

Book Reviews/Comptes Rendus

Robert M. Pike, Naomi E.S. McIntosh, Urban Dahllöf, *Innovation in Access to Higher Education*. New York, International Council for Educational Development, 1978. 322 pp.

Since inevitably, it would seem, universities will come to serve a much expanded clientele of part-time adult learners, this introduction to these unconventional learners and how they are – and might be – served is both timely and useful. Funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, this book presents three essays which together picture the contrasting efforts of Ontario, England and Wales, and Sweden (a diverse trio, to be sure) to broaden access to higher education.

Essentially, what Professor Pike offers is an analysis of the universities' somewhat reluctant accommodation to adult part-time learners, prefaced by a review of Ontario's educational structure and followed by an account of that Province's foray into teaching at a distance.

Part-time studies for credit have a long history in Ontario. As early as 1889, Queen's University made it possible for non-resident learners to plod along towards a degree. Yet, despite the likelihood that their present numbers are only a vanguard of larger forces to come, part-time students remain second-class citizens on the campus. The range and quality of learning opportunities afforded them does not match those available to full-time students; they do not have an effective academic advocate; institutional commitment to meeting their needs is lukewarm; and the cost to these students pursuing an education in this fashion is intimidating.

Sociologist Pike's study documents a substantial bias favouring the upper and upper-middle classes among high school leavers enrolled in full-time university programs and, in addition, the relatively low participation rate of women. And because between the Province's 18 universities and its 22 colleges of applied art and technology there is no transfer system, there is created an unnatural academic barrier characterized by prejudice as to "more noble" and "less noble" categories of post-secondary education.

What the author concludes is that part-time undergraduate studies in Ontario display few examples of strikingly new teaching-learning modes. Yet, in the interests of survival, universities must surely seek out new clienteles of learners (who will be ethnically and intellectually more diversified than in the past) and having done that, must reshape the content and delivery of instruction the better to fit this distinctly different student body.

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Professor McIntosh of the Open University provides a clear, well-organized statement of the nature and causes of the post-war expansion of higher education

in her country which details how wider access to institutions has affected – and been affected by government policy. Which is no simple task considering the variety of post-secondary institutions in England and Wales, differences in the status which each enjoys, the newly-created institutions, and the merger of others.

The core of her paper is its section, “Access For Whom?” The increase in the numbers entering higher education is obvious. What is not so obvious are answers to questions such as these: Has access been increased for all? Does “more” mean “different” . . . or does it mean more of the same? Are the same types of people as before benefiting proportionately or has there been a real change in the kinds of people receiving higher education? Clear answers are hard come by partly because the notion of “equality of educational opportunity” is a slippery one which may depend on ideologies or on the type of society towards which one aims. Alternatively, it may depend on the educability of individuals, a concept which itself is based on beliefs as to whether intelligence is innate and can be measured at puberty, and whether intelligence is influenced by “private environment” out of which one comes, and whether intelligence is influenced by both public and private environments.

A useful component of this (which supports Pike’s conclusions) is a sketch of the formidable barriers to access. There is, for example, the barrier of social class and that of entrance qualifications required. Another is the type of secondary school from which the individual has come and the kinds of subject specialties which the intending student presents for admission. And as in Canada, there are financial barriers and barriers of sex and barriers of age.

Universities have not been successful in dealing with these barriers or, indeed, have they been able to develop the part-time courses which have proved to be attractive to a significant number of students. The reason why – and here McIntosh echoes Pike – is that universities “have been more concerned to bend mature students to their existing structure and courses than to change the form of the courses to meet the needs of the students.” Should academic inertia rooted in the comfort of the *status quo* prevail, this unconventional student body may continue to find its way hard.

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Different in both content and format is the article by Urban Dahllöf which is comprised of two case studies; one recounts the strategies used to broaden enrolment in Swedish higher education while the other suggests the policies intended to guide them.

In Sweden, external studies is the key to widening access to higher education. The principal device employed is the “university study circle.” Organized throughout the country under a variety of auspices and with different sources of instruction, they may focus on the study of single subjects or of groups of subjects. In addition, since 1972 Sweden has experimented with distance education.

But as to whether these alternative approaches compete with or supplement each other, or whether the students they attract are of different kind than those

who normally inhabit the campus or how well these learners respond to the techniques of distance education, little evidence is at hand.

The nub of the second case study is a summary of the basic principles underlying this Swedish experimentation: as, for example, "to open up new ways for adult students, thereby reducing the generation gap in education"; and "to consider real rather than formal competence" in selecting the student body; "to promote social equality . . . a balanced structure of student groups and different professional groups in society." But so briefly reported as they are, they leave the reader uncertain as to what concrete values are intended to be added to society by these innovatory excursions.

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Regrettably, this book is flawed by production bangles: typographical errors; duplicate successive section headings; elaborations which fail to materialize where promised. Each of the three articles which comprise the contents of this book is the product of a team of collaborators. Yet in the book's *Foreword*, the name of Mario Creet who worked with Professor Pike is ignored as are the names of those associated with Professor McIntosh: Alan Woodley and Moira Griffiths. Quite inexcusable is the misspelling of Robert M. Pike's name on the book's cover.

Happily, the lucid and perceptive account of the contributors makes up for the blunders of the publisher. It is a book which deserves to be read — and carefully so — by all engaged in post-secondary education in government or on the campus and particularly by those administrators responsible for shaping their institutions so that they might more effectively serve a changing clientele.

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Charles M. Johnston, *McMaster University: Volume 1, The Toronto Years*, published for McMaster University by the University of Toronto Press, 1976, xvi and 295 pp., \$15.00; *Volume 2, The Early Years in Hamilton, 1930-1957*, 1981, xvi and 330 pp., \$25.00

McMaster University must count itself fortunate that its tale has been told by a historian of the skill and honesty of Charles M. Johnston. Conversely, Dr. Johnston must count himself fortunate that he was given scope to write two solid three-hundred page volumes on the comparatively short life, a mere seventy years, of a university which in 1957 still registered only some one thousand students.

Dr. Johnston has taken full advantage of his happy situation. He was able to investigate in depth the abundant materials with which the McMaster records have provided him. He sketches in the preliminary efforts in Montreal and Woodstock, gives more detailed treatment to the founding and fortunes of