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versities in five provinces in Canada. This article presents our findings with universities appeared to be coming from and to remain at different points on

Afin d'accomplir leurs missions, les universités à forte intensité de recherche doivent de maintenir les conditions nécessaires à la production et à la diffusion

dans cinq provinces canadiennes afin de mieux comprendre comment les universités et les systèmes d'enseignement supérieur parviennent à préserver

universités se situent à différents points sur un continuum autonomie/contrôle étatique, mais aussi que toutes les universités sont assujetties à un

work and effective social status" (p. 11), and participation rates have increased through



the provincial “system” through an exploration of system-level policy and governance. In our study we shift the unit of analysis down to the level of the institution: how do specific can we learn by looking across these institutional experiences in different Canadian jurisdictions

Our work has also been influenced by Pierre Bourdieu (1993), who distinguished between fields of restricted cultural production (where autonomous producers create cultural goods for other producers), and fields of large-scale production (where investments are driven by the quest for markets and profits, with production addressing pre-existing

ties and differences amongst provinces and case universities; changes over time; implica

The great majority of Canada's approximately 100 universities are not-for-profit cor

funding from provincial governments), there are major differences between institutions in terms of size and program mix, and the sector is highly stratified. At the top of the hierarchy are a handful of institutions that meet Altbach and Balan's (2007) definition of a case universities in this study meet this definition, being the flagship universities in their

there were also differences in several of the dimensions discussed below, the significance

Differences in the histories of universities in the five provinces and of their relationships





be outside the control of government and hence outside the GRE. In BC and Alberta, they were within. In Quebec, charter universities were outside whereas the UQ was within the GRE. Because the universities in BC and Alberta were within those provinces' GREs, they had less authority over their finances than universities in Nova Scotia and Ontario, and

residences) tended to be correspondingly less. Although charter universities in Quebec were outside the GRE, all Quebec universities were required by law to obtain provincial

All five provincial governments appeared to be seeking to align universities' activities or outcomes more closely with desired public policy goals. Officials interviewed in several

for money, and alignment with government's public policy priorities" on the part not only

official policy statements (*énonc*

a government letter of expectation to universities). Quebec universities were required to

sity officials both described the provincial government as expecting more from the universities, while reducing funding. In Quebec, the amount of legislation and regulation had increased dramatically over the course of the previous decade: government officials

increased significantly. In Alberta, recent government initiatives had extended beyond

to transform Campus Alberta into "a semi-official entity that allocated programs among

ed entity with 26 moving parts [i.e., institutions]." The minister in question had, in the

go to the world as "Campus Alberta," lower case university of Alberta. That would



can't find you because you've been pushed into Campus Alberta, then quite literally

In BC, university boards were not allowed to borrow, sell assets, sign collective agreement approval. (Because of UBC's land holdings, it was effectively able to borrow from BC and Alberta, one of the factors driving increased regulation was inclusion in the Gov of provincial governments' reporting entities, with a few exceptions (e.g., UQ institutions and two universities in Manitoba). BC universities were moved into the GRE in the wake

Accounting Board (PSAB) Handbook.

*ex of cio*

chair and public members] very much like filling a human resource vacancy.. in government." In BC, the government appointed more than half the members of a university board

ernment made appointments to the Dalhousie board only upon nomination by that board. With the exception of the rector, the members of the board of UQAM were all appointed

Dalhousie, it was a requirement of the legislation that government do so.)

At five of the six universities, the president or rector was appointed by the board. At UQAM, the rector was formally appointed by the government upon the recommendation of the UQAM board of directors, but this took place after a consultation by means of a

UQAM, provincial governments did not play a role in the appointment of the president, in BC, presidential compensation required approval by the province's Public Sector Employ

There were differences between provinces in the ways that governments related to universities. In Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario, presidents were the principal intermediary in meeting with a minister or other government official on a particular issue. In other provinces, the president was normally the president with whom government communicated. Depending on their

(Fournier & Maheu, 1975). That said, the Parti Québécois government had chosen to put the PQ government had also introduced into the National Assembly in the fall of 2013 a

would have affected not only faculty and staff but also students employed as teaching or research assistants. The rectors of numerous charter universities and the rector of UQAM

of the type of legislative initiative (an extreme example being “campus carry” legislation

between governments of different political stripes, there appeared to be variations in the

viewees indicated that the Parti Québécois government in power in 2013 was in commu

both “parties.”

incomprehension between university and government officials. To the latter, universities

they received. For their part, many university officials interviewed said that members of

capacity. (As one university official observed, lack of policy capacity could be a blessing: “In

do, I’d be worried.”) The result, however, was that government policies were often out of

and the need to orient people anew. A number of government officials acknowledged this

One long-serving official, who had had the opportunity of observing the interaction of provincial officials with university officials for many years, identified several factors that

- Deputy and assistant deputy ministers have complex and demanding jobs and tend
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- Finally, governments and universities operate on different time scales. Whereas “governments change visions every time a new government is elected,” and senior officials naturally pursue what ministers want, universities tend to have longer-

An additional factor, identified by an Alberta official, was that in a province, the “revenue ability to provide that level of stability on an annual basis.”

universities embodied different traditions of university governance and autonomy. All at different points on the state supervision/autonomy continuum. By and large, universi

There were instances in BC and Alberta, but also in other provinces, of policies, programs, and initiatives in Quebec and other provinces in prior decades, with corresponding increases in emphasis on

Provincial governments' efforts to put in place mechanisms to make universities accountable to succeed in their missions. In the course of our research, interviewees identified

responsiveness to government goals. A Nova Scotia official alluded to this:

to the universities and saying "you really have to be a part of the solutions." At the

province, the presidents will say. "But I can't tell my faculty what to do research on;

then' their interviews of categories highlighted: "you can't

some university officials in Quebec. Our interviews in Quebec began a year after the “Maple Spring”

such a cataclysmic effect on society and government.

its election, the Parti Québécois government had convened a higher education summit

holders interviewed had very different views on the policy issues at stake. Major changes

of more government and/or union and/or student association influence or control over

tion systems with very different traditions and degrees of university autonomy appear

regulation and accountability measures, and the findings of our study confirm that pro

This study found significant variations in the external governance of Canada’s major “public” universities in five provinces. The case universities appeared to be coming from and to remain at different points on a state supervision/autonomy continuum. All the

government reforms were difficult to initiate or sustain. However, this relative autonomy



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