

Authority Conflict in Relation to the Job Satisfaction of Ontario CAAT's Instructors

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the more interesting findings of a study on "The Concept and the Determinants of Job Satisfaction". The study's sample population was the full-time Community College Instructors in Ontario. The paper focuses on the relative contribution of individual and organizational factors to instructors' job satisfaction, with special emphasis on the apparent presence in the colleges of an "authority conflict syndrome". Policy recommendations to improve the prevailing situation are suggested.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article aborde quelques-unes des conclusions les plus intéressantes d'une étude intitulée "The Concept and the Determinants of Job Satisfaction". La population étudiée est celle des professeurs à plein temps des collèges communautaires de l'Ontario. L'article examine plus particulièrement l'incidence relative des facteurs individuels et organisationnels sur la satisfaction professionnelle éprouvée par les professeurs, de même que l'apparente situation de conflit d'autorité qui règne dans les collèges. L'auteur suggère des moyens pour améliorer cette situation.

The study which this paper originated from purported to investigate a widely researched topic, job satisfaction, in a rather new work setting: the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT). According to my search, it constituted the first job satisfaction study of any of the province's community college systems in Canada.

After a brief presentation of the methodological considerations of the original study¹, so as to give the reader the proper context against which findings can be interpreted, the

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focus of this paper is threefold: 1) to share with you the main findings of the original study concerning the identification of individual and organizational factors which have made the greatest contribution to Ontario full-time Community College teachers*; 2) to substantiate the existence in the CAAT of an "authority conflict" syndrome; and 3) to offer some policy recommendations derived from my analysis of the data.

METHODOLOGY AND RELATED INFORMATION

Before presenting the results of my findings as such, a short description of various methodological considerations is in order.

Rationale for Choosing Ontario's CAAT

The choice of the Ontario CAAT as institutions where the study would be conducted was appealing to me for the following reasons: 1) The interest of any researcher in the field of higher education in general and his intention to learn more about the non-university sector; 2) little research had been done in the CAAT although they had been established for seven years when this study was undertaken; 3) pertinence of the research topic, job satisfaction, to the Colleges; and 4) accessibility to the colleges, both in terms of willingness and open-mindedness of personnel to participate in the study, and in terms of geographical location.

The Sample

The population under study consists of the full-time teaching faculty members of the Ontario CAAT. At first, a random sample of all full-time instructors of the entire CAAT network was contemplated. Such an ideal sample, however, proved impossible. There was a lack of coordinated support from both the Applied Arts and Technology Branch of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (representing the Ontario government, the employer) and the Civil Service Association of Ontario (representing the great majority of Ontario College teachers, the employees).

Another sampling alternative, the case-study approach – which might have favoured a more in-depth analysis of faculty members' job attitudes in one particular college – was also rejected because, as much as possible, the basic intention of the study to generalize findings would be applicable to all Ontario Community College Teachers.

The compromise sample which proved successful had full-time faculty members as our unit of analysis but College institutions as our sampling unit. It consisted of a stratified sample of several Community Colleges, selected randomly according to the type and origin of the College and the size of its geographical location. While the latter criterion refers to the urban-rural split, the former makes reference to whether the institution had evolved from a vocational center, an Institute of Technology, or whether it was a brand new college. The rationale was that a survey of full-time instructors of institutions, selected according to these criteria, would satisfy the assumption of generalizability of the results of the analysis from data sample to the full-time College Teacher population.

From institutions which met the above criteria, cooperation on the survey was received. Included were both College administration and teachers' representatives at each of the

* The words teachers, instructors and faculty members are used interchangeably in this paper.

following institutions: Humber College, St. Clair College and Confederation College. They thereby became the three institutions that constituted the sample for this study. The field work was carried out during the months of April, May and June in 1974.

