

Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

Sinclair Goodlad (ed.), *Economies of Scale in Higher Education*. Society for Research into Higher Education. Guildford, England, 1983.

This book is the outcome of a conference held in 1982 under the sponsorship of the Higher Education Foundation and the Department of Education and Science in the U.K. The conference was one in a series arranged by the Foundation to develop an agenda for research, a philosophical position, and proposals for individual and institutional action in the field of higher education.

The various chapters in the book deal with a range of topics on economies of scale in higher education. They cover: the meaning of economies of scale and economic evidence of such economies in higher education; the potential for the application of cost-benefit analysis; the consequences of mergers of educational institutions; nominal and effective size; the effects of size on students; the optimal size of a university; the work of the National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education in the U.K.; and issues and research needed. It would be difficult to conceive of how such a range of topics could be properly addressed in so short a book (99 pages), but the objective of the Foundation was clearly not to provide an in-depth and detailed analysis of each topic. Instead, their aim appears to have been to stimulate debate about economies of scale in higher education, by bringing together persons from different disciplines to outline their different perspectives and conclusions.

This type of approach has its disadvantages. The reader is only exposed to a brief outline of the contribution of researchers in different disciplines to the study of economies of scale, and in some cases only one point of view is discussed. The uninformed reader may therefore not fully appreciate the weaknesses of some of the research results quoted, and he may not be aware that different opinions exist within a given discipline.

The advantage of the approach is that the perspectives of analysts from different disciplines are quite different, and so too are their conclusions. For example, one author argues that costs fall continuously as the size of an institution increases so that it makes sense to have very large institutions; another argues that large institutions have detrimental social and psychological effects on students; a third argues for large institutions with small departments and classes; a fourth suggests that the optimal size of a university lies between 1500 and 4000 students. Thus, the reader is left with the clear impression that existing research provides no unambiguous answers about the size of educational institutions.

The book is short and it can be read fairly easily. Despite its shortcomings, it provides a reasonable description of some of the issues in economies of scale

in higher education, and it is probably a useful addition to the studies already published by the Foundation.

Bill Ahamad
Consultant

Gwendoline Evans Pilkington, *Speaking with One Voice: Universities in Dialogue with Government*. Montreal: McGill University, 1983, 296 pp.

This work provides "an account of the relations of Canadian universities with Federal and Provincial Governments, as reflected in the history of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1911-1981." It derives in part from the history of the AUCC up to 1961 undertaken by Dr. Pilkington for doctoral thesis, and thus is founded on extensive research, both documentary and interview.

The irony of the main title, *Speaking with One Voice*, will be apparent to those familiar with voluntary associations of universities like the AUCC. The problem of securing consensus on major policy issues is difficult enough for the associations in one province (Ontario, Quebec), more so for those which span several provinces (Atlantic, the West), but is particularly taxing at the national level: "...the combined elements of the nation's geography, demography, cultural diversity, regional disparity, and, above all, the constitutional constraints that preclude federal participation in matters of education have always conspired to promote decentralization, provincialism, and parochialism." As with any voluntary interinstitutional organization, the AUCC's member representatives come together with differing personal inclinations (both substantive and strategic), and bearing a variety of institutional views. But they are also frequently caught between pressures from the two levels of government. Evaluation of the effectiveness of such an organization must bear these constraints in mind; the author is very aware of this.

Yet *Speaking with One Voice* is a perfectly apposite title, since it provides a metaphor for the central *raison d'être* of any interinstitutional organization, to be a spokesman for the common interests of its members. Constantly bedevilled by differences, it must pursue the goal of fostering consensus if it is to be effective, or even to survive. Abundant goodwill, readiness to compromise on lesser points for the greater good, and skillful diplomacy are all required.

These themes are well demonstrated through the historical account provided in this work. It is organized effectively by periods which reveal dominant characteristics, characteristics which are primarily determined by the societal and political environment.

The first period (1911 - 1939) was 'germinal', during which the organization was created and developed into an instrument which could be called into play later when the need for it was pressing. The association was not particularly active in relations with government, but its members developed the habit of