasized the social role of the school and insisted that the curriculum teach cooperation rather than competition. The material used in curriculum planning had to be selected "primarily for its functional value with social utility in mind".\(^\text{13}\)

The new curriculum was released in a number of bulletins issued from 1936 to fall 1937. The course outlines were very lengthy and detailed, and each was accompanied by a preface of "Aims and Philosophy of Education in British Columbia" which identified the functions of the new programme. The social aspects of education was very clearly articulated:

> From the point of view of society, the schools in any state exist to develop citizens, or subjects, according to the prevailing or dominating ideals of the state or society. Any society desires to transmit its culture. All states seek to ensure their safety, stability, and perpetuity...The people...wish to have citizens able to play their part in a democratic state, but able also to make new adjustments in an evolving progressive social order, so that social stability may be united with social progress...\(^\text{14}\)

The influence of the depressed economic times; the reports of Putman-Weir, Kidd, and King; the philosophies of American reformers such as Dewey and Bobbitt; and the personal beliefs of

\(^{13}\) The B.C. Teacher, 15, no. 2 (February 1936): 11.

\(^{14}\) British Columbia Department of Education, Programme of Studies for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia, Bulletin I (Victoria: King's Printer, 1937), 11.
George M. Weir, Minister of Education at the time, had visible effects on the new general high school curriculum released in 1937. The newly revised commercial studies curriculum clearly and in great detail articulated the direction in which business education would take until well into the 1970's.

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Chapter 4

Consolidation, Entrenchment, Stability; 1937-1960

The official British Columbia secondary school curriculum, in a state of continuing theoretical and rhetorical revision since the public release of the Putman-Weir report in 1925, became a physical reality in the years between 1936 and 1939. During those years, the Department of Education issued lengthy and large numbers of programme and course philosophies, rationales and outlines describing every aspect of the long-promised revised curriculum. The body of official literature pertaining to this new revision was immense, since each course and programme listed within the main document was described and outlined in minute detail in separately printed documents. The twenty-five year period following the release of this curriculum was a time of many locally, nationally and internationally important historical, political, economic and sociological events; however, this new curriculum remained stable and remarkably unchanged throughout the years. The principal curriculum document represented the learning psychology, philosophy, and political and economic policies of the province of British Columbia with regard to the education of children, until the early 1960's.1

As well as the general curriculum, the revised 1937 commercial curriculum endured, relatively unchanged except for a four-year interruption between 1944-1948, throughout the major revisions of 1950-1951, 1960-1965 until 1978-1982.

The British Columbia "Commercial Studies" curriculum of 1937, with its over 162 pages of detail, offered a programme on which major emphasis, for the first time, was placed on the teaching of office skills rather than business theory and "generic" commerce-related knowledge.¹ The academic base of the previous programmes, gradually eroding since 1906, was reduced to two academic subject constants: English through to grade twelve, and social studies to grade eleven, along with health and physical education. Apart from those constants, students were to choose courses in a concentration of their choice. The notion of the commercial programme as being a "package" or separate programme from others, originating in 1875, became a tightly prescribed entity in 1937. This "package" however, was far less academic than ever before. The available "concentration" choices leading toward high school graduation were: University Entrance, Home Economics, Art, Technical, Commercial, and Music. Including the constants, the course objective (high school graduation) was to accumulate 112 credits from grades nine through twelve. A credit was defined as an hour per week of instruction, with most

¹ British Columbia Department of Education, Commercial Studies for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia Bulletin V (Victoria: King's Printer, 1937).
courses carrying a value of five credits. So, for a student of the commercial programme, the "constant" load represented 47 credits. The remaining 65 credits were to be chosen from the available courses in the commercial programme.

The commercial programme listed 14 courses. At least 11 of those courses can be described as entirely and exclusively concerned with the learning, practicing and perfecting of office-process skills—that is, those skills attending to the recording, organization, reproduction and/or storage of business information. Those courses were: Shorthand I and II, Typewriting I and II, Secretarial Practice I and II, Business Arithmetic, Office Appliances, Bookkeeping I, II and III. The detailed outlines of those courses show that little was offered in the way of general business theory and knowledge within them. The introduction to typewriting, which includes the statement that "typewriting is no longer classified as a specialized subject, but is rapidly taking its place as a general subject in the secondary school curriculum", attempts to define typewriting as a general subject, but then, in the same paragraph justifies its primarily vocational approach and objectives:
The approach to Typewriting I, as well as its objectives, is primarily vocational. Thus the training provided will be fundamentally sound for any group whose aim is the personal use of typewriting. One the other hand, it is also designed to provide a prevocational foundation for students who will proceed with the more advanced courses intended to fit them to meet the demands of business.¹

Only two courses which may have taught students how to acquire, manipulate, and make decisions based on general business knowledge and principles were offered. They were General Business and Law,¹ and Junior Business and Introductory Bookkeeping.⁵

When comparing the proportion of constants, mandatory "variables", concentration courses and free choice courses, between the differing programme concentrations or "packages", the commercial, home economics and technical courses demanded a far greater proportion of mandatory courses than any of the other programmes. Essentially, a greater degree of specialization was required of students for high school graduation in those programmes than for any other. The opportunity to take any general interest, or academic courses was severely limited because of these requirements. As an example, for the home economics, technical and commercial programmes, the constant load

³ Commercial Studies, 1937, 11. In actual fact, it appears that typewriting, known as keyboarding in 1991, never did become a "general" subject until the computer became a permanent fixture in most secondary school classrooms after 1985.

¹ Commercial Studies, 76.

⁵ Commercial Studies, 111.
was forty-seven units, the "variable" and mandatory concentration load was 50 units, for a total of 97 out of the necessary 112. This total allowed the students only 15 "free" units (free electives), over four years to choose other courses to fill in their programme. In the music programme, however, after including the constants and mandatory variables, students could choose 47 additional units of ("free electives") from other areas. In the art programme, the free electives amounted to 45 credits.6

The emphasis on specialization and task-specific training within the commercial and technical programmes was meant to produce employable students ready for "entry" positions in business and industry. Judging from the testimony of former students, teachers, and principals, and the longevity of the curriculum, the programmes were successful in this.

The 1937 commercial curriculum was undoubtedly a product of its time. Two major influences on it were the depressed economic conditions, and the demographic composition of most business offices of the years between 1930 and 1937.

The government budgets of all the provinces in the nation were negatively affected by the depression, including that of British Columbia. An ever-increasing concern for the state of the economy and the employability of the population was a

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6 British Columbia Department of Education, Programme of Studies for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia Bulletin I. (Victoria: King's Printer, 1937) figures calculated from information offered page 29 and following.
dominant issue of the times and as noted previously, schooling was thought to hold the solution to many social problems, including those related to the economy. During the 1930's newspapers and periodicals were filled with articles about labour, employment and the education of the population for work.

Perhaps more important than the depression in crafting the 1937 curriculum, were the profound changes in business and office work which had developed between 1870 and 1930. By 1930 the fundamental characteristics that the business office holds today had been established\(^7\). Offices in 1870 were small entities generally employing only a few male clerks responsible for all the tasks and decisions affecting the business. Consequently, the employee was aware of all the workings of the business from the first transaction to the last. In this way the relationship between the employee and the employer, (usually the owner) was, generally, a personal one. By 1930, with capitalist enterprises expanding and consolidating into large corporations, the need for more recordkeeping and correspondence resulted in dramatic increases in volume of office work. As result, the demand for office workers rose rapidly, and this need, filled by literate women, was one of the factors affecting the reorganization and feminization of clerical office work:

\[^7\text{Margery Davies,} \textit{Woman's Place is at the Typewriter} (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 163.\]
The primary characteristic of that reorganization was an elaboration of the division of labor, with the restructuring of firms into functionally defined departments being basic. The effect on clerical jobs was immediate. Confined to working in a single department, a clerical employee was now at best able to understand only how things were done in that one department. No longer was he or she doing a job whose vantage point afforded a picture of the entire operations of a firm. Departments were often divided and subdivided into their component parts, a process that served only to further the isolation of any single office job.⁸

The depression increased the number of women available for work. Their incomes became important to family earnings, and clerical work was more desirable than other working-class employment, both because of the higher wages it offered and the comparatively high status it enjoyed in a society which offered very few occupational opportunities for women.⁹ Between the years 1891 and 1931, in Canada, the number of women in the job categories of bookkeepers, cashiers, stenographers and typists increased from 8,530 to 162,774.¹⁰ Clearly, the role of women as office workers had become acceptable by the 1930's and indeed became dominant in the many functions of the office. However, the role women assumed in the office rarely, if ever, carried supervisory or management responsibilities simply because of the existing social order. Since patriarchal social patterns dictated that men were dominant and women subordinate, it seemed

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⁸ Margery Davies, 163.
⁹ Margery Davies, 169.
natural that men occupy the higher-level office jobs.

Women reared in a male-dominated society and shaped by patterns of male dominance in a variety of ways, both subtle and direct, were trained to submit to male authority. Thus the feminization of clerical labor meant a docile workforce and helped to stabilize the power relations between office workers and management.¹

Education and training for the office positions open to women was in ever-increasing demand by those young women who aspired to work as clerks, secretaries, typists, and stenographers. Moreover, the provision of this kind of training fulfilled a social function in providing business and industry with a supply of qualified employees. It is, therefore, not difficult to understand why the new commercial curriculum of 1937 became so particularly office-skills centered.

Some memories of two students who attended commercial programmes during the years 1938-1942 clearly illustrate the choices many students made and why they made them:

All the students in my secretarial option classes were girls. It was considered 'femish' for boys to take them. If any boys were interested in commerce classes at all, and there were hardly any I'll say, they were in the bookkeeping and business law classes. All the girls in my classes went on or planned to become secretaries and clerks until we married. We imagined marrying the boss, never becoming one.¹²

¹ Margery Davies, 171

¹² Patricia Ruth O'Connor, interview May 17 1990 in discussing commercial programming at John Oliver High School. The commercial students in that school, according to Ms O'Connor, had classes in a completely different area of the school than the "regular" students. "It was already clear to us commercial students that we were of a lower class than the 'regular' students. We were termed 'nonacs', and the principal treated us with far less respect than he treated the 'regulars'. The physical separation between the 'regulars' and 'commercial' students only underlined the supposed differences between the two groups."
When asked why they took the commercial programme rather than the 'regular', they both asserted that it was an economic decision.

We girls in the commercial programme knew that we would never ever go to university because our families were not well off, we could never afford it, and so it was never encouraged in our home. We needed to learn something that we could do as a job and bring in some income to our families until we got married. None of us ever wanted to become waitresses, which seemed to be the only other option besides being sales girls in stores or factory workers. Anyway, being a private secretary was considered to be rather glamorous. So that was why most of us took commercial programmes. Besides, it was free training and that was important during those days.\textsuperscript{13}

The notion that the female office employee was a temporary appointee waiting for marriage, was very strong then. It gave employers many seemingly legitimate reasons to offer low pay and few prospects for upward mobility to those employees. This attitude was fairly common until well into the 1970's and perhaps still operates to some extent in certain quarters.

Former students were also asked if they remembered any classmates who could have actually afforded to go to university but consciously chose the secretarial option because of genuine interest. Both interviewees suggested that frequently, those who chose to take those courses out of supposedly "pure interest", happened to be daughters of merchants or businessmen who owned small enterprises such as jewelry stores, plumbing firms or small factories, who, in fact could send their daughters to university.