In all, as shown in Table 1, 338 faculty members out of 695 – forty-nine per cent of

TABLE 1

Rate of Response from the Three Sampled Institutions

	Total N of Full-Time Instructors	N of Full-Time Instructors Expected to be Reached ⁴	Questionnaires Completed	Completed/Expected
Number Coll.	382 ¹	344	99	28.78
St. Clair Coll.	246 ²	221	147	66.52
Confederation College	144 ³	130	92	70.77
TOTAL	772	695	338 ⁵	48.63

1. Figures obtained from the Registrar's office, as of March 1974.
2. Figures obtained from the Director of Personnel's office, as of January 1974.
3. Figures obtained from the Registrar's office, as of April 1974.
4. According to college administration and field workers, these figures should be regarded as a more realistic target number of teaching masters to be found in those campuses at this point in time. To determine the most realistic figure of people which could be expected to be reached at any one time in any college of this kind, especially at this time of the year, a figure reduced by 10 per cent of the official total number of faculty was deemed conservative. Reasons for this relate to the survey's being conducted at the end of the term, and to the academic term's being over. This meant that some faculty might have been either out-of-town on study leave, conference, or on holidays, or had left the College for termination of their contract. Still, other faculty members were absent because of illness while some were just absent without justification.
5. Five questionnaires (four from Humber and one from Confederation) which reached the researcher after coding was completed, were not included in the analysis.

those who could be expected to be reached during the time that the field work took place – completed the survey questionnaire. It was subsequently coded and processed through computers for analysis.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Age Distribution (A) and Academic Qualifications (B) of Ontario CAAT's Teachers from Two Surveys: The System Research Group Study (1972) and our Own Survey (1974)

(percentage)

A. Age Distribution		
	S.R.G. Survey (1972)	Present Survey (1974)
Under 25	1.5	2.1
25-35	42.0	44.4
36-45	30.4	30.7
46-55	18.5	15.3
56-65	7.4	4.5
Over 65	0.4	0.3
Missing observations:	0.0	3.3
TOTAL	100.2	100.0
B. Academic Qualifications		
Doctorate	1.8	2.4
Masters	17.7	18.7
Honours	19.5	23.7
Pass Bachelor	30.8	28.7
Certificate, CAAT Diploma/Equivalent, Craft Paper	30.7	21.3
Missing observations:	0.0	5.3
TOTAL	100.5	100.1

Representativeness of the Sample to the Total CAAT Teacher Population

The representativeness of the current data to the total CAAT's teacher population has been assessed through a comparison of percentage differences on selected individual characteristics found in this survey, compared with the percentages of the teachers' population found by the System Research Group Study.² Limitations in comparing our data with those of the System Research Group study are due to the lack of other data in the form needed and pertaining to the CAAT faculty as a whole; this includes inquiries to the statistics information office of the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

Having this as one form of external check on the validity of representation of data used in the present study, the sample can be said to be representative of the total CAAT teaching population.³ Thus, a cursory examination of Table 2 shows that basically the only differences which exist are that teachers from our own survey tend to be slightly younger and slightly better qualified. These differences probably are due to the fact that the System Research Group survey was conducted in the Spring and Summer of 1971, while the present poll was taken in the Spring of 1974.

A Short Profile of this Study's Population

The following profile of the study population can be made:

- a. Sixty-four percent of college teachers are male:
- b. The college teacher population is quite young, with 64.7% being thirty-nine years of age or less;
- c. It is relatively well-qualified, with 21.1% of them holding master's degrees or more;
- d. When holders of general and honours' bachelor degree are added to this percentage, the new figure is 61.9%;
- e. Seventy percent are Canadian-born;
- f. In terms of years of working experience in the same college as of May-June 1974, approximately 13% report having been in the college for the last two to six years;
- g. The percentage of those who had been in the college for one year or less was 22%;
- h. The great majority of them are at the full teaching master's level, the highest academic rank;
- i. Finally, 53% of them receive a salary in the range of \$12,000 to \$16,000.
(The next category with the greatest number of college teachers is in the \$16,000 to \$18,000 bracket (19.4%).)

The Research Instrument

The research instrument designed for the study consisted of a structured questionnaire, primarily designed to collect information and explore personal, institutional and immediate contextual factors which affect job satisfaction among Ontario College Teachers. The eight page final version of the questionnaire contained five specific parts.

Definitions of the Variables used in this Paper

In this study, a unidimensional approach to JOB SATISFACTION prevails. The dependent variable is the level of job satisfaction perceived by the Ontario Community College instructors as related to the following question pertaining to their job as a college teacher in general: "How satisfied are you with your job?" Thus the work setting is considered in

a global perspective without discrimination to any of the work activities or conditions in particular. College instructors' job satisfaction was gathered on a seven-point verbal scale, ranging from extremely dissatisfied (1) to extremely satisfied (7).

