



## Ascending and Descending into the System: A Comparison of Broadcasting Media Programs In Ontario Colleges

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### Abstract

In 2013 the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities released Ontario's Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education, for colleges and universities in the province. All 24 Ontario colleges responded to this Framework by presenting their Strategic Mandate Agreements(SMA). The Framework contrasts the original provincial mandate for the Ontario colleges, which was to provide accessible comprehensive institutions throughout the province. This paper examines, at a programmatic level, how this *Framework* affects Broadcasting Media programs in 13 out of the 24 colleges that offer this vocational discipline. The paper presents the vertical, inter-intra institutional, formal reputational hierarchy that exists amongst these programs. This paper argues that the Broadcasting Media programs are elite, differentiated, and diverse; their formal and informal hierarchical status creates deeper, intentional stratification, entrenching programs as positional goods with positional power competing for supremacy, regardless of the intent of the original mandate for the Ontario colleges. If the Strategic Mandate Agreements are executed by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, then this hierarchical, programmatic stratification will become further stratified and inaccessible. Although this paper focuses on one particular vocational discipline, the theoretical and research approaches have the potential to affect other programs within these comprehensive, community-based colleges.

### Introduction

Clark (1996) described Higher Education (HE) as "...more differentiation of ideas and interests, structures and programs. Observers shall remain confused because modern higher education is terribly confusing and will be more confused in the future" (1996, pp. 21-22). Clark (1996) explained that disciplines would face some form of fragmentation as institutions grappled with differentiation (p. 19). Almost 20 years later, Clark's (1996) statements aptly describe the scenario facing all 24 colleges in Ontario, who presented their Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMA) to the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (2015a), in response to *Ontario's Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education* (Framework) (2013). The *Framework* (2013) provides metrics for "Program Offerings (p. 15), and one of those quantifiable units is the "Concentration of enrolment at colleges by occupational cluster and credential (p. 15)." However, none of the SMAs (2015a) addressed specific occupational clusters or programs, but rather broad, overarching discipline areas, like "Media" (Seneca SMA, Humber SMA) or Digital Technologies (Niagara SMA). What will differentiation, diversity, and specialization, as outlined in the MTCU Framework (2013), look like, and what does it already look like, at the programmatic level across all the colleges in Ontario? The aim of this paper is to bring to light how this provincial framework of

differentiation (2013) will further stratify programs and opportunities for students (Bastedo & Gumport, 2003). An examination of the numbers and types (length of program of study and credential awarded) of Ontario Broadcast Media (BM) programs will help to illuminate the current and potential future shape of this differentiated and diverse academic landscape.

Amongst the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) and Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning (ITAL), there are a total of 13 Broadcast Media programs that award specialized diplomas and advanced diplomas with a focus on a single broadcast medium, like radio, or a comprehensive combination of all media, like film, radio, television, and digital multiplatform. The 13 colleges that provide these diploma and advanced diploma programs are Algonquin College, Canadore College, Centennial College, College la Cite, Conestoga College, Confederation College, Durham College, Fanshawe College, Humber College, Loyalist College, Mohawk College, Niagara College, and Seneca College. Based on the data collected, the BM programs in these 13 colleges revealed they are externally-internally (Birnbaum, 1983), intra-inter-institutionally (Teichler, 2006), vertically, horizontally, and programmatically differentiated and diverse (van Vught, 2008). These 13 BM programs are housed in universal, comprehensive institutions, yet are elite in nature (Trow, 1973, Marginson, 2006). This paper argues that collecting and analyzing programmatic metrics will affect funding and the survival of BM programs, and those programs that do “make the cut” will become further academically elite (Trow, 1973), hierarchically tiered (Moody, 2009; Teichler 2008; van Vught, 2008), and inaccessible positional goods (Marginson, 2006) with social power. Greater academic and social power belongs to the students who attend the BM programs located at the top of the vertical tier, and less power belongs to those who attend the ones that are lower in the stratification.

