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Rosalind Latiner Raby • Edward J. Valeau
Editors

Handbook of Comparative Studies on Community Colleges and Global Counterparts

With 57 Figures and 59 Tables

 Springer

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The creation of any work is directly related to the support and encouragement received to push on. In that context, we are indebted to those who agreed to serve as peer review advisors and to colleagues who spent time as advisory members giving critical feedback and direction. We give great thanks to the authors of these two volumes who subjected their thinking and writing to rigorous review, trusted us, and in turn worked diligently to be responsive. Their work is enduring. Finally, we wish to thank and dedicate this work to Ron Raby and Vera Valeau, our spouses. Their tolerance of our absence, and sometime lack of focus, provided the support, warmth, love, and care we needed to complete our work. We love you. The African saying, “it takes a village” is very much alive in the completion of this work. Thanks all.

Foreword

As students around the world continue to attain secondary education in increasing numbers, questions about effective pathways to, and content of, tertiary education has become a topic of great professional interest and academic curiosity. The talk about twenty-first-century skills, relevant knowledge, and applied career knowledge, which support evolving industries, is ubiquitous yet elusive. Clearly, changing political, economic, and social expectations of the role of postsecondary education are reinforcing new institutional forms that offer a combination of academic, vocational, career-oriented, technological, and specialist programs at certificate, diploma, or associate or bachelor degree levels.

The harmonization of higher education systems has become a reality for academically oriented colleges and universities, enabling international mobility for students enrolled in bachelor and masters programs. One may even speak of a universal model of academic higher education, strongly influenced by reforms in countries of the global North and West, such as the US credit system and the Bologna Process in the European higher education space. In contrast, national differences in lower tertiary institutions are vast to the extent that there is a lack of universal nomenclature to describe vocational-technical education or lower tertiary education that prepares students for skilled and specialized labor. Within this sector are institutions that are known by several names including College of Further Education, Community Colleges, Polytechnics, Technical College/University, and TAFE (Technical and Further Education). For purposes of this book, these institutions are being called community colleges. This is not to suggest that the US variant of community colleges, or any other type of lower tertiary education system, should be adopted in other parts of the world. The choice of the term is merely a matter of finding a common ground in order to reflect on common as well as different challenges in varied national contexts.

The forty-one chapters in the *Handbook of Comparative Studies on Community Colleges and Global Counterparts* illustrate the immense popularity of community college and global counterparts as they accommodate the educational needs of the communities they serve. Student enrollment underscores the crucial role that these institutions play worldwide, accounting for on average 25–58% of all higher educational students. At the same time, this higher educational sector struggles with funding and status.

Readers of this book are exposed to comparative, empirical, and case studies that show that although institutional variations exist, it remains the noted similarities that frame these institutions as an alternative to universities. These institutions fill an important gap. The unique characteristics include (a) location in geographical locations to service rural and urban poor; (b) nontraditional and under-served student populations (age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background); (c) curriculum that is deemed “useful” to support local industry and economy; (d) granting of certificates and diplomas for technological and specialist programs and associate level or baccalaureate level degrees for vocational, career-oriented, and academic disciplines; (e) belief that resulting education will support vertical social mobility; and (f) reality that these institutions maintain less prestige than selective universities and whose graduates are also often labeled as less prestigious.

While *Handbook of Comparative Studies on Community Colleges and Global Counterparts* does not feature every country with a community college or global counterpart, it does examine institutions in 24 countries and 6 regions to show how this educational sector is serving populations. In addition, several chapters in the book focus on different educational issues within the same country to illustrate the complexity of the sector.

The chapters in the *Handbook of Comparative Studies on Community Colleges and Global Counterparts* also address the complexities of transnational educational borrowing. Some chapters focus on borrowing as an internal process often linked to national development strategies. Other chapters focus on borrowing as an external process linked to institutional and donors from one country seeking out international partners and supporting educational change through international development and collaborative projects. Often the context for borrowing includes both internal and external flows. In addition, for many countries, results of increasing student/faculty/staff mobility, disciplinary need to acknowledge internationalized components of curriculum, and designed international collaboration projects which link curriculum and training also facilitate educational borrowing. Finally, many of the chapters show how flexibility and adaptability of goals, purposes, and design has local interpretations.

