Sur le plan technique, l'ouvrage présente quelques faiblesses. Ainsi, les articles auraient pu être regroupés par thèmes ou, du moins, présentés selon un ordre logique ou didactique, plutôt que selon l'ordre alphabétique de leurs auteurs. De même, il y a quelques oublis dans les références et les bibliographies et, ici et là, quelques coquilles.

Dans l'ensemble, toutefois, *L'éducation en prison* est un ouvrage de premier plan. Par la variété des sujets qu'il aborde, il est susceptible d'intéresser toutes les personnes qui oeuvrent auprès de détenus ou d'ex-détenus. Par la richesse et la profondeur du débat philosophique qu'il présente, il constitue un ouvrage-clé dans la littérature sur le milieu carcéral et sur sa fonction éducatrice:

> "(. . .) l'éducation est ce que l'on peut offrir de mieux aux détenus, à condition qu'elle soit bien fondée sur une vision profonde de Dieu, de l'homme, de la nature et de la société, sur une vision de l'homme en tant que projet à construire et de la vie humaine en tant que possibilité créatrice inépuisable" (p. 13).

C'est précisément à cette conception de l'éducation que ce livre cherche à nous amener.

Mario Ferland
Directeur général adjoint du premier cycle
Université Laval

Wilson, John D. *Student learning in higher education.* New York: Halsted Press, 1981.

Those of us working in the field of higher education, dealing with finance, arbitration, and resource allocation, sometimes lose consciousness of the fact that our purpose is the learning and development of our students. This book focuses on the student and student perspectives of higher education. The most important effect of Wilson's book is the insight provided into what students bring into the learning situation and what their expectations are. To North Americans, the style of the book may be perturbing, not just because of language usage differences (professors are called "staff"; residences are called "halls"; APA style is not used), but because instead of a linear, cause and effect format, the author's style is to pinpoint issues and then categorize into types. Most North American research literature talks about factors affecting results, and the relative amount of variance ascribed to different factors: analysis of variance and regression analysis shape our expectations of result reporting in education. Wilson, on the other hand, takes us into the personal and phenomenological world of the student.

At the beginning of the book, some untested legends are stated: that there are "different conceptions of a subject matter although all receive the same class of

degree"; or the "significance of learning may not dawn until a course is completed, and even perhaps many years later." These legends are challenged by recent research which suggests that there is a core of stable knowledge in any subject matter, and that the meaning or relevance of what is learned during a course and after it is completed correlates significantly. Perhaps the most surprising statement in the introduction is that "students are relatively homogeneous with regard to ability." That certainly isn't the perspective in North America. The incongruity increases as the book progresses, for while Wilson maintains that students are homogeneous with regard to ability, he then analyzes students in terms of their categorically different learning styles and strategies. Research here has shown far greater and clearer differences among students in ability than in style or personality.

Wilson's analysis of student perspectives is novel and worth perusing. He is insightful about students' lack of respect for teaching because they see learning as *their* operation, not their professors', and therefore do not ascribe cause to them. He is also perceptive about the hidden curriculum: the quest for what is really important; the effect of workload pressures; and the practice of "situational adjustment" to the academic context, particularly as it concerns what and how learning will be assessed. He makes a curious statement of surprise that there has been no follow-up study of how much is learned 10, 20, or 30 years after graduation. A knowledgeable educational researcher would avoid such a statement because the measurement is extremely difficult and probably futile. First, all postgraduate learning experiences would have to be accounted for to control for falsely positive results and, second, the state of the art is such that "the substantial body of factual knowledge in a course" that would have to be measured has not yet been codified. First attempts to delineate that knowledge have just begun.

The book provides us with extensive descriptions of Perry's scheme of intellectual and ethical development, and of Heath's dimensional model of development which consists of a grid of psychological dimensions such as cognitive skills and self-concept orthogonal to dimensions of maturity such as allocentrism and autonomy. We are given an interesting image of the "reasonable adventurer" as the ideal student. The author is in deeper water as he attempts to sort different approaches to learning. The main problem with this section of the book is that types or dichotomies are used to explain the learning process. Much attention is paid to studies of depth vs. surface learning, holist and serialist strategies, and field dependence and independence. The author does not appear to realize that he is, at this point, talking about different kinds or levels of ability. He notes that depth vs. surface learning can be seen according to Bloom's taxonomy as different levels, thus suggesting a continuum, but doe not make the association that what, say, the Graduate Record Examination or Miller Analogies Test measures is depth, analytic, or conceptual learning, and it measures it in one dimension. This returns us to the original criticism of this book: that its approach is for the most part in terms of dichotomies and categories when it could use more conceptually sophisticated dimensions and continue to provide us with a

schema for understanding students in higher education. In summary, the book is worth reading for its insights into student perspectives, if not for its approach to the measurement of learning.

Janet Gail Donald
Centre for Teaching and Learning Services
Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling
McGill University

David W. Piper, ed., *Is Higher Education Fair?* Sturminster Newton: The Society for Research into Higher Education; 1981, 194 pp.

This book was produced in association with a conference on 'Biases in Higher Education' organized by the British Society for Research into Higher Education in 1981. Since eight of the nine separately-authored chapters in the book explore evidence of bias in higher education in specific areas of British society, whilst the other chapter is entitled 'Bias is of the Essence', it is clear that the question which forms its title is strongly rhetorical. According to the editor who works at University of London Institute of Education, the initial premise is made that education is a service to the community. Then, the question is asked: which sections of that community are disadvantaged? Different ways of classifying the community are then considered: by social class, region, race, age, sex, able-bodiedness, religion and language. In his words, "how does each of these factors affect the chances of individuals applying for, being accepted in, succeeding in and benefiting from the educational system? Each chapter reviews and interprets the evidence". The evidence naturally tends to be drawn from the British research literature, although all of the substantive chapters except those dealing with age and language, incorporate substantial numbers of research references drawn from other European and North American sources.

The concept of 'bias' in higher education is very slippery to handle... so slippery, in fact, that in this book the task of conceptual clarification is left largely up to the individual authors. Some of them have a go at it, and generally they refer to those 'taken for granted' aspects of the structure and processes of higher education which tends to exclude, or substantially reduce, the educational chances of specific groups of people. However, a few of the authors also write about overt discrimination, notably against women and racial minorities, and others-with or without a clear definition of bias-are not content to concentrate solely upon the field of higher education, but range over primary and secondary schooling as well. For this broader approach there is certainly some justification: universities and colleges are at the top of the educational ladder, and many of the effects of social disadvantage are exhibited in the processes of academic and social selection which occur long before the stage of admission to higher learning.