STUDYING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY:
THE DECENTRALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT POLICY IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

by

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This paper examines the development of a decentralized policy structure governing the education of non-resident students attending international education programs in British Columbian public schools. These students are from foreign countries, neither they nor their parents are residents of the province, and they pay tuition fees to attend school. Currently, school districts retain responsibility for developing policies governing the presence of these students in their schools, the educational programs they receive, and the tuition fees they are charged. They are also responsible for determining how any revenue generated by these programs is used. This decentralized structure is the result of a policy directive issued in 1979 that remains unchanged as it best serves the most powerful interests involved in this issue: school districts, provincial politicians and the Ministry of Education.

This paper also considers two related issues that have resulted from the current policy model: the effect of tuition fee revenue on educational equality and the lack of health and safety protection for the students attending international education programs. It questions the role of these programs within the larger context of the commodification of public education in the province.

George Hoberg's policy regime framework is used as a basis for examining the roles of actors, institutions and ideas in contributing to the current policy model. Each variable and the pressure it exerts on policy change or inertia is examined in detail. In this case, those variables promoting maintenance of the status quo are the most powerful and currently prevent policy centralization.
Finally, options for policy change and methods of better addressing educational equality and international student safety while allowing for program growth in the future are considered.
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DEDICATION

To my parents, who gave me a love of learning and a desire to achieve.
I. Introduction

All British Columbian students between the ages of 5 and 16 are required by law to attend school or to participate in some other approved educational program (BC MOE, 1996, s. 2). The provincial government provides funding for these students based on a headcount taken at snapshot points throughout the year. Currently, school districts receive about $6500 a year for the education of each student (MOE, 2003). They use this money to pay teachers and school staff, buy books and other educational material, maintain school buildings, purchase sports equipment and fund capital projects. Funding changes year to year and school districts must alter their spending habits to reflect their annual budgets – funding decreases may require the cutting of programs, laying off of staff or closing of schools.

Declining enrolment across the province and unfunded increases in the teachers’ contract have put pressure on school district budgets. In order to supplement their budgets, many districts in the province have turned to the expansion of revenue-generating programs; one of these is international student programs. Districts are able to sell the education that they provide to BC students to foreign students at a profit and invest net revenues back into other district programs. International students often pay more than twice the per pupil grant that the government pays districts to educate resident students, in order to attend school in this province. These students are known by many names: foreign, off-shore, international or non-resident students. They come to the province for the purpose of obtaining an education here and neither they, nor their parents or guardians, are residents of the province.
International students are attracted to this province by the quality of the education system, a desire to learn English in an immersion setting, and by the possibility of earning a BC graduation certificate that will ease their entrance to North American universities (Onstaad, 2001; Matheson, 2001). Although the operation of these programs works well for districts looking to supplement their limited budgets and to enhance an international environment in their schools, the benefit from international student fees is unequal across the province. Some districts, particularly large districts in Victoria and the Lower Mainland, are at a definite advantage over others that do not have the means or capacity to recruit foreign students.

International student programs are just one example of a larger trend in education: the commodification of educational programs and materials. Budget restraints and a provincial government that supports the expansion of the free market have encouraged school districts to develop and expand programs that allow them to generate revenue for their districts. They have been aided in this process by the passage of provincial legislation that allows districts to develop companies and generate profit for educational programs (Kuehn, 2002, 1). The marketing of education in our province has also led to the expansion of offshore schools teaching the British Columbia graduation program (BCMOE, 2002d). Education is being recognized as a commodity and being marketed to the rest of the world in order to continue to pay for programs and services for resident students.

The students that leave their home countries to attend international education programs in British Columbia’s school districts are young students of elementary and secondary school age. In some cases they are able to live with relatives or family friends
during the school year, but in others their quality of life is dependent on the goodwill of strangers that accept these students into their Canadian homes as homestay families. As with almost all other areas of international education programs for non-residents, there are no provincial regulations governing the safety of these students or protecting them from possible abuses while they are attending school in a foreign country.

Like other revenue-generating programs, school districts have been given the responsibility for developing, marketing, and delivering international student programs. Districts are free to establish programs, recruit students and recoup revenue without provincial involvement. They retain responsibility for policy development and enforcement. Although the provincial government maintains official responsibility for the governance of educational programs, the school district monopoly over international student programs has remained unchanged through three different, ideologically diverse governments. Not even the left-leaning New Democratic Party government, which generally opposed the marketing of education, made any kind of move to centralize policy control or regulate the collection of revenue.

Districts that operate international student programs have benefited from revenue generated over years. They may choose to spend this money in any way they choose, unencumbered by provincial regulations and are not obligated to revenue-share with other districts or the provincial government. Over time, this arrangement is certain to threaten the equality of education funding across the province as districts benefiting from additional revenue, generally those in large urban settings, gain greater economic advantages over rural districts unable to attract students to similar programs. The BCTF estimates that the revenue from international student tuition alone totalled $40 million in
2001/02 (Kuehn, 2002, 1). Although only 1% of the provincial education budget of $3.79 billion, this is enough money to make a difference to those districts struggling to balance budgets (BCMOE, 2003). Each year, it is enough to give districts with additional revenue an economic advantage over those without and alter the equality of educational programs delivered across the province. Districts with international student programs also benefit from money for application fees and processing, homestay arrangements and language classes that many districts offer at additional costs.

This paper will examine the decentralized policy structure that governs the education of non-resident students in this province as well as two related issues that stem from the current policy structure: the effect of this decentralization on the integrity of educational funding across the province and the safety of the international students that attend these programs. This policy study takes place within the context of the larger issue of the commodification of education in the province. It is significant in that while international education policy is an issue of province-wide importance, affecting the budgetary equality of all school districts in the province, the provincial government has never become involved in policy regulation or development in a significant way. Even more remarkable, is that this indifference has persisted over three ideologically diverse governments. In an effort to better understand these issues, this paper will examine the actors, institutions and ideas that have influenced the development of policy in international education and that continue to exert forces of centralization and decentralization. The paper begins with a theoretical analysis, using George Hoberg’s policy regime framework (1998) as a basis, of the role of these components in determining the outcome of policy choice. This is followed by a detailed examination of
the dependent variable in this study, which is the development of a decentralized policy. 
Each of the independent variables, actors, institutions and ideas will be described and 
analysed to determine their roles in the policy process and the pressures that they exert on 
policy development. Finally, the possibility of policy change is considered along with 
models for future policy development.

In this study, policy decentralization is a result of the forces of actors, institutions 
and ideas exerting pressure on policy creation. In the actors section, four groups of actors, 
all with an interest in the issue of non-resident students, are examined. The politicians 
that are elected to serve in the provincial legislative assembly are the first group. They are 
responsible for the development of broad policy directions, but rely on others to carry out 
their wishes. They are empowered as elected representatives of the public, but are 
restrained by their desire for re-election and the limitations of the electoral cycle. School 
districts and their boards of elected trustees are the second group of actors. They are 
responsible for the development and implementation of non-resident policies and 
currently gain the most from the operation of these programs. The British Columbia 
Teachers’ Federation and the individual teachers from across the province that make it up 
are the third group. They have little influence over policy directions, but are responsible 
for actually delivering educational programs to resident and international students. The 
fourth group is a large one, those responsible for providing the funding for the education 
system. The taxpayers of the province rarely speak with a united voice, but as financial 
contributors to the system, they do have the power to effect change. Further, they are the 
electorate that hold the politicians and school trustees accountable through regular 
elections. The international students, their parents and local supporters are the last group
of actors. They are the consumers of international student programs and are willing to pay for a British Columbian education.

Two institutional factors will also be examined to determine their role in the policy process. The first is the Ministry of Education. The bureaucracy within the ministry has significant agenda setting and gate-keeping roles. As the drafters and enforcers of policy, they benefit from an intimate knowledge of the institutional structure and have a bias toward the maintenance of the status quo. International student programs fall within the jurisdiction of three levels of government. The federal government is responsible for the governance of immigration, the provincial government maintains constitutional responsibility for providing an educational program to the students of the province, and the local school districts are responsible for delivering these programs. The interaction of different levels of government is the second institutional factor. Intergovernmental relations complicate the policy process and necessitate intergovernmental negotiation to achieve any change.

In the final independent variable, ideas, the impact of three contributing factors will be scrutinized. The first is the role of schools as socializing institutions with a specific examination of their promotion of multicultural values. It looks at the school as the creator of future citizens and considers the values that school children are taught. The second is the democratic value of educational equality. Society values the availability of a quality education for all as a public good. This section looks at this belief and the effects that fee-paying students are having on educational equality across the province. Finally, this section includes an examination of the role of ideology in influencing policy. It is remarkable that international student policy has remained unchanged and relatively
untouched by the provincial government over the tenure of the Social Credit, NDP and Liberal governments: three very different governments with disparate ideological views.

While several variables with disparate impacts have influenced the development of policy governing international education programs, not all have had an equal impact on the current policy structure. The most powerful variables are those that support the preservation of the current decentralized policy model: school districts, provincial politicians and the Ministry of Education. All of these groups benefit from the institutionalization of the current policy path and have exerted influence to maintain the current structure as it is. Path-dependence has aided this effort by increasing the difficulty of departing from the current policy direction. Support for multiculturalism initiatives and the difficulty of inter-governmental negotiation have also favoured a continued decentralized approach. Interestingly, ideology and teachers and the BCTF appear to have had little influence on the development of the current policy structure. The change of government and governing ideology has had no impact on the policy structure and the BCTF has chosen not to adopt a position on this issue specifically, but rather has focused on the larger issue of the commodification of education. Variables that may favour a move to a more centralized policy structure have had limited influence on policy development due to a ignorance of the issue among the public and a failure to understand how international education policy may serve or hinder their specific interests.

The development of international student programs is having an effect on the education system in British Columbia. Although the number of international students in the province is not large (just over 5200 in 2002/03), it is growing rapidly (BCMOE, 2003c). The money that these students bring into school districts is clearly not enough to
change the nature of education in the province, but it is enough to prevent the
cancellation of programs and the laying-off of teachers in some districts. In West
Vancouver in 1998, the number of international students in the district fell by over 80
students due to the Asian economic crisis. This reduction in international students was a
central contributor to district budget cuts that included the elimination of 7.3 teaching
assistant positions, 2 vice-principalships, 2.5 custodial staff, and a reduction in the early
retirement budget by $90 000. The district lost over $1 million in revenue (Steffenhagen,
1998, B1). This additional revenue is altering the way that school districts with
international programs budget and plan for the future. The number of foreign students
and the revenue that they are expected to create have become a part of the balance sheet.
School districts depend on this revenue source to continue providing the programs that
students and parents expect. Those districts without international student programs are
slowly falling behind.

However, the promotion of international education programs in the province is
not only about money. International students enhance the educational experience for
other students and provide the opportunity for BC students to encounter aspects of other
cultures and countries. Nonetheless, the issue of international students is often reduced to
revenue. To be fair, this is not the only consideration of school districts in establishing
programs; but, in a time of budget reductions, the impossibility of offering these
programs if they did not provide an economic advantage is worth noting.

This analysis is restricted to an examination of public schools that provide K-12
education. These schools receive all of their per pupil budget allocations from
government sources. It does not include private or independent schools operating outside
of the public system, even if their budgets are supplemented with some government funding. It also does not include any post-secondary institutions or private international colleges that offer international education programs.

It is also important to clarify the term "free education". Clearly, none of the education offered in this province is free. BC taxpayers and grants from the federal government pay for the public education of resident students. However, for the purpose of this paper, a free education is one that is without cost to the student, even if it is state-funded. In almost all cases, a resident student's parents or guardians will have contributed to the cost of their child's education through taxes; therefore it does not cost them extra to send their child to school. This is in contrast to non-resident students who must pay tuition fees to attend the same schools that resident students attend for "free".

Over the course of writing this paper, the educational landscape has changed. The provincial Liberal government has passed legislation to allow for the development of revenue-generating school district companies and the expansion of offshore school programs while at the same time continuing to freeze the funding available to school districts, but providing them with greater autonomy to determine where this money will be spent (Kuehn, 2002, 1; BCMOE, 2002d; Clark, 2002). The issue of international student programs has come to represent many of the challenges that are currently facing the British Columbian education system.

In the process of researching this paper, I completed four interviews with people directly involved in the issue. I spoke to Ms. Barbara Onstaad, Program Coordinator for International Education in the Vancouver School Board; Dr. Rod Matheson, Principal of International Education in the West Vancouver school district; Mr. Larry Kuehn, a
researcher with the British Columbia Teachers' Federation who has since gone one to write about the overall impact of the free market on education; and a bureaucrat within the Ministry of Education who requested anonymity1. Other information was collected from the ministry databases of student statistics, policy circulars, some of which were made available through a request under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and the British Columbia School Trustees' Association policy database, which is available to the public online.

