



British Columbia Ministry of Education

Curriculum Branch

Business Education and Economics Curriculum Review Report

WEB VERSION

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Table Of Contents

Executive Summary (includes Key Recommendations)

Introduction

North American Context for K to 12 Business and Economics Education

Business Community Perspective

U.S. Business Education Standards Project

Secondary Business Education in Canada

The Applied Skills Overview Team

B.C. Business Education in the K to 12 Context

Research Findings

General

Enrollment Trends for Business Education and Economics 12

Course Names

Local Response to the Need for Curriculum Relevance

Reduction of Courses

Enhancement of Entrepreneurship

Infusion of Consumer Education

Value of Business Education and Its Role in K to 12 Education

4Need to Strengthen Keyboarding

Inclusion of Tourism

Suggestions for Improving the Utility of the Business and Economics IRPs

Appendices

A U.S. Business Education Standards Project

B Conference Board of Canada Employability Skills 2000+

C 2001 Business and Economics Teacher Questionnaire

D Sample Respondent Comments by Course Cluster

Executive Summary (includes Key Recommendations)

This report is the result of research and analysis of information gathered from a teacher questionnaire, teacher telephone interviews, the Internet and other sources. It identifies aspects of the provincial curriculum (two IRPs) that are perceived by teachers and others as in need of strengthening. It recommends changes to the business education and economics IRPs in addition to changes in the structure of the IRP itself that would make the resource more helpful to teachers in the planning process. The report also makes recommendations for meeting the needs of K to 12 learners.

Business Education is critical. More than ever, students now stand to benefit from a comprehensive overview of the nature of business and quality business practice. Elements of such an overview would address the need for business literacy that would include business concepts and knowledge, workplace and entrepreneurial skills, and an appropriate attitude towards co-workers, business associates, clients and customers. In the context of a broad liberal education, these are compelling reasons for retaining a business education curriculum and enhancing the current IRPs.

Currently, there is no single ministry authorized course that presents an overview of business. Because there is no compulsory Business Education at any level (unless some aspects of computer use are viewed as Business Education), it is possible for many students to leave the K to 12 system having had no Business Education instruction. This report proposes curriculum restructuring to provide more choice for schools and students while meeting gaps in student learning including comprehensive courses, understanding of entrepreneurial activity, adequate keyboarding skills, consumer education concepts.

Research indicates that many students lack a clear understanding of what constitutes business, and have some skill deficiencies critical to success in the workplace. While B.C. and Ontario have certain secondary school work experience requirements for at least some students, there is no expectation that students will understand the big picture of how a particular business operates. For the most part, because business education courses are elective in nature and are taken primarily to meet the Selected Studies graduation program requirement, most students do not have the capacity in their program to accommodate courses that could provide a comprehensive overview of business.

K to 12 business education has evolved from a tradition steeped in preparing students for an office environment with courses such as office orientation, office procedures, office practice, stenography, typewriting, business English, speedwriting, business organization, management and accounting. In recent years, the nature, focus and context for business has shifted to where there is now greater attention given to aspects such as marketing, entrepreneurship, innovation in organizations, and business utilizing computer-related technologies. Current enrollment trends in senior business education courses across Canada and within B.C. indicate a shift away from some of the more traditional courses to those having a strong integrative or holistic focus--courses that are often seen as highly relevant to contemporary career pathways.

Several factors have contributed to reduced business education enrollment. In 1995, new graduation program requirements meant that students were no longer required to take business education in Grade 10 unless a school chose to make it mandatory. This change together with the subsequent loss of consumer education as a ministry authorized curriculum have precipitated a marked reduction in business education enrollment across the province. Many business education teachers would like the ministry to attach greater importance to business education by making it a graduation requirement once again.

According to some teachers, as an Applied Skills subject, Business Education is viewed by some administrators and teachers as a low priority—a curriculum smorgasbord that schools may offer for instruction, and from which students may elect to meet one or more of their program requirements. The Business Education curriculum at Grades 8 to 10 (described in the *Business Education 8 to 10 IRP*) together with business education and economics courses at Grades 11 and 12 (described in the *Business Education 11 and 12 and Economics 12 IRP*) must compete with others for a ‘place in the sun’. Courses must ‘compete’ for students while teachers must compete for course assignments. The future of business education in B.C. is problematic, and could benefit from an adjustment in the ministry’s program requirements

The relevance of business education is best understood in the context of a changing economy, the so-called ‘New Economy’ which is reflected in the changing nature of business itself. New technologies mean that business is conducted ubiquitously in time and space. Home-based business, Internet (Web-based) business, entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial activity are all on the rise. The nature of business conducted in the stereotypic workplace is no longer stereotypic—no longer characterized by the familiar ‘division of labour’.

Concurrently in B.C.’s K to 12 education system, there are changing enrollment patterns for the existing business education curriculum Grades 8 through 12. These patterns challenge the relevance and perceived relevance of the existing curriculum and point to its reconceptualization. The changing economy and changing nature of business strongly suggest major curriculum revision. When combined with the premise that all students need a fundamental understanding of business and a level of business literacy, the curricular question that needs to be asked, therefore, is what basic concepts and skills should all students understand and be able to demonstrate respectively?

Recommendations

1) Reconfigure the business education curriculum in Grades 8 to 12 to reflect both the new economy and the need for students to gain business literacy: a comprehensive understanding of business and related entrepreneurial skills.

- **make entrepreneurial activity the central theme or focus of courses at Grades 10, 11 and 12**
- **create new ‘core’ courses at Grades 10, 11 and 12 that reflect current trends and priorities in business**
- **position existing courses as ‘specialized’ courses in an IRP**
- **create integrated courses at Grade 11 that accommodate diverse subject matter and link to career pathways**
- **adjust the curriculum at Grades 8 and 9 to reflect current practice in schools**

Background

There is little in the current business education course cluster that addresses concepts and activity characteristic of the new economy. Where attention is given the new economy, it tends to be piecemeal and reside in only two or three courses. In the present curriculum, little or no attention is given Internet business, e-tailing, e-commerce, e-marketing, Web-page design, home-based business, the impact of new technologies, and new ways of organizing and managing in the new economy. The following table depicts the current curriculum structure for Business Education.

CURRENT STRUCTURE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION IN B.C.						
Business Education 8						
Business Education 9						
Business Education 10						
Accounting 11		Business Computer Applications 11		Marketing 11		
Accounting 12	Financial Accounting 12	Business Information Management 12	Data Management 12	Marketing 12	Entrepreneurship 12	Management Innovation 12

At present, business education in Grades 8 to 12 is unfocused and fractured. There is no single provincial course that provides students with an overview of business. Rather, the B.C. curriculum is a potpourri of courses, each providing a business context for activities in which students learn certain skills and concepts specific to one or more aspects of business. Enrollments for most business education courses have been in decline for the past six years. Only the largest of schools are able to offer the full complement of these courses. The following chart outlines a possible curriculum ‘map’ for business education that would allow a maximum of implementation flexibility:

PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION IN B.C.
Information and Communications Technology 8 (Keyboarding and Word Processing Focus)
Information and Communications Technology 9 (Business Computer Applications Focus)
Business Education 10 (Small Business/Entrepreneurial Focus)
BE 11 (Corporate Business/Intrapreneurial/Global Marketing Focus) + ‘specialized’ courses (e.g., MKT11; AC11)
BE 12 (Research and Business Venture Focus) + ‘specialized’ courses (e.g., MKT12; ACC12; MI12)

Rationale

Today, many students enter the workforce with little understanding of how business operates. Despite there being a work experience requirement for all students, there is no stipulation that students must gain an understanding of how a specific business, or business in general, works. Because of the changing nature of the workplace, it is increasingly imperative that students understand the characteristics of the new economy and the role of business in this economy. It is as important that students learn skills, in a business context, that will be an asset to gaining and maintaining employment or starting up a business and being successful with it.

2) Determine the role and contribution of K to 12 business education in the context of the graduation requirements review.