HAPPINESS WITH LIFE IN GENERAL is a two-item scale, which combines answers to the two following questions: "Taking all things together, how would you say things are these days – would you say that you're very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?" and "In general, how satisfying do you find the way you're spending your life these days? Would you call it completely satisfying, pretty satisfying, or not very satisfying?" Its real meaning is to evaluate the relevance of the personality traits of an individual outside his job.

Information concerning organizational factors – such as *OPEN RELATIONS BETWEEN FACULTY-DIVISION ADMINISTRATION; OPEN RELATIONS AMONG TEACHING STAFF; RESPONSIBILITY OVER OWN WORK; BOARD MEMBER AND LOCAL COMMUNITY INFLUENCE ON THE LIFE OF THE COLLEGE; PHYSICAL WORKING CONDITIONS*; and others of the same type – were derived from an indication of the extent to which faculty members perceived the characteristic as being actually present in the College. Answers were collected on a seven-point verbal scale ranging from "virtually none" (1) to "a great deal" (7). *COLLEGE LEADERSHIP* was the only variable which was derived differently, through a typology of democratic, laissez-faire and authoritarian leadership.

Techniques of Analyses

The size of zero-order correlations, reinforced by results from commonality analysis which is a variant of multiple regression analysis, are used to explore the relative importance of individual and organizational factors on College instructors' job satisfaction (Table 3).

POSITION OF THE EXISTENCE OF AN "AUTHORITY CONFLICT" SYNDROME IN ONTARIO'S CAAT

A priori theoretical rationale and intuitive judgment had brought us to expect a rather high percentage of dissatisfaction among College teachers. The field work, which included dozens of formal and informal meetings with College teachers and personnel officers, further reinforced this position. Ultimately, faculty members' concerns over concrete issues – such as salary, promotions, lack of collegiality, work recognition, rationality of administrative decisions in terms of personnel, curriculum, programmes, policy orientations, etc. – were conceived of as evolving from a lack of concordance between the need structure of the individual teacher and both the administrative structure of the college institution and the College System as a whole.⁴

"Authority conflict" or "authority syndrome" in relation to job satisfaction, – those factors which were found of greater potential to College instructors' job satisfaction – originate from administrative or authority relations in the CAAT; and incumbents of higher administrative or authority positions do not seem to be able to satisfy instructors' needs in those specific areas.

Figure 1 attempts to show that the need structure of individual faculty members – and likely of the institutions as well – is best perceived by those at the bottom scale in the administrative structure. However, the authority structure of the CAAT provides for a