This paper has six parts. The first part of this paper provides a brief background on the history and purpose of Ontario’s colleges at their inception and the reasons for the topic selection. The second part presents and adapts Trow’s (1973) theoretical framework of the transitional phases of higher education (HE) from elite to mass to universal access, which helps to explain, contextualize, and theorize programmatic diversity and differentiation in BM programs. The third part provides the comprehensive definitions of differentiation and diversity from Birnbaum (1983) and Huisman (1995). The fourth part explains the method of research, strengths, and weaknesses of the collected data and the dynamics and trends at play within the BM programs. The data are theorized and problematized within Trow’s (1973) HE transitional phases and Marginson’s (2006, p. 2) notion of positional goods. The fifth part of the paper, in light of the data collected, considers the social ramifications of competition in BM programs across the province, whereby competition is understood as social competition in terms of program reputation within vertical and horizontal differentiation (Marginson, 2006, p. 2). The sixth and final part of this paper contemplates what the HE BM landscape will look like, should the government proceed with the SMAs.

### **The Programmatic Broadcasting Landscape in Ontario: The Purpose of this Paper**

In 1965, then Minister of Education, William G. Davis said in the Ontario Provincial Parliament that government was “to provide through education and training, not only an equality of opportunity to all sectors of our population, but the fullest possible development of each individual to the limit of his ability” (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 5). Furthermore, the colleges were meant to be “comprehensive institutions... providing a wide variety of programs of varying length...” (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 7). Nearly five decades later, after that public statement was made, the MTCU published *Ontario’s Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education* (2013). As the title of the document stated clearly, its main thrust was the demand for the differentiation of Ontario colleges and universities. On the surface, it appears that differentiated, specialized institutions and comprehensive institutions are on opposing teams. (paradoxically, defining differentiation requires a comprehensive definition to be presented in the next section of this paper). Comprehensive colleges were defined as “institutions offering a liberal arts program in addition to professional or occupational programs” (Stadtman, 1980, p. xv).

*Ontario’s Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education* (2013) explains the reasons for the change in approach to HE, which ranged from economic uncertainty to the ebb and flow of student enrollment numbers. The most interesting and troubling parts of the document are the proposed metrics the government outlined for gauging and valuing differentiation across postsecondary institutions in the province. One of the “*Differentiation Framework – Metrics*” (2013, p. 14) sub category is “Program Offerings” (p. 15), which is defined “As part of forming an institution’s profile and measuring progress in this component, the ministry will use the following system-wide metrics for all institutions” (p. 15). One of those measurements is the “Concentration of enrolment at colleges by occupational cluster and by credential” (p. 15).

Much of the consideration of diversity and differentiation in higher education has been at the system level. But it is faculty members at the department and discipline levels that largely drive a higher education organization in one direction or another. (Meek, Goedegebuure, & Huisman, 2000, p. 4)

Meek, Goedegebuure, and Huisman’s (2000) insight is the reason for pursuing this topic – to further examine diversity and differentiation from a granular perspective, because it does drive, as the data will show, the direction an institution or program will follow. The BM world and its many professions and positions enjoy a level of exclusivity that increased with the dawn of the digital era (Rodrigues, 2014). As a full-time faculty member who teaches in a BM program at an Ontario college, this matter is important from academic and professional perspectives. Academically, how will the shape and evolutionary changes that are taking place, and continue to take place due to technological digital advances affect the way the broadcast disciplines are taught and delivered in historically comprehensive institutions? Professionally, what kind of jobs and positions will they be available to the students upon graduating from Broadcasting Media programs in Ontario? These two questions, combined with the mandate of *Ontario’s Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education* (2013) raise a larger question about which BM programs will survive, or if

they all remain intact in the current college system, then what will they look like in the future, based on the data collected from the 13 colleges that offer broadcasting currently? Trow's (1973, 2005) HE theory of elite, to mass, to universal transitions is adapted and applied to conceptualize and problematize these programmatic and institutional issues.

