

Overall, the book is a little treasure, a reference work that should be on every department's teaching shelf. It deserves a better typeface and proofreading, and it should be revised to use nonsexist language, but the author's style is relaxed and the message is both useful and enjoyable.

Janet G. Donald
McGill University

Ian Lewis. *The Student Experience of Higher Education*. London: Croom Helm Ltd. 1984. 178 pgs.

This book describes several ethnographic studies performed at York University in England in order to obtain a better understanding of the experiences of students. The author explains that less than 30% of the people in England have had direct experience as a university student and therefore British research on the university which has been of a quantitative, questionnaire-based type does not provide information which can be easily understood or correctly interpreted by most people.

To exhibit the richness of detail of the ethnographic approach, five studies are reported, each concerned with a different aspect of student experiences at York University. The first which was a participant-observer study focused on the first few weeks of first-year undergraduate life – certainly a critical period of transition for many students. It highlights the problems of becoming a student and emphasizes the substantial gaps that exist between the perceptions of these students and those of their university.

The second study presents the results of a cooperative effort between a university librarian and the faculty of the history department. The results illustrate how the students perception of the requirements of the course become quite different from the original intent of the faculty.

Characteristics of mature students are investigated in the third study. This study was conducted by a mature student interviewing other mature students. The results of this study are compared with the results of a university sponsored study of faculty perceptions of the problems of mature students. The difference in the results of the two studies are discussed.

The fourth study centers on the perceptions of overseas students. Through a process of informal conversations with a number of overseas students, the researcher who was herself an overseas student, uncovers a major faculty misunderstanding regarding the problems of such students which was not identified in a more conventional study.

The last two chapters discuss the results of these studies. One chapter synthesizes the student perspectives identified in each study. These are then compared with the results obtained from the more traditional psychometric approach and the conclusion is made that the two approaches can lead to quite different results.

The final chapter discusses the implications for higher education in general, and is divided into four parts. The first part examines the immediate consequences of the student perceptions identified in the studies. Lewis, referring to the above studies as well as other studies in England and the United States, suggests that "the respective and misconceived assumptions which lie behind the perceptions of both staff and students provide the key to the problem of more effective student learning". In the second section, he explores some implications for approaches to more effective student education in higher education. In the third section, the author emphasizes that research in higher education should place a greater emphasis on qualitative research. In the last section of this chapter, Lewis raises some general questions about future developments in higher education and encourages academic researchers to perform research within their own institution in an attempt to identify and better understand the problems affecting learning among their own students.

While this book reports results from studies performed at one particular university in England, it can be of value to researchers by serving as a reminder of the importance of a qualitative dimension in the design of studies in higher education. If this book has a weakness, it is in the omission of studies or even a discussion of the advantages of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Norman P. Uhl
Mount Saint Vincent University

Jaroslav Pelikan, *Scholarship and Its Survival: questions on the idea of graduate education*. Princeton, N.J.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1983, pp. xv + 100.

In its report on humanities programs, the Committee on an Assessment of Quality-Related Characteristics of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States observed that:

The genius of American higher education is often said to be in the close association of training and research – that is, in the nation's research-doctorate programs. Consequently, we are not surprised at the amount of worried talk about the quality of the research doctorate, for deterioration at that level will inevitably spread to wherever research skills are needed – and that indeed is a far-flung network of laboratories, institutes, firms, agencies, bureaus, and departments. What might surprise us, however, is the imbalance between the putative national importance of research-doctorate programs and the amount of sustained evaluative attention they themselves receive.¹

The same observation could, of course, apply equally to Canada; and certainly the approach taken by the committee is something that Canadian higher education should examine carefully. Nonetheless, that study seems to lack an important prior consideration. It does offer ways of assessing whether institutions are doing well what their rhetoric and tradition say they are doing. But it does not (and, in