

EDUCATION

The Parent Report

The Parent report serves as a founding point for education as we know it in Québec. According to this report, although education must indeed serve as training for the labour market by adapting to the transformation of society, it must also inextricably prepare for social and civic life.



The Quiet Revolution

Many of the recommendations of the Parent report were implemented during the Quiet Revolution. It was within this context that the Universities of Québec (UQ) and CEGEPs were created. Their objective was to enable everyone to emancipate and to flourish both personally and collectively.



Access for All

Another aim of the Parent report was to make education accessible, in particular through the progressive implementation of free education. Thus, it provides an opportunity for people from underprivileged backgrounds, women and ethnic minorities to emerge from poverty, participate in community life and empower themselves.

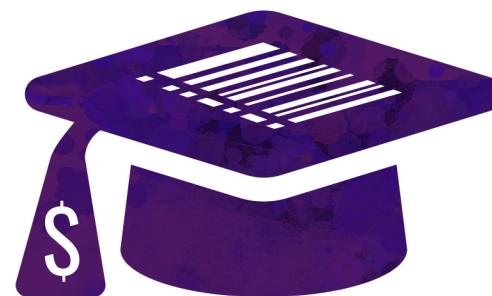


SO, WHAT IS THE COMMODIFICATION OF EDUCATION?



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NOT CLIENTS!**

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COMMODIFICATION

The Knowledge Economy

The knowledge economy is one of the cornerstones of the commodification of education. It ensures that educational institutions are more concerned with the training of future workers and the commercialization of profitable knowledge than with the quality of teaching and research.



Tuition Fee Hikes

In a commodified education, paying tuition is regarded as an investment by students to be able to obtain a well-paying job later on. As a result, they end up being perceived as clients of educational institutions. This user-payer rationale is used to justify any increase in tuition fees, as students are deemed to be “buying” a service.



Intrusion by the Private Sector

The commodification of education goes hand in hand with a convergence of private companies and higher education institutions. Education then departs from an emancipatory vision and instead becomes an instrument of profit used by private companies.



CEGEPS



General Education

General Education consists of a set of courses that are common to all programs of study (English, French, Humanities and Physical Education). These General Education courses have the purpose of standardizing the education received across different study paths, building a shared cultural background for all students and facilitating their transition to university and their reorientation towards other fields of academia.



CEGEP Boards of Governors

The Board of Governors is the highest authority of a CEGEP or a university. The Colleges Act requires that the majority of the Board's seats be filled by external members representing a range of private companies from the region. Therefore, the decisions concerning the CEGEP are made by members from the business world who are neither working nor studying in the CEGEP. Even if the constitution of the board can vary from one institution to another, on the Boards of most CEGEPs and Universities, the interests of the private sector dominate the room.



Economic Development

CEGEPs play a very important role in the economic development of the region in which they operate. For instance, they employ a large number of staff members and make a broad range of courses and training available to the local population. Furthermore, the CEGEP is a very dynamic environment that facilitates the creation of many new projects and the generation of new ideas. However, commodification can get in the way of the advantages a CEGEP provides. For example, the ADN campus (Arts and Digital Entertainment campus) offers numerous Attestations of College Studies (AEC) relating to video games. This campus, located in Montreal, is actually affiliated to the CEGEP ... of Matane.

COMMODIFICATION IN CEGEP



ACS/AEC

Attestations of College Studies (French: AEC), created by CEGEPs, consist of short college programs without General Education courses geared towards the training of adults according to the realities of the labour market. They are often designed in collaboration with regional private companies. However, these ultra-specific programs are not complete and usually require going back to school after a couple of years on the job market.



CCTT

The Collegial Centers for Technology Transfers (CCTT) are government-funded organizations attached to CEGEPs and designed to assist the private sector. These organizations, by using the CEGEPs' infrastructures, subsidize research projects conducted by private companies. They also go as far as relieving some teachers of their course loads so that they can work for these CCTTs. Therefore, these institutions are deflecting public money to finance private projects.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN UNIVERSITY



BLEU and SOVAL

The Business and University Liaison Offices (BLEU) are responsible for selecting research projects according to their commercial potential and applying for grants from the appropriate bodies. Each university in Québec is affiliated with at least one BLEU. These offices work closely with value-added companies (SOVAL), which are private companies heavily subsidized by public funds to successfully add market value to university knowledge, discoveries and research. BLEU and SOVAL are therefore working to patent and commercialize the knowledge created by universities to private ends.



Subcontracting

Universities may also occasionally outsource some of their services to private companies. A prime example is the Télé-université du Québec (TÉLUQ), who signed a \$5 million agreement with the MACTI institute, kicking out almost all of its tutors. The task of supporting and supervising students has thus been transferred to a private company that does not even hold a teaching permit.

FINANCING OF UNIVERSITIES



Under-financing

Since the 1980s, funding to universities by the Government of Québec has shifted from about 80% to roughly 50% of their total funding today. This disengagement on the part of the state has led universities to turn to other sources of revenue, including private funding, mandatory institutional fees and campus advertising.



Poor Financing

Since the Legault reform in the early 2000s, universities have been funded per full-time equivalent student (FTES/EETP). Universities are therefore given "points" for the number of students they have in the programs. For example, a bachelor's degree is worth about 1 point, a pure science degree is worth 2.11 points and a doctorate in dentistry is worth 10.69 points.



International Students

Starting autumn 2019, the deregulation of tuition fees for international students will be implemented. Universities will therefore be able to charge them the amount they want, which is very troubling given the very high fees usually billed to them. Worse still: given the new lucrative potential of this student population, this deregulation will cause competition between universities internationally, a competition that will ironically cost these same universities staggering amounts of money.

PAID INTERNSHIPS

Internships and Commodification

Unpaid internships ensure that CEGEPs and universities consistently provide labour to employers. Indeed, interns will often perform the same tasks as employees, with the only difference that they will not receive a salary. To add insult to irony, trainees have to pay tuition fees to do this free work, which further aggravates their precariousness! In addition, many internships in traditionally male-dominated fields such as engineering and law are generously paid, while curricula in traditionally female disciplines such as teaching, social work and midwifery involve hundreds of hours of unpaid internships.