This paper will examine the myriad factors that have influenced the maintenance of a decentralized policy structure governing international student programs. When international education programs were first developed there appears to have been little thought put into assigning responsibility for the governance of these programs. Yet, as they have expanded since that time, there has been almost no change in the way that they are organized and operated. School districts retain exclusive responsibility for the operation of international student programs and are the sole benefactors of any revenue generated through them. The policy has changed little since it was originally developed to provide direction to school districts in 1979, yet, today, it governs a much larger and more complex system of international students and international education program. This suggests the importance of path dependence in preventing deviation from the original policy path. However, as the programs continue to expand and some districts gain ever more from their operation of international student programs, the current policy structure has become increasingly unable to address issues of inequality among districts, student safety and educational integrity.

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1 Information from the interview with the Ministry of Education official will be identified as BCMOE, 2001c, all other interviews are sourced with the interviewee's last name.
II. Theoretical Framework

George Hoberg’s policy regime framework provides three categories that I will adapt to classify the independent variables in this policy comparison. Hoberg identifies three regime components: institutions, actors and ideas. These components are intimately interrelated, yet each offers a competing explanation for policy development. Each variable has influenced the development of a decentralized policy, yet it is only through their interaction that the current policy direction has resulted.

The first component, actors, is defined as “the individuals, both public and private, that play an important role in the formulation and implementation of public policies” (Hoberg, 1998, 7). This definition is intentionally inclusive. In Hoberg’s work, it comprises individual members of the public, groups and organizations, government bureaucrats and politicians. He unites these groups by expanding his definition of actors to emphasize that actors are those who develop strategies and use resources in the pursuit of interests (1998, 7).

Although Hoberg clearly considers politicians and bureaucrats part of the actors category, their roles are very different. Hoberg has chosen to broaden the definition of actors and narrow that of institutions to exclude any individuals that operate within institutions. His definition of institutions emphasizes their role as rule frameworks, within which actors exist. Institutions are defined as the guidelines that shape the resources and strategies of actors, not the individuals that operate within these institutions. So, even though some individuals, like bureaucrats, may not truly act in pursuit of their own interests, but rather reflect public or political interests, Hoberg would not place them within the institutions category as he feels that they do not serve an institutional function.
In this analysis, I have chosen to follow Hoberg’s example and place politicians in the actors category, because, as Hoberg notes, they are individuals engaging in actions for the purpose of realizing preferences. In the case of politicians, this paper assumes the rational choice argument that politicians pursue strategies that will improve their chances for re-election\(^2\). However, I have diverged from Hoberg’s model by including bureaucrats, and the ministry that they compose, in institutions. Although the civil service is made up of individuals, their role is an institutional one. They do not act in pursuit of their own interests, but rather work to develop the policy guidelines that govern the action of others.

Hoberg defines institutions as the “rules and procedures that allocate authority over policy and structure relations between various actors in the policy process” (1998, 7). He expands this definition by specifying two roles for institutions: structuring authority and relations between and among government actors, and influencing relations between societal interests and the state (Hoberg, 1998, 7). Atkinson’s work on institutions suggests that they “establish who is permitted to participate, how decision-making is to be accomplished, and what limits (if any) are to be placed on the range of possible outcomes” (1993, 6). Thus, institutions are the rules and norms that structure the interaction between actors and ideas into a systematic, legitimate form (Atkinson, 1993, 6).

The very nature of institutional structures tends to lend legitimacy to those who possess the greatest knowledge of the rules and norms associated with them. This means that public officials, who derive much of their knowledge and skill from the very institutions within which they are working, are at a distinct advantage and have a greater

\(^2\) An examination and critique of this assumption first made by Downs (1957) can be found in Flanagan (1998, 10).
probability of realizing their own interests than those actors who are not intimately familiar with the institutional structure (Nordlinger, 1988, 882). Public officials benefit from both an intimate knowledge of the rules and from working daily to implement them.

Institutions perform both regulatory and selective functions: they structure interaction between actors, and classify interests into legitimate and illegitimate (Fabbrini, 1988, 895-7). This gate-keeper role is significant as it often serves to reinforce the status quo and discourage change. As North (1993, 21) notes, the architects of the current institutional model necessarily have a stake in preserving it and, therefore, tend to develop policy that functions within the existing institutional structure rather than proposing change that requires the development of a new structure.

Much of the literature on institutions and their function in the policy process emphasizes the difficulty of making change within an institutional structure. Paul Pierson and others address the role of institutions in encouraging policy inertia through a process of path dependence. Pierson points out that once an institution has adopted a policy, or path, it becomes increasingly difficult to deviate from that path and choose an alternate policy option. The longer a policy is used, the more ingrained it becomes and the more difficult it is to change to a different policy path. Ultimately, "initial moves in a particular direction encourage further movement along the same path" (Pierson, 2000, 74-5). This process, called self-reinforcing or positive-feedback, reinforces a strong preference for the status quo and narrows the set of policy choices available (North, 1990, 98-9 as cited in Pierson, 2000b, 265).

Hoberg's third regime component is ideas. These he classifies as "both causal and normative beliefs about the substance and process of public policy" (1998, 7). This paper
borrows from work done on the influence of ideas in international relations in order to
discuss the contribution of ideas to policy development. Goldstein and Keohane identify
three ways in which ideas may influence policy: ideas act as "road maps" to help clarify
the relationship between actors, their goals, and possible methods of achieving them; they
serve as focal points to narrow the range of options under consideration; and they may be
reflected in institutional rules (Hoberg, 1998, 7; Goldstein and Keohane, 1993). Actors
employ ideas as resources in their pursuit of policy goals. As Sabatier (1993, 17) notes,
public policies all incorporate implicit theories for achieving policy objectives. These
theories are based on deeply held beliefs that incorporate individual value priorities,
perceptions of important causal relationships, understandings of world systems, ideas
about the efficacy of various policy instruments, and self-interest. Groups are often bound
together by shared beliefs and a common vision of how best to address a given policy
issue based on this vision. Sabatier believes that conflict over policy issues will vary
depending on how deeply held the beliefs are that form the basis of the contentious issue.
Essentially, it is ideas that supply reasons for following a particular course of action or
pursuing a policy direction. They "define the universe of possibilities for action"
(Goldstein and Keohane, 1993, 8).

Ideas become particularly powerful when actors that have been granted legitimacy by
an institutional setting endorse them. Once an idea is selected and implemented,
particularly in an institutional setting, it may limit the consideration of other ideas or
interpretations of the situation by suggesting that they are not worthy of exploration
(Goldstein and Keohane, 1993, 12). For this reason, the sequence in which ideas are
presented is very important. Ideas, like institutions, are influenced by path dependence.
Early decisions put actions on a distinct track that is difficult to alter. Pierson argues that the nature of path dependence is intrinsically historical: ideas from the past are ultimately linked to the structure of the present (2000b). Existing organizations have a stake in preserving the current mental models as they will have evolved with the institutional structure and will be complementary to the existing institutional framework (North, 1993, 21). Ultimately, ideas matter, but the sequence in which they are presented matters more.

The issue of international students paying tuition to attend public schools in British Columbia is influenced by variables in each of these categories. Provincial politicians, the administrative and elected representatives at the school board level, teachers and the BCTF, the public, parents and students are all included in the actors category. All of these groups are composed of individual actors that rely upon different resources to pursue their own interests.

However, while each of these actors has resources at their disposal, it is the government actors, the elected politicians, that possess the greatest authority. Government actors are granted greater legitimacy than other actors by their association with the institutional structure of the bureaucracy. Their ability to direct the operations of the bureaucracy gives them an advantage over those who attempt to exert influence from outside the institutional structure. For instance, the Canadian Constitution formally protects the authority of the province in educational matters, whereas the authority of local school boards is not recognized. In fact, a recent Supreme Court of Canada decision, Public School Boards Association of Alberta v. Alberta, determined that school board authority does not exist independently of the province; rather it is delegated authority given to school boards by the province (Public School Boards Association of Alberta v.
Alberta, 1999; BCSTA, 2000). However, while politicians benefit from institutional authority, their true power is limited by their dependence on the public for election and re-election; therefore, the power of politicians to act is limited by their desire to keep the electorate satisfied.

The importance of the final factor, ideas, is largely determined by the power of those who adopt them. Ideas such as multiculturalism, educational equality, and political ideology, become more powerful if institutional structures and dominant actors reinforce them. In this case, those actors who are Canadian residents have an advantage, as they have grown up within the social norms that are the root of these ideas. Those who were educated in the Canadian school system have been socialized into the very ideas that it is necessary to understand in order to benefit from belonging. However, there is tension between competing ideas. In this case, multiculturalism and the value of having international students in the classroom runs counter to the value of educational equality as school districts across the province benefit to differing degrees from the presence of these students.

The actors, institutions, and ideas in this case study are not always as easily defined as this framework may suggest. Rather, it is an interactive, dependent relationship, where all of the variables are fluid and may exert pressure on one another and create change through their interaction. In this policy study, a majority of the variables favour the preservation of the status quo and those that do not are obscured by a general public ignorance of the issue. Overall, it is the government and institutional actors that gain legitimacy through their association with the institutional framework that have the greatest authority to influence policy inertia or change.
III. History of Policy Development

In British Columbia, as in other Canadian provinces, children between the ages of 5 and 16 are required by law to attend school. They may attend private or public school but must provide evidence that they are receiving instruction in a state-approved educational program (BCMOE, 1996, s. 2). Under the School Act, the body of law that legislates how the British Columbia school system is operated, students are entitled to enroll in a public educational program free of charge if they are of school age and resident in the school district (1996, s. 2). For the purposes of the School Act, a student is considered resident in the district if “the student is ordinarily resident in the school district and the guardian [...] of the student is ordinarily resident in British Columbia” (1996, s. 82). Therefore, all students considered residents of the province are entitled to a state-funded education. However, the School Act does not make any provisions for those students who are not provincial residents. Students from other provinces or other countries who are not “ordinarily resident” in BC and whose parents or guardians are not “ordinarily resident” in BC are not included in the guarantees of the School Act. Yet, these students are increasingly present in British Columbia, often for the express reason of obtaining a public school education.

The education system in BC, as in other Canadian provinces, is defined by a three-way separation of power. The federal government has little policy making power, but provides block transfers to the provinces which are used to fund educational programs. It is the provinces that are responsible for passing legislation related to education, allocating funding, and determining broad educational priorities and curriculum content. Individual school districts within each province are the third level of
educational governance. They are responsible for actually administering and providing students with the educational programs that are guaranteed in provincial legislation. School districts are the level of administration closest to students, teachers and school administrators and are intended to respond to community needs through an elected slate of local school trustees that compose a school board (BC MOE, 1989b, 7). School boards are responsible for ensuring that the educational priorities of the province and the local community are represented in the districts' schools, as well as for developing policy in areas that the provincial government does not specifically address in legislation (Creighton, 1987, 6).

The educational funding system is one of the most important determinants of educational priorities in the province. The Ministry of Education is responsible for determining school district funding levels based on a scale that allocates a standard amount per student, school and district each fiscal year. Districts receive a block of funding for the school year based on the number of students registered in the district on specified counting days each year. This per student allocation changes yearly based on provincial and federal budget allocations (BC MOE, 1994, 2-3; BCTF, 2002). Students with special needs, including learning and behavioural disabilities, may receive more funding, but in general the district is funded about $6,500 per resident student (BC MOE, 2003).³

³ Each school district receives a different per student allocation based on geography, demography and other factors that are considered in the budgeting process. In 2002/03 the average per student allocation was $6455 (BCMOC, 2003).

Like many other publicly funded institutions, school districts have experienced budget cuts over the last decade as governments work to pass balanced budgets. Faced with budget shortfalls, many districts have chosen to boost foreign student enrolment...
rather than cut programs (see Appendix 1). On average, international students are charged about $11,000 per year to attend school (McLellan and Nurmohamed, 2002, A10). Nearly half of that amount is profit that can be put back into the district and used to make up budget cuts in other areas. For example, in June 2000, the Coquitlam school district decided to boost the number of foreign students in the district by almost 300% to avoid a $2.4 million budget overrun. They expanded the program to 350 students from a total of 120 the year before. Patricia Garland, district principal for international education, explained that this program expansion allowed the district to avoid cutting any staff or programs in the 2000/01 school year (Steffenhagen, 2000, C7). School districts in British Columbia are engaging in the education of international students as a profit-making endeavour and are selling education as a commodity.