\textsuperscript{13} Patricia Ruth O'Connor, interview 17 May 1990. Ms Anna McGowan, interview with author, 23 June 1990 made a similar point.
Their motivation, claimed the interviewees, was a wish "bide their time" helping out in the family business until marriage, rather than go to university to take more schooling. The idea that daughters could be trained to fill office positions in the family business seemed to be acceptable. The view, however, that daughters might manage the business was rarely, if ever, entertained. Clearly, young women were very well 'trained' in their high school programmes for office jobs. Whether it was 'commercial education', however, is indeed questionable.

An important aspect of the 1937 "Commercial Studies" revision was the retention of the 1923 requirement, that students choose one of two "specializations" within their commercial programme. Bound already to take a rather limiting sequence of office-skills courses, commercial students had also to choose to specialize between secretarial or accountancy divisions of those courses. This further specialization had the effect of sorting the already 'sorted' commercial students into two further divisions. The accounting-bookkeeping specialists taking a more academic course load with the requirements of general business and law, held more "status" within the hierarchy than the specialists in the secretarial option. The division of students into academic and work-related streams, followed by the further division of those streams into a hierarchy based on the supposed academic rigour of selected courses, had the effect of stratifying students into social levels at school, and later on, in the office and general work world. At the top of the
hierarchy was the strictly academic student, destined for university and a professional career. Further down, was the "practically-oriented", occupationally-prepared student, destined for working class occupations in factories, stores and offices. At the lower end of this division were women, often called "business girls", waiting to marry. Below them, were manual labourers, waitresses, housemaids and domestics.

Following the release of the commercial curriculum in 1937, teachers set about implementing it according to their vision of what it should be. When war was declared and many male teachers and office workers enlisted in the military, employment opportunities for women in schools and offices increased. In both areas, there was a shortage of qualified personnel. As a direct result many women were presented with opportunities to improve their working life prospects. It was during this time that many office-experienced women, and women graduates from private commercial colleges were recruited to teach the commercial courses in high schools. Naturally, they brought the attitudes, and knowledge of structures, politics, power relations and hierarchies of the business office, as well as first-hand experience of the needed office skills to their teaching. In the years 1937-1946 the "Commercial studies" programme was gradually redefined into an "office skills" programme. The British Columbia commercial "package" curriculum of 1937, and the

14 "Staff Changes" B.C. Teacher, 14, no. 2 (October 1934) 21, notes that a Miss G. Savage from Pitman's Business College was hired to Templeton High School's Commercial Department.
effectively socialized business teachers of the day, both male and female, perpetuated a certain kind of high school commercial training and business office environment which "kept women in their place"... now that they had found a new one!

The commercial studies curriculum of 1937, part of an educational game-plan resulting from a declining economy, was a paradox. On the one hand it was a "freeing" and "progressive" curriculum, efficiently training aspiring young women for much-coveted office jobs. At the same time it was a binding one, limiting, by the nature of the knowledge obtained, those same young women to subordinate office positions and, by extension, in many instances, inferior social status.

The largely academic, theoretical curriculum in the early years of the century, gradually shifting to one of intensely practical utility by 1940 was no doubt partly a result of the difficult economic times. Regardless, of the reasons, it seemed to parallel a general trend, nationally and internationally, favouring a more utilitarian philosophy toward all education and business education in particular. Some attribute it to the result of a belief in a more "democratic" curriculum, which was to serve children of all abilities and talents; to others it

15 See, for example, J. Marshall Hanna, "Conflicting Viewpoints in the Field of Secondary School Business Education" (D.Ed. diss., New York University, 1939).

16 George H.E. Green, in his thesis, "The Development of the Curriculum in the Secondary Schools of British Columbia" clearly states that the utilitarian quality of the 1937 curriculum was due to an attempt to produce a more "democratic" curriculum. Green apparently sat on one of the revision committees and was privy to much of the discussions surrounding decisions regarding the "new" curriculum.
was the manifestation of a belief in the education of the "whole child", including learning for work life. Still others, argued it was a part of a plan to serve and stabilize the current economic and political agendas. Notwithstanding the motivations and thinking of its supporters, the utilitarian, practical vision of education came to the forefront in the British Columbia commercial curriculum of the late 1930's. Along with this vision however, came the notion that commercial education, like many other practical disciplines, was somehow inferior to the "cultural" subjects. As result, the students, mostly young women, of those perceived to be inferior subjects and programmes were conferred with the same inferior status.

The general trend in the late 1920's of the reunification of disciplines, became clearly apparent in the general high school curriculum of 1937. The separate topics of literature, poetry, composition, spelling, writing, reading were unified into the constant subject of English. Similarly, divisions of the social sciences such as geography and history became social studies, the laboratory sciences were unified into general science until the grade eleven and twelve years, and algebra and geometry were unified into general mathematics courses. It was only in the commercial programme that an increasing division and subdivision between bodies of knowledge occurred. In ensuing years, as office technology and information management techniques became more "systemized", an ever-increasing division and subdivision of

17 Jean Mann, 105.
commercial knowledge would continue. These divisions would, in turn, sort students into roles that, on the surface, appeared to serve their needs for commercial education but perhaps worked to their distinct disadvantage.

The Department of Education noted a disquieting trend in the enrolment patterns of high school programmes in its 1944 supplement to the "Programme of Studies for Junior and Senior High Schools of British Columbia". Despite the fact that there was an "insistent demand from the public in all parts of the province that the high schools have a less academic bias", it noted that enrolment in the subjects of industrial arts, home economics and the commercial subjects had for some years been falling off.\(^\text{18}\) The reasons, according to the ministry were partly because of faulty educational guidance (including parental guidance) and partly because priority in time-table [sic] construction has been given to the more academic subjects associated with University studies.\(^\text{19}\)

Since the war had shown the importance of the industrial arts, home economics and commercial subjects, the continued existence of them needed to be reaffirmed, claimed the department.\(^\text{20}\) To remedy the situation, the Department issued a list of subjects in which all students had to earn at least ten credits in grades


\(^\text{19}\) *Programme of Studies*, 1944, 13-14.

\(^\text{20}\) *Programme of Studies*, 1944, 13-14.
nine and ten—criteria never before required. The list of courses included: industrial arts or technical subjects, home economics, art, music, commercial studies (including business English and business arithmetic), agriculture, geography and practical mathematics. The foremost objective for mandating these credits was to increase the enrolment of students into these subjects to safeguard their place within school programmes. Another objective that may have been underlying these requirements was to increase the "status" of the practical courses within the school subject hierarchy. In its own introduction to the typewriting course of the 1937 "Commercial Studies" document, the Department acknowledges the general public's perception of practical subjects as being inferior. It refers to the cloud which tends to hover over "practical" subjects. They have been designated practical and therefore "inferior" to the "cultural" subjects.1

Increasing the number of students, including academic ones in these courses might have served to confer greater "status" to practical subjects within the school subject hierarchy. The perceived difference in value of one kind of high school graduation certificate over another also became an issue during this time and one which the Department deemed it necessary to address:

1 Programme of Studies, 1944, 11
In the case of any two students holding the High School Graduation certificate, one with University Entrance standing and the other without it, the relative value of their certificates will depend upon the grades which they respectively have earned [not the subjects taken]. It is important that high school principals preserve the prestige of their schools and of the certificate by exercising the most scrupulous care in the maintenance of standards and the determination of grades.\textsuperscript{21}

By 1946 the Department of Education's Central Curriculum Committee, in keeping with the 10-year "renewal" plan established in 1937, contemplated another revision of the commercial programme. It released an "experimental edition" which was to be gradually implemented grade by grade between 1946 and 1948. Perhaps recognizing the limiting effects of the 1937 "office skills" programme, the new one promised to address the value business people were currently placing on basic business knowledge.\textsuperscript{23} The programme was planned to provide for three groups of courses: the constant requirements of the secondary school programme, a number of business courses intended to provide general business knowledge, and a group of vocational courses. It promised "A greater degree of ...specialization" but

\textsuperscript{22} Programme of Studies, 1944, 14.

\textsuperscript{23} There is a fair quantity of literature dealing with the "basic business" philosophy, the most eminent and prolific advocate being Gladys Bahr. See for example her "From Specific Business Training to General Education--That's the Basic Business Story" Business Education Forum (May 1957) 11: 27-29 and Two Decades of Partnership in Economic Education (Washington, D.C.: National Business Education Association, 1969). In British Columbia the notion of "basic business knowledge" has often been referred to as a desirable goal in the curriculum documents, but was sometimes ignored in the specific courses of study.
also an opportunity for students to "acquire a broad background of general business knowledge". It was intended to release students from the limited and strictly prescribed "package" of the 1937 programme, and allow for a broader one which could include more free electives in such courses as home economics, general science, industrial arts and music.

A review of the objectives of the programme show that a new emphasis was developing in general business knowledge and skills. In addition, consumer knowledge or education was, for the first time in B.C. curriculum documents, considered as being part of a commercial programme. The following is a list of the objectives of the general business courses of that programme. They were to be "of such a nature as to give pupils:--

(a) Consumer education, or business knowledge of value in personal dealings.
(b) Understandings of the place of the individual and of business in the social organization, and of how each functions in the satisfying of human wants.
(c) A knowledge of the working of government and of the part played by government in the economic system.
(d) Information about business occupations—information intended to aid pupils in the selection of vocations.
(e) A background of business knowledge that will make specialized vocational training more meaningful.

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25 Ibid., 3.
(f) Understandings of commoner business procedures and their significance—understandings useful to the individual who, though without vocational training, enters a business occupation as a general clerk or even as owner or manager of a small concern.

In addition to the new recognition for the value of general business knowledge and consumerism, the role of the individual in business and a concern for necessary commercial knowledge for personal business use was, for the first time, articulated in a commercial curriculum document. These new concerns resulted in an array of entirely new courses, and the revival of some that had been dropped in the 1923 and 1937 revisions. The chart on page following shows the courses offered in the commercial programme of 1946 as compared to those in the programme of 1937. Using the Department's own definition of "General Business Knowledge Courses", ten courses of that nature were offered in 1946 as compared to five in 1937. The number of "specialized vocational courses" were also increased with the addition of two more "specialities", namely "clerical practice" and "retail selling".

26 The Commercial Studies, 1946, 3.
A Comparison Between Courses Offered in 1937 and 1946

1946

"General Knowledge Courses"

Junior Business
Typewriting
Record-keeping
Business Arithmetic
Business English
Fundamentals of Business
Business Law
Business Organization (or Rural Economics)
Economic Geography
General Business and Applied Economics

"Specialized Vocational Courses"

Shorthand I & II
Secretarial Practice I & II
Bookkeeping I & II
Clerical Practice I & II
Retail Selling I & II
Office Practice

1937

Typewriting I
Typewriting II
Shorthand I
Shorthand II
Secretarial Practice I
Secretarial Practice II
Business Arithmetic
Business English
Office Appliances
Bookkeeping I
Bookkeeping II
Bookkeeping III
General Business & Law
Junior Business & Introductory Bookkeeping

With the adoption of the new programme, students were able to "specialize" even more than those students of the 1923 and 1937 programmes, and yet also gain the general knowledge and business principles that were becoming necessary to work in the post-war business office. At the same time, the increasing "specialization opportunities", seemed to serve as channels for students of varying abilities to be divided into homogeneous groups.

Close reading of the "Note to Administrators and Counsellors", and introductory preambles to many of the courses and programmes reveal a bias, by the writers of the document, of
a preference for particular students for certain specializations.