TABLE 3

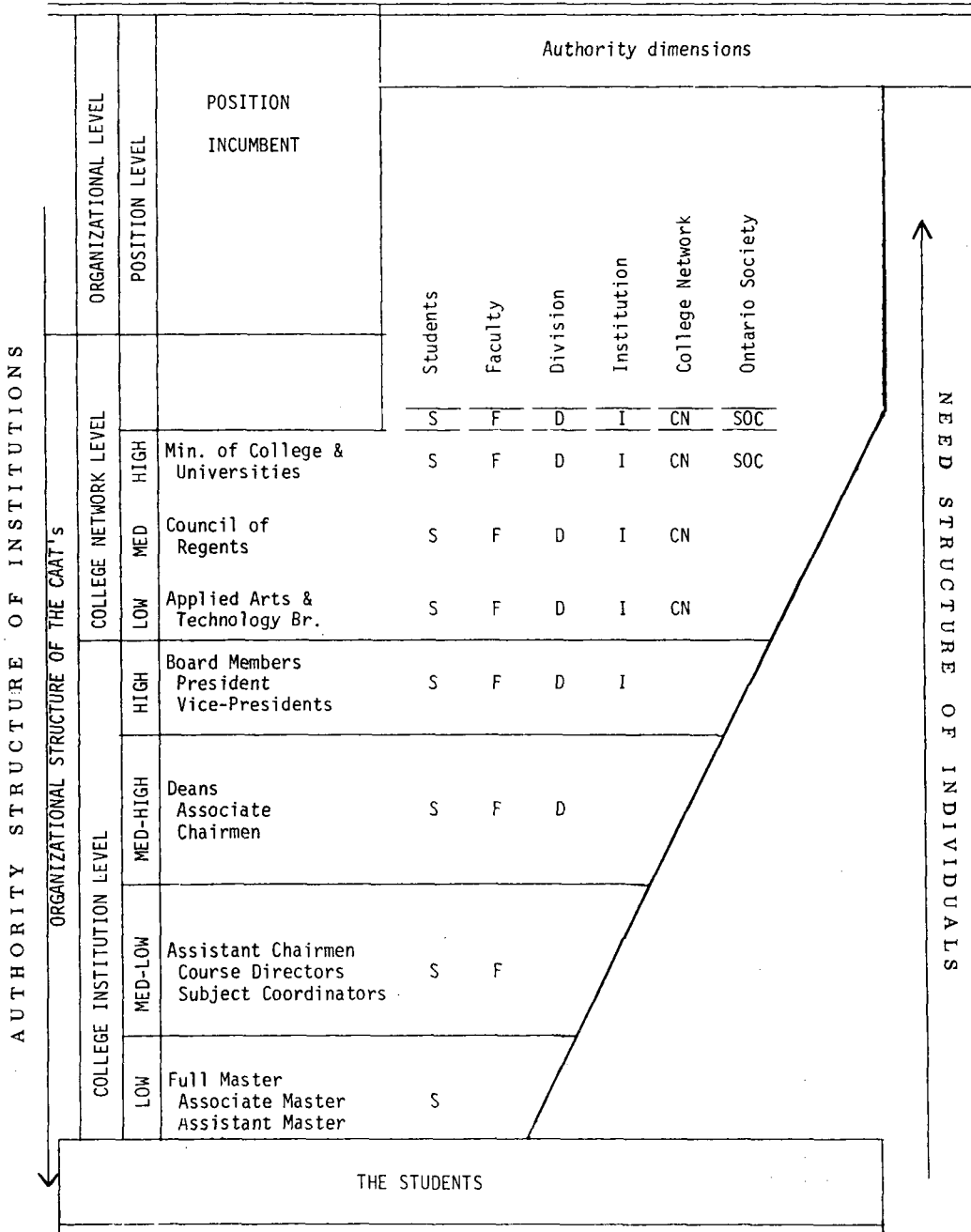
Level of Contribution of Independent Factors on Instructors' Job Satisfaction

Ho #	Variable Name	Nature of the Variable ¹	r	R ²	e	E ²	Increment due to non-linearity	Var. meeting criterion test
<u>Basic-Need Dispositions of the Individual</u>								
H1	Need for achievement	C	-.0502	.0025		.1184		
H2	Need for affiliation	C	-.0371	.0013				
H3	Happiness with life in general	C	.3422	.1171		.1184	.0013	*
<u>Abscribed Individual Attributes</u>								
H4	Sex	N			.0155	.0025		
H5	Academic rank	N			-.1044	.0108		*
H6	Country of origin	N			.1375	.0189		*
H7	Number of years at this College	C	-.1421	.0202		.0252	.0050	*
<u>Structural Attributes of Work Envt.</u>								
H8	Institutional Salary	C	-.1177	.0138		.0384	.0246	*
H9	Physical working conditions	C	.2144	.0460		.0465	.0005	*
H10	Board influence on College life	C	.0478	.0023				
H11	Local community infl. on College life	C	.2054	.0422		.0567	.0145	*
<u>Organizational Attributes of the Work Envt.</u>								
H12	Responsibility over own work	C	.1739	.0302		.0408	.0106	*
H13	Type of College leadership	C	.2576	.0663		.0712	.0049	*
H14	Open relations among teaching staff	C	.1706	.0291		.0352	.0061	*
H15	Open relations betw. faculty-div.admin.	C	.2813	.0791		.0947	.0156	*

¹C means continuous; n for nominal variable.

* In the study, the contribution of an independent factor was considered significant if it achieved a zero-order correlation equal to or greater than .10.

FIGURE 1
A Partial Typology of Organizational and Authority Structures of the CAAT's



reverse situation: the higher the level at which a decision is taken, the further removed from the needs of faculty and students. Therefore the chance of judicious decisions capable of satisfying these needs are diminished.