Gene Macdonald, director of foreign student programs in the Langley school district, reinforces this vision of education. He believes that “education is becoming a commodity that we are able to market, just like fish and wheat” (Steffenhagen, 2000, C7). Proponents of international education programs argue that profit is only an added benefit of having international students in local schools and point to increased cultural understanding and international contacts as the real benefits (Steffenhagen, 2000, C7). Regardless of the advantages, it is clear that the presence of international students in BC schools is altering the tradition of publicly funded education. An examination of two relatively similar school districts, Burnaby, which up until 2002/03 did not have any international students paying to attend school in the district, and Langley, which was one of the pioneering districts in developing a program, demonstrates the economic advantage that an international student program is able to provide a district. Both school districts are
fairly large urban districts located in the Lower Mainland. Burnaby is slightly larger, with a student population of 24,543, while there are 20,216 students attending school in Langley (including over 500 international students) (BCMOE, 2002e). In the 2002/03 school year, Langley has 520 international students, but Burnaby has only 75 (BCMOE, 2002b). In Langley, each international student is charged $12,500 to attend the international education program, plus an additional application fee of $100, homestay and insurance fees that I will not include in this analysis (SD 35, 2003). For each international student attending school in Langley, the district provides an educational program relatively equivalent to that offered to other resident students. If the provincial per student allocation of $6455 is used to estimate the cost of providing this program, the district retains a profit of approximately $6000 per international student after expenses. In Langley, this means that revenue generated from international student education for the district is over $3.1 million this year alone. Although this represents less than 3% of the district’s total budget of over $116 million, it is more than the $2.7 million allocated to the district annually for school maintenance funding (BCMOE, 2003d; BCMOE, 2003e). Granted, some of this money may be put into additional staff and resources to support the international education program in the district; however it is a pocket of revenue that the school district can add to its bottom-line without interference from the province. This money becomes more significant when it is considered over time – each year revenue is generated, districts with international students have extra money to invest into their district. For a district like Langley, that has operated an international student program since the mid-1990s, additional revenue has been available to supplement the budget for almost a decade. Even if revenue from the program is only calculated over a five year
period, holding the number of students and the fee for them to attend school constant at 2002/03 numbers, the presence of international students in the Langley district represents over $15 million in additional revenue over five years that is not available to those districts without programs or with smaller ones. This places school districts like Burnaby, that has only 75 international students attending school this year and has never run an international education program in the past, at a distinct disadvantage. While Burnaby currently has 75 students that are being charged $12 000 each to attend school in the district this year, and stands to make a profit of approximately $400 000 this year after educational costs are deducted, it has not benefited from this kind of revenue in the past as the district only began operating a program in the current school year (SD 41, 2003). Although Langley and Burnaby school districts are approximately the same size, Langley is able to use this additional revenue to offer extra programs, hire additional staff, support field trips and extracurricular activities that the students in Burnaby will not benefit from. Each year that some school districts in the province benefit from the revenue generated from international education programs, while others operate only with the budget provided by the province, the gap in services between districts with international education programs and those without increases.

The education of international students in public schools is one of those areas that is not specifically addressed in provincial legislation. However, the provincial Ministry of Education has not been entirely silent on the issue. The first policy memo addressing the admission of non-Canadian students to public schools was issued in 1979. In it, the Ministry stated that the province had "no specific authority" to rule on the eligibility of

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4 This memo applied only to non-Canadian students. Policies including out-of-province Canadians were not developed until 1997.
non-Canadian students to attend public school. Instead, it put this responsibility with federal immigration laws and individual school boards. The memo went on to remind district administrators that public schools are intended for BC residents and that other children should not be encouraged to enroll. It outlined exceptions to this rule, including student exchange participants and children of close friends or relatives in the district visiting for a limited period of time. Finally, the ministry suggested that boards adopt a district policy to deal with non-Canadian students wishing to attend school (BCMOE, 1979, R. 46). This memo marked the beginning of a decentralized approach to the development of international student policy. Districts were encouraged to develop their own policies rather than being provided with specific guidance on the issue from the ministry level.

This decentralized approach was reinforced in 1997 when the next policy memo was issued on the subject, largely to clarify funding issues. The “International Students Policy Circular,” issued in late August of 1997, just in time for implementation in the 1997/98 school year, identified and clearly defined which students were to be considered “offshore” for the data collection form used to determine funding levels for each school district. It stated that offshore students would not receive provincial education funding and that if the district had claimed funding for these students, the ministry must be reimbursed. Included in the definition of offshore students were international students with Immigration and Citizenship student authorizations. Exceptions to this regulation included refugee claimants; students whose parents were landed immigrants or in the process of applying to be landed immigrants, had temporary residency status, were part of
a teacher exchange program, or were carrying out their duties as diplomatic or consular
officials; and reciprocal exchange students (BCMOE, 1997, 97-06).

Similar to its predecessor, this policy does not provide any real guidance for
school districts other than clarifying which students the province will fund. However, in
the instructions for completing the 1701 form, the ministry form used to count students
and account for provincial funding, it says specifically under *Out of Province/Offshore
Students* that "provincial funding will not be provided for these students, tuition fees may
be charged" (BCMOE, 1999, 2). This is the first indication in any official ministry
documents that districts could charge tuition fees for the provision of educational
programs for non-resident students even though it was a widespread practice across the
province. In 1997, when the policy was issued, thirty-nine districts had international
student programs, 7 of them with more than 100 students (see Appendix 1) (BCMOE,
1998b).

In 2002, under the newly elected provincial Liberal government, the Ministry of
Education became active in re-examining the policy determining which students would
be exempt from international student fees. They announced that students whose parents
had work or student visas in the country for one year would no longer be eligible to
attend school free of charge. As international students, they would be required to pay the
same fees as other visiting students. This policy created problems for many other
government ministries working to recruit skilled labour to the province. The recruitment
of foreign-trained doctors and nurses, researchers and other high-demand positions was
suddenly endangered by the fact that these people would have to pay non-resident student
fees to have their children attend school in the province (Spencer, 2002, A11). By mid-
June, 2002, the Minister of Education sent out a letter declaring that the change had been rescinded and the international student policy would remain as it had been, pending consultation (BC MOE, 2002b).

It is not clear why the provincial government chose to adopt such a hands-off approach to this issue, but it is clear that it was a choice. Yet, relying only on official policy documents to determine the ministry position only tells part of the story. Unofficially, the ministry had a much greater role in encouraging districts to recruit international students, particularly from the Pacific Rim, to attend school in BC. In fact, in 1989, the Gleneagles Group, an independent consulting company, was hired by the ministry to produce a "marketing and implementation plan for secondary level international education initiatives in the Pacific Rim" (The Gleneagles Group, 1989, i). The plan outlines marketing and promotional priorities in several target Pacific Rim countries over a 2-3 year period and describes a two-pronged approach to encourage increased involvement with, and understanding of, the Pacific Rim among British Columbian students and teachers. They recommended that the first stage involve increased participation in the Pacific Rim through student exchanges, school twinnings, scholarship programs, curriculum development and partnerships with business and government. The second calls for the increased presence of international students in public schools through a program structured to allow for the maximum utilization of classroom space and educational resources (The Gleneagles Group, 1989, 4). A recruiting plan defines the focus of the ministry as being the recruitment of academically gifted students able to pay $5-6 000 in tuition per year as well as transportation costs and living expenses (The Gleneagles Group, 1989, 14). The focus of this recruiting program appears
to have been the attraction of international students for multicultural enhancement, not profit generation as the program cost for international students to attend school is the same as the per pupil allocation for that year (BCTF, 2001b, 6). The report notes that school districts vary in their interest and receptiveness to the idea of fee-paying students due to philosophical arguments or population pressures (The Gleneagles Group, 1989, 15). Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia are identified as priority markets (22).

This ambitious recruiting plan appears to have been abandoned by the mid 1990s; however, immediately following the release of the Gleneagles Group Report in 1989, Student Selection Offices were established by the Ministry of Education in Bangkok, Hong Kong, Taipei and Tokyo in an effort to attract fee-paying students to public and private schools in British Columbia (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 1991, 38; BCMOE, 1990b, 8). In 1992, a letter was sent to all superintendents from the provincial director of the National and International Education Branch urging them to take advantage of the services of these selection offices in recruiting international students that would “add an international dimension to the schools they attend and compensate the district through payment of full fees” (BCMOE, 1992b). Since this time, the recruitment process has been highly successful, although the ministry is no longer involved in the process. There is no mention of the student selection offices after the early 1990s. Most school districts now do their own recruiting and many with large programs are members of the International Public Secondary Education Association (IPSEA), a group that recruits on their behalf (IPSEA, 2001).
The number of international students in BC districts has steadily climbed since 1990. In 1990/91, there were 632 international students in public schools in 29 districts in BC (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 1991, 38). By 1997/98, this number had increased to 1998 non-resident students in 39 school districts. It reached 5208 students in 46 districts by 2002/03 (BCMOE, 2003c). Over 95% of these students are hosted by school districts in Victoria and the Lower Mainland that welcome hundreds of tuition-paying international students each year (BCMOE, 2003c).5

Although the Ministry of Education was involved in the recruitment of international students in the early 1990s, individual schools boards have always been responsible for developing policy related to all aspects of international student education. District tuition fees, entrance requirements, program availability and regulation vary widely.6 Most districts restrict the admission of non-resident students based on available "space, support and resources" (SD 34, 2000). In general, district policies outline ministry funding requirements and Canadian immigration restrictions as well as providing information on tuition fees, homestay fees, health insurance and other aspects of the international schooling program. Fees to attend school from September to June vary from districts that only aim to cover costs and charge students the equivalent to the provincial per pupil block funding allocation ($6 455 in 2002/03) plus any additional ESL costs (Bulkley Valley), to $13,000 per student in West Vancouver (SD 54, 1997; SD 45, 1991). The ministry began recruiting students to enhance the multicultural experience for resident students, but since districts controlled program fees, they were able to increase

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5 See Appendix 1.
6 Generalizations about school district policy based on policies obtained from the BCSTA policy database at www.bcsta.org. Search terms used include "international students," "foreign students," and "non-resident students."
tuition and realize a profit from hosting these students. Today, districts like Richmond and New Westminster specify in their policies that the tuition charged must be enough to cover all of the costs associated with educating these students as well as ensuring "that there is a net financial benefit accruing to the district" (SD 40, 1997; SD 53, 2000).

As the number of international students in the province increases, issues of guardianship, student health and welfare and overcrowding are gaining more attention, particularly at the district level. The unique circumstances of international students, whose parents or guardians are often in an entirely different country, place them at risk. This is certainly a concern for the school district officials and educators who recruit these students to Canada and are responsible for their well-being while they are at school.

In the past there have been cases of parents granting guardianship of their child(ren) to a resident of the district to avoid having to pay international school fees. Guardianship status could be changed from the parents to a local resident for the cost of a notary seal and the children could then attend school for free as local residents (Matheson, 2001). In order to avoid this practice, many school districts, like Vancouver and Richmond, have chosen to change their entrance requirements. These districts adopted the definition of guardian in the Family Relations Act, which requires an appearance before a provincial court judge to transfer guardianship (Matheson, 2001). This change has been unpopular among the immigrant community and has received attention in the ethnic media. The Chinese Newspaper, Ming Pao complained that it limited access to education (Ming Pao, 1998, A1). However, like many areas of international student policy, it has been up to individual districts to implement this kind of policy change.
The protection of the health and welfare of international students while they are studying in the province is also a concern. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (1991, 38), which published short summaries of the international education programs in Vancouver and Powell River in the early 1990s, students in the Vancouver School District were required to have a "responsible person" in the Vancouver area; that is, a relative or a family friend who was willing to serve as a mentor or school liaison while the student was studying in Canada. Presumably, this person would also be responsible for ensuring that the student remained safe and healthy. High incidents of abuse and neglect among international students were highlighted in a 1997 Ministry of Education policy memo on the subject of international students, which outlines not only provincial funding requirements, but also warns school districts to be vigilant in their supervision of these students, watching for signs of poor health, abuse or neglect (2). As the number of international students in BC districts increases, the need for greater vigilance by the provincial government to protect students’ welfare is becoming increasingly important. Provincial involvement is required to ensure that these young students, who are studying away from their families, remain well cared for. The responsibility for ensuring that the health and safety of these students is protected currently rests with local school boards.

In September of 1999, the issue of international students in public schools gained public attention for a different reason. The public began to express concern about the presence of these students in BC schools in light of the fact that 40 secondary school students in the Vancouver School District were unable to attend the first three weeks of classes due to a lack of classroom space. At the same time, 285 international students
were attending class. The foreign students had been registered based on June 30\textsuperscript{th} enrolment projections that anticipated there would be room for all resident students; this was not the case and the story hit local papers (Steffenhagen, 1999, A1-2). All Lower Mainland school districts accept tuition-paying international students. Yet, many of these districts are already overflowing with students and anticipate that the resident student population will only continue to grow (Steffenhagen, 2000, C7). Ironically, it is the large Lower Mainland districts experiencing resident population growth that also have the largest number of international students. In the future, they may have to decide whether to reduce the number of international students in their programs to ensure there is enough room for resident students or increase international student enrolment to provide funding for the construction of additional classroom space. For the majority of school districts in the province, the student population is decreasing and this may pose an opportunity for the further expansion of international students programs in those districts that have available capacity.