Note for example, the Secretarial Option:

For some reason or other the private secretary has become invested with an aura of glamour, and many girls who lack the means or ability for university training seek solace in the thought that they will become private secretaries. A moment's thought concerning the kind of girl to whom he would entrust his correspondence and confidential affairs, or better still, a few minutes' conversation with a business executive concerning the qualities he expects of his secretary, will convince the principal that the office-worker [sic] at the high level requires a lively intelligence, good appearance and voice, tact, cultural background, and a reasonable command of the English language. The Secretarial Option, therefore should be offered only to students who possess the qualities enumerated above. If counsellors and administrators load the advanced commercial classes with people of mediocre ability, three unfortunate results will ensue... 27

or the Stenographic Course:

Principals and teachers must realize that shorthand is not an easy subject to master. It is quite as difficult as a foreign language and, therefore, quite as demanding in its call for intelligent study and properly planned drill-work [sic]. Recognition of this fact will put an end to a practice once widely favoured, that of guiding weaker pupils into the stenographic field. 28

even the Retail Selling Option:

Although retailing calls for a high level of intelligence in some of its phases, many students of poor academic ability possess the necessary personal qualifications for success in this field... 29

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29 The Commercial Studies, 1946, 144.
It is not suggested that students of mediocre ability be kept out of all commercial classes, but rather that they be kept out of those classes designed to train people for the more responsible office positions.

These statements suggest that the Department at the very least was attempting to increase the number of "intelligent" (academic?) students into the commercial education fold. At most, it may have been an attempt at streaming students of varying abilities, into "suitable" courses. This streaming likely resulted in dividing students of different abilities into the various subject "status" groups--the lowest ability students going into the subjects of least status, but the most practical.

For the first time in commercial curricula a concern for "integration" of business knowledge was articulated in this document. The notion that "the treatment of many of the topics is far from complete unless such related work such as business arithmetic, vocabulary studies and ... commercial law are incorporated into the lessons" indicated a growing awareness by the curriculum builders that far more than task-specific skills were required for successful commercial students.

During the years 1948-1952, the general secondary school curriculum came under review, and by the fall of 1952 a major restructuring of all the programmes was in place. This restructuring allowed for much more freedom in course selection

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30 The Commercial Studies, 1946, 14.

31 The Commercial Studies, 1946, 7.
for students of both the university entrance and the practical programmes.

During the "governance" of the 1937 curriculum and even prior to it, students of high school programmes were divided into an "either/or" dichotomy between academic university entrance subjects or nonacademic practical subjects. Students who chose any of the practical fields, the commercial "package" for example, were excluded from university entrance because of the restrictive nature of the "package", as described earlier in this chapter. Similarly, the academic university entrance students could choose few if any practical courses because the rigorous nature of the academic programme allowed for few practical subject electives. The 1944 mandatory requirement that all students in grades nine and ten must take at least ten credits of practical courses attempted to address the problem. It appeared, however, that none of the offered programmes served the needs of the student who, for example, wished to pursue university entrance, but also wished to gain some work skills; or, the student who wished to graduate with practical skills, but also desired some academic qualifications. The curricular reorganization of 1950-1952 attempted to remedy this deficiency.

The new 1950-1952 curriculum now offered two programmes: High School Graduation General Programme and High School Graduation University Programme; both officially carrying the
same "stature" within the school community.\textsuperscript{32} The minimum 112 credits formerly required, were increased to a minimum of 120 credits. The core constants for both programmes were similar, except the university programme required more science and foreign language constants in the two senior years. For the General Programme the "constants" took up 55 credits, leaving the student to choose 65 for free major concentrations and free electives; the University Programme constants took up 85 credits, leaving the student 35 for to choosing majors and free electives. To graduate on the General Programme, a student had to MAJOR in at least one subject; for the University Programme the student required three. A major was generally defined as a minimum of three years of study in a particular field, for example, social studies; for some courses it required four (mathematics, English). The permissible fields of study included both academic and practical subjects. Accordingly, the new system of credit accumulations allowed students to choose graduation with university entrance requirements including a major in a practical field such as commerce, home economics, or agriculture. This new "status" conferred upon commercial subjects was noted in the "General Objectives and Plan of the Curriculum in Commerce" for

\textsuperscript{32} British Columbia Department of Education Division of Curriculum, \textit{Administrative Bulletin 1952-1953: Curriculum Organization for the Secondary Schools of British Columbia} (Victoria: King's Printer, 1952), 16. In this bulletin the Department cautions "Principals and Teachers should studiously avoid (emphasis in the original) giving the impression that the General Programme is inferior to the University Programme. The two programmes meet different needs."
1951:

The curricular changes introduced into the secondary schools of British Columbia with the school-year 1950-51 gave new status to the Commerce courses and should enable Commercial teachers to work with greater satisfaction than ever before. The new programme will now bring to the Commercial Departments of our schools students who formerly took no Commerce, and who require a related series of courses to meet University Entrance requirements.33

The core requirements of the "experimental" Commercial Studies curriculum of 1946, refined and implemented during the years 1946--1950 became permanent in the 1950-1951 curriculum document entitled Commerce, 1951. The contents, however, of this "experimental" edition were considerably changed in terms of courses offered. The apparent 1946 movement toward a balance between general business knowledge and vocational office skills, was abandoned in 1951. Six of the ten general business courses were dropped. Another difference between the 1946 and the 1951 documents, was a major reorganization of the courses to take into account the recognition of a new kind of student (alluded in the quotation above) apparently appearing within the commerce programmes. This document, for the first time in the history of the commercial curriculum in British Columbia, dropped the restrictive, exclusive, all-or-none "package" vision of programme planning. The university entrance student could now include a commerce major as part of her/his programme. Similarly, the general programme student could incorporate many academic courses

33 British Columbia Department of Education Division of Curriculum, Commerce 1951 (Victoria: King's Printer, 1951), 11.
in her/his programme. The majority of the courses now offered were again office skills courses very similar to those of the 1937 curriculum, but at least students had some choice in combining them with other courses. The alleged importance of and references to consumer awareness and personal business knowledge made in 1946, were all but deleted in 1951.

The four specializations offered in 1946, namely Retailing, Bookkeeping, Secretarial, and Clerical were retained within the commerce major in this curriculum and the student could choose any one of them. All, however, were geared to task- or office-specific training.

The 1951 commercial curriculum, with its emphasis on "office skills" rather than business knowledge remarkably resembled the 1937 curriculum in course content and offerings. However, it did enable students to enjoy a much broader programme than the 1937 programme because it allowed both academic and nonacademic students access to either or both divisions of knowledge within their programmes—something that had been denied them since 1937. Officially, this curriculum remained unchanged throughout the decade. A Royal Commission on Education in 1958, and a major revision of the general secondary school curriculum between 1960 and 1965, resulted in little change for the commercial curriculum. The emerging "new" commerce programme in 1965 was remarkably similar in character, philosophy and content to the 1937 programme. It would remain that way until 1972.
Chapter 5

Neo-Conservative and Progressive Changes; 1960 - 1975

The post-war years and the decade of the 1950's remained relatively free of conflict and radical or rapid change. The early 1960's however, heralded a fifteen-year period of extraordinary and rapid social, political, technological and economic change.

Between 1946 and 1955 the "baby boom" resulted in greatly increased secondary school enrolments for the 1960's. The general population became increasingly urbanized, and rural occupations dwindled. Finance, retailing, personal service and government occupations took the place of many of the traditional "working class" and manual labour positions. Women left traditional home roles in increasing numbers and entered the work world—the "office" welcomed them. The women's movement from home to wage-earner markedly changed the way women viewed their lives. The development of "the pill", as well as the decline of traditional religious authority released them from formerly preordained biological, home and family-related roles.

Culturally, Canadians benefitted from numerous federal and provincial initiatives. Following a Royal Commission on Arts, Letters and Sciences in 1951 "a major cultural explosion became evident with the proliferation of theatres and concert halls..." during the 1960's.\(^1\) School curricula as well as television

\(^1\) Tomkins, *A Common Countenance*, 269.
programming became targets of a movement for "Canadian content." With the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963, came new and shrill demands from many groups for French language instruction. Parental groups mobilized for immersion and core French programmes for their schools. At the same time new overseas immigrants, Native peoples and other ethnic minorities, as well as "alienated" western Canadians placed stress on Canadian unity. The principles of cultural diversity, regional disparity, and equality were much discussed.

Throughout the 1960's and early 1970's North American economies boomed. Society became exceedingly involved in the earning of high incomes and acquiring the abundant and ever-expanding array of consumer goods, machines and appliances. A continuous stream of new industrial, manufacturing, and office technologies changed the character of many occupations and professions. The "office" was altered by electronic communications, filing, recording, calculating, and accounting equipment.

Education enjoyed a new interest from the entire population; a rapidly increasing school population and its parents continued to place faith in schooling as the major means of improving opportunities for economic gain and social mobility. Education became just one more "product" to acquire in society's rapidly expanding catalogue of "new and improved" items. With the increased attention to education the quality of school systems began to be questioned across Canada.
Hilda Neatby, a Canadian professor from Saskatchewan, attracted a considerable degree of attention with a savage attack against the lax and undisciplined teaching that supposedly prevailed in Canadian schools. Educators' uncritical adoption of American "progressive" and Deweyian doctrines resulted in schooling that neglected the primary intellectual function of the school, claimed Neatby in her book. She exhorted Canadian educators to return academic rigour, challenging subject matter, and intellectual skills to education. Other eminent Canadian educators also criticized the system, and while they perhaps were less vitriolic than Neatby, the total effect of the criticism forced the nation and its provinces to take stock. In 1957, with the launching of the Russian Sputnik, the shortcomings of the system, with its "alleged soft pedagogy" forced governments to take action. Historically, in Canada, a common government reaction toward any particularly thorny problem resulted in the establishment of a formal investigative commission. True to form, between the late 1950's and early 1960's, five provinces initiated commissions on education.

In 1958 British Columbia announced the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into "the various phases of the provincial educational system with particular attention to

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2 Hilda Neatby, So Little for the Mind: An Indictment of Canadian Education (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1953).

3 Tomkins, A Common Countenance, 290.
programmes of study and pupil achievement". The Chairman was S.N.F. Chant, and his fellow appointees were John E. Liersch, and Riley Paul Walrod. The commission's mandate was an exceedingly broad one; its work entailed the commissioning of research reports, attending public hearings, visiting schools, meeting with various interest groups and calling for and reading over 350 briefs. The resulting report, termed the Chant Report, concluded that the major emphasis of schooling should be returned to intellectual development. In so saying, the report proposed a reorganization of school subjects into a hierarchy in terms of the time that should be allotted to each within school programming. In so doing, of course, it conferred certain status to each group of subjects. Classifying the subjects into three categories, it placed language arts and mathematics into the rank of "central importance" while relegating the cultural and practical subjects of art, music, drama, commerce, physical education, agriculture, home economics, industrial arts, health and personal development into a tertiary position. They were termed "outer subjects", which could be taught elsewhere than in the public schools, if necessary. The sciences, social studies, and languages took a secondary position as "inner subjects" having almost equal importance to the language arts and mathematics but not quite. One would think, with this quasi-official declaration of the subordinate position of practical

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subjects, that those subjects would immediately suffer neglect in
terms of public financial support and in curricular attention.
The cultural subjects did, in fact lose much ground in ensuing
years, but the vocational subjects, of which commerce was one,
received financial and public support from quite another quarter
--the federal government. Its initiatives seemed to cancel out
any potentially negative effects the Chant Report may have had on
commercial programmes.  