Figure 1 graphically illustrates this: faculty members who are relied upon more heavily by the whole organizational responsibility to actually instruct and educate students – and who, thereby, know better students' needs as well as their own needs to do an efficient job – have less scope of authority. On the contrary, the authority structure gives College Board Members, those most highly removed from day to day activities of the College, immense power and control over all spheres of college activities.

Job Satisfaction Level

Looking at Table 4, it can be seen that on the whole, 73.0% of respondents' appreciation of their job is located in values 5, 6 and 7 (i.e., at the satisfaction end of the continuum), while 15.4% of respondents of the entire sample have expressed varying degrees of

TABLE 4

Frequency Distribution of College Teachers' Satisfaction
with their Job in General (V165):
"How Satisfied are you with your Job?"

Value Labels	Value	Absolute Frequency (N)	Relative Frequency (%)	Cumulative Relative Frequency (%)
Extremely Dissatisfied	1.00	6	1.8	1.8
Very Dissatisfied	2.00	7	2.1	3.8
Dissatisfied	3.00	39	11.5	15.4
Neutral	4.00	37	10.9	26.3
Satisfied	5.00	136	40.2	66.6
Very Satisfied	6.00	83	24.6	91.1
Extremely Satisfied	7.00	30	8.9	100.0
	TOTAL:	338	100.0	100.0

Mean = 4.948 Std. Error = 0.070 Median = 4.960 Skewness = 0.721

Mode = 5.000 Std. Deviation = 1.283 Variance = 1.645

Kurtosis = 0.530

dissatisfaction with their jobs. These figures thus, in appearance, contradicts the above postulated position of the existence of widespread dissatisfaction among full-time College instructors.

While Table 4 might give apparent grounds of optimism with regard to the overall well-being of Ontario College instructors, theoretical arguments and further empirical analysis of the data have demonstrated the validity of the above stated postulate.

Theoretical arguments which may be used to explain the reported "low level" of job dissatisfaction among College teachers are numerous. They go from myopic methodology and resignation of the worker to his fate, to various accommodative mechanisms for coping with professional-bureaucratic tension. Included are early socialization and prior knowledge of the bureaucratic structure prevailing in the work setting. A greater comprehension of this problem awaits further studies.

Main evidence however comes from examination of the frequency distribution of individual and organizational factors which correlate highest on job satisfaction.

A first indication of this was that the best single predictor of College instructors' job satisfaction was found to be a basic personality trait of the individual, the degree of HAPPINESS WITH LIFE IN GENERAL, i.e. in all other life spheres or activities other than work ($r = .34$). While this finding might be interpreted as simply indicating the primacy of individual variables on workers' job satisfaction, it also can be viewed as an expression of failure on the part of College authorities to provide a work environment capable of satisfying job-related needs of their teaching personnel.

The above interpretation of the high degree of relationship between happiness with life in general and job satisfaction appears likely to be the correct interpretation. Such an interpretation is supported when it is found that the second and third best single indicators of college instructors' attitude toward their jobs are *OPEN RELATIONS BETWEEN FACULTY-DIVISION ADMINISTRATION* ($r = .28$) and the *TYPE OF LEADERSHIP* ($r = .26$) provided by the senior officials of the College. They represent vertical lines of authority prevailing at the College – one at the division level, the other at the institutional level. Similarity and complementarity of these two variables were assessed. It was found that both their unique and common effects were strong contributors to job satisfaction, under the most stringent control situation in the thesis.

Although these variables were perceived by faculty members as significantly related to their job satisfaction, there were still 47.2% of all respondents who described the perceived amount of open relations existing between them and the division administration in "virtually none" to "a moderate amount" (i.e., they fall into the first four categories of a seven-point scale going from virtually none (1) to "a great deal" (7); see Table 5).

Similarly, while a strong relationship between democratic leadership and job satisfaction indicates preference by teachers for a democratic type of leadership, they described the current leadership as authoritarian (47.0%) and as laissez-faire (27.8%); fewer (25.1%) noted them as democratic.