Background

Currently, there is no mandatory business education requirement at any grade level. Business Education is one of four subjects considered as Applied Skills. There is an expectation that time will be devoted to Applied Skills in the Elementary School years; however, there is no Applied Skills IRP for K to 7. At Grades 8 to 10, there is a Business Education IRP and a requirement that schools provide instruction in at least one of the Applied Skills subjects in each of Grades 8 through 10. At Grade 11, graduation requirements specify that students must gain two credits in Applied Skills, and if the student chooses, these credits may include business education courses or content.

Rationale

As graduation requirements are reviewed, there is an opportunity to evaluate the contribution of each subject to the education of students. For business education, this means a re-examination of the value of those skills best learned and understood in a business context. It also means re-evaluating the importance of having a broad understanding of how business works locally, nationally and globally. The presence of business education in K to 12 schools ought to be based on educational value to both students and society, and warrants there being a mandatory course.

3) Establish a provincial elementary keyboarding curriculum.

Background

Currently, there is no ministry authorized keyboarding curriculum for elementary schools. The ministry has viewed keyboarding in the elementary years as part of an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) curriculum (no longer an IRP). In 1995, the ministry considered developing a business education IRP with a keyboarding component; however, this project was curtailed because it was seen as contributing to curriculum overload. A number of elementary schools in B.C. have made keyboarding a priority and offer some formal keyboarding instruction where keyboards and teacher expertise are accessible and available.

Rationale

Increasingly in the 1990s and into the 21st century, students enter middle and secondary schools having had little or no formal keyboarding instruction. The result has been that students demonstrated a wide range of keyboarding proficiency. More often than not, teachers reported that their schools must devote considerable time and energy to ‘undoing’ inappropriate keyboarding habits. Currently, most secondary schools offer keyboarding instruction to students in either of Grades 8 or 9 with much of that time devoted to proper fingering technique. For many students this is their first experience with formal keyboarding instruction. Some middle schools offer keyboarding instruction to students in their first year in the school. Many meaningful uses of technology are left undone while students focus on rudimentary keyboarding skills.

4) Revamp Tourism 11 and 12 into the IRP format, and consider options for locating these courses such as in the *Business Education 11 and 12* and *Economics 12 IRP* or in its own IRP.

Background

Tourism 11 and 12 were developed as ministry authorized curricula in 1990. These courses were organized around themes having a strong career focus. In 1998, the Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism supported a revamping of the curriculum in which the learning expectations for students were streamlined to approximate the learning outcome language of ministry IRPs. These curricula were later approved for external credit. Today, schools may offer either the 1990 curriculum or one based on the 1998 ‘revision’. Tourism 11 and 12 were two of the relatively few ministry authorized courses not to have been included in the ‘first round’ of IRP development.

Rationale

In its current format, tourism learning outcomes are not supported by suggested instructional strategies, suggested assessment strategies and recommended learning resources in the form of a grade collection. In the context of a B.C. economy in which tourism makes a major contribution, enrollment in tourism courses continues to grow. The ministry should, therefore, support this curriculum through IRP development.

5) Modify the content of the ‘four-column spread’ in each IRP.

Background

Currently, each Column 4 of the IRP contains a list of recommended learning resources that support a particular cluster of learning outcomes in Column 1. The Suggested Instructional Strategies are, for the most part, starting points for activities that would take one to several days to implement. Suggested Assessment Strategies link to learning outcomes and the Instructional Strategies, and are somewhat repetitive and stereotypic.

Rationale

There is a perceived unevenness in clarity and specificity across learning outcomes within an IRP and from one IRP to another. Often, the suggested learning strategy examples are activity starting points and do not detail an approach to a major unit or project. Assessment strategies could be more diverse. All of these adjustments together with one or more samples of performance standards linked to one or more learning outcomes, could make the IRP more useful and better assist teachers with planning for teaching and learning.

Introduction

This report is the result of a ministry initiated review of two areas of curriculum, Business Education and Economics, and the associated Integrated Resource Packages, ***Business Education 8 to 10 IRP*** and ***Business Education 11 and 12 and Economics 12 IRP***. Such a review is the primary activity of the ministry's Curriculum Cycle, Phases I and II. Phase II of the Cycle is represented in this report by the data analysis and recommendations. The purpose of the recommendations is to indicate the action to be taken with regard to IRP renewal. This action could range from making no changes in an IRP at this time to undertaking immediate substantive revision. The intent of the curriculum cycle is to achieve curriculum currency and relevance through regular assessment and renewal. The four phases of the curriculum cycle are described below **as they pertain to Business Education and Economics**:

Phase I -- Research

- maintain a database of comments and input regarding the IRP and its implementation from various sources including Applied Skills Overview Team
- maintain a database on developments and trends with regard to related curriculum in various jurisdictions
- administer teacher questionnaire
- conduct interviews with teachers and others as appropriate

Phase II -- Data Preparation, Analysis of Information, Report Preparation

- compile and represent data in various ways for analysis
- analyse data and interview information
- prepare report with recommendations
- share report with Applied Skills Overview Team and other education partners
- incorporate feedback as appropriate
- seek approval to proceed to Phase III or to re-enter Phase I at a future specified time, for example, in two years

Phase III -- Curriculum Development and/or Revisions

- develop a workplan to accommodate anticipated changes to IRP which may include addition and/or subtraction of courses
- complete revision and/or new development for the IRP
- develop implementation plan in conjunction with Field Services and other education partners as appropriate

Phase IV -- Implementation

- provide support to schools and districts through Field Services and education partners as appropriate and as identified in the implementation plan

North American Context for K to 12 Business and Economics Education

Global forces are having a dramatic impact on individual nations including those of North America. "Big government" is shrinking; "big business" is restructuring; entrepreneurial activity is increasing; national and local economies are becoming global. Recent events in the United States have heightened economic change in North America. In this changing world and evolving economy, increasingly, young people need business skills and an understanding of business in order to succeed.

In response to concerns expressed by the business community, particularly in the U.S., that youth are not being adequately prepared for the rapidly changing world of work, the *National Standards for Business Education: What America's Students Should Know and Be Able to Do in Business* were developed. In other North American jurisdictions, such standards have not been formally developed. However, there have been expressions of concern and need relating to the adequacy of workplace and employability skills, and knowledge of business and business practices.

Business Community Perspective

In January 2001, a federal advisory panel submitted to Industry Canada recommendations for changes in the K to 12 education system to better prepare Canadian students for success in an increasingly fast-paced, global economy. The panel argued for students learning concepts, skills and attitudes that would help them contribute to the development of a more competitive, entrepreneurial culture. Specifically, the panel supported students learning the concepts of risk management, innovation and entrepreneurship in a school environment that fosters an entrepreneurial spirit. In addition, the panel identified particular skills that are often lacking in employees, namely, management, communications and teamwork skills. These recommendations are timely, with the recent report by bizSmart of Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce predicting that self-employment in Canada would continue growing strongly in the current decade.

In the last decade, the Business Council of B.C. (BCBC) occasionally polled its members on what they considered to be the most important skills, qualities and knowledge that prospective employees ought to have to be successful in the workplace. This prioritized list of skills closely approximates each of the Employability Skills 2000+ skills cluster (See Appendix B) identified by the Conference Board of Canada and the list published by the Harvard Business School. In recent years, the Council's advocacy has included an entrepreneurial perspective in the sense that creativity and innovation have become increasingly valued by member organizations. There is an acknowledgement that an entrepreneurial spirit is valued even if a person is seeking employment with an established company. Economists continue to forecast that most job growth will be in self-employment, contract work and in small business. This means that most workers will need some business management and marketing skills.

In the past seven years, the BCBC has periodically written to the ministry expressing its dismay and concern for the ministry's lack of support for business education and, specifically, in not requiring all students to take some business education. As an education partner, the Council has contributed its views through its participation both on the Applied Skills Overview Team and the Deputy Minister's Education Advisory Committee.

U.S. Business Education Standards Project

In 1995, the National Business Education Association (NBEA) published achievement (curriculum) standards for K to 14 Business Education in the U.S. for 12 content areas. These standards are meant to inform state curriculum development projects, and are not intended to equate to courses at the secondary level. Standards from several content areas could very well be represented in a single course. The NBEA believes that business education standards are essential for the success of America's young people and the nation's economy. Currently, the Standards are under review, and revisions are expected in late 2001.