At about the same time the Chant Report was released, a
federally-launched Technical and Vocational Assistance Act was
passed in 1960 to combat youth unemployment and to address the
occupational realignment which had gradually developed since the
war years. Throughout the duration of the agreement 1961-1967,
which was signed by the provinces and Ottawa, the federal
government poured nearly 1.5 billion dollars into facilities
which would prepare students for entry into employment, or
provide students with courses and programmes which furnished the
basics for further training after leaving secondary schools. As
result of this funding, over 500 vocational wings and buildings,
including commercial training facilities were constructed in
Canada, many of them attached to secondary schools. 6 In the
1960's, just as it did in the 1920's, commercial education in
British Columbia benefitted both financially and in programme

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5 British Columbia, Report of the Royal Commission of

6 Tomkins, A Common Countenance, 298-299.
attention somewhat on the coattails of a renewed interest in vocationalism.

A major influence in the educational climate of North America during the early 1960's was the theories of Jerome Bruner, an American psychologist. Bruner believed that the disciplines had a basic structure that could be taught at any student level. Knowing the structure of the disciplines would, he claimed, assure the mastery of its content. Along with the "structural" learning philosophy, the advance guard of the educational world adopted a child-centered "discovery" methodology in problem-solving. The resulting curriculum reform, more academic, and subject-centered combined with a "discovery" process approach, took root in all provinces during the 1960's. It was especially visible in the "new math" curricula and science programmes in British Columbia. Teacher training in this new philosophy and methodology was particularly assertive during the late 1960's and early 1970's at the University of British Columbia.  

The social and educational climate, the Chant Report, and the Technical and Vocational Act resulted in curricular revisions in many provinces, including British Columbia. Beginning in 1962 at the junior secondary level, and continuing incrementally for the next five years over the grades, a newly revised, restructured general curriculum emerged in British Columbia. It

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would remain in place until 1978, relatively unchanged.

The Administrative Bulletin of 1965 articulated the direction of the new programmes. Secondary education was divided into two stages—the junior secondary and the senior secondary. The primary purpose of the junior secondary was for students to "explore various fields of learning and progressively prepare themselves for specific programmes in later years." The senior secondary stage was to allow students to select and follow programmes in one of five special fields of study chosen by the student. The fields of study offered were: Academic-Technical, Commercial, Industrial, Community Services, Visual and Performing Arts, and Agriculture. In examining the prescribed requirements of the programmes, it appears that they took on a somewhat more academic emphasis (in keeping with the Chant Report's recommendations) than the former. The general education constants for all the programmes were the same as in all the previous years since the 1937 revision: English 11 and 12, Social Studies 11, Guidance and Physical and Health Education 11. In addition, the constants for all programmes except the Academic-Technical prescribed mandatory General Business 12, and, moreover, for three of them, General Business 11 was also made compulsory. Examination of the General Business 11 and 12 course syllabuses show them to be fairly academic, content-based studies of geographic and regional economics. The fact that they were

required for graduation showed the emphasis curriculum-makers were currently placing on a more academic programme, and a hint perhaps of a new awareness of the need for "basic business" knowledge for students.

A paradoxical aspect of the 1965 general curriculum was the opportunity it provided for specialization and the increasingly restrictive nature of the specialized programmes as the students progressed toward graduation. All the programmes except Agriculture were divided into further specialities. The Academic-Technical offered arts-humanities, sciences, or technical specialties. The Industrial Programme provided construction, mechanics or electricity and electronics while the Community Services division offered specializations in foods, textiles or home and industrial services. The Visual and Performing Arts Programme was divided into art, music and theatre as specialization options, while the Commercial Programme offered secretarial, accountancy, and clerical. By grades eleven and twelve, students were compelled to choose a specialty and the prescription of the required courses within each specialty, once more, as in the pre-1951 revision, precluded the opportunity for students to take any courses outside it. So, as an example, the Academic-Technical student specializing in the arts-humanities division was required to take so many "required" courses in that field, there was no opportunity to take any courses either from the other specialties within that programme, such as science or math courses or courses in other programmes, such as home
economics or typewriting. A general education within any of the programmes was hindered—the student was compelled to become a specialist. The integrative presence of academic students in nonacademic classes as well as that of nonacademic students in academic subjects was once again prevented. Like the general curriculum of 1937, the curriculum of 1967 for both academic and nonacademic students became more restrictive in terms of general educational opportunities. Once more, the "either-or" dichotomy of academic and practical programming returned, and once more it clearly sorted students into differing programmes which in turn carried different status positions within the school subject hierarchy.

The commercial programme of 1967 which emanated from the revised 1965 programme bears close examination, since its purpose was to "provide the basic preparation necessary for employment or further training in business and commerce", identifying two goals. Its specializations were reduced to three—secretarial, accountancy and clerical from the 1951-52 curriculum's four, having dropped the retail selling option. Within all three specialties, four courses were constants: Typing 11, Office Orientation 12, General Business 11 and General Business 12. Examination of the course outlines shows that with the exception of General Business 11 and 12, Accounting 12 and Bookkeeping 11 and 12, the nature and content of all the other mandated courses

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³ British Columbia, Department of Education, Division of Curriculum, Administrative Bulletin for Secondary Schools (Victoria, Queen's Printer, 1967), 32.
were exactly the same as that of the preceding curriculum. In fact, most of the course descriptions seemed to have been directly copied from the former schedule. With its added "academic" courses of General Business 11 and 12, and increasing specialization, it would seem that a more rounded academic programme was being offered to commercial students than ever before, and perhaps, in many ways it was. Its greatest imperfection however, was also the greatest fault of the general curriculum--its failure to provide for the needs of the student who did not wish to be compartmentalized into the "either-or" dichotomy of academic vs nonacademic. The curriculum's tendency to catalogue and stream students into one of two options that were mutually exclusive did not sit well with the general population's current perception of education as being an enabling enterprise. Ironically, the programmes of 1967, designed to provide the best educational opportunities in terms of intellectual development, employment and social mobility for all, including those of least ability and means were, on close examination, the most limiting of all.

By the late 1960's, subject-centered and vocationally-oriented curriculum reforms were being superseded by a neo-progressive child-centred and teacher-centred thrust that reflected a new era of decentralization.10

The early 1970's were halcyon years for teachers and other educators in British Columbia. It was a time when professional educators took the lead in attempting educational change. It

10 Tomkins, A Common Countenance, 302.
began in 1968 with the commissioning of a new survey of education in the province by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation\textsuperscript{11}. This commission, composed entirely of professional educators, examined school programmes and issued a report that would place the responsibility of curriculum selection and implementation primarily in the hands of teachers--hence Tomkins' reference to "teacher-centered" thrust.

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, the neo-progressive quality of education was manifested in the dropping of province-wide examinations, the relaxation of standards, and a "wider, more humane curriculum".\textsuperscript{12} Education became decentralized, and, in the perception of some, lacking in rigour and far too permissive.

The British Columbia senior secondary general curriculum as well as its commercial programmes became "more humane" during the years 1972-1974. In a so-called "interim" Administrative Bulletin released in 1972 and reprinted in 1974, it was reorganized and its "general intent" was restated. The five "Programmes" offered in 1967 were cancelled, and replaced with


two: a "Selected Studies Programme" and a "Combined Studies Programme". The former was intended to provide opportunity for "study in depth" (emphasis in its original) in a major field of learning, while the latter would provide a "study in breadth" in related fields. Maximum flexibility in pupil programming of "personal relevance" within broadened general requirements established by the Department of Education was the overarching goal. It presented a much more relaxed schedule of prescribed courses than the former, and invited the student to choose courses "even though the pupil [has] not formally met all admission requirements." Both programmes allowed for a much greater choice of courses from five broad subject groups (remarkably similar to the five "Programmes" of the former curriculum). Course titles and content appeared to be exactly the same as in the 1967 document (which in turn were similar to the 1951-1952 documents), but the omission of General Business 11 and 12 as required courses for graduation on any programme was notable. Specialization still occurred within the "Selected Studies" programme but the number of required courses was reduced. The overall tone of the document was written in a style less formal and officious than previous ones.

As result of the "humane curriculum" the academic student

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could select some elective courses of a nonacademic nature; similarly, the nonacademic student could choose academic courses if desired. For example, a senior "Selected Studies" student interested in mathematics might choose the following programme:
The required "general education constants" of English 11 and 12, Social Studies 11 and Physical, Health and Guidance Education 11 would form the base of the programme. The student could then choose Algebra 11, Algebra 12, and Geometry 12 as courses in the preferred specialty, as well as three more courses from the same grouping. One course numbered 12 could then be selected from any other grouping, such as Office Procedures 12 or Accounting 12. To complete requirements for graduation, the student would then choose three more courses from any of the other specialty groups; for example Band 11, Typewriting 11 and Community Recreation 12.

A senior student in a "Combined Studies" programme might take a programme as follows: the "general education constants" as above, and any eight courses from any of the specialty areas in any combination as long as three of them were numbered 12. An interest in foreign languages might well be combined with two courses in theatre in a programme for commercial specialization.

Clearly, opportunities for a broader-based education were once again restored to secondary students in 1974.
As the 1970's advanced, inflation and unemployment became serious public issues in British Columbia. The cost of education in the province came under attack, and as result, a new vocabulary was developing regarding education. The notion that all educational matters were "accountable" to a host of constituents became a much supported idea. The "taxpayer", business, industry, special interest groups, as well as the provincial government began to exact accountability procedures from those in the educational community. Surveys of businessmen disparaged the lack of competence in English grammar, spelling and writing by graduating business students. Curriculum differentiation and teacher autonomy, together with a diversity of teaching methods, had led, in the eyes of many observers, to a minimal degree of consistency and continuity in learning. In addition, differentiated vocational programmes came under attack because of their narrowness and presentist focus, at a time when orientation towards the future was encouraged. The "golden" days

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of curricular and programme freedom were being loudly denounced and demands for going "back to basics", returning to "basic skills"\(^2\) or "minimum competencies" became particularly shrill. In the view of many the educational community had much to answer for. In consequence, the general British Columbia curriculum was about to change again and along with it, the commercial course of studies.

In 1976, Dr. Patrick D. McGeer, the province's Minister of Education, claimed that citizens were demanding that the government "take a more positive role in defining what should be taught in our schools and in assessing the results of that teaching"\(^3\). In 1977 the Ministry issued a policy guide mandating three levels of curriculum and what should be taught\(^4\). "The goals and learning outcomes in this booklet, revised on the basis of public and professional reaction received, are those which must be taught."\(^5\) Appearing to "get tough" with the school programmes and the teachers who taught them, McGeer issued

\(^2\) Unfortunately, the issues were complicated by demands of countless special interest advocacy groups who redefined "basic skills" to mean practically anything within their areas of interest.


the "Guide to the Core Curriculum" in September of 1977—with implementation to be immediate.6

To most teachers, the "core" was hardly news, nor hardly new to what they already had been doing in the classroom. The "guide" articulated very broad general goals and some "learning outcomes" for language, mathematics (measurement and computation), science, social studies and physical education and health. There were no new requirements nor prerequisites for courses. The guide's purpose was to be a model for the development of new programmes in specific subject areas in ensuing years and it provided some guidelines for those future revisions. Officially, and to all outward appearances, central control of curriculum appeared to have returned to the Ministry, "wrested" so to speak from the hands of "irresponsible" educators. By its own admission however, in the very document that supposedly "took control", the Ministry acknowledged that teachers would "use their experience and professional expertise to develop appropriate teaching programmes,...to meet student needs..."7—in essence freeing teachers to do whatever they had been doing all along. Clearly, the document was designed to please those calling for accountability without alienating those working in the field.