International education policy was originally articulated in 1979 in reaction to the presence of foreign students in the classroom and the desire of the ministry to clarify policy-making responsibility. The simple policy circular encouraged school districts to develop policy to address the issue, making it an area of school district jurisdiction. By the late 1980s, when the ministry and school districts began to recruit international students to their districts, the official policy had not changed: school districts retained responsibility for policy development in nearly all areas relating to international education for non-residents, except immigration which remained an area of federal
jurisdiction. Over the 1990s, the ministry became even less involved in the international education sector, no longer recruiting students and leaving it to school boards to expand their programs and increase tuition rates without provincial involvement. The ministry clarified funding responsibility for non-resident students, but school districts were left to develop policy to deal with all other issues related to international education programs. Today, the policy that was put in place in 1979 to deal with the demand by foreign students visiting family or friends in the province and wanting to attend school, continues to govern the international education of non-residents in public schools. As the number of international students has increased over the years, many districts have experienced increased pressure on their international education policies and been forced to clarify issues of guardianship and residency, yet this has only been done on a district-by-district basis. There is still no provincial policy dealing with anything other than residency funding qualifications. The provincial government continues to favour a hands-off approach to the issue.
IV. Actors

Several different groups of actors are directly involved in the development of a decentralized policy governing international students. Each of these groups has different resources at their disposal and seeks a specific policy outcome for reasons of self-interest.

4.1 Provincial politicians

The first group of actors is made up of the provincial politicians that sit in the British Columbia legislature and determine the policy direction of the government from around the cabinet table. They respond to the ebb and flow of the election cycle, targeting controversial announcements for early in their mandate to avoid voter punishment at the next election and following public opinion closely for an indication of the public response to different policy options. Politicians depend on the institutional knowledge of the bureaucracy for expert advice, but policy direction is also influenced by the ideological direction of the ruling party. Ministers must be able to explain and defend their decisions around the cabinet table. Social issues such as education and health care policy can be very important to a government. Author Crawford Kilian believes that “even a dying government can prolong its life by raising the alarm about problems in school” (1995, 63). Yet, the public can be fickle in their preferences and politicians are bound to follow the wishes of the majority out of their self-interest in re-election. For instance, if the public favours those leaders who are able to keep expenses down, even though budget cuts may harm the education system of the future, politicians of the day will approve budget cuts (Kilian, 1995, 67).

The creation of a decentralized, and essentially unregulated, policy regarding international students reflects the interests of provincial politicians. They do not want to
alienate any of the electorate by making decisions that could jeopardize their political future. By leaving the governance of international student programs to the discretion of local school boards, they are able to avoid upsetting their local school board by creating a power-struggle with the provincial government over the control of international education programs and revenue. Further, they avoid alienating the immigrant community. This issue could be particularly hurtful to politicians in areas with large immigrant populations, such as former Premiers Glen Clark and Ujjal Dosanjh, both of whom represented East Vancouver constituencies. The powerful lobby of the naturalized immigrant community on behalf of their friends and relatives who benefit from being able to enroll their children in BC public schools, and set them on the path to entrance in a North American university, would certainly be a formidable force to have to take on if changes were made that made it more difficult, or more expensive for these students to attend school. Out of an interest in re-election, it seems unlikely that many urban politicians would be willing to raise this issue in the legislature or support the development of a specific provincial policy that might be seen as interfering with the access of international students to local schools. Since politicians representing the urban Vancouver ridings are always well represented in cabinet, it is unlikely that the provincial government will change the policy in any way that would limit international student access or increase the regulations around entrance. This reluctance on the part of politicians certainly influenced the lack of provincial policy that was developed by the ministry.

7 The volatility of this issue is outlined in an article from Ming Pao, a Chinese newspaper, in which the author claims that any restrictions on international student access to public schools represent “insensitivity” to the educational needs of the immigrant community (1998, 02).
4.2 School Districts

The second group of actors is located at the school district level. It includes the school boards and elected school trustees that are responsible for putting Ministry directives into action and actually providing children in a given region with an educational program. School board power stems from a historical belief in the importance of the local governance of the educational system. In Canada, schools have traditionally been seen as belonging to the people. Schools are a representation of the community identity and it is the role of the school board to ensure that this identity is protected and maintained for future generations (Creighton, 1987, 1). School boards were developed to serve local interests – they are responsible to a smaller constituency than the provincial government so they are able to respond to the specialized interests of the community (Worth, 1987, 11). Local control of school districts provides real opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making, allows for the structuring of programs to acknowledge local need, encourages experimentation and innovation and competition for academic excellence (Crowson, 1992, 129).

According to Ministry of Education guidelines (1989b, 7), the role of the school board is to govern in a cost-effective manner, set educational policies that reflect the community’s goals and are consistent with provincial guidelines, and focus on the implementation of local and provincial educational programs, school finance and facilities, student access and achievement, teaching performance, and accountability to parents, taxpayers, the community and the province.

School trustees are elected by the community at large to ensure that the school district is governed in a way that is consistent with the values of the community and that
decisions are made “as close to the level of student contact as possible” (Storey et al., 1988, 6). Their actions are restricted by the School Act, the constitution, and other provincial acts and regulations (BCSTA, BCSSA, Housego, 1993, 8). This principle of local governance is intended to ensure the optimum responsiveness of the school system to the local community and to provide for citizen access and redress within the local system. For most citizens, the local school is the closest government-run institution available to them. It is far more accessible than senior government officials or the bureaucracy in Victoria. This local connection allows the board to respond to parental concerns and the needs of the community in a way that the ministry is unable to (Storey et al., 1988, 21; BCMOE, 2001c). The tradition of local governance is often emphasized as part of the democratic mandate.

However, while the tradition of local involvement in education is a long one, the real power of school boards in British Columbia is limited by their reliance on the provincial government for budget allocations. Districts are funded through a block grant system that was implemented in January 1990 following the recommendations of the Sullivan Commission. Since its implementation, the funding system has been revised numerous times, most recently in April, 2002 (BC MOE, 2002). Districts are allocated a block of funding that is intended to cover all educational costs. The grant is adjusted annually to reflect government financing, local enrolment, changes in mandate and other economic indicators (BC MOE, 2002). A referendum option is built into the School Act for those school boards wishing to exceed their local block funding allocation - they may appeal to local voters to accept an increase in property taxes in order to provide the school district with additional funding (BC MOE, 1991b, 7). However, it is generally
accepted that this option is unusable, as it requires a referendum every year and would almost guarantee the defeat of all current school trustees (BCSTA, 2001).

While the principle of local control is built into the governance structure of school boards, they are ultimately responsible not only to the electorate, but also to the provincial government and the Ministry of Education. Not only are boards bound to follow the directives of the *School Act* and other provincially produced policy documents, but in a recent Supreme Court of Canada decision on the Public School Board of Alberta’s challenge of provincial legislation that restricted educational financing, it was determined that school boards are a municipal structure and as such do not have an independent constitutional status. Rather, their authority is delegated from the province and may be restructured at any time (*Public School Boards Association of Alberta v. Alberta*, 1999). Not unlike municipalities, this creates tension in the relationship between the provincial government and local school boards who seek independence and localized power and policy control (Worth, 1987, 12).

In practice, school districts are given the power to make decisions about local matters, but the province reserves the right to intervene and develop policy on any issues that are of provincial importance. School districts often resent this interference and see it as a loss of power that is rightly theirs (Worth, 1987, 12). The Alberta school district case that was recently tried in the Supreme Court is evidence of the kind of animosity that can exist between the two powers. Across Canada, this relationship has become particularly bitter since the budget cuts of the mid-1990s and has grown more acrimonious in BC with the provincial government’s decision not to fund the raises in the teachers’ contract (Canadian School Boards Association, 1995, 3; BCTF, 2003). To demonstrate their
dissatisfaction, many boards in this province have introduced motions to censure the
Education Minister (Steffenhagen, 2002b, B1). Faced with budget cuts and tough
decisions about program and staff cuts, school districts have turned to other revenue
sources to protect their budgets (Steffenhagen, 2002, B5)\(^8\).

School districts would certainly prefer to operate without the intrusion of the
provincial government, especially in financial matters. However, in order to get the
money they need from the government, they must agree to accountability measures that
track their use of budgeted funds (Clark, 2002). As well, disparate needs and wants of
different school districts have further reduced their ability to influence decisions at the
provincial level, as they do not speak with one voice on policy issues. Those districts that
rely on international students to increase their budgets are fearful that any provincial
intrusion or regulation of the issue would mean a loss of revenue for them (Matheson,
2001). Therefore, school districts, especially those with large international students
populations, appreciate the lack of provincial intervention in the operation of
international education programs and will certainly push for this policy direction to
continue. Dr. Rod Matheson (2001), Principal of the International Student Program in
West Vancouver, voiced his concern on the issue: “It is one of those entrepreneurial
projects - if the government steps in there would be no incentive whatsoever for us to
continue our program”. However, those rural districts that have greater difficulty
attracting international students and do not benefit from the revenue that these programs
generate, are losing the opportunity for revenue sharing with the lack of provincial

\(^8\) Along with international student programs, districts like Surrey are also signing exclusivity deals with
corporations in exchange for sponsorship agreements, looking at renting out platforms for cellular phone
towers, constructing schools for other districts, placing ads on district vehicles and renting school facilities
to film companies. All of these activities were made possible in April 2002, with the passage of legislation
promoting revenue generation at the school district level (Steffenhagen, 2002, B5).
involvement in the policy-making process. Policy centralization and the development of province-wide standards would create the opportunity for the collection of a percentage of the profits to be distributed to those districts that are unable to operate the kind of large-scale programs that exist in the Lower Mainland. Policy centralization would also allow for the development of consistent tuition fees, program offerings and entrance guidelines. But, only those rural school districts that have difficulty attracting international students would likely support provincial involvement, which might partially equalize the benefits of the programs across the province.

4.3 Teachers and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

The third category of actors is those people that are responsible for imparting both resident and non-resident students with knowledge: the teachers. Like many other groups within this section, teachers are a diverse group with diverse opinions; however, on the political front the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) represents the views of teachers. The BCTF is a union that all teachers must belong to in order to teach in this province (Smyth, 2003, A6). It is also the sole bargaining agent for the provincial teachers' contract (BCTF, 2001d, 12). They have a well-developed policy shop and provide regular commentary in the news media on anything that may affect the education system. The BCTF has long been affiliated with left-leaning political movements and the New Democratic party. Since the election of the Liberal government they have vocally opposed the policy decisions of the provincial government and have been instrumental in organizing protests and rallies to demonstrate this opposition. In February 2003, they organized a province wide protest caravan of school buses that arrived in Victoria just as the legislative session began (BCTF, 2003b).
The BCTF is a powerful interest group that lobbies the government on issues related to education, but they do not officially have a role in policy development. In the past, they have not been particularly vocal on the issue of international student programs. In fact, Larry Kuehn, a BCTF researcher, suggested that few teachers are even aware of the issue (2001). However, in 2001, individual teachers raised concern about the quality of education that international students are receiving at the Association’s AGM and proposed that school boards end the practice of operating for-profit international programs due to concerns about educational quality (BCTF, 2001c).

However, since the election of the Liberal government and the introduction of legislation to allow school districts to expand their revenue-producing activities, this issue has become more widely discussed in the context of the general discussion around the commodification of education. In the November/December 2002 edition of the Teacher magazine that is sent to all teachers in the province, the union clearly outlined their position on international student programs and the increasing involvement of the market in education. The article refers to international students as “cash cows” who “pay high tuition and top up the district budget” (Kuehn, 2002, 1). It goes on to state that revenue from international student tuition totaled almost $40 million in 2001-02. The article claims that recent changes to class size limits mean that more students can be in each class and that this could affect the learning conditions of both international and resident students (Kuehn, 2002, 1). Interestingly, the BCTF does not argue that the province should become more involved in policing the treatment of international students, nor do they follow the example of their individual members and question the quality of education that these students are receiving, but rather choose to frame the
argument for quality education around the contract issue of class size limits. International student education programs are included in the greater discussion of changes in the education system that have allowed for the expansion of profit-making ventures like online learning, offshore schools and school district companies. For the BCTF it is an ideological argument: “education is [. . .] threatened when ideological preference for market competition distracts it into profit-seeking rather than focusing on the needs of the students in its classrooms” (Kuehn, 2002, 4). The expansion of international student programs is seen as part of the problem, but the union suggests that the solution is found not in greater provincial involvement in policy development but rather in a reversal of recent policy changes made by the Liberal government.

4.4 Taxpayers

The fourth category of actors is a broad one - all those people who pay taxes to support the provincial education system. This includes parents that have children attending school as well as those that do not have any children. Although this group may appear disparate in their needs and wants from the education system, the fact that they all contribute financially to the system is a uniting force. Even those without children attending school are concerned that their money be used effectively and efficiently to provide an education for eligible students. In his presentation to the Select Standing Committee on Education, Gordon Comeau, President of the BC School Trustees Association noted “in most communities approximately 70 percent of the residents don’t have children in school, yet they all share an interest in what students learn” (BCSTA, 2001, 250). Neither parents of school-aged children nor those taxpayers without children in the school system are interested in paying for the education of foreign students who
arrive in Canada for the sole purpose of receiving a Canadian education, without a history of contribution to the tax base of the province (Spencer, 2002, A11; Letters to the Editor, 2002, A19). This sentiment was enforced by the Minister of Education, Hon. Christy Clark, who stated: 'We're not interested in paying for people who don't live here, don't pay taxes and don't contribute to the economy'” (Spencer, 2002, A11).