At least one standard from each area of Business Education identified in the *Standards* has a direct link to the B.C. business education or economics curriculum. The following areas of Business Education are identified in Appendix A along with a complete list of the *Standards*:

Accounting
Business Law
Career Development
Communications
Computation
Economics and Personal Finance
Entrepreneurship
Information Systems
International Business
Interrelationships of Business Education Standards
Management
Marketing

Secondary Business Education in Canada

While there is disagreement across Canada as to what subjects constitute business education at Grades 11 and 12, almost all provincial and territorial jurisdictions offer senior level courses in either business education or a closely related subject. The following table summarizes most of the business and business-related courses in Canada as authorized by ministries and departments of education. It is noteworthy that Ontario has workplace preparation courses in most of the business-related subjects.

PLEASE NOTE: In the following table, checkmarks (✓) indicate the number of courses or modules in each jurisdiction. In B.C., Keyboarding is part of the curriculum of three courses.

Province or Territory	Keyboarding	Computer Applications	Data/ Information Management	Marketing	Entrepreneurship	Management Innovation	Accounting	Economics	Other
BC	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓	Tourism 11/12
AB			✓	Management and Marketing	Enterprise and Innovation	Management and Marketing			Financial Management
SK			✓✓		✓		✓✓		Tourism, Hospitality and Entrepreneurship
MB	✓✓	✓✓		Marketing Practicum Promotions Retailing	Start Your Own Business	Management	✓✓	✓	Automated Office Relations in Business
ON		IT Applications in Business	IT in Business	✓	✓✓	Organizational Studies	✓✓✓✓		International Business
QC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
NB	Typewriting	✓	✓		✓	Business Organization and Management	✓✓✓		Business Communications Intro. To Office Technology
NS	✓✓		✓✓		✓	Business Organization & Management	✓✓		Business Communications Bus. Personal Development Tourism 11
PE	Information Technology Communication Business Typing		Introductory Computer Studies Office Procedures		✓	The World of Business	✓✓	✓	
NF	✓		Desktop Publishing		Business Enterprise Enterprise			✓	DP Consumer Studies Bus. English
YT (BC)									
NU (AB)									
NT (AB)									

The Applied Skills Overview Team

The mandate of the Applied Skills Overview Team is to provide Curriculum Branch with a broad perspective on initiatives and issues that pertain to the original Applied Skills subjects (Business Education, Home Economics and Technology Education), Career and Personal Planning (CAPP), Physical Education, the Applied Skills 11 curriculum and Career Programs. The collective expertise of the group allows them to make recommendations to the ministry based on informed discussion.

The Overview Team supports the curriculum cycle activity believing that it is dynamic and well managed. The Team directs some of its time to policies and procedures associated with curriculum cycle work. For example, in late 2000, the Team recommended a wider audience for the information gathering phase of the curriculum cycle. They also encouraged curriculum coordinators to use additional research techniques, besides the teacher questionnaire, to elicit relevant information regarding district and school implementation of curricula and programs. The ministry incorporated these recommendations as discussed in this report.

A very important aspect of the Team's work is to provide feedback on business education and economics, and the substance and recommendations of this report. [Once this report is reviewed (March 2002), the Team's perspective and recommendations will be included.]

B.C. Business Education in the K to 12 Context

The Nature of Business Education

Historically in B.C., the business education curriculum has incorporated a broad range of subject matter, concepts and skills. For example, many elements of consumer education, personal finance and household economics have been included. The context for learning aspects of these topics need not include a reference to business, although business teachers might help students make relevant connections to business examples.

Since the emergence of computer technology in the early 1980s, the teaching of keyboarding and word processing 'fell' to business educators. They were already teaching typewriting courses. For many, the teaching of keyboarding and word processing became synonymous with business education, and contributed to the diversity of what had been taught in the name of the subject. As taught today, business education includes many of the technology-related skills and concepts that are understood and used in contexts other than business.

With IRP development, Information Technology emerged as a curriculum that was designed to integrate with and support other subjects. With the development of CAPP and Personal Planning, some of the personal financial planning and management, and personal budget activities became part of that new curriculum at a time when Business Education 10 and Consumer Education 9/12 were no longer compulsory.

The result of recent change is that business educators believe they have lost a significant aspect of their subject. Enrollments are down in several business education courses. Some subject matter has been lost to ICT and to CAPP, but not the essence of what constitutes business--its concepts and principles. Business education has its roots in the foundational principles that govern and direct the market economy. This can best be understood when key questions about the nature of business education are posed such as the following:

- What is business?
- What is its role in the community?
- What is the contribution of business to society and to the economy?
- What is the relationship of good business practice to both consumers and markets?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of business and consumers?
- What does an educated citizen need to know and understand regarding business?

Personal skills of those exhibiting good and ethical business practice do not by themselves constitute business education as a subject. These are desirable in order to be effective as citizens, employees and entrepreneurs, but they should not be confused with the important concepts and principles on which the subject is based. The business education curriculum, therefore, must focus first on concepts and principles that are core to business and that contribute to business literacy for B.C. students.

Recent Curriculum Development and Program Policy

Along with Home Economics and Technology Education, Business Education is one of the three original subjects under the umbrella of Applied Skills. As a subject, business education is not a graduation requirement. However, students may elect, or be required by the school to take a course in which there is business education content in order to meet the Applied Skills requirement at each grade (8 to 11) as determined by the school.

The ministry completed a major revision of Business Education 8 to 12 in late 1989 (published in 1990). By the time the ministry embarked on the reformatting of most provincial curricula in 1994, significant changes were necessitated as to what should constitute provincially authorized business education courses. For example, entrepreneurship had emerged as a key force in the new economy suggesting that many students ought to have entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and spirit. Also, student enrollments in courses such as shorthand had dwindled significantly, raising the question as to the number and type of courses the ministry should offer.

In 1994, the ministry established new graduation requirements that included two credits of Fine Arts and two credits of Applied Skills for Grade 11. The ministry published options for meeting the Applied Skills requirement that included students taking a four credit combined Fine Arts and Applied Skills course developed by the school; students taking a career program or locally developed course that meets the Fine Arts and/or Applied Skills requirement; and students taking a designated four-credit provincial course that meets both the Fine Arts and Applied Skills learning outcomes. For the latter option, the ministry designated certain courses that would meet the dual requirements; however, all of these courses give only token attention to either the Fine Arts component (dance, drama, music, visual arts) or the Applied Skills component (business education, home economics, physical education, technology education).

With the change in secondary school program requirements in 1994, specifically the emergence of requirements in CAPP, Information Technology and Applied Skills, there has been a steady reduction in business education enrollment across the province. A few of the skills associated with the business education curriculum of the past became part of the CAPP and Information Technology curricula but, for the most part, there is no compulsory business education, and students may receive no instruction in business education in Grades 8 through 12.

All curricula at Grades 8 to 10, including business education, were designed to be the bases upon which schools would create whole, partial or integrated courses. The development of the *Business Education 8 to 10 IRP*, published in 1997, was premised on there being no ministry authorized

business education courses at that level. The IRP identifies a curriculum based upon PLOs from broad areas of business education and economics: business communication, economics, entrepreneurship, finance and marketing. This IRP with its optional implementation replaced the ministry authorized Business Education 10 course that was a graduation requirement until 1995. In 1998, the ministry reduced the number of business education and economics courses at Grades 11 and 12 from 13 to 10, with the greater number of course options at Grade 12.

Research Findings

General

Two primary research techniques yielded most of the information upon which this report is based. The Business Education and Economics teacher questionnaire was developed in two sections to coincide with the two IRPs (See Appendix C). Part of each section is devoted to gleaning feedback about the particular IRP itself, and part relates to the implementation of business education that may or may not reflect the use of that IRP. Questionnaire responses were received from 57 teachers in 28 school districts.

Subsequent to the collation of questionnaire information, a determination was made of those school districts for which no questionnaire responses were received (32 districts). It was decided to identify large schools in four of these districts and to contact business education and/or economics teachers from those schools (17 teachers). Interviews were conducted between April 23, 2001 and June 1, 2001. This approach helped broaden the geographic base for response.