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The new "guide" had some effects on some subjects--"new math" was abandoned, and the return of drills and emphasis on computational skills was effected. The process of "sciencing" was forsaken for a return to delivering basic factual material in biology, chemistry, and physics. The greatest effect the new "core" programme had was in the subsequent planning and the writing of new curricula for each programme or subject which followed. The business education programme of 1978/1979 was a prime example of the type and timbre of new programmes and curricula issued after the release of the *Guide to the Core Curriculum*.

Since the 1978/79 curriculum represented both a transformed role for business teachers in its development and reflected their increasing anxiety about defining their field, at this point some consideration must be given to both these topics.

In a 1979 article, L. Cuban advances a theory of curricular determinants which identifies four forces as determinants of curricular change: a) influential social, political and economic movements, b) political-legal decisions, c) influential groups and d) influential individuals. This study has touched on the

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8 The notion of "sciencing" or "messing about in science" allowed children to explore and manipulate various kinds of equipment and phenomena to allow for "discovery" of principles. The only "structure" or "formality" imposed was the provision of a limited variety of equipment. Particularly in the elementary grades, students experimented with soap bubbles, colour dyes, mirrors, and so on in the name of science.

social, political and economic movements, and political-legal decisions which have affected both the general and the commercial curricula over time. Some mention has been made of influential individuals or groups within the larger contexts. The role of teachers however, collectively and individually, has not been discussed because documentation about their direct role in curricular deliberations and contruction, particularly in regard to commercial programmes in the early years is not extensive. One reason advanced for this is that membership on committees was rarely made public.

What is known is that the Department of Education had a very definite organizational structure for curriculum development from 1935. A Central Curriculum Committee of leading educators, named by the Minister of Education, advised the Department of Education in respect to the need for curriculum revision in the various subject fields, and it helped plan the general pattern of education to be followed in the schools. The Director of Curriculum chaired the committee and wide representation was sought from teacher and lay groups. Subject revision committees were named through the Department by the Director of Curriculum who worked with them. These committees were composed of "experts", a few of them practicing teachers who were specialists in specific subject fields. According to interviews with teachers of that time, press releases in the B.C. Teacher, and "acknowledgement" pages in course guides, most of the members representing Commercial programmes were principals of schools of
commerce in British Columbia, or commercial department heads within those schools. Almost all of them were male. In the revision of secondary school subjects, representatives of university departments were also included. The Assistant Director of Curriculum was responsible for providing materials, programmes of study, professional literature, and textbooks for use by the committees during their work. The findings and recommendations of subject revision committees, supervised by the Director of Curriculum were, in turn, referred to the Central Curriculum Committee. Final authorization for the adoption, printing, and distribution of various courses of study rested with the Minister of Education and other members of the Provincial Cabinet. All courses of study outlines were subsequently published as tentative editions and remained subject to continuing revision when deemed necessary. For the most part, this process had been followed for most of the major curricular events since Minister of Education Weir instituted it in 1935.10

It needs to be said that, presumably, for groups or individuals to be influential, they must be perceived by others as having some power or capacity for influence, or it must be proven that they did indeed influence the curriculum to change. The proof must come from documented evidence, and this evidence has been very difficult to obtain until the 1970's. It appears that throughout the time from 1900 to approximately the early

1970's, practicing commercial teachers did not have much say or influence over the content and philosophy of commercial programmes. Teachers participated in deliberations during annual general meetings of the "Commercial Section" of the B.C. Teachers' Federation but not, in their estimation, to any degree of importance\textsuperscript{11}.

By 1972, however, a core of strong commerce teachers were beginning to make themselves known on the curriculum scene. Through their association with the British Columbia Business Educators' Association (B.C.B.E.A.), these individuals began to make the concerns of business teachers known to curriculum makers. In 1976, for example, some of them sent briefs to the British Columbia Commission on Vocational, Technical and Trades Training outlining their personal positions and also that of the B.C.B.E.A.\textsuperscript{12}. Similarly, curriculum-related articles written by commerce teachers in support of various positions, orientations and methodologies became more and more prolific during the 1970's. In the B.C.B.E.A. Newsletter, the major communicating

\textsuperscript{11} Sheila Cameron, telephone interview with author, 17 March 1991. Mrs. Cameron, a former long time teacher of business education in Vancouver indicated that teachers on school and district curriculum committees were indeed consulted, but seemed to have little influence on programs unless the suggestions were in keeping with an already established focus.

instrument of the organization, the names of the authors became familiar to teachers of business--Stan Dunster, Patsy Hinton, Bob Lindsay, Bob Peacock, Sheila Cameron, Mhora Zelter, Berne Neufeld, Streb Collins and later Adriana Zylmans, Judy Dallas and Diane Good. At about the same time, 1972, Dr. Shirley Wong, an experienced business educator at the secondary level, was appointed lecturer of business education at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Wong worked under the directorship of Robert Heywood, a former long-time commercial subject teacher in the Vancouver schools, and later professor in the Faculty of Commerce at the University of British Columbia. Mr. Heywood retired from the Faculty of Commerce in 1975, and Dr. Wong was then designated co-ordinator of business education at the University's Faculty of Education. Mr. Heywood's and Dr. Wong's influence in maintaining relevant programmes for business teachers served to increase the importance of business education at the university level and in the field in British Columbia. The B.C.B.E.A. organization, an adjunct association of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, as well as the above-named individuals, became dominant players in commercial curriculum change from the early 1970's to the present.

Many of the above-named individuals, who were indeed practicing teachers, were named to the revision committee of the business education curriculum in spring 1975. This committee worked until December 31, 1975 at producing the first draft of the "goals and outcomes" which were to become the core and
The name "Business Education", although already employed throughout the professional literature of the 1970's both in B.C. and abroad, was not used in the British Columbia Ministry of Education official curriculum publications until the release of its "Interim" edition of the new curriculum in 1977. Evidence from the B.C.B.E.A. Newsletter all through the 1970's, indicates teachers involved in teaching any business education courses were invited to participate in the revision procedures by writing position papers, or calling any of the members of the revision panel with suggestions, cautions and counsel. It appears that much of the revision process was tightly controlled by the Ministry's "core" guidelines with respect to philosophy, format and presentation. The "goals and learning outcomes" of the courses within the programme, however, were deliberated and defined solely by the business education revision panel.

A review of a few of the major issues concerning business educators during the time of the revision process need mention. Many of the articles in the B.C.B.E.A. Newsletter reflect the same concerns as those which appeared in national and international professional journals during the 1970s. Teachers were

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13 "Revision Committee Program," Business Educators' Association of British Columbia Newsletter, 16, no.1 (November 1975) 3. One of the panelists, Mhora Zelter makes a comment to that effect in this report.

14 For American concerns see National Business Education Quarterly, Business Education Forum, California Business Education Journal, and Journal of Education for Business. For the Canadian perspective the Alberta business teachers' journal Synoptic, is a good example. For an international perspective, see SIEC: International Review for Business Education.
lamenting the decline of shorthand use in business offices. Changing office technology was a matter of great concern because business teachers were discovering that their machine skills were becoming obsolete. An increasing use of computers and many other electronic office machines including photocopiers and sophisticated telephone technology changed office employment roles. Sex-role stereotyping in the business world became an important topic for discussion in university and business classrooms. The notion of business education as more than "teaching typing" was much explored during those years as was the concern expressed for "defining our discipline" and "falling enrolments and poor performance". The greatest "buzzwords" of all in business education in the 1970's were, however, "career awareness and personal development". These topics were recurrent ones in that era, and they became the guiding themes of the new British Columbia business curriculum of 1978/1979. This curriculum was a fairly extensive project and by the time it was completed, it included seven separate booklets describing in detail teaching resources and evaluation criteria to be used with the offered courses. Some of the courses remained the same in terms of content as those in the preceding curriculum, but in philosophy, goals, and emphasis, the new programme took a new

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direction.

The business education programme was one of the first of many issued which embodied the new direction and philosophy of the "core curriculum". The most immediately noticeable aspect of it was its length and the long lists of "learning outcomes" articulated for each course. The principle document encompassed 154 pages; the individual resource booklets on the average 125-175 pages. The primary document identified the purpose, goals, and content of each subject, and provided four hundred fifty learning outcomes categorized into fourteen broad areas of knowledge. The purpose of the programme was the provision of a curriculum which allowed students to pursue:

a general (economic) education and skill acquaintanceship [or] a general career awareness with an introduction to vocational training in a business setting.\(^6\)

These particular purposes differed very little from those of earlier years—skill training or "acquaintanceship" coupled with general business knowledge. They had been goals of the commercial programmes in one proportion or another since the first document was printed. What set this curriculum apart from all its predecessors was its eight "goals"; seven of which emphasized the development of personal and social growth within a very broadly defined concept of business and the "world of work". Up to the 1979 revision, the "skills and general business

knowledge" provided were those which served a very narrow vision of what business and work life was for commercial students. Business meant "the office", "the bank" or "the store", and commercial education for that conception of business meant essentially shorthand, typing, and filing for women, and perhaps bookkeeping and accounting for men. Education for personal development emphasized the superficial: to look good, to present a good impression, to act appropriately in the office—to make the company or the employer look good. With the new curriculum a vastly expanded view of what business life could mean was presented. Students were offered knowledge about marketing, for example, not only from the retail clerk's point of view, but also from that of an owner, or a manager's perspective. Students could study consumerism, applied business law, labour law, resource analysis, the structure of organizations and principles of management. The personal and social growth goals encouraged within this document attempted to develop the student from within—in attitudes; to develop a sense of individual self-worth and value, to not only look good, and behave with "proper office deportment", but to actually "be good" and do good work because of it. Sheila Cameron, a highly-respected business teacher in Vancouver schools between the years 1932 and 1973 suggests that the active involvement of many female business teachers in this curriculum, many of them models of efficiency and business sense, had much to do with producing this enlightened and broadly
This new curriculum offered the largest number of suggested courses of any business or commercial curriculum to that time. In all, 22 courses were offered. Ten of them were skill-specific subjects: four typewriting, two shorthand, two office procedures and one machine calculations course. The rest were concerned with personal and business knowledge, consumerism, marketing, business communications and so on. The learning outcomes of the courses showed a clear emphasis on a broad notion of what business, commercial and work life could be in students' futures. The document prevailed as the official business programme in British Columbia until 1990.

Throughout the 1980's certain events, trends and political inclinations in British Columbia brought new visibility and stature to economic education and to those who delivered it. By the end of the decade, business education and business educators enjoyed official stature and recognition such as they never had before. Their "discipline", seemingly ignored for so long, had a new and exceedingly powerful champion--the provincial government and its mighty Ministry of Education. How business education managed to secure such prominence and official support arose from increasingly difficult economic times, the establishment of a province-wide compulsory consumer education course, and the gradual adoption of computers in the work world and the schools.