Taxpayers are concerned that international students will get a free ride and benefit from a British Columbian education without contributing to the system. Particularly in those districts with small international education programs, without well-established policy governing their programs, non-resident students may be able to take advantage of policy loopholes and attend school without paying tuition. Among the international student recruiters, there are many stories of parents buying their children houses in a district to establish residency, transferring guardianship to a local resident or enrolling in university classes so their children will qualify for a free education (Matheson, 2001). Dr. Matheson (2001), the Principal of International Education in West Vancouver, believes that many of the districts with smaller programs may not be aware of these issues and even suggested that the provincial government should hold workshops or develop guidelines to help them.

It is clear that taxpayers would not support providing international students with free educational programs in British Columbia. Taxpayers expect that international students will fund their own educational programs and not jeopardize the education that resident students receive. As a rule, taxpayers do not like paying taxes. They want to ensure that their money is put toward providing the best programs possible at the lowest

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9 In September 1999, stories about Vancouver schools that did not have enough seats for BC students, but did have seats for international students, made the front page of the Vancouver Sun (Steffenhagen, 1999, A1-2).
cost and, therefore, would probably be supportive of any entrepreneurial programs that contributed revenue to the education system. But, the majority of taxpayers are probably not aware that these students even attend local schools or of the financial benefits that they represent to the system: scattered media reports have failed to raise widespread awareness of the issue.

Taxpayers gain their power through their contributions to the system and the accountability that this demands; however, it is not clear that they support the decentralization of international student policy over the centralization of it. In fact, provincial regulation would probably benefit taxpayers, as fewer international students would be able to slip through the cracks and receive a state-funded education due to lax district requirements or simple ignorance. All students would be required to produce the same papers and pay the same amount for programs of equal length and value, while school districts would continue to benefit from additional revenue. However, a move in this direction would require far more widespread knowledge of the issue and public outcry for change.

4.5 International Students, their Parents and Local Supporters

The final group of actors with a stake in the creation of non-resident student policy is the international students themselves, their families and the groups in Canada that act on their behalf. The greatest concern of these actors is access to an inexpensive, quality education. Most of the people in this category are neither Canadian citizens nor taxpayers in British Columbia, but rather foreign nationals seeking to improve their quality of life, or that of their children, by sending them to attend school in Canada. They lack political resources because of their inability to vote in Canada, yet are supported by
other immigrant groups and community ethnic organizations that lobby for immigrant rights from within the country. In districts such as Vancouver, these groups are particularly powerful as most of the international students that attend schools governed by the Vancouver School Board are friends or relatives of residents in the area. In fact, so many of the international students in Vancouver have personal connections that few of the students require homestay arrangements provided by the district (Onstaad, 2001).

In some cases the Canadian immigrant community will take up the cause of foreign students and argue about unfair program requirements. For instance, an article in the Chinese daily, Ming Pao, complained that the Richmond and Vancouver school districts required guardianship papers from local residents before children would be allowed to attend school free of charge (1998, 2).

It is not clear that delegating policy decision-making to local school districts favours international students more than a provincial policy would; however, it does create a more competitive recruiting environment that benefits potential students. Depending on their financial resources, preferences for district locations and program size, students are able to compare the costs and offerings of different programs and choose the one that is right for them. In essence, they are able to “shop around”. This competitive environment allows them to avoid the strict entrance requirements of some districts. If all programs were governed by the provincial government and charged the same amount for the same program offerings, this competitive edge would be lost. However, a uniform provincial policy could provide greater protection for the health and safety of these students and more effectively guarantee international education programs were of a consistent quality across the province.
Each of the five groups of actors examined in this policy comparison has resources and strategies available to them that aid in their pursuit of interests. In some cases these resources are limited because of their interaction with other actors or because of external limitations; in others they gain greater resources or authority through their interactions. The first group of actors, composed of the elected politicians that direct policy development and program direction, are restrained by the election cycle. They do not have the resources to carry out decisions on the ground, but determine policy direction based on government priorities. However, they are ultimately restrained by their desire for re-election, the need to maintain public support and avoid controversy. Although this group has significant power to direct policy, they will not institute change that would jeopardize their support among a significant proportion of the electorate. In the case of international student education programs, the power of the immigrant vote, particularly in the Lower Mainland will continue to restrict political support for any change to the current system.

School districts and their elected trustees are the second group of actors. They enjoy public legitimacy because of their accountability to the local electorate. School districts have the power to make policy in areas not regulated by the province and make choices about the use of provincial funding. However, they are constrained by provincial control of all budget matters. School districts currently benefit from their control of policy regarding international student programs. They are able to operate the programs unhindered and determine the use of any profits.
Teachers and the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation make up the next group of actors that have contributed to the current state of international student programs. The BCTF, the political voice for teachers’ interests, has framed their opposition to the expansion of international student programs in terms of the larger issue of the commodification of education in BC. They are ideologically opposed to the direction of education policy in the province in general, but have not chosen to specifically oppose the issue of these programs on the basis of the way they are regulated or the lack of specific authority for their operation.

The fourth group is composed of those people that pay taxes in the province. Their financial contributions to the education system give them the right to voice expectations about the functioning of the school system; however, they are such a diverse group that they do not speak with a united voice. The demands of this group are for an effective, cost-efficient education system for the children of the province. Their financial stake in the delivery of this service gives them the ability to make demands on the system, in particular, the expectation that only those children from families that have contributed to the tax base be permitted to receive a free education in the province. This group also generally composes the electorate of the province and is able to hold politicians and school boards accountable through their votes.

The final group is made up of international students, their parents and local supporters. International students and their parents lack political resources as they are neither able to vote nor do they pay taxes in BC. However, they are often wealthy and possess the financial resources to pay for their childrens’ education in Canada, and are supported by immigrant and multicultural groups within the country. They benefit from
the lack of provincial involvement in non-resident student policy as this allows them to search for programs that meet their financial and educational expectations and in some cases will allow them to get away from restrictive entrance requirements by simply choosing a program in another district. They are the consumers of the services being offered by the other groups.
V. Institutions

The second independent variable in this policy comparison is institutions - the rules and procedures that structure the interaction between actors and define the expectations for how policy is to be developed and what the acceptable policy outcomes will look like.

5.1 Ministry of Education

According to a ministry publication that reviews the role of different educational partners (1989b, 7), the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education include setting policy in accordance with specified duties and powers, ensuring that the system provides quality education in a cost-effective manner, setting the standards and overall direction for the school system, providing leadership and encouragement to educational agencies, and cooperating with provincial agencies in the delivery of non-educational support services. The ministry is responsible for finance, facilities, program direction, development and implementation, student access and achievement, teaching performance, and system evaluation and public accountability. The ministry also develops a standardized curriculum for all students and defines what students are expected to learn in each grade (BC MOE, 2001b).

The ministry is a non-political institution; however, policy directions and priorities are determined in the legislature and around the cabinet table. The Minister of Education is a politician rather than a bureaucrat and policy will often change with a change of government. For example, when the Liberal government came to power in British Columbia in June 2001, the focus of education policy shifted to a more entrepreneurial model emphasizing decentralized power and greater accountability.
School districts were given the responsibility for determining how they would divide their budget allocations, but were required to report to the ministry on specific performance measures (Clark, 2002). The bureaucrats that work within the Ministry, although directed to act by politicians, are generally career bureaucrats, each of whom gradually builds up an area of expertise and is able to evaluate policy change based on this experience, not on political considerations.

The ministry maintains a cautious relationship with its political masters. In order to successfully administer an educational program for the children of the province, bureaucrats must engage in long-term planning that will allow them to account for demographic changes as well as changing social norms and educational demands. They are able to perform long-term planning that politicians would find nearly impossible to reconcile with a political structure that concentrates on short-term gains and electoral cycles.

The British Columbia Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring that all school-age children in the province receive an education and for establishing the regulations and policy that govern how school districts deliver educational programs. It is directly accountable to the minister and the cabinet, and indirectly accountable to the electorate through the legislative assembly.

Although it faces restrictions imposed by politicians, the Ministry of Education has significant institutional power. The ministry is responsible for the writing, amending, and enforcement of the School Act and all other legislation that governs public education in the province, and has the power to develop policy guidelines that will affect all school districts in the province. It is responsible for ensuring that all children receive the same
quality of education, regardless of where they live. The ministry is also responsible for allocating money to school districts and for funding any large capital projects within the districts (BC MOE, 1989b, 7; BC MOE, 2001b). Its interests include ensuring that effective educational programs are provided within budget pressures. Its power derives from a close connection with the minister and the government, from its control of the education budget, and from its policy-making and enforcement abilities, which are protected in law.

Ministry bureaucrats are intimately familiar with the policies that they work to develop and implement. This knowledge gives the ministry the ability to structure the relations between other actors who lack familiarity with the institution's functioning. However, this authority may also be a source of conflict between the ministry and other educational stakeholders. The competition and constant give and take between the ministry and school boards has led to an uneasy relationship between the two as the ministry demands more services from the same funding and school districts fight for greater independence to determine policy without provincial interference. In the fall of 2002, some school districts began demonstrating the poisonous nature of this relationship by taking votes of non-confidence in the Education Minister (Steffenhagen, 2002b, B1). In the Vancouver school district, the motion of non-confidence outlines the areas of contention as "severe cuts in educational and support services to the students in Vancouver schools in this school year and [...] anticipated [...] further shortfalls in the 2002-03 budget year" (Steffenhagen, 2002b, B1). This conflict is certain to continue as school districts face a lack of funding for wage increases in the second and third years of the current teachers' contract (Steffenhagen, 2002c, B1).
The ministry also has agenda-setting power. The policy-making authority of the ministry allows it to serve in a gate-keeper role, choosing which ideas to champion and push forward and which to defeat. Bureaucrats working within the ministry have a stake in preserving the institution that they have worked to develop. In order to maintain their advantage over others that lack institutional knowledge, they work to preserve the policy direction that they have developed and worked within over time. North (1993, 21) believes that this encourages the maintenance of the status quo as bureaucrats work to implement policy structures that will function with the existing institutional structure and will not require the development of a new system. Path dependence limits the ease of achieving change within an institutional structure once a specific policy path has been selected (Pierson, 2000, 74-5). In this policy area, change has been made more difficult by the persistence of the same policy direction: history has increased the difficulty of altering from the current decentralized policy as it has become ingrained in the bureaucracy over time.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the development of province-wide education policy. However, the status quo bias of this institution makes it unlikely that the bureaucracy would move to alter the current decentralized international student policy, particularly since the policy direction of the current provincial government is toward a decentralized governance model.

5.2 Intergovernmental Relations

Canada is a federal state. This complicates the achievement of policy change as it increases the number of participants involved in making decisions and adapting to new
models or ideas. It also fundamentally influences the development of policy as it often creates the necessity of negotiation with at least one other government to achieve change.

Under the federal system the provinces are responsible for the organization and delivery of education. Section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1867, gives the provinces the exclusive responsibility to make laws governing education. Each province has its own education system administered and run entirely by the provincial government. In provinces where the church is given the power to operate schools, they must do so within provincial policy, legislation, guidelines and regulations (Martin, 1996, 43). All legislation relating to the governance of education is the exclusive jurisdiction of the province, but provincial governments depend on funding transfers from the federal government to supplement the provincial budgets.

Although the provinces are legally responsible for the provision of education, the responsibility for the actual delivery of educational programs has been devolved to the school district level. School district authority derives from the provincial government; their responsibility for the provision of educational programs at the local level makes them a third partner in educational governance and further frustrates the policy-making process. This devolution of power has created a complex intergovernmental relationship.

International student programs complicate the relationship between governments as immigration is an area of federal responsibility, but the educational programs for these students are delivered at the school district level. Therefore, although school districts face little interference in their policy decisions from the provincial government on this issue, they are required to adhere to federal immigration laws when recruiting students. Immigration requirements for entrance to Canada under a student authorization include a
valid passport and visa, a certificate of medical clearance, a letter of acceptance to a Canadian educational institution, proof of good character (no criminal record) and evidence of enough money to pay tuition and living costs (BC MOE, 1990b, 6). While most non-resident students in BC attend school with student authorizations, those without them may still be allowed to attend. BC ministry funding guidelines suggest that students without authorizations “should” be referred to Canadian Immigration, but does not require that they be, nor does the provincial government actively enforce immigration requirements (BC MOE, 1997, 2).