For the most part in the telephone conversations, questions were chosen to extend those asked in the teacher questionnaire rather than replicating them. This approach allowed some exploration of perceptions and perspectives relating directly to a school's business education/economics program, and to business education across the province. Most questions posed centred on the following:

- trends in business education enrollments in the district and school
- staff assignments and turnover
- courses offered at Grades 11 and 12 and why
- business education at Grades 8 to 10 and why
- time allotted for business education at Grades 8 to 10
- learning outcomes addressed at Grades 8 to 10
- IRP use

Enrollment Trends for Business Education and Economics 12

Enrollment in provincially authorized business education classes in B.C. including Consumer Education 12 over the past several years has declined dramatically (35% between 1994 and 2000) and continues to do so. Factors contributing to this decline include:

- removal in 1994 of Business Education 10 as a requirement for graduation
- university course and program standards, and policies, that dictate choices for many students who will NOT enter university; that is, secondary school student programming (course options) is restricted by university entrance requirements
- development of CAPP 11 and 12
- addition of the CAPP requirement in each of Grades 8, 9 and 10
- parental persuasion to take more of the 'core' courses in preparation for post-secondary

- counseling bias towards university preparation if student has the academic potential
- deletion of Consumer Education as a graduation requirement in 1996 and, later, as a business education course in 1998 (successful completion enrollment in 1995/96 was 7653 students)
- removal of Consumer Education as a provincially authorized course in 2001 (1998/99 completion enrollment was 1079 students)
- growth of IT with schools offering entire courses devoted to computer skills development
- school administration indifference as reported by a few teachers
- growth in locally developed courses compensating for the loss of keyboarding and information management as provincially authorized courses at Grade 11
- shortage of qualified staff to teach business courses, as reported by a few teachers, thus limiting course offerings

The dropping of Accounting 11 in 2001 as a course taken by students to receive their Grade 11 mathematics credit is expected to further reduce enrollment. The table below compares B.C. province-wide enrollments in 1995/96 with those in 2000/01 for courses in business education, economics and tourism. The amount of change as a percent of the 1995/96 enrollment is also given.

COURSE CODE (1995/96)	COURSE NAME	COURSE CODE (1999/00)	1995/96 ENROLLMENT	2000/01 ENROLLMENT	PERCENT CHANGE
AC11	accounting	AC11	7802	5829	-25
AA12	accounting	ACC12	2356	1539	- 35
FA12	financial accounting	FA12	1461	836	- 43
DP11 + IM11	data processing + information management	BCA11	6994 + 1604 = 8598	4469	- 48
DP12	data processing	DM12	2897	1416	- 51
IM12	information management	BIM12	696	1256	+ 80
EC12	economics	EC12	1017	622	- 39
ENT12 (1997/98)	entrepreneurship	ENT12	80 (1997/98)	2450	+ 2963
BM12	business management	MI12	3144	864	- 73
MK11	marketing	MK11	3044	2344	- 23
MK12	marketing	MK12	2882	2543	- 12
CE12	consumer education	CE12	7653	1079 (1998/99)	- 86
TRM11	tourism	TRM11	916	2421	+ 164
TRM12	tourism	TRM12	204	1504	+ 673
TOTAL	all courses		42 750	29 172	- 32

Reduced enrollment has exacerbated the situation where teachers are required to teach courses in subjects for which they are not qualified. With the exception of the largest schools, it appears that most are unable to offer a full range of business education courses at Grades 11 and 12 because there is tough competition from student enrollment in other electives including the number of business courses themselves.

Rather than offering business education in Grade 10, several schools allow students to elect Grade 11 business education courses while in Grade 10. These students meet their Applied Skills requirement in Grade 10 by electing a class in an area of Technology Education or Home Economics. The impact, then, is to reduce the enrollment in Grade 10 business education.

While the general trend in enrollment is downward, there are some exceptions to it. Some schools have maintained enrollments in business courses or have seen modest increases thanks to aggressive marketing by business education staff. Enrollment in Entrepreneurship 12 has grown rapidly since its official inception in 1998 with half the schools in the province offering the course in 2000/01. However, it appears that students are showing a preference of one business education course over others. Enrollment has dropped in courses such as Management Innovation 12, formerly Business Management 12.

Another exception to the downward trend in business education enrollment appears to exist in some of the larger secondary schools where teachers are well qualified, experienced and enthusiastic, and where resources are strong. In these schools, there may be less competition for computing resources, more than adequate operating budgets, and support from the administration and teaching staff. Business education seems more highly valued in some schools which has contributed to steady enrollments over the last few years.

In large urban high schools, there is often sufficient enrollment to offer classes in all business education courses. However, in non-urban and generally smaller secondary schools, overall enrollment in business courses means that only the courses with sufficient enrollment are offered. The drop in business education enrollment coincides with the increase in enrollment of courses in ICT. One approach to increasing enrollment in courses with a business component is through the creation of ministry authorized courses that allow students to meet both their Applied Skills and Fine Arts requirements.

With ongoing pressure for students to meet university entrance requirements, schools continue to make adjustments in response to declining enrollments in provincially authorized business education courses. Schools, by and large, make the decision for students at Grades 8 to 10 by removing flexibility or choice among Applied Skills offerings. Usually at each grade level, students are faced with one of the following three alternatives: taking a required business education class; taking an optional business education class; having no business education class available. In rare exceptions where enrollment is sufficiently great, a student may have a choice between two courses that have a significant business education focus. When no business education class is offered, students meet their Applied Skills requirement by taking a course that has a technology education and/or home economics component.

There is much turmoil regarding business education in some of the smaller secondary schools. All is not well. Course enrollments continue to drop. Teachers are increasingly required to teach in areas where they have little interest and education/training. Not all courses are offered in any given year or term. Some courses such as entrepreneurship require teacher experience and advocacy in order that they be offered.

Course Names

With the inception of the 1998 curriculum (IRP), four courses having new names saw enrollment decline dramatically in some schools: Business Computer Applications, Business Information Management, Data Management and Management Innovation. Teachers feel students and counsellors may not understand what these courses are about when they look only at names, whereas the teachers, themselves, do. This may be contributing to fewer students electing these particular

courses. While schools must make extra effort to provide meaningful descriptions in their course selection handbooks, teachers are recommending that the ministry choose course names that clearly communicate their content.

Some schools meet student needs by creating classes made up of students enrolled in two or three different courses, for example, Accounting 11, Accounting 12 and Marketing 11. However, such classes place extra pressure on teachers to address the needs of individual students.

Local Response to the Need for Curriculum Relevance

Analysis of the research information strongly suggests that the Business Education curriculum is in need of revision. Local school and district initiatives are emphasizing skill development and business literacy with an eye to relevance in a new economy. Key indicators include district development of curriculum/courses to meet this need such as ICT, keyboarding, business computer applications and integrated curriculum.

Current practice in Grades 8 to 10 emphasizes ICT and the linkages of business education with other knowledge domains. Many schools offer topics such as Internet research, web page design, graphic communications and html programming. In some schools, students rotate through two or three course components that may include keyboarding and another area of business education such as entrepreneurship, business computer applications or accounting. Some schools use ICT to encourage enrollment and offer business education instruction along with information technology. The elements of business education actually taught usually pertain to technology applications used in the business community rather than the nature of business or business concepts.

Sometimes curricular priorities or competition necessitates that schools offer courses that are much narrower in scope than suggested by the IRP. This is reflected in one teacher's comment, "When cutbacks happen, curriculum is 'watered down' to keyboarding." When the *Business Education 8 to 10 IRP* is used as the basis of a course (not keyboarding/computer applications), aspects of finance, marketing and entrepreneurship are usually emphasized. Given the limited province-wide attention to these areas, however, the ministry should re-think the constitution of the Business Education IRP, and revise the *Business Education 8 to 10 IRP* to better reflect those aspects of the curriculum actually implemented. The continued inclusion of business finance, marketing, economics in the provincial curriculum at this level is problematic and must be assessed.

Many students leave the K to 12 education system with poorly developed business skills. Non-business graduates, in particular, may have a poor conceptual understanding of the elements and nature of business and how business is conducted. Teachers surveyed expressed support for a curriculum that encourages greater depth in topics and more technical knowledge and computer skills. Several questionnaire respondents pointed out that senior students lack skills important for both their academic success and their effectiveness as educated citizens.