17 Sheila Cameron, telephone interview with author, 17 March 1991.
In a widely-read article Michael Apple argued that

In times of economic difficulty, when tax revenues are lower and jobs are hard to find, it is not unusual for school programs to become more closely aligned to the needs of business.\(^\text{18}\)

Apple's observation clearly illustrates an attitude soon to become very prevalent in British Columbia's school programming agendas. A growing neo-conservative political ideology and a strong political role assumed by economic interest groups such as the Fraser Institute, for example, had much to do with creating the British Columbia political and economic climate of the 1980's. An international recession developed during the early 1980's and the prevalent conservative political and economic values were exemplified by "Thatcherism" in Great Britain and "Reaganomics" in the United States. British Columbia remained relatively unaffected for a time by the international recession, although it did produce hardship across much of Canada. Nevertheless, with the control of the British Columbia economy rapidly eroded by outside jurisdictions, British Columbia's resource-based economy eventually experienced a near overnight recession.\(^\text{19}\) A significant drop in provincial revenues, coupled with steadily increasing expenditures on educational and social programmes demanded attention. At the same time, dramatic increases in personal and business bankruptcies, default rates on


personal and business loans, and an "overwhelming number of cases appearing in Small Claims Court", suggested a need for economic education.\(^{20}\) The Minister of Education of the time, Brian Smith, noted in his *Education: A Report from the Minister*, that during his travels about the province for his Fall Forum, he was made aware that "our students lack an understanding of many of the practical consumer skills we all need to function in our society".\(^{21}\) He supported his notion by referring to a presentation made by a parent group.

On March 16, 1981 the Ministry of Education issued *Ministry Policy Circular #144*, a document that foreshadowed sweeping changes in the governance of education within the province. Introduced among the several controversial topics, was the announcement that a mandatory consumer fundamentals course at the grade 9/10 level would be developed, written, and implemented within eighteen months. This announcement set off curricular debate and conflict within and between many educational jurisdictions and constituencies in British Columbia.\(^{22}\) Despite the loud and bitter disputes which followed related to the nature

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\(^{20}\) Geoffrey William Horn, "Consumer Education--A Criticism from the Political Perspective" (Major essay submitted for M.Ed degree, University of British Columbia, 1987), 33.


\(^{22}\) For a political perspective of the events and developments leading to the establishment of Consumer Education 9/10 see Geoffrey Horn, "Consumer Education--A Criticism from the Political Perspective" (M.Ed Major essay, University of British Columbia, 1987).
and implementation of the course, consumer education became a compulsory requirement for all secondary school graduating students in British Columbia and remained so until 1991.\footnote{Clear documentation of the conflict between the British Columbia Business Educators' Association and its parent organization, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (B.C.T.F.) with respect to the establishment of Consumer Education 9/10 is provided in the \textit{B.C.B.E.A. Newsletter}, 22, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 4-7.}

It became clear to many that the content of the course, and its compulsory nature, would bring new recognition to its supporters and teachers. Consequently, in a move interpreted by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as political and self-serving, the British Columbia Business Educators' Association (B.C.B.E.A.),\footnote{M. Allison, \textit{Letter to the Minister of Education}, 4 May, 1981 in BCTF Records Division, p.1} the Teachers of Home Economics Association (T.H.E.S.A.)\footnote{Friedrich, J, \textit{Letter to the Minister of Education}, 6 April, 1981, in BCTF Records Division, p.1.} and the British Columbia Industrial Education Association (B.C.I.E.A.)\footnote{G. Sofko, \textit{Letter to Larry Kuehn} 26 May, 1981 in BCTF Records Division p.1.} made congratulatory overtures to the Ministry. These positive encouragements also contained arguments for each subject group's supposed territorial jurisdiction over the course. All three organizations' favourable responses to the course were in direct opposition to the stance taken by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (B.C.T.F.), and caused considerable debate and conflict between and among all the organizations. After receiving letters of reprimand, the Home
Economics and Industrial Educators' Associations quickly fell into line with the official B.C. Teachers' Federation position, but the B.C.B.E.A., against B.C.T.F. official policy, continued to offer support and lobbied for jurisdiction over the course. As result, a number of members of the B.C.B.E.A. were appointed by the Ministry of Education to assist in the construction and initial implementation of the course. Through the efforts of those members, the B.C.B.E.A. and business teachers in general achieved a good measure of approval from influential members of Ministry staff. Consumer education became known, almost province-wide, as a "business education" subject. Having a required course for graduation under the domain of business education, and having it strongly supported financially by the Ministry of Education (particularly during a period of restraint), immeasurably elevated the importance of business education within the school subject hierarchy. Within six years, its rank would rise even further when the Ministry finally recognized the importance of computers in British Columbia schools.

In British Columbia, the advent of computers in classrooms was a slow and gradual process. The notion that the computer was an important tool to be reckoned with was raised in the early 1970's but its price prohibited its use in the average classroom. During the late 1970's a few business educators in British Columbia were extolling the virtues of the TRS 80—a Radio Shack 16 K computer that could be used in accounting and calculations
applications. For the most part, however, computers did not become an important part of school furniture/equipment until after 1984. One reason was that the provincial government, in the deepest wells of economic recession, could not justify, nor even afford, to supply schools with the expensive hardware. The attitude the Ministry of education adopted toward computers appeared to be one of indifference: if schools wished to buy and use them, they could, but funding for them had to come from their own school budgets--special or specific funding for them from the Ministry would not be forthcoming. This attitude prevailed until 1988.

Between 1982 and 1987 however, the computer technology exploded, and advances within the technology were rapid--computers were quickly becoming affordable, available and moreover, used by more and more businesses, industries, and government departments. During those tight economic years 1982-1987, schools went about buying their own computers and software. Those schools and districts who placed computers as top priority items gathered funds from many sources--parental support, fund-raising and so on--and became leading schools in terms of teaching computer use. In many schools, business educators took the lead, teaching keyboarding and computer-based accounting. Others, however, could not or did not and fell far behind those leading schools both in the acquisition of the hardware and software, and in the

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sophistication of the computer knowledge they were teaching. Predictably, and naturally, unequal and uneven levels of computer hardware, software, and instruction resulted throughout the province. Moreover, since schools were electing to buy whatever technology was available, they gave little thought to its compatibility with that already in the field, or its consistency between one district and the next, or even one school with another within the same district! The consequent overall provincial disarray regarding computers and computer-related instruction was immense, and the Ministry began considering some remedy.  

At the same time that computer acquisition and teaching was occurring within the public schools in British Columbia without official sanction or assistance, business educators began to call for changes in the business education curriculum. The curriculum of 1978-1979, while enlightened in philosophy, content and approach, virtually ignored the existence of the computer. Many teachers, including business educators, were already employing the computer at rather sophisticated levels in many secondary schools but on rather an ad hoc basis since there were no guidelines nor standards emanating from the Ministry.

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28 Numerous Administrative Information Circulars issued by the Ministry of Education during the mid to late 1980's record its interest in improving the current situation.

29 B.C.B.E.A. Newsletter, 26, no. 2 (November 1985): 16. The first official indication that business educators were seeking revision to the curriculum was in an article by B. Peacock titled, "Do We Need to Revise the Business Education Curriculum?"
Business education subjects, as well as other courses were taking on new characteristics in some schools, but not in others. Computer studies and computer science curricula had already been drafted up and sanctioned by the Ministry, but, they were being implemented in some schools but not in others. The entire school system required some major policy guidelines regarding computer funding, acquisition, use and teaching. The call for a revised business curriculum by business teachers occurring at the same time as the overwhelming need for a unified approach to computer technology in education, drew Ministry attention to the demands of business educators over those of other subject groups who were calling for essentially the same order. Business educators were somehow finally able to convince the Ministry that funding, consistency, and policies were required to regulate the acquisition and use of hardware and software in schools.

Fresh from a happy association with business educators in the implementation of Consumer Education 9/10, and 12, the Ministry looked upon the business educators as leaders in the use of the technology. In so doing, they seconded from the ranks of business educators, teachers who would serve on not only the new business education revision committees, but also on committees designed to draft computer curricula and provincial policy proposals regarding the computer technology. As Becky Matthews, the Assistant Director of Curriculum at the Ministry stated at
the time, "Business education is on a roll!" As result of their major role in establishing computer technology guidelines, and as result of the revised aspects of their own curriculum (which depended on computer technology for its implementation), business educators were able to convince the Ministry of Education to fund all districts, on a "one-time only" basis, the acquisition of computer hardware. Never before in British Columbia history had any subject group wielded such influence with the Ministry of Education and with such tangible results. The Ministry released thirty million dollars in 1988 and 1989 to business education departments in districts all over the province, and enabled all districts to attain at least a minimum level of computer availability and instruction in all junior and senior secondary schools. The status of business education subjects and the professional standing of business education teachers rose considerably within the school subject hierarchy as result of this action.

At the same time the above events were occurring within the computer and business education realms, the issue of underfunding education as a government restraint policy came to the forefront during the years 1982-1986. The Ministry of education attempted


31 Statement made by Judy Dallas, Past President of the British Columbia Business Educator's Association (B.C.B.E.A.) and Business Education Curriculum Revision Coordinator with the Ministry of Education in a speech delivered at the BCBEA Spring conference in May, 1988.
to prove that schools had not lost any ground in the delivery of quality education during the underfunded recession years. In attempts to placate the increasing calls for a Royal Commission on education, the Ministry instituted a "Let's Talk About Schools" Survey in 1985 and made visits to each school district in the province to hear the views of interested stakeholders. The published results of that survey were inconclusive but they led to a realization by the government that its treatment of educational matters was becoming a major provincial issue.\(^{32}\) In addition to the education underfunding issue, revision and reordering of graduation requirements came under attack. Some of the requirements, instituted practically overnight without notice by the Ministry, were hotly debated while others were accepted with little comment. The combined effect of the graduation requirement controversies, the perceived underfunding of education and other social programmes, as well as the results of the "Let's Talk About Schools Survey" in addition to an overall disquiet about schooling in general by an overtaxed public, led, finally, to a Royal Commission on Education. On March 14, 1987 by Order-in-Council number 446, the provincial government appointed Barry Sullivan to lead the Commission in a thorough examination and survey of the British Columbia educational system.

Chapter 7

A New Vision and Revision -- Business Education, 1990

"Our challenge is to have a balanced curriculum that will teach concepts that can be transferred to the workplace and that will provide a base for life-long learning...we must overcome the temptation to teach 'button-pushing' on computers...we must reinforce basic skills..."


Major aspects of the "Year 2000" document relate to a recognition of a rapidly changing world, and a new vision of what

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"the educated" citizen should or could be. The focus for learning turned to the individual learner with programme emphases to be placed on what the learner could do rather than what the learner could not do. Programmes for the learner were to involve "active" learning methods, recognizing that learning occurred in cooperative as well as individual modes. The document emphasized the notion that learning for the "educated citizen" had now to be a life-long enterprise, since the world was changing so rapidly. This learning had to involve attitudes and practices that promoted flexibility and versatility in the thinking and problem-solving practices of students. Literacy in technology, as well as the traditional disciplines had also to be developed. The importance of separate disciplines and specializations, so long a feature of secondary programming was minimized, and emphasized was an integrative interdisciplinary approach to studies. The development of programmes based on broadly grouped subjects in "strands" was promoted. The interconnectedness of global societies, in all ways, including political, economic, environmental, peace and other endeavours was stressed. For that reason, great significance was placed upon educating students well in written, oral and technological communications. The multicultural nature of Canadian society, as well as gender and aboriginal issues needed to be addressed within programmes. Finally, the importance of preparation for work, career plans and matters related to the world of work was a major theme in the "Framework" documents.
Long before the Sullivan Royal Commission began its task and filed its report and recommendations on the state of education in British Columbia, the British Columbia business education curriculum was under review. Since January 1985, encouraged by official Ministry approval and funding, curriculum workers began to investigate major issues they knew had to be addressed in a new curriculum. The dominant issues business educators had to contend with were both political and educational.