For some BC school districts the interference of federal immigration officials in recruiting efforts has been a frustrating issue (Matheson, 2001). Canadian universities that also depend on foreign students’ tuition to supplement government funding complain that strict immigration requirements are hampering recruiting efforts and punishing bona fide students (Duffy, 2000, A13). In BC, those districts that recruit students also complain of being hindered by the uneven application of immigration requirements. The principal of the International Education program in West Vancouver feels that the immigration policies need to be reviewed to ensure that they are logically and rationally applied:

I can talk to a parent in Hong Kong and I know that child is going to get a visa and come to my school, and a thirty minute train ride across the border in China I talk to another father and son and there isn’t a chance in hell that kid is going to get a visa. We are supposed to have a visa policy that is not country specific but there are a lot of things that defy logic and defy what we feel is good immigration policy (Matheson, 2001).

Since the responsibility for policy development concerning non-resident students rests at the school district level, school districts have become responsible for ensuring that federal immigration requirements are adhered to and must deal directly with the federal government on this issue.
Regardless of federal involvement in the provision of education funding and some areas of federal jurisdiction, like immigration, the primary intergovernmental relationship affecting the public education system is that between local school districts and the provincial government. The Ministry of Education, as the representative of the provincial government, determines school district funding, develops provincial policy, dictates educational priorities, class size requirements, the contents of the curriculum and many other significant aspects of public education (Canadian School Boards Association, 1995, 9; BCTF, 2003c). The provincial government has greater agenda-setting power than their federal counterparts, as they are constitutionally responsible for the provision of education within the province. However, the responsibility for the delivery of most programs has been devolved to the school district level. This creates an inherent tension between the school districts, which lack authority for policy development, yet maintain responsibility for program delivery, and the provincial government, which is not involved in on-the-ground education, but is responsible for all aspects of educational governance under the constitution. School boards are in a constant state of negotiation with the ministry. They have limited decision-making authority - only over local issues that do not have province-wide implications. The provincial government may intervene at any time in school district decisions and even has the authority to fire the elected trustees and appoint a public administrator if it is determined that the school board has not been fulfilling their obligations as outlined under the School Act (BCMOE, 1996, s.172).

School districts are also entirely dependent on the province for their budget allocations. However, over the last decade, many districts have been moving toward raising money through the development of entrepreneurial programs, like international
student programs, that are outside provincial policy. The province maintains the ability to
develop policy governing these issues if it chooses, but at the current time they remain
essentially unregulated and provide a rare opportunity for districts to independently affect
their bottom lines. The province only becomes involved if there are specific concerns
about a particular district, in which case the school district is subject to an audit on their
application of the residency requirements (BCMOE, 2001c). According to a Ministry of
Education official (2001c), the provincial government rarely becomes involved in this
issue: it has been left almost entirely to the school districts to establish and implement
policy around the admission of non-resident students and other revenue-generating
programs. Recent legislation has enforced the independence of districts to develop policy
in this area by expanding the opportunities for school districts to make profit from non-
educational sources (Bolan, 2002, A9B). Allowing school districts the freedom to
develop and operate these programs signals the province's move away from regulation of
revenue-generating programs. Any change to the current policy structure would certainly
require extensive negotiation between the provincial government and school districts as
the school districts would be loathe to give up their revenue-generation ability.

In his examination of pension reform, Kent Weaver (1999, 8) applies Scharpf's
(1988) arguments about the difficulty of achieving change when negotiation with more
than one level of government is required to the Canadian federal system. Weaver states
that the difficulty of making change in areas of shared jurisdictional responsibility results
in a joint-decision trap. All levels of government have different priorities and are forced
to work with, or in spite of, one another to achieve disparate goals.
The tension between these levels of government and the difficulty of achieving policy-change through intergovernmental negotiation limits the ability of any of the partners to alter the current policy course. Making any change means bargaining with other governments. This increases the transaction costs of changing course and makes governments more likely to favour the status quo than engage in lengthy negotiations (Sproule-Jones, 1993, 108). Intergovernmental relations are, therefore, likely to contribute to policy inertia and the maintenance of current policy direction in a classic path-dependence model. In this policy example, maintaining the status quo and allowing school districts to continue operating and regulating the development of international student programs without provincial interference remains the most appealing option as it prevents the difficulty of intergovernmental negotiation and avoids the imposition of policy from one level of government onto another. However, on the issue of immigration, the federal government seems certain to become more involved in the selection of international students entering the country, particularly following current terrorist scares and heightened security measures at our international borders.

The institutional pressures affecting policy creation in this study, the Ministry of Education and intergovernmental relations, both favour the maintenance of the status quo because of the difficulty of achieving change within rigid institutional frameworks. Although the ministry does not face the same limiting political considerations that provincial politicians do, like the short time-line of the election cycle, altering a current policy course is still difficult. The bureaucracy gains authority through their intimate knowledge of the current policy structure. They are loathe to weaken this power by
agreeing to any kind of policy change that could lessen their knowledge of the policy structure or their role in creating and administering it. The intergovernmental component of this policy also increases the difficulty of deviating from the status quo. Any policy change will involve negotiation between at least two-levels of government, increasing the difficulty of achieving change and once again creating a bias for the current policy path. The probability of moving toward more centralized policy development in the area of international student education is further decreased by the ideological direction of the current provincial government, which is moving to decentralize responsibility for policy development to the school district level.
VI. Ideas

The final component of this policy framework is ideas. Ideas are rather indistinct resources that shape the pursuit of policy goals but are difficult to define, particularly in isolation from the actors and institutions that incorporate them. They focus the policy process and define the relationships between different components.

6.1 Socialization and Multiculturalism

The dominant place of education, particularly the community school, in society has had a significant effect on the ideas that have influenced policy in this area. Education is an essential element of socialization in any society. Schools are the primary institutional means of “reproducing community and national identity” (Scribner and Fusarelli, 1996, 294). Traditionally, the objectives of the education system were to encourage the development of informed citizens, able to function and participate in society. Schools acted to achieve these goals through the preservation of the dominant ideology and by encouraging students to conform to a dominant set of beliefs. Fleras and Elliott (1992, 188) identify seven objectives of education:

- transmission of cultural and social knowledge;
- self-development at the level of personal awareness, knowledge and critical understanding;
- fostering of positive social change;
- inculcating loyalty to the system;
- training a new set of leaders, thinkers, entrepreneurs etc.;
- preparation for the workplace, consumerism and citizenship;
- reproduction of the social order.

These objectives clearly outline the role of schools as socializing institutions that serve to teach dominant social values. The Sullivan Commission on Education in British Columbia (1988), which evaluated the provincial school system and examined how the education system could best contribute to the development of students that were well
prepared to face the 21st century, recognized and reinforced this role for schools in the province. It identified one of the three social functions of schools as the socializing of students to the norms and values of society (BC MOE, 1988, 21).10

In Canada, one of the social norms that schools teach is multiculturalism. Adopted as official government policy on November 7, 1971, by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the concept of multiculturalism has since been enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Alladin, 1992, 73). For most Canadians multiculturalism implies the celebration and tolerance of diverse cultures and ethnicities. The British Columbia Ministry of Education expressed their commitment to this concept of multiculturalism in their response to the Sullivan Commission. They acknowledged that due to the development of an increasingly diverse society and the increase in ethnic groups, "students must develop an understanding and appreciation of this cultural mosaic" (1989, 6). They established the recognition of multiculturalism in policy and programs as a goal for the school system and suggested a series of programs to further this cause including the establishment of a multicultural education policy, the circulation of multicultural ideas, the introduction of heritage language pilots, fair hiring and promotion practices, and a plan to seek more ESL funds from the federal government (BC MOE, 1989, 23).

This dedication to multiculturalism came about at the same time that the province began to seriously expand recruiting efforts for international students and opened recruiting offices overseas (Gleneagles Group, 1989; Canadian Bureau for International Education, 1991, 38; BC MOE, 1990b, 8). The presence of international students in BC schools has long been promoted as an effective method of exposing resident students to

10 The other two functions were a custodial service to provide a safe place for children to spend time during the day, and an educational function, to teach basic skills that would enable continued learning.
other cultures, particularly in areas that do not have diverse ethnic populations. Dr. Matheson, the principal of the West Vancouver international student program, made exactly this point when discussing the advantages of international education programs: "It [is] an opportunity to bring different cultures into the school district and allow students and staff and teachers and parents, through the homestay program, to get to know a little bit more about other cultures and other people" (2001).

In 1989, the Ministry commissioned The Gleneagles Group to produce an "action-oriented market and implementation plan for their secondary level international education initiatives in the Pacific Rim" (Gleneagles Group, 1989, 1). This study emphasizes the importance of international education programs in promoting multicultural values. In fact, it identifies the purpose of expanding international programs as providing "added opportunities for British Columbian students and teachers to increase their exposure to, and understanding of, Asian cultures and language." It goes on to assert that these new relationships will strengthen "goodwill, awareness, and long-term social and economic relationships" (1989, 3). The promotion of multiculturalism and the popularity of concepts like diversity and cultural tolerance in the school system provided an excellent fit for the expansion of international student programs. In fact, in terms of public relations, they provided a perfect opportunity for school districts to change the nature of their cost-recovery international student exchange programs to revenue-generating programs when school district budgets began to decrease in the mid 1990s. Proponents were able to sell the programs as multicultural and could justify their promotion and expansion with little reference to their economic advantages.
The role of the education system in promoting the concept of multiculturalism as a desirable social value encouraged the development and acceptance of international student programs across the province. School districts began to benefit from the new opportunities created by an increased presence of international students in the classroom and would certainly have opposed any move by the province to interfere in the policy making authority that was allowing them to promote the expansion of international student programs.

6.2 Educational Equality: A Public Good

Education has long been recognized as a democratic right for Canadian citizens (Storey et al., 1988, 5). The education system promotes participation in the democratic system and a belief in the success of government institutions. The British Columbia Ministry of Education Mandate for the School System, written in 1989, discusses the role of the education system in promoting social progress. It suggests that progress depends on “educated citizens who accept the tolerant and multi-faceted nature of Canadian society and who are motivated to participate actively in our democratic institutions” (4). Education is a public good - something that enhances society and helps maintain and reinforce values and norms. It encourages a belief in democracy and the development of a citizenry that is thoughtful and able to comprehend complex issues. It promotes constant values even in times of rapid change (Storey et al., 1988, 5).

Following the release of the Sullivan Commission Report on the state of the BC education system in 1988, the Ministry of Education was forced to re-evaluate priorities and examine the public school system more carefully. This included defining what the education system needed to provide to the public in order to serve them in the most
effective way possible. The Ministry chose five areas to highlight: accessibility, relevance, equity, quality, and accountability (1989, 5). While all of these lofty goals will pose a constant challenge, it is equity that is today being threatened by the current influx of fee-paying international students.

One of the central reasons for state involvement in education is to ensure equality. The private sector may deliver some educational programs but will not provide education for all as they depend on being able to make a profit. Free market education is not available to all students as not everyone is able to afford it. Even when bursaries or scholarships are offered for low-income students, awards are dependent on criteria set by the school administration and some students are excluded. John McMurty (1991 as quoted in Tooley, 1998, 41) argues that education is not amenable to commodification as it has different goals than the market. The market exists to achieve profit, while public education exists for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge to society. Tooley (1998, 42) believes that while these goals are not necessarily incompatible, the final goals of public education are educational - the wide dissemination of knowledge - whereas the final goals of private educational agents, or those who deliver education in the free market, are financial. Ultimately, the difference between public and private education and the reason that private education is unable to provide an equal education for all students is that not every student can afford an education in the free market.

Thus, if education is treated as a commodity, it will lose one of the fundamental factors that define public education - equality. That is, the belief that members of society share a common right to an education that provides an approved package of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Schwartz, 1988, 4). This equality is reinforced by a standard funding
system for all public schools in the province. However, as some school districts benefit disproportionately from the funds that international student programs and other sources of revenue generate, the equality between districts is being threatened. Many small, rural districts without large international student programs have had to adapt their educational programs based on ministry funding allocations, while districts with large revenue-producing international education programs may use this money to supplement the educational programs being offered in their district. They may add teachers, provide extra time to help students having difficulty or offer more field trips and hands-on experiences for their students, enhancing the education that they receive (Matheson, 2001). For example, in West Vancouver, the school district was forced to cut over $1 million in staff and services to make up for an enrolment reduction of over 80 international students in 1998 (Steffenhagen, 1998, B1). Larry Kuehn of the BCTF believes that the expansion of international student programs will only make inequities between districts worse. “When the funding of the education of British Columbia children and youth depends on the sale of services, then the resources available will depend on the entrepreneurial success of the district (Douglas, 2002, A1).

The lack of regulation of international student programs at the provincial level has threatened the principle of equality within the school system. Public support for this standard value would certainly lead to pressure to centralize the regulation of these programs, at least from those districts that do not currently benefit from the additional revenue. However, there is little evidence that the public is widely aware of the existence of fee-paying non-resident students in their local schools, let alone that the public has considered the implication of the unequal distribution of students and benefits from fees
charged by these programs (Kuehn, 2001). The concept of educational equality and the impact that international student programs and other recently developed programs that generate revenue for the individual school districts are having on education are complicated by the self-interest of parents and other community members, who support programs that will increase the quality of the education their children are receiving. Self-interest has led to a situation where people within communities that benefit from these programs support them because of the benefits that they bring to their children, while those in areas that do not benefit from these kinds of programs suffer from a general lack of information about their potential impact. Those people that are not in districts with international student programs are probably not aware of the increasing inequality that their children may be facing because of a lack of revenue from international education programs.