The ministry needs to restructure current business education courses to better reflect current business and economic realities. Existing courses in business give little explicit consideration to e-commerce and e-retailing particularly in the context of global marketing and international business. In practice, marketing is an integral part of any business operation and, yet, may be taught with little attention given to other aspects of business. Students require an understanding of marketing as part of research into any small business start-up or entrepreneurship program. This need could be addressed through a revamping of Marketing 11 to create more of an integrated business course and a revamping of Marketing 12 to accommodate Internet-based business.

Currently, there is no single ministry authorized course giving students a comprehensive overview of business. Rather, business courses are specific to one of four areas: accounting; business computer applications; business organization/management; and marketing/entrepreneurship. Some course reconfiguring may now be appropriate given the lack of support for an increase in the number of business courses, and the potential value of a course offering an overview of business. The ministry should consider developing courses that give students a broad view of business and contemporary business practice and, in so doing, address the goals of business literacy and career development.

Many schools offer locally developed courses in lieu of some provincially authorized curriculum because students see them as having greater relevance. These courses support student interests in the following:

- endeavours such as home-based business
- school programs such as accounting that have post-secondary articulation
- information technology such as Web page design
- areas of study such as theatre management where there would be a need for an understanding of business.

Schools valuing courses with strong links to career pathways are now blending content and skill sets to create new foci for locally developed courses. Some of the solutions that incorporate business education include graphics, communications, desktop publishing, computer animation, internet research, web page design, and e-commerce. Part of the impetus for such development comes from the Fine Arts and Applied Skills graduation requirements. Some schools have developed integrated courses that effectively address learning outcomes from subjects in both Fine Arts and Applied Skills (e.g., visual arts and business education). Most of these courses reflect contemporary career pathways. Enrollments are high and wait lists are the norm. Such courses are typically developed in those larger schools having the necessary human resources and staff who are willing to collaborate. It is precisely this lack of time and teacher expertise that precludes many schools from developing integrated courses.

Some of the larger secondary schools have developed courses designed to give students two credits in each program area. These courses may draw on business education concepts and skills, and would afford students another opportunity to receive instruction in business education. Course content would also draw from any one of dance, drama, music and visual arts. In order that both business and fine arts teachers could be comfortable instructing in such courses, the ministry should consider course templates that would allow implementation from both a business and fine arts focus. This concept may help implementation and reduce competition between subject departments over 'course ownership'. The availability of ministry authorized courses by which students would receive credit for both Applied Skills and Fine Arts requirements could significantly reduce reliance on locally developed courses.

In addition to courses offering credit in two subject areas, schools continue to develop courses that meet student interests and needs. Desktop publishing is one example of a locally developed course that has become increasingly popular, particularly in larger schools. This has significantly reduced enrollment in ministry authorized Grade 12 business courses so that some large schools do not offer all business courses. Now that enrollment (N=253 for 2000/01), in locally developed courses in desktop publishing has grown significantly it warrants a fresh look at creating a ministry authorized course, particularly if course consolidation becomes a reality. In addition, the ministry should explore the availability of desktop publishing certification options that could be offered as an external credential for students.

In the context of K to 12 business education, the ministry has considered desktop publishing to be an extension of word processing. During IRP development in 1997, the ministry concluded that a ministry authorized course dedicated to desktop publishing was perhaps premature, and chose to include desktop publishing within the framework of Business Information Management 12. The creation of a Desktop Publishing 12 course would likely be at the expense of Business Information Management 12. The ministry should consider amalgamating BIM12 and DM12 into a single course while developing a desktop publishing option.

As part of the 1999/00 accreditation process, a very small minority of schools (8/230) identified information technology/Applied Skills as a focus in their 1999/00 growth plans. A few student-related themes were identified from these schools as follows:

- limited access to computer labs
- less than satisfactory achievement overall and in basic competencies with technology tools
- low level of satisfaction with Applied Skills and information technology
- too little attention to learning outcomes
- too little attention to critical thinking, problem solving, critical analysis, decision making and attitude development
- limited knowledge about Applied Skills and information technology courses
- limited enrollment in Applied Skills and information technology
- few opportunities to experience integrated learning

It is evident from the number and nature of the responses that Applied Skills, in the past, has not been a priority for the schools that identified Applied Skills in their growth plans. Given that so few schools involved with accreditation in 1999/00 identified Applied Skills in their growth plans, this might suggest that all is well with the Applied Skills as a cluster of subjects and program requirement. On the other hand, it might simply mean that Applied Skills is a low priority generally for schools.

Local course development is, in part, a response to low interest in some of the existing provincial courses in the IRP such as Marketing, Management Innovation and Economics. These local courses create too much choice and too few openings in the students' timetable. As one teacher recently put it, "Enrollment drives everything." The results of the questionnaire suggest that very few teachers at Grades 8 through 10 are utilizing the entire set of learning outcomes for a given grade.

Reduction of Courses

During the last curriculum revision process for business education, the number of courses at Grade 11 was reduced to three. The current curriculum configuration is given below:

CURRENT STRUCTURE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION IN B.C.						
Business Education 8						
Business Education 9						
Business Education 10						
Accounting 11		Business Computer Applications 11		Marketing 11		
Accounting 12	Financial Accounting 12	Business Information Management 12	Data Management 12	Marketing 12	Entrepreneurship 12	Management Innovation 12

Most teachers responding to the questionnaire commented that the number of business courses should stay the same or be reduced. While a few teachers suggested that there ought to be more choice at Grade 11, the downside of this may be an increase in competition amongst business courses for student enrollment. Fewer course offerings can lessen the uncertainty in scheduling of both classes and teacher assignments. This might prompt the replacement of the existing Marketing 11 with a new course having a significant marketing component.

The BCBEA has concerns about the number of business courses at Grade 12 when there are too few students electing them. The Association believes that fewer business education courses would solidify teacher assignments. It suggests combining essential content of related courses at Grade 12 to reduce the overall number, for example, entrepreneurship and management innovation; data management and business information management.

One way to address course reduction is to re-cast the curriculum according to priorities that schools are establishing, and according to the need for increased business literacy in graduates. The chart below shows a possible curriculum configuration that represents both a reduction in the number of courses and a comprehensive view of business.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION IN B.C.
Information and Communications Technology 8 (Keyboarding and Word Processing Focus)
Information and Communications Technology 9 (Business Computer Applications Focus)
Business Education 10 (Small Business/Entrepreneurial Focus)
BE 11 (Corporate Business/Intrapreneurial/Global Marketing Focus) + ‘specialized’ courses (e.g., MKT11; AC11)
BE 12 (Research and Business Venture Focus) + ‘specialized’ courses (e.g., MKT12; ACC12; MI12)

In future, current courses could be viewed as business education specializations, and continue to exist in the IRP as needed.

Enhancement of Entrepreneurship

In 1998, the ministry introduced Entrepreneurship 12 as part of the *Business Education 11 and 12 and Economics 12 IRP*. By the 1999/2000 school year, half of B.C. schools had implemented the entrepreneurship curriculum. All jurisdictions in Canada offer at least one entrepreneurship or enterprise course. Entrepreneurship has special significance in B.C. where approximately 98% of all businesses are small businesses with 15 or fewer employees. More than one million people in the province are employed in these businesses accounting for about 30% of the province’s gross national product.

Teachers surveyed expressed strong support for entrepreneurship. When asked about the adequacy of the entrepreneurship curriculum in the K to 12 system, 60% of the teachers completing the questionnaire expressed support for an expansion of entrepreneurship at the secondary level with a third of these recommending compulsory entrepreneurship and self-employment education. These values are higher when the teacher interview data is factored in. Teachers also cited ways to strengthen/solidify its presence as a Grade 12 course by including school-based projects and partnerships with community organizations. They noted two limiting factors to a strong entrepreneurship program: teacher expertise and sufficient funding to support ventures.