An important 1986 British Columbia Business Education Association survey conducted by Dr. Shirley Wong and Judy Dallas, underwritten by the Ministry of Education, had important results for curriculum workers. The survey investigated the beliefs of employers in both large companies and small businesses, regarding the skills and concepts required by business education graduates for employment in entry-level positions.\(^3\) Of the top ten basic skills required, "communication and interpersonal skills by far outnumber[ed] any other essential skills needed by entry-level employees...".\(^4\) Moreover, the employers indicated that the telephone and photocopier were the only "business machine" skills considered essential in the education of entry-level business employees. These results were remarkably similar to those obtained by Kelly Services, Inc., who conducted polls of office


workers in both the United States and Canada in 1984. Kelly Services' results indicated office workers perceived seven of the top ten "essential skills" to be communication and personal development skills. Clearly, both surveys underlined a decided preference for interpersonal and communication skills over those traditionally perceived to be important—the task-specific and machine-related skills such as typewriting and shorthand, in their new business recruits. Before new curricula were planned, results from such studies needed to be considered.

Judy Dallas, Ministry curriculum coordinator for the business education curriculum revision committee, as well as many teachers from the field, identified a number of other important issues in the B.C.B.E.A. Newsletter which required debate and deliberation prior to developing new programmes.

Elementary keyboarding was considered a new field in which business educators could expand their teaching "territory". The adoption of the computer in elementary classrooms opened an enormous market for teaching efficient "keyboarding" skills. There was a very real need for competent instruction at the elementary level and secondary business teachers were the most qualified to do so. Teaching typewriting to young children


presented some different instructional conditions and required serious attention. Inefficient or inappropriate keyboarding habits acquired in early elementary years could make for very difficult reteaching in later years. A related but less pressing issue was the possibly deleterious effect of elementary keyboarding on secondary-school business course registrations. For many years typewriting classes had enjoyed the highest number of registrants of all business classes in provincial secondary schools, and the implications of non-business education personnel teaching elementary typewriting, (or "keyboarding" as it was now called), could have serious effects on the future employment of business teachers.

Entrepreneurial education, an important issue discussed in the American journals was also a notable British Columbia concern. Premier Bill Bennett of British Columbia had gone on record in 1981 as supportive of entrepreneurial education in his "Let's Teach Capitalism in our Schools" address to the Legislative Assembly. The British Columbia economy by 1987 was dominated by trade relations with Pacific Rim nations and research had demonstrated to the government that small and medium business enterprises had the potential of employing the largest

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percentage of the population. With government programmes already encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship in British Columbia, implications of the cultural differences in business relations between and among Pacific Rim countries seemed to be an important component for entrepreneurial courses both within schools and programmes in the business domain.

Another economic-political issue was the recognition that business activity had shifted from local or national economies to multinational and/or global ones. Teaching for and about business within them was necessary if the government agenda for maintaining economic buoyancy was important. The importance of the government business agenda had already been underlined by its financial and official support for business and consumer education in the early 1980's. A perhaps related political issue, the compulsory nature of consumer education, had also to be addressed.

The changing roles of women in business was an important concern. Women's previously limited roles as "office workers" had expanded to include junior, middle- and upper-management and executive possibilities.

Over-arching all other concerns for business educators, during the 1980's, however, was technology and its impact on business practices, the curriculum and the classroom. The advent of the office computer radically altered many traditional office practices and employee roles. Correspondence and typing, formatting, presentation and reproduction of documents, filing,
record storage, accounting and other office task-specific skills were now dependent upon the effective use of the computer and matching software. Moreover, the variety of the available hardware and software was extensive. Implications for instruction were enormous. Another study by Wong and her associates surveyed the British Columbia business communities' use of microcomputers and software to determine what, if any, hardware and software was in dominant use in the business world. The results needed to be considered by the programme review committee particularly in its recommendations for the purchase of hardware, software and other resources for the future teaching of computer-related business education courses.

During the years 1985 to 1988, the British Columbia Business Educators' Association was instrumental in promoting the curricular perceptions of business teachers in the field through its publications, the B.C.B.E.A. Newsletter. Every issue of the publication called for opinions, positions, and experiences from teachers which could be applied to the revision process in preparation for the new curriculum. It appeared the revision committee members definitely wanted and valued any contributions those in the field could offer. One other important aspect of the making of the new curriculum had to be addressed before the revision procedures could conclude. As discussed in a previous

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chapter, public pressure for a formal review of the school system had become particularly strong and it ended in the appointment of a Royal Commission. A new business curriculum could have become obsolete very quickly if it didn't consider the findings and recommendations of this survey and incorporate the philosophy and language of the "Framework" documents. Consequently, final revisions were delayed until the Commission completed its work and issued its report.

The Business Education Curriculum Guide, issued March 1990, clearly reflects thematically and topically the philosophy, focus and direction of its "parent" document, Year 2000: Framework for Learning, as well as the other issues of the day concerning business educators. Considering first its philosophy, which is reproduced below, it is very much reflective in language and intent of the learner-focused, interdisciplinary approaches recommended for student acquisition of communicative, personal life, employment, and future learning-skills. Its frequent references to "skills", "preparation", and "practical applications", however, tend to manifest a somewhat utilitarian bias.¹⁰

PHILOSOPHY

Business Education is a program for all students and provides:

- personal life skills, employment skills, and post-secondary preparation

o practical application of concepts and processes learned in other disciplines

o articulation with elementary and post-secondary programs

o application of current business technologies

o opportunities to explore related careers

o interaction between the school and the community

o an awareness of the effect of technological, economic and cultural changes on our values, social structures, and employment opportunities

o an awareness of individual responsibilities as citizens of a global economy

The rationale of the programme appears to be consistent with the language and philosophy of the primary document.\textsuperscript{11} It reiterates the mandate as established by the Ministry of education, and underlines the important role of business education in its contribution to "a prosperous and sustainable economy."\textsuperscript{12}

The goals of the 1990 business education curriculum reflect many of the themes advanced in the "Year 2000" document. They also afford a broader vision of business education than that offered in the previous curriculum. The concept of business as a local or perhaps a national enterprise in 1979, is expanded in


\textsuperscript{12} British Columbia Ministry of Education, \textit{Year 2000: A Curriculum and Assessment Framework for the Future} (Victoria: The Ministry, 1989), 7. Words in quotation marks are a partial citation of the government-established "mission" statement for the British Columbia school system: "The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy".

1990 to a global enterprise for which very sophisticated communicative, technological and intellectual skills are required. The theme of personal development is carried over from 1978, in the goals' references to the development and growth in positive self-concept and excellence. The document also promotes reflective understanding, the development of positive personal attitudes toward entrepreneurial and cooperative enterprises, as well as an awareness of ethical business practices in differing cultural groups. In terms of career development, the goals of the programme profess to prepare students for the probability that they would likely be making numerous career changes in their lives. In its preamble to the course descriptions, the curriculum provides exemplars of programmes students may put together employing the flexibility and variety of courses offered in the new curriculum. Cooperative ventures between the workplace, the school and the community are encouraged and supported. In approach and methods, the goals stress flexibility, accommodation and integration.

The course offerings of the 1990 curriculum require some scrutiny. Under the business education designation there are presently listed fifteen courses. Three of the course names have been brought forward from the previous curriculum. Marketing 11 retains the contents of the 1979 course almost intact, and Marketing 12, an entirely new marketing course, emphasizes national and international marketing with a Pacific Rim focus. Consumer Education 12, the senior level consumer course first
offered in 1982, remains intact. Accounting 11, the introductory course to accounting methods and procedures, closely resembles the former "Introduction to Accounting 11" course.

The remaining eleven of the fifteen courses of the new curriculum are new in name and content. The former typewriting courses have been superseded by a full Keyboarding 9/11 course and a Keyboarding 8 "module". The Keyboarding 8 module is designed to be an introduction to alphabetic keyboard skills for students who have had no prior access to computer or typewriter keyboarding. It represents approximately twenty-five hours of "hands-on" instruction. The Keyboard 9/11 course attempts to develop keyboarding proficiency as a personal life skill and as a foundation for career development. Both keyboarding courses require access to a typewriter or computer keyboard.

Two courses titled Information Management (IM) 11 and 12 have been developed. The IM 11 grounds much of its content on computer-related skills; 40 of the 75 core hours of the course are designated for skill development, word processing and electronic mail transfer. The other 30 hours are taken up by telephone, and other forms of business and workplace communications skills. The IM 12 course attempts to provide applications opportunities for the skills learned in IM 11. Fifty-five of 75 hours are designated for work on the computer.

Speedwriting 11 is a newly developed course replacing the obsolete Shorthand courses. Sixty of 75 hours are set aside for speedwriting theory and practice. The remaining 15 hours attempt
to develop general note-taking and study techniques.

Business Management 12, another new course introduces students to organizational and management skills. "Management styles and issues relevant to a global economy are introduced". Composition and interpersonal skills are to be incorporated throughout all assignments within the course.

Data Processing (DP) 11 and 12 are entirely computer-driven courses. DP 11 provides introduction to and practice with ministry-approved "industry-standard" software. Manipulation of data to produce useable final reports is its main intention. DP 12 is an extension of DP 11, requiring students to analyse and organize business information to solve problems and produce and present, by computer, and in person, both orally and visually, professional-quality business reports.

Financial Accounting 12 is intended for students wishing to pursue professional designations in the fields of finance, trade, commerce and business management. It presents advanced concepts of financial accounting of a fairly high academic quality.

Applied Accounting 12 allows students to apply the theory and practices of Accounting 11, using industry standard accounting software in the solving of problems.

Business Education 10 is an intermediate (junior secondary) level course, slated to become a compulsory course/module for graduation, and replacing the formerly mandatory Consumer
Education 9/10. Its purpose is to introduce all students to basic business theory with communications, marketing and finance as major topics and claims to provide students with "economic survival" skills.

The courses offered in the new business programme have been arranged into modules. The core modules and optional modules have been identified, and teachers may select to expand or reduce each module to suit local conditions, or the needs of the students. Some modules may form the basis for cooperative education ventures. The modular format is designed to allow for maximum flexibility for each school.

Of the 15 courses offered in the new business education curriculum, at least seven require access to the computer for part or all of the modules. Four of those seven courses are completely computer-driven. The eight other courses are theory-laden, business knowledge courses; the accounting courses offering more specialized information than the others. In many instances, the theory courses are fairly academic. The communications theme figures largely in all fifteen courses. In some it takes up one or more modules, in others it demands practical applications of communication skills (other than electronic) throughout. The concept of communication advanced in this document includes not only technological communications skills, but also written, oral, and non verbal (body language).

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13 British Columbia Ministry of Education, Deputy Minister's Newsletter, (February 1991) affirms the compulsory nature of the course.
All of the described courses encourage the student to integrate business knowledge, information and communications skills into problem-solving processes.

On paper, to all appearances, the new 1990 curriculum is the most "enabling" in British Columbia business curriculum history. It provides a broad vision of what business-related activities could mean in students' future plans and it does not appear to sort students into narrow occupational routes. The business education programme fits appropriately into the Graduation Programme and affords all students the opportunity to take one, some, or all courses from its offerings. It reflects a view of business education which would be equally attractive to students of varying abilities and both sexes. Academic and nonacademic students are free to choose business subjects along with other courses in virtually limitless combinations. Specialization is possible, but it is not compulsory. The business courses contain enough academic material and "rigour" to secure moderate if not elevated status for its students within the school subject hierarchy.