6.3 Ideology

One of the most interesting aspects of the development and maintenance of a decentralized policy model governing international student programs is that the policy has remained unchanged through three separate and ideologically diverse governments: Social Credit (Socred), the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the BC Liberals. Howlett and Brownsley offer descriptions of these parties and their constituents:

The New Democrats, as the traditional party of labour in the province, have aligned themselves with the sectors that depend heavily on government spending, including both the re-vamped resource sector and the large post-World War II service sector. On the other hand, the former Social Credit government and now the Liberal Party have allied themselves with large corporations as well as with elements of the traditional middle class of professionals and small businesses who prefer a regime of privatization, deregulation, and tax and deficit reduction (2001, 325).
Most intriguing perhaps is the fact that while the NDP, a left-leaning labour party, was in power for almost all of the 1990s (1991-2001), they left the policy unchanged from what it had been under the previous right-wing Socred government.

International student programs in the provinces first began to grow under the Social Credit government. It was during their watch that the Gleneagles Group was commissioned to examine international education initiatives in the Pacific Rim (The Gleneagles Group, 1989). Student recruiting offices were also established in four Pacific Rim cities to recruit students on behalf of interested school boards (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 1991, 38; BCMOE, 1990b, 8). When they were voted out of power in October 1991, the Socreds had established the foundation for the expansion of international student programs in the province.

Unlike the Social Credit government before them and the current Liberal government, the NDP government was known for the centralization of policy control, opposition to the involvement of the market and private revenue-generation in education, and for disagreeing with programs that could provide advantages to students unequally across the province. Evidence of these policy goals can be found in some of the changes that occurred during their two terms in government.

The centralizing tendency of the NDP was evidenced in their inclusion of class size in the provincial teacher's contract. This was an area that had never before been regulated at the provincial level (BCTF, 2001d, 12). Yet, when the teacher's contract was renegotiated in 1998, limits of 20 students in kindergarten classes and 23 students in grades 1-3 were included (Ward, 1998, B7). School trustees complained that this hindered student placement, took away their flexibility to move students between classes
and caused some students to be turned away from their neighbourhood schools, but the
government sold the policy as a means of ensuring that every student was in a small
enough class to enhance their learning environment (Steffenhagen, 1999b, A1, 8). The
new policy was a pet project of the BCTF, and its inclusion in the provincial contract was
not doubt encouraged by extensive lobbying on their part. Education Minister Paul
Ramsay emphasized the province-wide appeal of these changes and reinforced the idea of
equal educational opportunities across the province: "Whether they live in Vancouver or
Fort Nelson, Prince Rupert of Fort St. John, parents have consistently asked for smaller
class sizes" (Ward, 1998, B7).

In the area of market involvement and revenue-generation in the education
system, the NDP opposed projects such as the West Vancouver all-day kindergarten in
which parents willing to pay for the service were able to put their children in kindergarten
for the full school day rather than only half the day as in other districts. Education
Minister, Penny Priddy told the media that she had "huge difficulties with it," as she saw
the program as a step toward the privatization of the BC public school system
(Steffenhagen, 2000b, A1). The BCTF also vigorously opposed the user-pay kindergarten
and banned their members from teaching in the program until this action was declared an
unlawful strike by the BC Labour Relations Board (Steffenhagen, 2001b, A3). However,
while the NDP and members of the teachers' union publicly opposed the program, the
provincial government did not take steps to shut it down, choosing instead to defer to the
West Vancouver school district and the decision of the Labour Relations Board. The
government was reluctant to become involved in a power struggle with the school district
over the issue of district-operated revenue-generating programs and deferred to outside authority to make a decision on the controversial issue.

During their tenure in government, the NDP also opposed plans to sell the curriculum to other jurisdictions as a means of generating revenue for the province (Steffenhagen, 2001, A1,8). Although it appears that the general policy direction of the NDP government would be opposed to the expansion and continued decentralized governance of international student programs, the policy was not altered. In fact, the number of international students paying to attend school in the province increased dramatically during the years that the NDP were in power from 632 in 1990/01 (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 1991, 38) to 4050 students in 2001/02 (BCMOE, 2001). Not only did the NDP government not centralize the responsibility and policy-making authority for international student programs, they also did not curtail their expansion at the school district level. Clearly, ideology was not the only factor at play in this decision.

It is less surprising that the current Liberal government would also choose to leave the policy untouched as the provincial Liberal party shares many of the same right-wing roots as the Socreds. In the Liberal’s New Era Document (2001), a pre-election outline of their intended policy direction, they highlighted plans to move toward a more decentralized government structure dependent on outcome-based standards and greater local responsibility for policy decisions. In education, the government promised to “give local school boards more autonomy over the delivery of education services, subject to provincial curriculum and testing standards” (BC Liberal Party, 2001, 16). Further, the Liberals have moved to expand opportunities for school districts in many of the areas that
the NDP government vigorously opposed in theory, though not always in practice. These include the expansion of the offshore school program that will offer the provincial curriculum to an additional twenty schools overseas in the next year (BCMOE, 2002d). Interestingly, this program also began under the NDP with the development of the Dalian school in China; however, it never expanded beyond one school (BCMOE, 2003b, 2). The Liberals have also passed legislation to allow school districts to establish corporations that are able to engage in revenue-generating activities (Steffenhagen, 2002, B5). The Liberal ideology of greater local government responsibility and policy devolution to the school district level suggests that there is little chance that the current international education policy direction will be centralized. More than likely, this government will follow the example of its predecessors and leave international student policy development as a school district responsibility.

Considering all of the varying political pressures and ideological differences among the Socred, NDP and Liberal governments it is remarkable that international student policy has remained relatively unchanged through three very different eras. Ideology may have played a role in the original development of the program, but it seems to have had little effect on the expansion or policy direction of international education programs in the meantime. It appears that while ideology may influence the current government to expand other similar revenue-generating programs, it has had little impact on the current governance structure.

The public education system has long served as a tool of socialization in this province. It reinforces common cultural values and passes on social characteristics to the
next generation. In the case of multiculturalism, the school system served to legitimize this concept as part of the Canadian set of values. A belief in the importance of exposure to other cultures opened a natural doorway for the development and expansion of international student programs. The programs were sold to the public as expansions of the multicultural experience, part of teaching the Canadian values of acceptance of diversity and tolerance of other cultures, but gradually became an effective means of supplementing school district budgets. However, the connection between multiculturalism and the expansion of international education programs probably had little to do with the decentralized regulation of these programs that is currently in place. Multicultural values simply imply support for the promotion of cultural integration, not a centralized or decentralized governance structure. It is the revenue-generating potential of these programs that causes school districts to continue to favour decentralized policy control.

Its association with traditional democratic ideals legitimizes the concept of education as a public good, to be shared equally by all citizens. However, the unequal distribution of international education programs and the benefits from these programs is affecting the equality of educational programs across the province. At present, few people have fully grasped the effects that international students fees may have on educational equality and those that have probably live within districts that are benefiting from the extra revenue. The lack of public awareness or action to induce change in this policy area supports the maintenance of the status quo.

Since the recruitment of international students began in earnest in the late 1980s, three different, ideologically diverse governments have governed the province. Yet, while
they have different views on the marketing of public education, all have maintained the same decentralized policy structure that was originally articulated in 1979. Ideology appears to have had little effect on policy-development in this area, regardless of divergent views by the NDP and Liberal governments, in particular, on this issue.
VII. Discussion

The provincial policy of deferring responsibility for the education of non-resident students to individual school boards has given school districts the power to utilize their entrepreneurial skills and recruit revenue-generating international students from overseas. Some districts have established extensive programs for hundreds of students that involve summer language camps, homestay networks and special ESL programs, while others simply continue to offer their regular educational programs (Matheson, 2001; Onstaad, 2001). Those districts that successfully generate revenue from their international students are able to invest this money into other educational programs. In the Lower Mainland, many of these districts are simply responding to demand and providing a program that is needed to meet the requests from residents that want their family and friends to be able to attend school in BC, while others have intentionally developed programs and recruited students as revenue-generators (Onstaad, 2001).

However, while the lack of a centralized policy regulating the education of non-resident students allows school districts the freedom to develop and benefit from these programs, it also contributes to increasing inequality in education funding and opportunities across districts and fails to address health and safety issues among international students. The lack of specific provincial policy governing student fees and school entrance requirements has meant an unequal benefit across districts. It is almost exclusively large, urban districts, particularly those in the Lower Mainland, that have benefited the most from these programs. They have the advantages of the city to attract foreign students and the capacity to deal with them. They are able to handle large programs and charge much more than other districts, therefore accruing greater benefit.
Each year that districts operate international student programs and are able to supplement the quality of education that they are offering their students with the revenue from these programs, districts without this additional revenue fall further behind. Rather than being able to use this additional funding as a cushion to absorb government budget cuts and prevent program cuts, they must balance their budgets by laying off teachers, cancelling programs and classes and closing smaller schools.

The lack of provincial policy to attend to the health and welfare of international students is also a concern. There are no regulations of educational programs, homestay arrangements, or guardianship issues. International students attending public schools are young and have often left home without parent or family support, yet little has been done to safeguard their health and safety.

Although the decentralized, piece-meal policy that currently exists has been relatively effective to present, the pressure on this policy will only continue to increase. The international student market is a relatively untapped opportunity for BC districts. But, there is definitely a need to level the playing field between districts in the province. The province needs to become involved in a more concrete way through the establishment and, more importantly, the enforcement of regulations governing educational programs offered to these students. Provincial involvement is needed to standardize the fees charged to attend school in the province, the use of this money by districts, and the expectations for homestay arrangements and care for these students. These issues are bound to persist until they are addressed, as it is certain that the demand from international students to attend school in this province will continue to increase. At the 2001 British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) Annual General Meeting, a
resolution was referred to the Assembly calling for the end of international education programs operated at a profit. The resolution was critical of the revenue from international education programs and school district dependence on it, as well as the lack of additional educational support that international students received for this money (BCTF, 2001c, 2).\(^\text{11}\) It seems rather drastic to cancel the programs altogether as they certainly provide benefit to the partners involved, however, the unregulated nature of non-resident programs is a concern.

Most other Canadian provinces offer international student programs similar to those in BC school districts. As in BC, there is little evidence of provincial regulation in any province except Nova Scotia, which developed an international student policy in 1997 that addresses many of these issues. Their policy outlines the provisions in the *Education Act* for charging foreign students to attend school in the province. Local school districts are responsible for regulating the number of students in their area, but the fees that they charge are provincially regulated. A non-resident student that chooses to attend the regular public school program is charged a fee equal to twice the provincial funding formula rate. A student attending an international student program is charged three times the provincial formula rate. An international student program includes the public school curriculum with the addition of "integration and settlement services," but does not include residency (Nova Scotia, 1997, 2). Finally, the policy states that all fees collected from foreign students will be divided between the school board and the minister: 80% for the school board and 20% for the minister (Nova Scotia, 1997, 3). The intended purpose of funds collected by the minister is not clear. It may be to supplement overall school funding or provide additional budget support to districts without large foreign student

\(^{11}\) The resolution was put forward by the Coquitlam Teachers’ Association.
populations. Whatever the purpose, this policy is significant as it clearly establishes funding levels, expectations for school programs, and the division of profits from the programs. The revenue sharing arrangement between the school boards and the minister allows the school districts to retain enough revenue to maintain the viability of operating an international student program.

This compromise is one policy option that is worthy of consideration in BC. It allows school districts to retain much of their autonomy in running the programs, therefore encouraging further entrepreneurial spirit, but also allows the ministry and perhaps even other school boards to benefit from the revenue generated through the 20% share submitted to the minister. Further, it provides clear, province-wide regulations that outline program expectations. However, it does not address protections for the health and safety of international students.