### **Theoretical Framework and its Implications**

George Fallis (2013) stated that “universal higher education has been achieved” in Ontario (2013, p. 91) and the next phase should be about how to design a differentiated system of HE (2013, p. 91) in province. However, what Fallis (2013) omitted were the resulting potential consequences when differentiation is executed by CAATs and ITALs. Currently, Ontario's system of HE is binary with the universities and colleges sharing the rarefied space—for now. When adapting Trow's (1973) concept of the transitions of HE from elite, to mass, to universal access, Ontario transitioned and maintained, at an institutional level, all three forms of elite, mass and universal HE education. Trow (2005) reflected (more than 30 years after his original conception) it was becoming “more difficult to identify institutions as centering primarily on elite, mass, or universal access forms of higher education; many institutions provide recognizable forms of all three side by side in the same institution” (p. 6). In addition, this paper adds to that reflection that all three forms of HE can and do co-exist amongst and within institutions that share similar programs, like BM. What was once considered the sole function of elite institutions, to shape the character and mind of the ruling class (Trow 1973), has transitioned “to the transmission of skills for more specific technical elite roles” (Trow, 1973, pp. 17-8) that, several decades later, evolved into the training for “technical elite jobs” (Trow, 2005, p. 18). This educational evolution is a North American societal shift, whose “chief characteristic is rapid social and technological change” (Trow, 2005, p. 18).

*Ontario's Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education* (2103) responded to this evolution by stating: “This alignment will ensure that students graduate with skills that respond to local and provincial labour market needs and contribute to social development” (p. 10). These elite roles, professional positions, or specific skills are cultivated in institutions that are historically comprehensive (Stadtman, 1980) and accessible in educational nature and scope (Basic Documents, 1967). How does this educational elite evolution manifest itself in the institutions that have BM programs? The next section of the paper presents a comprehensive definition of a differentiation and diversity as it applies to BM programs.

### **A Comprehensive Definition of Differentiation and Diversity**

Fumasoli and Huisman (2013) argued that studying institutional diversity and differentiation was hindered by governmental regulations and decreased diversity (p. 156). However, HE institutions can position themselves strategically in the system and impact diversity (Fumasoli and Huisman, 2013, p. 157). For the case of Ontario's CAATs and ITALs, they are institutionally and programmatically differentiated when it comes to BM programs, because not all 24 CAATs and ITALs house this discipline, or “occupational cluster” (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2013). Hence, discussions of programmatic homogeneity are

not applicable. In order to understand how BM programs are differentiated and diverse, comprehensive definitions are provided, based on the cumulative arguments and categories of Birnbaum (1983), Huisman (1995), Clark (1983), Teichler (2008), and van Vught (2008).

Birnbaum (1983) provided and defined seven external dimensions of diversity (van Vught, 2008, p. 21). One of them was “Programmatic Diversity” (Birnbaum, 1983, p. 39), whereby an institution was distinguished by a further five sub units, based on “degree level, degree area, comprehensiveness, mission, and emphasis” (Birnbaum, 1983, pp. 39-40). “The aggregation of programs within an institution permits classification according to the third programmatic variable: comprehensiveness” (Birnbaum, 1983, p. 41). Huisman (1995) contributed to Birnbaum’s programmatic dimension and explained, “the terms differentiation and diversity refer to establishing or maintaining differences between entities-institutions, programs, sectors – of the higher education system” (p. 1). Furthermore, differentiation (Huisman, 1995) is a dynamic process that happens within an integrated whole, like the emergence of new types of institutions, unlike diversity (Huisman, 1995), which is static, because new entities emerge out of a pre-existing community (Huisman, 1993). Huisman (1995) applied Clark’s (1985) definitions of vertical and horizontal differentiation, whereby vertical or hierarchical differentiation could occur within the institution, and horizontal or sectoral differentiation may manifest amongst institutions. Hence, BM is a discipline that is externally differentiated horizontally within the larger comprehensive college and amongst the 13 colleges, yet programmatically and internally diverse, because of the number of parallel programs of study under the broadcasting umbrella within any institution (Huisman, 1995).