A majority of B.C. teachers responding to the questionnaire expressed support for an additional course having an entrepreneurial focus. Many entrepreneurship teachers now find themselves offering some instruction in accounting and marketing in order that students can adequately do business plan research. The success that some teachers have had in linking aspects of business management, accounting and marketing with entrepreneurship suggests that the ministry might consider a comprehensive focus for a course at Grade 11. Such a course would come closest to giving students an overview of the nature of business and what constitutes business. A few teachers support a rethinking of the entrepreneurship curriculum citing, for example, too much attention given the business plan. Perhaps the ministry should research models of entrepreneurship education and use specific information relating to the role and significance of the business plan as one of the bases for further curriculum development.

One way to increase the presence of entrepreneurship in the senior years is through an Entrepreneurship 11 course. Such a course would serve two needs. First, a few teachers of Entrepreneurship 12 reported that they have to instruct students in teamwork and aspects of marketing and accounting before students can properly research their venture. Part of the Entrepreneurship 11 curriculum could meet this need. Second, there is a need to provide students with a holistic view of what constitutes business, and to promote the option of self employment. In addition, as most students will work in a small business environment, either as an employee or as an owner, such a course would provide students with excellent preparation for what to expect in the workplace. The benefit to students who would take both Entrepreneurship 11 and 12 is that they could devote more time in Grade 12 to conducting the extensive research needed to increase the likelihood of a successful venture.

Warning of future skills shortages, a federal advisory group stated in its January 2001 report to Industry Canada that all levels of the K to 12 education system and beyond have a contribution to make towards the development of a more competitive, entrepreneurial culture. The report recommends that Canadian elementary schools begin infusing an entrepreneurial attitude and spirit in their day-to-day teaching and that Canadian children be taught "the basic concepts of risk management, innovation and entrepreneurship" as early as elementary school. The ministry should find ways to incorporate entrepreneurial concepts into the provincial elementary curriculum.

Infusion of Consumer Education

The ministry introduced a consumer education graduation requirement in 1984. Students could elect either Consumer Education 9/10 or Consumer Education 12 to meet that requirement. Since 1995, both Consumer Education 9/10 and Consumer Education 12 have been phased out. Consumer Education 12 remained ministry authorized through June 2001. Consumer Education 9/10 remained until 1991 when replaced by Business Education 10. Currently there is little consumer education in business education curriculum 8 to 12.

Teachers reported that the business education curriculum gives insufficient attention to consumer rights, responsibilities and issues. More than 75% of teachers who responded to the questionnaire support a significant consumer education component in a revamped curriculum, but do not support an entire course devoted to this topic at any grade level. There is a further need to relate consumer education to business to give students an overall view of business.

Some specific recommendations suggested by respondents include a consumer education component or a course that deals with topics such as budgeting, credit, money management and investment education. As long as business education is not a graduation requirement, most students will not gain

an adequate understanding of many important business concepts that relate directly to financial management, financial planning, personal economics and their role as consumers.

The enhancement of consumer education in ministry authorized curriculum would need to consider both its content and grade level placement. One suggestion is to expand the content of CAPP and/or ICT to include concepts that are both consumer education and financial education. CAPP, however, does not require the use of business examples or, indeed, a business context in order that students address the personal aspect of finance and, so, there is no guarantee students will learn business concepts or will have sufficient opportunity to achieve proficiency with certain computer-related skills.

Some teachers are not in favour of increasing what consumer education is already in the curriculum or don't want the amount of consumer education to be significant. 26% of respondents have reservations or want changes to what is in currently in the curriculum.

Value of Business Education and Its Role in K to 12 Education

Several factors contribute to a perception that business education is not highly valued as a curriculum in the K to 12 context. One of the most noteworthy is the fact that there is no mandatory requirement that students take classes in which business concepts are taught or in which business skills are learned in a business context. Although business education is one of the Applied Skills subjects, and there is an Applied Skills requirement in Grades 8 through 11, schools can choose to ignore business education. While most schools, if not all, offer keyboarding and computer applications classes of varying duration (40h to 100h), in recent years these have been viewed more often as information technology, and may or may not include business education concepts and knowledge.

Some schools currently offer no business education of any description at Grade 10. As soon as Business Education 10 was eliminated as a graduation requirement in 1994, some schools decided to no longer offer that curriculum and continue that practice today. Other schools, believing that business education is important for all students, developed compulsory courses for Grades 8 through 10 that include a significant business education component. Teacher response suggests that there is currently strong support in the field within the business education community for the idea that all students would benefit significantly from a mandatory course in business education. Such a course would be based on provincial curriculum that allowed flexibility in its implementation.

Currently in Grade 11, there is an Applied Skills, two-credit Foundation Studies requirement. One of the ways students may meet that requirement is by taking an existing ministry-authorized, Grade 11 or Grade 12 business education course. As indicated earlier in this report, however, enrollments in business courses continue to decline thus jeopardizing the availability of specific courses. Another option for meeting the Applied Skills requirement is taking a course that has some business education content. There are no statistics that specifically indicate how often this option is accessed throughout B.C.

Business education seems to lack a positive image. Contributing to this perception is the fact that there are no compulsory courses. For those teachers supporting compulsory business education, more teachers expressed support for a Grade 10 requirement than for a compulsory course at Grade 11 or 12 even though some of the content would better match the maturity level of students in the senior years. One teacher of senior courses reported frustration with the lack of a compulsory business education curriculum at Grade 10.

Since Business Education was made an option, it has disappeared significantly from Grades 8 to 10. Students entering Grades 11 and 12 are way behind the basic skills required. [It is] difficult to meet requirements [in business education courses] at Grades 11 and 12.

Not surprisingly, a majority of business education teachers believe all students should have some business education experience in secondary school. Questionnaire respondents were asked open-ended questions relating to the importance of business education in the K to 12 system. Respondents volunteered comments and were not forced into responding “yes” or “no”. Percentages below are **indicative only of the respondents desire to offer positive or negative comments** for the seven items identified on the questionnaire.

Business education as a way of fulfilling a program/graduation requirement:

- 68% of respondents support business education as a program/graduation requirement; 13% were against business education as one means for students meeting a program/graduation requirement

Business education and all students:

- 42% of respondents support business education for all students; 21% disagreed with all students being required to take a business education course, citing lack of student interest, limited resources, varied prior learning and decreased flexibility with more requirements for students

Business education and teacher pre-service:

- 67% of respondents advocate a combination of work experience, computer skills, business courses/major/degree, entrepreneurial experience for business educators

Business education and the workplace:

- 74% of respondents see business education as very important in preparing students for the workplace, particularly as all students will be self-employed, employees or employers

Business education and post-secondary education and training:

- 51% of respondents see a strong link between business education and post secondary for **all** students; 64% for **at least some** students; 84% of respondents reported business education having future value to students

Business education as an option for meeting the Grades 8 to 10 Applied Skills requirement:

- 78% of respondents indicated they support business education as an option for students meeting the Grades 8 to 10 Applied Skills requirement; many of these respondents added that business education should be mandatory

Those teachers supporting business education as a graduation requirement felt this should happen for reasons such as these:

- “University entrance requirements dictate what our best and brightest take as a course load, usually NOT business course options. This current practice has created a stream of university-bound students who have little commerce knowledge or interest . . . what a waste!”
- “Most of our students are not university bound. Almost ALL will have

to interact with the business community, yet most curriculum decisions, and course planning decisions involve the former, not the latter.”

- “As a graduation requirement? Absolutely. It’s criminal that our students do not have to acquire knowledge of business concepts while in high school.”
- “It is more than a program requirement. It is a necessary life skill essential for preparing our youth for adulthood.”
- “Why isn’t it? Placing business subjects under the umbrella, “practical skills” means most students will never take a business course.”

A few teachers offered both practical and educative reasons to support the view that business education should not be made a program requirement. For example, some suggested that because the senior courses assume prior learning, they are inappropriate for learners who have no business education in Grades 8 to 10. One teacher cited the danger of further overloading requirements to the point where students cannot pursue their interests.

A few teachers suggested the current business education curriculum (IRP) does not meet the needs of all students. One suggestion was that the IRP ought to have ‘modified learning outcomes’ appropriate to learners with special needs. A few teachers indicated that more attention should be given keyboarding in the IRP. They cited the loss of Keyboarding 11 as a backward step.