Related to the type of College leadership, it might be of interest to note that exactly 63.0% of respondents reported having between "virtually no" influence and "a little amount" of influence *IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS* of the Colleges (which includes only the first three values of a seven-point scale). With regard to the perceived amount of *PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS* of the College,

TABLE 5
Frequency Distribution of Responses
By Open Relations Between
Faculty-Division Administration

Amount Perceived by Instructors	Frequency	Percentage
Virtually none	17	5.3
Very little	40	12.6
Little	32	10.1
A moderate amount	61	19.2
A lot	60	18.8
Quite a lot	67	21.1
A great deal	41	12.9
TOTAL	318	100.0

Missing observations: 20

Mean: 4.483

Std. Deviation: 1.747

61.1% noted little or no participation. These figures, and others found in the study, seem to indicate the existence of a general lack of communication or understanding between teaching masters and College administrators at both the division and college levels.⁵ *These issues demand immediate and careful attention from provincial authorities – the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Council of Regents, in particular.*

Unfortunately, our data also seem to suggest that central authorities might be well advised not to seek help from *COLLEGE BOARDS* in this critical examination of administrative behaviour in Colleges. For one reason, it must be admitted that they are, at least partially, responsible for the development of this kind of situation. Factually, the data showed that College instructors judged them as having “a great deal” of *INFLUENCE ON THE LIFE OF THE COLLEGE*. It is interesting to note, however, that Board influence did not correlate significantly with instructors’ job satisfaction ($r = .04$). This seems to suggest that, whatever College Boards do, it will affect instructors’ job satisfaction only minimally.

While College Board influence was perceived as a non-significant source of job satisfaction among instructors, the *INFLUENCE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY* was revealed as a major source of job satisfaction ($r = .21$). However, the influence of the local community on the life of the College was perceived as slightly lower than that of College Boards.

Upon examination of the last two points, it appears that faculty members do not perceive College Boards as adequate representatives of the local community. By definition, the Colleges are to serve the needs and interests of the local community and College Boards are the official representatives of the community. It follows therefore that if the latter are not perceived as adequate representatives of the community by the majority of those who teach at the College, chances that the Colleges meet the needs of the local community are greatly diminished.

One side effect of greater participation of the local community in the life of the College, might also be translated in the erection of some type of more tangible reward-structure for College teachers – such as sabbatical leave, financial or other type of reward for good teaching – which seems to be unexistent or at least rather inoperative in the present set-up.

Of considerable importance – though of less urgency related to the items referred above – are the need to maintain the good quality of the physical plants, equipment and internal services of the Colleges; to favour open relations among teaching staff; and to continue leaving a considerable amount of responsibility to teachers over their own work activity. All these factors were found significant correlates of job satisfaction as well as being discernably present in the Colleges.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Assuming College instructors' job satisfaction as the goal to be achieved in the Ontario CAAT, policy recommendations derived from this study, can be summarized as follows:

1. Immediate and careful attention should be given to democratizing the administrative leadership of the Colleges, at both the College and division levels.
2. The quality and quantity of each community's input into the life of the College should be increased.
3. Continued effort should be made to provide good physical working facilities; to favour open relations between teaching personnel; and finally, to maintain the amount of responsibility all teachers have over their own work activity.

Notes

1. Desroches, Jocelyn (1975), *The Concept and Determinants of Job Satisfaction: An Exploratory Study in the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto.
2. System Research Group Inc., (1972), *The Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology*, Toronto: Queen's Printer.
3. Further assurance of the validity of representativeness of our sample to the total CAAT teachers, and confirmation of the universality of findings obtained through the survey, and presented in this paper, were offered to the author also by senior teachers-administrators from Algonquin and Fanshawe

Colleges. These comments were made in the discussion period following oral presentation of this paper to the Ontario Educational Research Council's annual meeting, December 3, 1976.

4. Substantiation of this rationale can be found in chapter six of the original study (Desroches, 1975).

5. Evidence supporting this finding can be found in Arthur Porter's 1974 analysis of Conestoga College, *A Report of An Inquiry Into the Operation of Conestoga College of Applied Arts and Technology*. Equally supportive is McCormack Smyth's socio-political analysis of the origin and the genesis of the Ontario CAAT network. See McCormack Smyth, D., (1970), *Some Aspects of the Development of Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology*. Unpublished M. Phil. thesis, The University of Toronto.