Teichler (2008) built on the tension of Trow’s (1973) phases and Huisman’s (1995) definitions of diversity and described the “vertical” (p. 349) differences amongst institutions of the same type and, for the purposes of this paper, differences amongst programs as well. Teichler (2006) examined further vertical and horizontal differentiation and diversity in terms of informal and formal dimension. Informal dimension is not “visible in legal documents and official system descriptions, whereby we disentangle: (a) vertical attributes of informal diversity, such as ‘quality’, ‘excellence’, ‘elite’ or ‘reputation’; and (b) horizontal attributes, such as ‘profile’ of a higher education institution (Teichler, 2006, para. 10).” He goes on to explain that when these “informal attributes are taken into account, a close examination reveals that they are more frequently attributed to sub-units of institutions, that is departments, study programs or disciplines” (Teichler, 2006, para. 11). Teichler’s (2006) informal dimensions are formal in and amongst BM programs, as the data show in the next section of this paper. It’s what Teichler (2006) described as “an increasing vertical and horizontal diversification (that) is the most likely result of growing competition for success” (para. 34) and survival.

### **Data: Fiercely Obscured Competition and its Consequences**

Competition for success is measured by accessing the institutional web sites for each of the 13 colleges and counting the number of full-time BM programs. Table 1 presents the 13, out of the 24 colleges in Ontario, which offer diplomas or advanced diplomas in the BM profession, namely television, radio, film, and digital multiplatform media. What is excluded

from this table is the broadcasting baccalaureates programs offered at Humber ([www.humber.ca](http://www.humber.ca)) and Sheridan ([www.sheridancollege.ca](http://www.sheridancollege.ca)), as they are recent additions to the institutions and they lack the required comparative data about the number of entrants and graduates. Hence, this paper examines only the diplomas and advanced diplomas, because historically, those were the credentials awarded for the broadcast vocational disciplines offered in the CAATs.

Table 1 - College, Broadcast Program, and Type of Full-time Credentials Awarded (2015)

<b>College</b>	<b>Location by Geographic Region</b>	<b>Broadcast Program(s)</b>	<b>Full-Time Credential Awarded</b>
Algonquin	Ottawa (Eastern Region)	Television	2 year diploma
		Radio	2 year diploma
Canadore	North Bay (Northern Region)	Television & Video Production	2 year diploma
		Radio	2 year diploma
		Digital Cinematography	3 year advanced diploma
Centennial	Toronto (Central Region)	Radio, Television, Film & Digital Media	3 year advanced diploma
College la Cite	Ottawa (Eastern Region)	Television	2 year diploma
		Radio	2 year diploma
Conestoga	Kitchener (Western Region)	Radio	2 year diploma
		Television	2 year diploma
Confederation	Thunder Bay (Northern Region)	Television	2 year diploma
		Film production	2 year diploma
Durham	Oshawa (Eastern Region)	Radio & Contemporary Media	2 year diploma
Fanshawe	London (Western Region)	Television	2 year diploma
		Radio	2 year diploma
Humber	Toronto (Central Region)	Television Videography	2 year diploma
		Radio	2 year diploma
		Film & Television	3 year diploma
Loyalist	Belleville (Eastern Region)	Radio	2 year diploma
		Television & New	3 year diploma

		Media	
Mohawk	Hamilton (Western Region)	Radio	2 year diploma
		Television and Communications Media	2 year diploma
Niagara College	Welland (Western Region)	Radio, Television & Film	3 year advanced diploma
Seneca	Toronto Central Region	Radio	2 year diploma
		Television	2 year diploma
Total 13		25	

Source: Program information was collected and adapted from:  
[www.algonquincollege.com](http://www.algonquincollege.com), [www.canadorecollege.ca](http://www.canadorecollege.ca),  
[www.centennialcollege.ca](http://www.centennialcollege.ca), [www.collegelacite.ca](http://www.collegelacite.ca), [www.conestogac.on.ca](http://www.conestogac.on.ca),  
[www.confederationc.on.ca](http://www.confederationc.on.ca), [www.durhamcollege.ca](http://www.durhamcollege.ca), [www.fanshawec.ca](http://www.fanshawec.ca),  
[www.humber.ca](http://www.humber.ca), [www.loyalistcollege.com](http://www.loyalistcollege.com), [www.mohawkcollege.ca](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca),  
[www.niagaracollege.ca](http://www.niagaracollege.ca), and [www.senecacollege.ca](http://www.senecacollege.ca).

Map locations by region provided by:  
<http://www.ontariocolleges.ca/colleges/college-map> According to the  
comprehensive definitions of differentiation and diversity, all 13 colleges  
provide differentiated BM programs.