In support of mandatory business education, several teachers pointed to the need for all students to develop basic skills in keyboarding and word processing. While students may develop these skills to a degree in some contexts other than business, it is the business context that may provide the most relevance for most learners.

Many teachers (80% of those responding to the questionnaire) firmly and/or passionately support the importance of business education to the world of work. A sample of comments follow:

- “Critical! All students are future employees or even employers.”
- “Everyone will need some business skills.”
- “Very important. Business education is useful in any walk of life.”
- “Vital but neglected.”
- “This seems like a ‘no-brainer’ . . . teaching about the workplace to the workforce. Extremely valuable of course!”
- “Business education = workplace skills—a simple equation.”

At the same time that many teachers see the link between business education and the workplace, they also see an important connection between business education and post-secondary education and training. Teachers reported that their former students had an advantage in university or college over students who did not have business courses in high school.

There continues to exist a core of business educators who deplore the ministry's lack of support and indifference with regard to business education. The following teacher perspective typifies this sentiment:

This province has destroyed the importance of business in education. Students today don't even know how to type their documents like they used to years ago. Teachers and businesses are disappointed in this province with their view that everyone will rely on one another to survive today and that business knowledge is not a necessity. Students are graduating in a competitive marketplace with very few skills because they have reduced the number of credits for graduation and eliminated the importance of business courses. No wonder why the Province is in such a mess.

Another respondent's comments further reflect the status given business education, particularly by some non-business education teachers. She writes:

Business Education is not considered 'academic'; therefore, value is low. Business is not seen as a valuable career option. Business is not seen as [an] essential skill base for all students.

And another teacher comments:

While the middle intellect students may not ever go to university, our business and apprenticeship stream suffers as most [of these students] are pressured into [the] university stream. Make the commerce components of education significant and legitimate for the benefit of Canada's future.

This type of comment is a signal to the ministry that there should be a review of the value/role of the Applied Skills subjects generally, and Business Education specifically, in K to 12 education. An important context for this consideration is the meeting of students' needs related to post-secondary transition, ICT, the community and the market. One positive sign is that in August 2001, the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission announced it had approved two business-related occupations (Small Business IT Specialist and Small Business Associate) to fall within the scope of the Certificate of Industry Training.

Even from within the K to 12 system itself, there are questions relating to the perceived relevance of business courses and their possible future. One respondent asks:

Will Business Education become obsolete while other departments are creating courses around multimedia productions, film and video, [and] electronic publishing?

Apart from a few local articulation agreements between secondary and post-secondary in the province, a number of post-secondary institutions appear indifferent to students taking business courses in secondary school and most do not recognize business courses for advanced credit. This indifference is also reflected in post-secondary admission requirements. At present, for example, the

Faculty of Business Administration at Simon Fraser University does not require students entering directly from secondary school to have taken any business education courses prior to entering their programs. Moreover, secondary school business education courses are not a category of courses students may use to meet General Requirements for entry into SFU.

Some teachers suggest that the image will not improve unless there is a government examination attached to one or more senior business courses. While there is a small group of business educators who are vocally supportive of government examinations to improve the image of business education and raise the credibility and respect for it, the ministry remains cool to widening the scope of the government examination program for reasons such as cost.

Need to Strengthen Keyboarding

The ministry's Education Plan of September 1994 required elementary teachers to integrate aspects of Applied Skills into their instruction. This meant that schools were to ensure that they gave sufficient attention to student technology skills development. The release of the 1996 Information Technology IRP further stressed the integration of computer-related activity into existing classroom practice. As a result, schools are giving more attention to computer applications and less to keyboarding. Most student computer time is now spent using the mouse doing Internet research and working with specific software.

The 2000 version of *The Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching* acknowledges the importance of using computers as a creative learning tool even in the primary years. "Children need access to both traditional materials and newer technologies." (p. 49) Unfortunately, the elementary school curriculum is more than can be addressed in the time allotted. Witness the ministry's withdrawal of the K to 7 Technology Education curriculum. Part of the reason, to be sure, is the resource-dependent nature of the curriculum, a problem shared by all curricula heavily dependent upon computer-related technologies.

This perception is supported by the findings from the *Review of Learning Outcomes Project (K-3)*.

Teachers indicated they lack the training and expertise needed to teach and assess Information Technology outcomes. Most reported that the equipment in their classrooms and computer labs was outdated, insufficient, or in poor condition. Several teachers commented that when they took the students to the computer lab . . . there were not enough computers for all students to work at the same time. (p. 32)

It is similarly supported by the findings from the *Report on the Second Research Phase, Grades 4-7*.

In general, teachers identified a lack of equipment and expertise as obstacles to their ability to teach and assess the Information Technology outcomes. Many reported difficulties gaining access to technology. Those fortunate enough to have access to technology, often reported that the equipment and software [were] outdated, insufficient, or in poor condition.

For the most part, teachers agreed that these basic skills [keyboarding, information processing, and using basic

terminology] are most important for students to learn in Information Technology.

The BCBEA recommends mandatory keyboarding instruction in Grade 3 or 4 and a mandatory ICT curriculum with a keyboarding component in Grade 8.

The perception of teachers is that keyboarding skills demonstrated by students entering Grade 8 range from none to excellent. The skill level is highly dependent upon curriculum priorities established by the elementary school, teacher expertise, access to computers and maintenance of computers. There are indications that the overall secondary school entry level keyboarding performance of students is in decline. From conversations secondary teachers have had with their elementary school counterparts, a reduction in computer maintenance is negatively impacting student access time. In addition, students are using much of their computer time to work with software tools such as web browsers and e-mail programs

Because teachers continue to cite the inadequacy of keyboarding skills for students entering middle school at Grade 6 or 7, the ministry should give serious consideration to mandating an elementary keyboarding curriculum. Such a curriculum would provide specificity, and could be supported by performance standards and resources that would help increase student competence and performance. With students gaining access to computers at an early age, research suggests that they should be given formal keyboarding instruction as soon as they begin using the computer to complete projects. This approach teaches students, for example, the advantage of being able to complete report writing more effectively.

At the secondary level, locally developed keyboarding is also very popular as schools find students' entry-level keyboarding skills to be weak. Some schools offer keyboarding classes as an opportunity for students to develop industry standard levels of proficiency in keyboarding and with skills using advanced features of software.

There are examples of resistance by secondary students to their gaining facility with keyboarding. Increasingly, students are electing not to build advanced performance skills, some feeling that voice recognition software will become the norm by the time they are in the workplace. In addition, schools are pressured to increase the range of software to which students are exposed. Students are resistant to taking additional courses using the same software such as Microsoft Word. This creates pressure on schools to purchase additional software, and to match that software with existing computer operating systems.

The president of the BCBEA reports that based on her contact with business teachers, they see serious shortcomings in what students are exhibiting as graduates. These shortcomings most often relate to curriculum gaps, curriculum decision making and program policies. For example, too few students achieve a high level of performance with respect to keyboarding and advanced software applications. Instruction seems very uneven across the province, and students do not have equal access to computers to gain the necessary facility with them.

Based upon the concern that has been expressed by both teachers and the BCBEA regarding the keyboarding skill level of students leaving the K to 12 system, the ministry ought to give serious consideration to prioritizing the development of a formal keyboarding curriculum within a K to 12 conceptual framework. The ministry should recommend standards of performance attached to three or four of the grade levels. Any conceptual framework should include the types of software and related learning objectives such as student 'products' that may be associated with the development of keyboarding proficiency. The philosophy of the current ministry curriculum where keyboarding is identified in learning outcomes is that keyboarding not be a separate course. While a few

respondents identified the need for a separate course, there is no outcry for one at the secondary level. Many schools meet their needs by offering a locally developed course in at least one of Grades 8 through 11.

Inclusion of Tourism

ministry authorized courses, Tourism 11 and 12, do not currently exist in IRP format but should be given IRP status. They are the last of the ministry authorized courses not to have been reformatted as an IRP. A strong case can be made for their revision based upon currency of curriculum, provincial enrollment, learning resources and links to business education.

The current Tourism 11 and 12 courses need to be updated as the curriculum is about 12 years old. In 1999, the Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism (PRIT) reworked and reorganized the ministry Tourism learning outcomes to meet currency needs of the Tourism Learning System Certification Program. These outcomes were developed as part of a Tourism Career Preparation Handbook. This work can be a valuable resource when casting Tourism 11 and 12 in IRP format.