It seems to reflect all the major themes of the primary curriculum document, which purports to embody the beliefs, opinions and needs of modern-day "new age" society. Development of important communicative and interpersonal skills are seriously considered as well as a good knowledge of technological processes. Current issues in business education, as well those of general education are considered.
What the new curriculum-as-written will become in actual classroom practice is an important issue which only the passage of time and careful study can answer. The curriculum's greatest strength, its flexibility and adaptability, could well be its greatest weakness. The potential for offering a narrow, machine-specific—even software-specific programme is very evident in the freedom the programme allows for implementing teachers. Emphases placed by teachers on some areas to the exclusion of others, could well result in business programmes less "enabling" than the typical typing/shorthand-dominated ones of the 1940's and 1950's. Indeed a very narrow, even more limited programme could result—with students becoming little else but data-input agents by their well-meaning, but misguided software coaches—their teachers. As for the important interpersonal and communication skills, there is a very real potential for marginalizing them. As long as students are "attached" to a computer, the opportunity for real human colloquy, real communication, that is, the exchange and interpretation of verbal and physical signals between humans, not data, are precluded. The computer can at best respond, manipulate, and/or rearrange data, but it cannot communicate on a human level. The graduates of a programme heavily dependent on computers and software could well be far less prepared for future communications, "survival" and business work life in the "new age" than their counterparts in the "olden days", if teachers are not vigilant about their implementation strategies.
Chapter 8

Summary and Conclusions

The secondary school business curriculum in British Columbia originating in a highly academic programme suitable for "gentlemen" in its early days, evolved into a balanced programme of practical and academic qualities equally attractive to students of both genders by 1991. During the intervening years, it experienced long periods of stability, low prestige within the school subject hierarchy, and name changes and identity problems. In certain periods it enjoyed official approval of the federal and British Columbia provincial governments. It benefitted enormously both in terms of financial support and official recognition with the Ministry of Education in British Columbia through its recent relationship with the Social Credit government and its economic agendas during the 1980's.

During its early years the "Commercial Programme" was a very academic "package" programme, and appeared to enjoy the same stature as the "English" and "Classics" Programmes within the school subject hierarchy. It did not engender any resistance from school officials towards its initial inclusion in the official high school curriculum nor did it ever, throughout its lengthy history in the British Columbia public schools, endure the difficult struggles for acceptance that some other subjects did. Its academic nature, useful as it was in giving it
legitimacy, was criticized at the turn of the century because it served no practical purpose at a time when qualified workers for businesses and offices were in short supply. With the adoption of typewriting and shorthand in 1905-1906, the curriculum took on a slightly more functional emphasis and appeared to pay adequate attention to the needs of both industry and the rapidly increasing high school population. A revision in 1914, was the beginning of a series of minor revisions which in sum produced an definite shift toward a more utilitarian, specialized commercial programme. The vocational movement became strong between the years 1910 and 1920, having finally attracted attention from both federal and provincial governments. Commercial education began to emphasize its vocational aspects, and thereby benefitted materially from its affiliation with the vocational movement. Its vocational emphasis gradually supplanted the academic quality of the commercial programme by 1937. Because of its association with vocationalism and the loss of its academic "rigour", the curriculum lost much of the prestige it previously enjoyed within the school subject hierarchy. Indeed, from about 1937 until well into the 1970's, despite the work of curriculum revisionists at the Ministry level to enhance the status of the field among school populations, the commercial subjects became known in many quarters as the easy-way-out for graduating students or, worse yet, the dumping ground of nonacademic students (particularly female), unfit or unwilling to take academic studies.

With the 1937 revision, the commercial programme took on a
decidedly different emphasis from its origins—it was no longer a somewhat academic programme which taught general business and entrepreneurial principles as well as some office procedural skills. Instead, it became a vocational training "package" for office work, and much of the training involved students' manual operation of an ever-present, but ever-changing array of "office appliances". For the next forty years, it remained a female-dominated training program which virtually guaranteed business a continuing supply of entry-level employees. The program also practically assured all its students work at the entry level in business offices, but made no promises of upward mobility in business. During the 1950's and 1960's, attempts to increase its rigour and appeal to more academic students failed miserably --students, teachers, parents--everybody knew the commercial program was for those who could not "cut it" on the academic program or could not afford to go to university. Apparently, few students actually "chose" to take the commercial program--they took it because it was the only free vocational training available to them which would practically ensure a job after leaving school--no other school program then, or since, has offered that. Federal government interest in increasing vocational opportunities for youth during the 1960's improved the financial status of commercial education subjects, just as it did in the 1920's. At the same time, however, because of its "vocational" inclinations, the status of the commercial programme remained low.
During the 1970's, greatly increased participation of practicing commerce teachers in curriculum affairs, and rapid advances in office technology began to change the long-held general vision of what commercial education entailed. Commercial education took on a new name, "business education". With the new name, business teachers attempted to revise the image of commercial education from training for office work, to "education for and about business". The curriculum became less a "package" and more of a process. A serious recession in the early 1980's turned government attention to schools, particularly their programs, and their costs. A new relationship developed between the Social Credit government and business educators in the form of a mandatory consumer education program. Business educators were delighted to find themselves the deliverers of a course compulsory for all students in preparation for graduation, and gained great attention for themselves and their courses. They apparently did a good job of writing, implementing and teaching the courses in the Ministry's view, because when the time came for revision of the business curriculum, business educators and their representatives had the attentive ear of Ministry of Education officials. An updated, viable business education curriculum required the inclusion of the computer into its courses. Business education departments needed funds to purchase computers and software so that the curriculum could be implemented. In a feat never before accomplished by any subject group, business education curriculum workers managed to convince
the Ministry of Education to make financial grants to all districts in 1988 and 1989 for the specific purpose of updating computer and software holdings in all business departments in the province's secondary schools. Prior to this, many teachers and subject groups had been lobbying since 1982 to have the Ministry of Education set down policies and allocate funds for computer purposes, but were not successful. Business education was successful because the economic times were right, and more probably because business teachers had shown, through the consumer education controversy, that they could carry well the government's economic agenda in the early 1980's. By 1990 business education subjects gained new respect from and approval of the Ministry of Education, and their rank rose to new heights within the school subject hierarchy. At last, business education departments were teaching something the government clearly and publicly approved of—business, and moreover, they were using—thanks to the Ministry, the most glamourous and universally respected equipment available—the micro-computer!

Whether business education's new prestige and relationship with the Ministry of Education will be of actual benefit to students and their career plans is a central question, but its answer is yet unknown. Whether the current status and relationship will indeed last is also in question. Business education's occupation of a place within the official curriculum has never been challenged. Its changing position within the ranks of the British Columbia school subject hierarchy has,
however, raised a number of troubling points. It appears that status in the hierarchy is largely determined by three particulars—the regard with which students and the public view a discipline, how "peer" subject groups view a particular discipline, and how powerful forces or officials view it. As Goodson has shown in Great Britain studies, it appears that official attention and resource allocation by power groups is the greater determinant of subject status and legitimacy. Indeed, oftentimes the views of the other groups are largely determined by it. In Great Britain, and in B.C. until quite recently, the most powerful determinant of subject status and curriculum control has been, directly or indirectly, the university and/or educational "experts" promoting academic disciplines. They have been much criticized for "elitist" bias and the perpetration of inequality among student programmes. In the last fifteen years in British Columbia, however, the government economic agendas through the agency of its powerful Ministry of Education seem to have taken control in the allocation of resources and defining subject importance within provincial schools. In part, the historical development of the business education curriculum has shown how the shifts in power and influence have developed. The implications are serious.
A Note About Sources

Data for this study were obtained from numerous sources. An extensive array of primary sources were available. The most important of them were documents issued by the British Columbia Department (later changed to Ministry, 1958) of Education, including annual school reports, manuals of school law, curriculum bulletins, circulars, memos, newsletters, administrative bulletins and other publications issued or sanctioned by the Ministry, including course textbooks.

The early annual reports between 1876-1895 were very detailed including within them correspondence, entrance examinations questions, subject and course attendance statistics for every school in British Columbia. Much information was obtained from these statistical data, as for example, the popularity or need for certain types of courses. The reports also included lists of authorized textbooks, admission regulations for high schools and yearly reports and remarks of the Superintendent of Education, principals, school inspectors, boards of school trustees and directors of special subjects. As the school system expanded and the amount of reportable information increased, the annual reports were abridged to include only general statistical and demographic information of all B.C. school districts, thus reducing the value of this material for the later years of this study.

However, the manuals of school law, issued from 1893-1918
and the precursors of the now well-known curriculum guides, were very useful for this study, listing courses of study and authorized texts. After 1918 the Department of Education issued separate curricular guides and bulletins. These curriculum guides became very useful documents for teachers in planning their work, but also provided very detailed and illuminating records of the dominant beliefs of their time.

Interviews with a number of individuals have been conducted for this study. Students of British Columbia public high school commercial programmes from each of the following time-periods were interviewed for the purpose of acquiring their impressions of what they felt were the aims and rationales for the commercial classes they elected to attend and how they felt about the business education they received: 1938-1942, 1945-48, 1955-57, 1961-1964, 1967-1971, 1975-1978, 1982-1987. In addition, several interviews were conducted with former Vancouver commerce/business teachers between the years 1924 and 1973. Those interviews helped to corroborate, counter-point or otherwise round out much of the information gathered from other primary and secondary sources.

A number of separate interviews were conducted with members of the family that has operated Pitman Commercial College since 1898. Those interviews provided insight into the influences of the private college commercial curricula on public high school business curricula, especially during the early years, as well as gave some notion of the thinking and motivations of its founders.
Archives of the school were examined for relevant information and included letters, advertisements, scrapbooks, certificates and newspaper clippings from 1903 to present.

Documents from the curriculum correspondence files of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as well as publications by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation were examined for relevant information and provided insight into the educational philosophies held by local educators. Information about the controversial emergence of the formal Consumer Education course mandated for secondary school graduation during the 1980's, was recorded in these files.

Records of the provincial business educators' associations, the Commerce Teachers' Association and British Columbia Business Educators' Association were readily available. They included minutes of annual general meetings, letters, reports and the associations' professional publications. These documents furnished much information concerning the viewpoints of teachers, their curriculum recommendations and their role in creating and implementing business education curricula from the early 1970's.

Reports of major educational reviews in the province such as the Putman-Weir Report issued 1925, the Chant Report of 1960, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation's Involvement: The Key to Better Schools in 1968, as well as British Columbia Ministry of Education's 1978 Analysis of and Public Response to the Core Curriculum, the 1985 Let's Talk About Schools survey results, Barry Sullivan's Legacy for Learners released in 1988, and the
recently issued (1990) Public Response to the Year 2000, were consulted for information regarding educational trends and philosophies of the times. Views of local educators and of the general public concerning education were reflected in these documents. The report of the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education (1913, Vol. I-IV) provided information concerning the philosophy underlying the introduction of practical education into Canadian schools during the early part of the twentieth century.

Business education curriculum documents, such as course outlines, programmes of study and curriculum guides (1918-1990) provided a record of officially adopted philosophies and specific curriculum changes made at various points in time. Some textbooks were examined to ascertain whether and/or how they reflected the philosophies and objectives of the written curricula of their time.

Several historical accounts of the development of education in North American were used to understand the educational contexts in which business education curricula were functioning. Writings concerning the history of the province of British Columbia and/or the development of education in the province were consulted to provide the provincial context.

Many secondary sources, including theses and dissertations dealing with the curricular history of other subject areas as well as business education both in British Columbia and in other provinces provided different perspectives. They also assisted in
identifying broad social and economic movements which appeared to influence change in the general curriculum, and to business education curricula specific to those jurisdictions. The University of British Columbia library has limited holdings in business education historical material, so most secondary sources of that nature were acquired through the interlibrary loan service of the university library.
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