If we return to *Ontario's Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education* (2013), it states that its goals are to “build on and help focus the well-established strengths of Ontario colleges and universities while avoiding unnecessary duplication” (p. 9). Based on the data provided in Table 1 and Table 2, the programs, although part of the larger BM discipline, fall under the “breadth of programing, enrolment, and credentials offered, along with program areas of institutional strength/specialization...” (p. 11). However, Colleges Ontario released its *Environmental Scan of Student and Graduate Profiles* (2015a), and under the College graduates by employment sector, the creative and applied arts comprised 12% of all the sectors (p. 28). Therefore, the creative and applied arts are elite (Trow, 1973), because less than 15% of the student population is enrolled in that disciplinary area. By default, BM students and programs are elite also, as they fall under the creative arts umbrella (Colleges Ontario, 2015b). However, inter-institutionally (van Vught, 2008), where does that place BM programs amongst other colleges and intra-institutionally (van Vught, 2008) within their own departments?

The answer to this question is found in the BM enrollment numbers in Table 3, which reveal the power and reputational struggle happening intra-inter-institutionally. van Vught (2008) further categorized differentiation and diversity:

We should design multiple ranking instruments that enable us to make inter-institutional comparisons per category or type of institution. In order to create higher levels of diversity in higher education systems, we need to develop typologies

of higher education institutions. In these typologies (or classifications) the diversity of institutional missions and profiles should be made transparent, offering the different stakeholders to better understand the specific ambitions and performances of the various types of higher education institutions (as cited in van Vught (2008 p. 172)

These “ranking instruments” are readily available on two provincial government websites: Government of Ontario college enrollment data (<http://www.ontario.ca/data/college-enrolment>) and the MTCU Key Performance Indicators (KPI) (<http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/audiences/colleges/colindicator.html>). Table 2 compiles all the programs and total enrollment numbers for three consecutive enrollment years.

Table 2 - Enrollment Numbers by Years and Program

<b>College</b>	<b>Broadcast Program(s)</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Algonquin	TV	121	202	94	229	127	211
	Radio	81		135		84	
Canadore	TV & Video Production	39	70	42	105	41	126
	Radio	31		28		26	
	Digital Cinematography Film & TV Production			35		59	
Centennial	Radio, TV, Film & Digital Media	187		201		211	599
College la Cite	TV	87	117	87	124	74	100
	Radio	30		37		26	
Conestoga	Radio	63	155	64	128	59	157
	TV	92		64		98	
Confederation	TV	98	282	45	218		155
	Film production	75		67		71	
	Film & Television Production	109		106		84	
Durham	Radio & Contemporary Media						118
	Film & TV Production	139		118		53	
	Radio					65	
Fanshawe	TV	157	240	153	292	192	331

	Radio	69		93		82	
	Radio & TV	14		13		19	
	Advanced TV & Film			33		38	
Humber	TV Videography	130	523	116	557	111	233
	Radio	114		124		122	
	Film & TV	279		282		122	
	Advanced TV & Film			35			
Loyalist	Radio	53	284	55	261	46	231
	TV & New Media						
	Film & TV Production	231		206		185	
Mohawk	Radio	66	317	68	326	77	313
	TV & Communications Media						
	Radio & TV	251		258		236	
Niagara College	Radio, TV & Film	260		263		255	
Seneca	Radio	82	185	78	180	83	192
	TV	103		102		109	
Total 13		24					

Note: Program names, such as Television, were abbreviated to TV. Some programs on the table do not have any MTCU enrollment numbers; yet appear on the institutional sites.

Table 2 shows formal, visible, vertical, inter-intra institutional differentiation and diversity (van Vught, 2008). It also reveals the competitive programmatic BM landscape of these academic sub-units (Teichler, 2008, pp. 20-22) amongst and within colleges through the provincial data (<http://www.ontario.ca/data/college-enrolment>). Hence, the hierarchical stratification is government created and endorsed. Rather than referring to them as sub-units, going forward, the term to be used in this paper is academic-vocational-unit. The term sub-unit implies a pejorative quality to BM or any college program. What emerge from the data and definitions are academic-vocational-units that are elite, yet members of comprehensive universal institutions (Trow, 1973; Fallis, 2013), and in competition intra-inter institutionally.