The difficulty of altering policy in this area should not be underestimated. As the current Liberal government discovered in the spring of 2002 when it attempted to change the policy slightly to exclude some of the groups that were exempt from paying non-resident student fees, these policies are not easily altered. Many stakeholders, including school districts, international student and foreign worker recruiters and the immigrant community depend on international student policies remaining unchanged. Although the current government supports the expansion of programs that allow districts to diversify their revenue base through entrepreneurial activities, any change to the policies governing international students will not be made easily.¹²

¹² Legislation passed in April, 2002, gives BC school boards the right to form private companies to engage in profit-making ventures (Bolan, 2002, A9B)
Actors, institutions and ideas influence the adoption and rejection of policy change. In this case, each component has contributed to the difficulty of altering the current policy direction in this area and will continue to stall proposed change in the future. Among the actors, both provincial politicians and the school districts have reason to prevent change or greater policy regulation. For politicians, this is a controversial issue that raises questions about the equality of residents and their rights within the province. It calls for a differentiation between those who are entitled to have their children educated for free and those that are not, and could incite backlash within the immigrant communities. This is a potentially divisive issue that politicians, particularly those from urban areas benefiting from the current policy decentralization, would like to avoid. School districts are also unlikely to favour any change from the status quo as they currently have the most to gain from maintaining the policy as it is. They are able to keep all of the revenue generated from their international student programs and operate the programs unhindered by the provincial government. The positive effects of these freedoms are unevenly distributed across districts, which makes it even less likely that school districts, as a group, would agree to any kind of policy change. Teachers and the BCTF are opposed to the commodification of education that they feel international education programs represent. This opposition is not aimed specifically at the local governance of these programs, but rather at their very operation. Parents and taxpayers are generally oblivious to the existence of these programs and international students; their parents and local supporters favour the availability of education in Canada and the advantage of “comparison shopping” among district programs that the current structure allows.
Institutionally, the current decentralized policy has been functioning and accepted since 1979, when school boards were first instructed to develop policy to deal with the admission of foreign students (BCMOE, 1979). Any change to the current policy would almost certainly include increased centralization and provincial regulation as it is currently almost completely decentralized. It is unlikely that the Ministry of Education would support this change as bureaucrats have worked within the decentralized framework since it was originally developed. Change would require negotiation between the school districts, who certainly would not want to give up their responsibility for this issue, and the provincial government, which is currently moving to a decentralized governance model of more autonomous school boards with specific accountability measures (BCMOE, 2001c). Policy change would require school districts to surrender an area of responsibility and revenue generation, and the province to interfere in a controversial policy area, intrude in school board issues and move in a direction opposed to their current governance model.

Finally, while centralization and increased regulation is encouraged by the idea of educational equality, change to the current policy would mean opening public debate on politically sensitive issues and acknowledging the inequality that exists in the system. It would require an analysis of who deserves to receive a state-funded education in the province and who does not. It would also require acknowledgement, at least at the provincial level, that the current policy is not functioning effectively and requires revision. This debate could open the province up to charges of racism as most non-resident students being charged to attend school are of Asian descent. It would also probably increase public awareness of the existence of these programs and the inequality
of the benefits enjoyed by school districts across the province. It is certainly conceivable that rural British Columbians may begin to demand a share of the profits for their districts, citing geographic and demographic disadvantages in recruiting students and running international education programs themselves. The difficulty of dealing with these political issues has plagued all three political parties that have governed the province since recruitment of international students began in the late 1980s. Rather than facing the backlash that could result from the centralization of international education policy, they have all chosen to retain the status quo.

The development of policy dealing with the regulation of educational programs for non-resident students has been influenced by a variety of variables and the difficulty of overcoming institutional path-dependence. Although the actors, institutions and ideas that have affected this policy decision each represent different interests, each supports the maintenance of the current policy structure. The choice of the provincial government in 1979 to leave school districts with responsibility for this issue has created a situation of unequal program offerings, fees, and benefits; however, moving away from this policy structure will certainly create turmoil among the many involved interests.
VIII. Conclusion

The current policy governing non-resident students, to the degree that it exists, was developed to govern a system of international students that has changed significantly since the policy was developed. Yet, the current policy remains as it best serves the most powerful interests involved in this issue. The province established basic regulations defining who could be funded as a resident in the provincial system and then left it to school boards to determine what would be done with those students that did not fit into the definition. School boards were given the discretion to determine which students would be permitted to attend school, if they would be charged tuition to do so, how much they would be charged, what kind of educational program they would be provided and how the revenue that they generated would be used. The province only involved itself in situations where it was suspected that the district was claiming funding for students that were not actually residents under the *School Act* definition.

The actors, institutions and ideas that contributed to the realization of this decentralized policy have been examined using Hoberg's policy regime framework. Each variable within these three broad areas contributed to the process of policy development and to the definition of acceptable policy outcomes. They all exerted pressure on the policy-development process in an attempt to further their own interests.

The actors involved in this policy-making process are significant in their number and diversity of interests. Although they share a stake in the policy area, each group employs different resources and strategies in an effort to achieve their desired policy goals. The first group, provincial politicians, seek to avoid the controversy associated with this issue. For this group, political concerns, including re-election and the possibility
of alienating ethnic groups are of central importance, so they have chosen to leave responsibility for the development of policy in this area to the school districts. However, this group of actors in not entirely uninvolved in the process. They are responsible for determining school district funding and providing policy direction to the ministry. It is extremely unlikely that this group would become involved in the policy development process, as any change to the current policy structure would be unpopular in the urban school districts that benefit most from international student programs.

School districts also have a stake in the maintenance of a decentralized non-resident student policy. Many districts with international student programs rely on these programs as revenue generators for their schools. The money is used to offset budget shortfalls or to allow districts to offer services that would otherwise not be available. Control of policy development gives districts the freedom to establish their own programs, recruit their own students, determine tuition costs, program offerings, and homestay arrangements, and decide how the revenue will be used. Even for those districts that do not have programs, the decentralized policy serves their desire for greater policy control overall. However, the policy-making authority of school districts is not protected in legislation. Their power derives from the provincial government and can be challenged if the province decides it wishes to take over responsibility for policy in this area.

The BCTF, representing teachers in the province, is opposed to the marketing of education generally. They have chosen not to take a stand on the policy structure of international education programs specifically, but have instead used the existence of these programs to identify an ideological opposition to the sale of public education.
The fourth group of actors is the taxpayers. They are a large, diverse group that have disparate needs and wants but who share a common interest in the school system through their financial contributions to the tax base. This group wants to ensure that their money is well used to provide an affordable, effective education for the students in their jurisdiction. They are probably in favor of any kind of entrepreneurial activity that may generate revenue for the school system, but would not support providing education for foreign students who had not contributed to the system. Although this group is large and fairly powerful, it is not clear that they have exerted pressure to cause either the centralization or decentralization of policy, as they are probably largely unaware of the issue.

International students, their parents and local supporters are the final group of actors. These are the consumers of the programs that school districts in the province offer, which gives them some power to exert policy change through the spending of their money. International students and their parents have little political influence as they are not able to vote and do not pay taxes in the province, but they have local supporters within the ethnic community that advocate on their behalf. The current decentralized policy structure allows them to comparison shop for different program offerings, entrance regulations, and program fees. However, a more centralized system would probably provide greater protection for these students as the province could enforce penalties for those school districts that were not providing adequate educational programs or safety protections.

Of the actors, the first two groups, politicians and school districts, exert the most pressure on the policy development process. Both of these groups are certainly in favour
of maintaining the status quo, although it is the school districts that have the most to lose if any policy change is made.

Institutionally, there are two variables that may have contributed to the development of the current policy: the Ministry of Education and intergovernmental negotiation. Each defines the rules and procedures that other variables work within. They guide interactions between the actors in the policy process and apportion authority. The Ministry of Education is responsible for developing and implementing the structure of educational governance in the province. The ministry benefits from familiarity with the government and is able to use knowledge of the School Act and other regulations to gain authority over groups that lack this institutional legitimacy. The ministry gains authority though its control of this institutional framework, within which other variables must work. However, in the case of international education programs, the power of path-dependence is significant in the preservation of the current policy. The ministry bias is toward the preservation of the status quo. Any change would necessitate the development of a new policy path that would require deviation from the current familiar structure and, therefore, face resistance from the ministry.

The Canadian federal system gives the responsibility for education to the provinces. The provinces have chosen to further divide this responsibility by creating school boards to deliver educational programs at the local level. This governance structure complicates the achievement of any policy change as it necessitates negotiation between at least two levels of government. In the case of international student policy, which raises immigration issues, it also involves the federal government. The difficulty of achieving policy change through intergovernmental negotiation increases the transaction
costs of any policy change and reinforces the likelihood that the current policy will not be altered. Therefore, intergovernmental negotiation may be considered a decentralizing force as it favours the maintenance of the status quo.

Ideas are the final component in the policy regime framework. Although difficult to define, they identify options and the possible ways of achieving them. They are reflective of the actors and institutions and their goals. The education system is a socializing agent that has long served to teach children dominant social values. It had a clear role in the promotion of multiculturalism which, once enshrined in the Charter of Rights, was adopted as part of the Canadian identity. Acceptance of multiculturalism as a national trait boosted support for the development and expansion of international student programs. The programs were sold to the public as extensions of the multicultural ideal, promoting tolerance and cultural diversity. This variable aided in the legitimization of international student programs at the school district level, but probably had little influence on the development of a decentralized policy, as opposed to a centralized one. It simply provided general support for policy development in any form.

Educational equality is a principle with a history in the democratic tradition. The idea that all residents have the right to a quality education is a part of our collection of social values. Education is viewed as a public good that all citizens should be able to enjoy. However, the unequal generation of revenue from international student programs has increased inequality across school districts. Those districts that have the space and ability to establish large programs are able to supplement their budgets and offer programs and services that other districts cannot afford. This new source of revenue is upsetting the funding balance in the province and allowing some districts to provide,
presumably, a higher quality education than others. Proponents for educational equality would favour a centralized policy that would allow for the redistribution of profit. However, a lack of public awareness of this issue and the effect it is having on school district finances makes it unlikely that this factor would have much impact on policy development or change in the near future.

The final variable in the ideas category is ideology. Since the recruitment of international students to the public education system began in earnest in the late 1980s, three different political parties have governed the province. Each has been faced with the issue of policy-development surrounding international education programs, yet regardless of differing ideologies and political styles, all have chosen to leave the policy untouched. The current Liberal government, which is moving toward greater policy decentralization in other areas of education, is likely to maintain this tradition.

The strongest variables in this policy analysis are those pushing for the maintenance of a decentralized policy structure. These forces are aided by the institutionalization of the current policy path and the role of path-dependence in increasing the difficulty of departing from this policy direction. A lack of public awareness and poor understanding of the issue weaken nearly all of the centralizing forces. Change could happen, if those actors with institutional power decided to alter the current policy structure and were able to lever political support for the change. However, it would require an acknowledgement that the current system is not working effectively and a willingness to interfere in the entrepreneurial activities of locally elected school boards.
The regulation of non-resident education in this province is an issue that has been largely left to policy analysts in school district offices to address. Until recently, the media showed little interest in the issue and the public seems to be largely unaware of the presence of tuition-paying international students in our public schools. Nonetheless, the continuing importance of this policy area and the need to develop a more effective method of dealing with it at the local level is only reinforced by the international nature of this topic. The demand for placement in Canadian public schools will continue to increase as parents in foreign countries seek opportunities for their children to master English and gain advantages for entrance to North American universities (Onstaad, 2001; Matheson, 2001).

The delivery of education is changing on a global scale. Public education is becoming a commodity, for sale on the open market. Provincial and school district buy-in to this concept is inconsistent, yet it certainly offers entrepreneurial and financial opportunities for BC. However, the expansion of international student programs also raises questions about the purpose of a public education system and requires a redefinition of the role of public schools. Finally, it requires a value judgement by the policy-makers and politicians involved in governing the education of non-resident students. At issue is the co-existence of publicly funded and for-profit education programs within the provincial public education system. International education programs serve to highlight this issue and emphasize the need for an examination of the decentralized policy structure that currently regulates their operation.

Although a variety of different factors complicate this issue, what is clear is that in order to continue to provide quality education for non-resident students in this
province, the current policy should be revised. The provincial government can no longer resort to laissez-faire governance and depend on the school districts to develop policy around this issue. They need to become involved and provide guidance on the type of educational programs that these students are offered. Perhaps, as in Nova Scotia, more than one option could be considered: regular public school, teaching the provincial curriculum, for those students that have the language abilities, and special international classes, including an ESL component, for others. The province also needs to clearly establish fees for these programs and regulate how the revenue will be used. In order to avoid the continued advantage of districts with large programs over those without, a revenue-sharing scheme between the school districts and the provincial government would allow for the benefits to be more widely dispersed. However, any system of revenue sharing with the province would have to ensure that the percentage claimed by the provincial government is small enough for it to continue to be worthwhile for districts to operate their programs. Finally, regulations to protect the health and safety of these students are needed. It is essential that the province set basic homestay and guardianship standards to protect students from neglect and abuse. This may require the involvement of other ministries, as health and safety standards do no fall within the mandate of the Ministry of Education. Standards that protect the non-resident students in this province will only enhance the reputation of our international education programs.

Our public schools have a role to play in the international education environment. Foreign students and their families choose British Columbian international education programs because of the quality of the education that is offered and the opportunities that this will afford them in the future. This demand offers an opportunity for the provincial
education system to supplement the education budget with revenue from international student programs. However, it also enhances the need for more centralized regulation of non-resident policies to ensure sustainable, successful, and fair international student programs within the public education system.
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## Appendix I

Non-Resident Student Enrollment by School District (1997/98, 2001/02, 2002/03)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>District #</th>
<th>District Name</th>
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<th>Non-Resident Enrollment 2002/03</th>
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BCMOE, 2003c; BCMOE, 2002b; BCMOE, 1998b.