The *Handbook of Comparative Studies on Community Colleges and Global Counterparts* provides the first set of comparative studies that explore the complexities of the institutions in this sector in terms of institutional profile, mission, economic impact, governance, curriculum, faculty, assessment, and the role that these institutions are playing in achieving societal equity and in postcompletion student pathways. Authors include scholars from around the world who are conducting research on institutional design, practices, and reform. The authors make clear that the exploration of this sector of institutions shows variability, but at the same time enough similarities to warrant future study. Moreover, the authors collectively make it clear that educational leaders have to change the way they look at this sector to more fully address its purpose and impact around the world.

The Sustainable Development Goals, launched in 2015 and in effect until 2030, focus on completion of free, equitable, and quality secondary education increasing, skills development, and life-long learning. It is likely that the number of students

who complete secondary education in the countries of the global South and East will increase dramatically over the next few years, making it necessary for policy analysts and researchers to scrutinize, and critically reflect on, the existing pathways and outcomes of tertiary education. The debates and case studies, presented in this book, are both timely and unique because they illuminate fascinating trends in different parts of the world in an area of vocational skills development that has been seriously understudied.

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Preface

The community college system may be thought to be as American as apple pie, but distant regions have created analogous educational systems hoping to reap some of the benefits that the 2-year public institutions have brought to the United States. Using education to enact equity, providing training and postsecondary access to underserved groups, and open the doors of opportunity are principles on which the American system was built. Since “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery” (Colton 1837, p. 118) the expansion of the American community college speaks loudly of its positive global reputation.

However, a showering of compliments on the American community colleges must be balanced with the realities that not all enrollees have experienced high levels of satisfaction or academic success. Since their inception, community colleges have been plagued with low success rates, high proportions of drop-outs, low transfer rates, students trapped in remediation, and for some colleges high loan default rates. As such, countries and regions considering a community college counterpart are well advised to take a realistic look at the American 2-year sector and to understand the system with full acknowledgment of the warts and faults that mar their walls. Moreover, a transplanting of the American system would not only be insufficient to meet the needs of countries around the globe, but also ill-informed. Rather, countries have incorporated aspects of the American model while adapting other characteristics to fit their needs and to retain their cultures.

In a spirit of transparency, I confess to beginning my postsecondary education at an American community college and credit this system with my ability to complete a college degree. Hence, I personally understand the value of these institutions and as a result have been a strong advocate throughout my career. Coupled with my appreciation is my deep convictions for globalization and internationalization. My two research areas – community college student success and international education – have often seemed to be a peculiar coupling. However, as this book has demonstrated, there is a convergence; especially when viewed through the lens of world economic prosperity and understanding. I have often said that my goal in life is to contribute to world peace. While such statements are almost always met with skepticism, I want to clearly state my sincerity. Perhaps, the best road to a more peaceful world peace winds through the roads of quality education – one student at a time. Thus, world peace requires that education be liberally and globally distributed

across the lifespan. An educated citizenry is the key to economic prosperity both at the individual and aggregate levels. Yet education has historically been reserved for the young. Youth are given one chance to be educated and if poverty, lack of access to quality schools, or other issue prevents the acquisition of a quality education, individuals are generally doomed to a suboptimal life. Community colleges and their counterparts do not draw a line eliminating adults or those who have been previously unsuccessful in the educational arena but rather expand opportunities for a second or even third chance at a better life.

This book is a testament to the importance of postsecondary education in a form to fit the society, wherever it might be. From **Albania** to **Zimbabwe** countries are facing life or death challenges: terrorism, extremism, global warming, and human frailty to mention but a few. These threats cannot be overcome with education alone, but are left to flourish without it.

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Introduction

Rosalind Latiner Raby and Edward J. Valeau

There is a sector of institutions in higher education that share similarities in mission, philosophy, and student composition. This sector exists alongside the university sector and offers a curriculum designed to attract a specific cohort of learners. Institutional variations exist between countries and often within institutions in the same country. Nonetheless, noted similarities frame the institutions in this sector as an alternative to universities, and sometimes, a precursor. Although, comparative research has been conducted since 1971, there remains a lack of a concise term by which these institutions are called. The lack of identification is echoed in the lack of integration of these institutions in the study of higher education.

The generic term “tertiary” fails to distinguish these institutions from universities. The specific term “short-cycle” does not take into consideration the 2–4-year certificate and degree programs that are commonly found within these institutions. The disciplinary focus of vocational, technical, occupational, all of which offer a practical emphasis, are commonly offered by these institutions. However, institutions in this sector increasingly offer a practical oriented curriculum combined with a liberal arts or theoretical emphasis. The term “community college” is considered to be a North American prototype, and some feel it is not applicable on a global scale. Yet, there are numerous institutions around the world that call themselves “community colleges” and some share components found within the North American model. Despite the lack of a term for these institutions, research documents that this sector exists, that institutions within the sector are growing in number, that student enrollment is substantial, and student success is highly linked to job attainment. For purposes of this book and to facilitate communication on this sector, we call these institutions community colleges and global counterparts (Raby and Valeau 2009).