### Competition: The Social Ramifications

van Vught (2008) argued that differentiation and diversity, through the population ecologist's lens, was a "process of competition for scarce

resources” (p. 159), and when organizations or vocational-units outperform their competitors, they have a better chance to find a successful “resource niche” (p. 159). For the purpose of this paper, the focus is on BM programs establishing and grounding their programmatic niche in order to secure their resource niche to survive (and not necessarily thrive) under the *Differentiation Framework* (2013) and amongst themselves in the 13 institutions. However, unlike the resulting homogeneity at the institutional level (Neave, 1979), BM programs seek to further differentiate, become ultra-differentiated internally, and become diverse externally in order to compete and survive. Programs not included in government data were found on the college sites.

The competition inter-intra-institutionally is fierce. Simon Marginson’s (2006) argument about the nature of positional goods is important in this discussion about the diverse and elite BM programs within comprehensive institutions in Ontario. Marginson (2006) adapted Hirsch’s (1976) model and theory of “positional goods” (Marginson, 2006, p. 3). “Higher education produces ‘positional goods’ (Hirsch, 1976) that provide access to social prestige and income-earning” (p. 1). Marginson (2006) explored the national and global competition in HE, whereby competition was understood as social and economic competition; and competition was further analyzed in terms of hierarchy and power (pp. 2-3). Unlike the provincial government websites that provide the programmatic information of each BM discipline, the employment rates of graduates, who are employed in the industry after graduation, are not available on the institutional sites. Instead, most of the college sites provide links that redirect to other sites, like Colleges Ontario (2015a), which provide college wide numbers under broad discipline umbrellas like Business. Centennial is the only college that is fully transparent about its direct employment to industry numbers. The remaining semi-transparent colleges for students graduating and employed in industry from BM programs are Canadore’s TV and Video Production program at 56%, Confederation’s TV program at 5%, and Fanshawe’s Radio program at 67%. Fiercely hidden competition, such as this, is the thin veil that covers the struggles of hierarchical, positional power, and prestige.

Marginson (2006, p.3) suggests that within each national higher education system (or national market, as in the USA), students, families and employers of graduates rank the degrees credential on the basis of the institution and field of study. The hierarchy of rankings is steeper in some nations than others, and more powerfully felt in some places than others, but always exists.

The competition “always exists” (Marginson, 2006, p.3), but who or what creates these hierarchies is where the notion of positional goods becomes a matter of positional power. In the case of the BM programs in Ontario, it is the MTCU that intentionally established this hierarchy, which it can now use to control the college system and its funding resources, once created with semi-altruistic, social purposes (Basic Documents, 1967). What winners win, losers lose’ says Hirsch (1976, p. 52). Within one nation – though ‘within one nation’ is a significant qualification...there is an absolute limit on the number of positional goods at a given level of value. The number of such goods cannot be expanded without reducing unit

value, for example, once everyone can enroll in Medicine and become a doctor, Medicine ceases to be a high income high status profession. (Marginson, 2006, p. 4)

Marginson's (2006) explanation of the social value of academic positional goods is applicable to the BM disciplines and the industry as a whole in Ontario. Hirsch (1976) also described the hierarchy of preferred jobs as a pyramid whereby:

A job at the upper end of a particular hierarchy is normally preferred; in terms of job satisfaction, it almost invariably carries greater status.... The height of the pyramid, or any section of it, depends on the width of the base. (p. 42)

Marginson's (2006) explanation of the social value of academic positional goods is applicable to the BM disciplines and the industry as a whole in Ontario. Hirsch (1976) described the hierarchy of preferred jobs as a pyramid. The totals, for each year in each program per college as depicted in Table 3, suggest there is a BM program pyramid. At the top of the pyramid are the colleges whose reputations far exceed all the other colleges in this discipline, and their student numbers are greater than their competitors. Rather than fewer students being more elite, the opposite holds true at the Ontario College level. Marginson further explained:

Thus the positional markets in higher education are segmented into vertically aligned groupings.... The top tier produces elite higher education; the bottom tier is focused on mass higher education.... The dynamic of scarcity and exclusion creates the elite/mass dualism and drives further vertical segmentation within it. Stratification is played out in the tense middle zone between the two primary segments... Stratification is both formal and informal, it varies by nation, and it can be much more complex(p. 8)

The elite/mass duality (Marginson, 2006) exists at the inter-institutional and intra-institutional academic-vocational-unit levels, and the width of this positional pyramid (Hirsch, 1976) of goods and power is quite wide for BM. Furthermore, when this vertical segmentation occurs, it also creates what Marginson called, "stratification of participation, not just access to higher education, but "access to what?", and "who obtains it?" (Bastedo and Gumport, 2003)" (p. 17). Access becomes another vertical, hierarchical component that becomes social rather than academic. Hirsch (1976) referred to this, and adapted here for this paper, as "social scarcity" (pp. 10-11).

The stratification becomes a mechanism, whereby satisfaction is derived from the scarcity itself (Marginson). If BM programs become available in all 24 colleges in Ontario, then the "quality" is reduced in the eyes of the consumer-student (Marginson, 2006, p.29; Hirsch, 1976, p. 31). The physical limitation on the number of BM programs available imposes, what Hirsch described as, "social limits to consumption" (p. 3). Social limits on the consumption of BM programs leads to positional power for the students who graduate from the top portion of Hirsch's (1976) pyramid and eventually work in the industry. Furthermore, the consequences of socially limiting the number and consumption of BM programs warrant scrutiny

because of the way they limit access to the BM programs (Bastedo & Gumpert, 2003). They quote Marian Gade (1993, p.1) saying

“Indeed, an ongoing tension exists between the twin principles of access and differentiation in the design of public systems. As Marian Gade has observed, ‘Citizens need a choice of educational opportunities, institutions and programs with minimal geographic and demographic gaps, or access becomes a hollow promise’. (cited in Bastedo & Gumpert, 2003, p. 342).

This hollow promise is echoed clearly under the “Strategic Enrolment” (p. 12) portion of Framework (2013) that claims its purpose is: “...helping to protect the quality of postsecondary education from periods of slower growth while meeting local access needs and system-level forecasts” (p. 12).

### **Broadcasting Media Programs: In the Pit of Irrelevance or on the Horizon of Higher Education?**

In Ontario, the BM programs are elite, vertically, formally, and inter-intra-institutionally diverse. These programmatic characteristics reflect a discipline that is exclusive (Rodrigues, 2014) in nature. This exclusivity creates a “stratification of participation” (Marginson, 2006, p. 17) because of programmatic segmentation that occurs inter-intra institutionally (Teichler, 2006) in Ontario. Competition is created that limits access to those around the province who wish to enter the academic-vocational-unit and the profession overall. It’s an elite/mass duality (Marginson, 2006) with the potential to evolve or co-exist with new mass/universal BM programs. However, the power to truly differentiate the system remains with the MTCU, and the tension between what the colleges deem necessary on behalf of student interests and what the government requires are two different perspectives. Diversity is “a term which in earlier times carried with it an operational significance (which) is now endowed with a solid ideological dimension and a certain creative ambiguity” (Neave, 2000, p. 18).

These competing and ambiguous perspectives are neither new nor unique to Ontario colleges. In 1995, John Dennison wrote the Ontario college system must “confront the obstacles to reform or they will sink into a pit of irrelevance” (p. 56). Then Dennison (1995) recalled the 1960 to 1975 transitional time in Ontario colleges when “the horizon of higher education was redefined” (p. 123). Ontario BM programs face that same duality: either fall into an academic pit or rise to a new horizon. Change may be necessary for survival, but not all change should be viewed with optimistic naiveté. The *Framework* (2013) is a document of control. Even before it is fully realized and executed, even if not all parts are executed, the SMAs (2015a) are the responsive documents the government can use to further quantify and qualify their already pre-established database of Ontario Colleges on their success, mid-level success, or failure of any programmatic academic-vocational-unit in any College across the province. It is no longer about the quality of the institution or the program, but about the quality of life these Ontario colleges can offer to those who attend them.

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