Based on the work of PRIT, there are now alternate versions of Tourism 11 and 12 that the ministry has identified as external courses. The learning outcomes identified in these versions more closely link to the structure of the outcomes found in all IRPs.

In the last five years, provincial enrollment in tourism has grown by a factor of three and one-half and continues to increase. There are now close to 4000 students enrolled in tourism classes. This, alone, would seem to warrant a curriculum revision.

At present, the tourism curriculum has no ministry identified learning resources associated with it. Inclusion of Tourism 11 and 12 in IRP format would provide a grade collection for these courses. The greatest need expressed within the teacher survey was for learning resource information.

The strong links of Tourism 11 and 12 to the business education curriculum suggest they be given the same status as other business courses. This would mean the inclusion of these courses in a Business Education IRP. On the other hand, this creates the potential for an IRP name that is unwieldy. Other options include relocating Economics 12 or making Tourism 11 and 12 a separate IRP.

Suggestions for Improving the Utility of the Business and Economics IRPs

There is the sense that many teachers, particularly those with new teaching assignments, are still familiarizing themselves with the IRP and assessing its contents. Much planning is done directly from the student text and community-based resources, but it remains an effort for some teachers to wade through the PLOs and text. Other teachers have indicated that the IRP may be used in the first year but “fades into the background” in subsequent years.

Teachers use business education and economics IRP content in a variety of ways across courses. Their responses as to how they use the IRP are summarized below:

- compare suggested strategies to what is currently being done in the classroom to get ideas that can be modified to meet individual student needs
- confirm intentionality of existing practice and build upon it

- use as a general guide
- use as a starting point for lessons, instructional units and strategies
- provide information for parents

These sample responses reflect the work of experienced teachers--those who have already had considerable experience in the planning process. It is unclear how teachers new to the profession are using the Business Education IRPs and how valuable they find them. One possible use at the district level is that the PLOs are helpful as a way of building curricular consistency across the school district.

The generalized results from surveying teachers on specific aspects of the Business and Economics IRPs are itemized in the bullets that follow:

- a solid majority of teachers are comfortable with the level of specificity for learning outcomes but, overall, there is strong support for increasing the level of specificity in the suggested instructional and assessment strategies
- there is support for the current number of learning outcomes being about right
- teachers would like to have additional alternatives for both instructional and assessment strategies
- a significant number of respondents would like more content that is effective in guiding the planning process
- a majority of teachers use these learning outcomes for yearly or unit planning for instruction or both instruction and assessment, as well as unit planning for assessment
- a majority of teachers use the assessment strategies to assist them in yearly planning for both instruction and assessment
- almost all of the respondents indicated they used the IRP content at least some of the time to help in the planning process
- there is an indication of total agreement that the content of the IRP is grade appropriate
- teachers are split as to the question of IRP specificity—half wanting more detail and half wishing to retain a level of generality
- teachers are split on the question of adding additional concepts to the learning outcomes—slightly fewer than half of the respondents supporting more concepts
- there is general satisfaction with the content of recommended learning resources (Note: the ministry release of the questionnaire preceded the publication of the grade collection for business education and economics)
- a slight majority of teachers feel there are sufficient ministry-recommended learning resources (above note applies)
- a number of teachers are frustrated at the real or perceived inadequate funding for learning resources

Given a wide spectrum of teacher need, it is not surprising that some teachers prefer considerable guidance in using the IRPs. Up to now, the ministry has included a minimum level of implementation support for the PLOs by providing examples and samples of instructional and assessment strategies, and learning resources identified as part of grade collections. In addition, through each Appendix D, some planning assistance for a given theme or 'unit' is provided by showing the relationships among a small cluster of learning outcomes, instructional strategies, assessment strategies and student-based criterion referenced evaluation techniques. It may be that there is a middle ground where the ministry can more effectively support classroom implementation of the IRPs, where the IRPs can better assist teachers in the planning process without the ministry doing the planning for teachers (telling teachers how to teach).

Many questionnaire respondents spoke for greater specificity in the IRP, not just at the level of learning outcomes. Sometimes it is a request for more detail in helping teachers get started with planning; sometimes greater specificity means that teachers need greater clarity and understanding of what is intended by the outcomes or examples presented. Perhaps a few well-constructed visuals would be helpful in assisting teachers in their utilization of the IRP. Occasionally, it appears to teachers outside the major urban areas that the IRP is written for those in the urban regions. Greater attention to the needs of those in smaller communities is urged.

Based upon a range of teacher comment, the ministry should consider bridging the information provided in the IRP with the teacher planning process. The current gap contributes to the perceived lack of utility of the IRP for some teachers. Inexperienced teachers apparently need more guidance on what the IRP intends for learning (PLOs), instruction (suggested instructional strategies), and classroom assessment (suggested assessment strategies). The ministry should also give serious consideration to providing sample performance standards that link to one or more learning outcomes.

Nearly one half of the respondents (26/57) replied to the question about the desirability of performance standards. Nearly half of those teachers who responded support the inclusion of sample standards linked to learning outcome clusters. This aligns with the way in which many teachers implement a curriculum—by developing units, themes, projects that support several learning outcomes through a series of linked activities. Of those who responded, 40% indicated a preference for standards attached to individual learning outcomes. Only 15% favoured standards matched against curriculum organizers. A few respondents approved of performance standards and either wanted them developed at more than one level or were comfortable with them being developed at different levels.

In addition to this assistance, teachers proposed that the ministry provide frameworks or models for organizing the entire content of the curriculum or course and, also, lesson plans, handouts, project information and overhead transparencies. Teachers have indicated that the detail offered as Suggested Instructional Strategies is so little as to not be useful. As for Suggested Assessment Strategies, the most frequent criticism was directed toward the stereotypic nature of the examples. While some teachers indicated that the IRP assessment content facilitated the setting of criteria and checking of consistency, they would like to see greater diversity and detail in the examples.

Appendices

Appendix A

U.S. Business Education Standards Project

Appendix B

Employability Skills 2000+

Appendix C

2001 Business and Economics Teacher Questionnaire

Appendix D

Sample Comments by Course Cluster

Accounting 11/12; Financial Accounting 12

- need to keep Accounting 11 as a mathematics credit
- more financial support required in order to utilize newly recommended resources
- need for free resources

Business Computer Applications 11; Business Information Management 12; Data Management 12

- need to identify software and examples of additional current software options
- need more specific learning outcomes directed to software use
- include more Web-based instruction and include Web site development
- learning outcomes need to be more measurable
- learning resources dated and too broad or they are too narrow and specific to commercial programs; some resources lack sufficient exercises
- need a text that supports all or most of the learning outcomes
- need resources that support ergonomics, Web site development, spreadsheet and data base applications
- too much on desktop publishing and communications
- need more choice of resources; good ones being used that are not recommended
- more financial support required to purchase new resources
- need wpm performance standard for senior courses
- need more on PERT/GANTT charts and surveying software; records management

Economics 12

- learning outcomes seem limited/general
more attention to issues
- better balance between technical and philosophical
- suggestions for projects
- resources are either too simple or too difficult
- need a better Canadian text
- need Canadian videos
curriculum organizers too limited
- consider new organizers such as: international trade; distribution, consumption & exchange; business ownership; entrepreneurship; e-business
- need for suggested course outlines to follow more specific units of study—models??

Entrepreneurship 12

- need more specific instructional strategies
- suggestions for projects
- instructional strategies are too general; they need to be more specific and detailed

- a number of current resources are not ministry authorized

Management Innovation 12

- learning resources somewhat outdated

Marketing 11/12

- need for greater specificity in the learning outcomes
- more computer and Internet marketing in Marketing 12
- suggested assessment strategies require a significant amount of time to organize and that's usually not available to teachers
- language level in marketing resources is difficult for ESL students; greater attention to ESL needs
- learning resources need to reflect greater use of the computer
- marketing resources require more current, topical, controversial and effective material
greater choice of texts
- videos either get outdated quickly or districts cannot afford them

Tourism 11/12 (not currently part of IRP)

- need for recommended resources