Institutions within the community college and global counterpart sector are mostly divided according to institutional type (Applied Sectors of Higher Education, Higher Colleges of Technology, Junior Colleges, University Colleges); academic level (upper-secondary, postsecondary; pre-baccalaureate); length of study (short cycle; short-term; 2-year; associate degree; applied baccalaureate); type of study (post-compulsory; tertiary); curricular context (lifelong education, transfer

education, vocational education); and status (non-university, sub-degree, second-tier). The complexities of these institutions are intensifying as changing local and national needs, funding options, and public opinion redefine the purpose, institutional structure, and even names of these institutions.

Early publications explored how the institutional design and curriculum made these institutions unique from universities (Kintzer 1979; Raby and Tarrow 1996). This first generation of publications focused on similarities of form, with knowledge obtained as a result of personal visits. The second generation of publications applied theories of massification, social capital, globalization, neo-liberalism, inequality theories, and transnational educational borrowing to explain institutional development and varietal patterns. It is important to note that more than half of the publications in the field are written by those who reside in other countries, and yet almost all of the publications are written in English. The identification and addition of non-English sources should be embraced as they will continue to broaden a deeper and richer understanding of the institutions in this sector.

This book represents a third generation of scholarship that no longer questions the existence of these institutions but rather uses empirical research to study the sector and highlight contemporary issues that are germane to the field of higher education with a purpose of building a comparative understanding of the sector at large. The authors explore emerging and evolving phenomena that impact the institutions' ability to (a) serve students; (b) offer a sound curricula; (c) admit and retain students; (d) increase completion rates; (e) link completion to job attainment; (f) create viable and sustained partnerships locally and internationally; (g) address the needs of unique populations; (h) fund and sustain adopted missions, visions, and values; and (i) support staff development to enhance faculty and staff excellence.

The *Handbook of Comparative Studies on Community Colleges and Global Counterparts* provides the first set of comparative studies that explore the complexities of these institutions in terms of mission, economic impact, governance, curriculum, and the role they are playing in the completion and success of students. The first volume focuses on philosophical, economic, and cultural adaptations as well as elements of success in terms of achieving equity. The second volume focuses on faculty, curriculum, assessment, internationalization, innovations, and post-completion pathways. The *Handbook of Comparative Studies on Community Colleges and Global Counterparts* is important due to the sheer number of community colleges and global counterparts that exist worldwide and the increasing focus they are gaining as countries are turning to them for an educated citizenry capable of competing on the world stage, economically, socially, and politically. It is time to acknowledge and validate the influence and importance that these institutions play and will continue to do so in the changing landscape of higher education.

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Prologue 1

The *Handbook of Comparative Studies on Community Colleges and Global Counterparts* comes out at a time when many countries are expanding and strengthening postsecondary education systems. In our increasingly global society and economy, education and training beyond secondary education is essential to a nation's competitiveness and the standard of living of its people. Institutions, like community colleges, are filling a need for education that is inexpensive, accessible, flexible, and tied to business and industry.

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Prologue 2

The field of international education is a lived experience for me, as it is for many of us who are champions of mobility because we have experienced first-hand its transformative power. Although I studied at a large research institution as an international student in the United States, it was while living and working in California, with its vast network of community colleges, that I truly began to grasp the unique role that these institutions play in educating the American population. Today, 68% of Americans begin their education at a community college, and so do almost 10% of all international students as demonstrated in Open Doors. But our field is also a constantly evolving one, with knowledge and educational transfer knowing no boundaries. As one such example of learning from global best practices, India – where I came from as an international student to the United States – is now exploring its own version of a US-inspired community college model.

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Prologue 3

In recent decades, many higher education institutions in Latin America have evolved to become universities. This phenomenon has been the result of the higher prestige that professional degrees (4–5-year-long programs) have over shorter technical and vocational education. However, the costs of attending universities and drop-out rates tend to be high, job markets have been challenging for college graduates, and there is an increasing demand for more occupations in technical and technological majors. In this context, the development of affordable postsecondary institutions and shorter programs is necessary. Community college models could become the solution to prepare the manpower in a wide range of areas and with specific knowledge and skills for the labor market. This book showcases some successful examples in Latin America.

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