Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

Main, Alex, *Educational Staff Development*. London: Croom Helm, 1985, 129 pp.

At a time of low mobility among college and university faculty, changing student characteristics, fiscal constraints and increased demand for accountability, it seems appropriate to examine ways to improve educational effectiveness. During the past decade and longer, educational institutions have pursued activities to enhance the effectiveness of their staffs.

Alex Main has provided a useful treatment of "the values inherent in what is being done" in staff development. This is not another survey of staff development activities around the world or even of activities in one country; rather, it is a reflective examination of what is perceived to be most useful in staff development.

Dr. Main writes from an extensive involvement in staff development in the United Kingdom. Although the book is not prescriptive, the author clearly argues in favor of a "person-centred" approach to staff development. For Main, such an approach fits well with current theories of adult and continuing education. Staff development programs, according to this view, "need to recognize the autonomy of the adult learner, the diversity of learning styles shown by mature students, and the help they can obtain from others for the development of their learning" (p. 122). Throughout the book, Main places the emphasis upon "personal growth" and "learning to learn" in examining the value of various activities.

Perhaps a major weakness in the book lies in the author's attempt to go beyond his stated purpose – "to consider the values inherent in what is being done" – to develop an overview of staff development. In somewhat of a sketchy fashion, the book examines definitions, course development, instructional development, teaching improvement, staff developers, teachers as learners, staff counselling, and a model for professional development. For the most part, each of these chapters contains perspectives and listings from a variety of authors. In this sense, Main could be faulted for drawing upon a wide array of authors rather than developing a consistent and coherent conceptualization of staff development. Indeed, in several instances the reliance upon a variety of sources contradicts the underlying assumption of self-development.

For this reviewer, the book suffers in two other ways: it addresses staff development in both traditional schooling as well as in postsecondary settings, and it includes specific reference to administrative as well as to faculty development. Clearly, staff development is of equal concern at both compulsory and non-compulsory levels of education, but the basic differences between the settings

suggest considerable variations in strategies if not in models of staff development. Similarly, managerial and faculty development concerns may have much in common, but major differences in roles and responsibilities require a more rigorous examination of different appropriate strategies than this book provides.

While the book lacks depth in "how-to" establish staff development activities and programs, it provides convincing arguments for placing the responsibility for such activities and programs upon the staff itself. A "person-centred" approach promises greater effectiveness than approaches that rely upon either external sources or internal hierarchical authority.

This book may be of general interest to faculty committed to their own development, but it will be of greatest interest to those who seek to support others in their quest for professional growth and improvement.

<div align="right">

Abram G. Konrad
University of Alberta

</div>

David W. Conklin, Thomas J. Courchene (Eds). *Review of Ontario Universities: Access, Operations, and Funding*. Ontario Economic Council, Special Research Report

As its contribution to the Commission on the Future Development of the Universities of Ontario, the Ontario Economic Council sponsored a conference which was held in October of 1984. This volume is a record of the conference proceedings. Having attended the conference and now having read the conference proceedings, I can say that the proceedings are a fair reflection of the conference.

As suggested by the title, the conference and consequently the proceedings are divided into three main sections: Access, Operations and Funding. In addition to these three main topics, there is a key note address, a background paper by Arthur J.R. Smith and a summary of the submissions to the Bovey Commission. Within any of the main sections, however, there is a wide spectrum of topics. For example, in the case of Operations, there is a major paper by J.C. Wilson dealing with the rationalization of the system while a second major paper deals with the particular experience of one university in its use of various information technology tools.

For anyone wishing to get a brief review of the material in this volume, they could do no better than to turn to the rapporteur's remarks which provide a very useful summary of the topics covered. The following quotation taken from the rapporteur's comments are pertinent:

"I must admit that during the conference itself I did wonder from time to time whether or not it had been a good idea. Was it just another interesting but not very productive conversation about higher education? I certainly could not claim that any radically new insights had been presented. Nevertheless, I believe that the conference has been useful, for the problems of higher education in Ontario persist."