

Finally, the impact of technology on education is hardly noticed by Dr. Schaefer except for a brief nod to the computer, an invention the impact of which has been acknowledged by virtually everyone. Less-acknowledged developments, such as television and VCR's, are not even recognized as part of the contemporary landscape. Yet here is where most North Americans obtain daily education about human relations, politics and meaning ("liberal education" as Dr. Schaefer calls it) that used to come from daily reading of the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*. While everyone is embedded in this medium, few even among the elite liberal arts graduates have received the training they need to deal critically with it. And few have paused in Canada to wonder what contribution they and other new telecommunications developments might make to university education in Canada.

Geoffrey Squires. (1990). *First Degree: The Undergraduate Curriculum*. England and USA: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Reviewed by Robert G. Wyant, The University of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Education Centre.

Curriculum reform is, in most North American universities, a matter for constant discussion, periodic study and occasional action - usually very conservative action. The current economic and political situation is forcing universities to make some difficult decisions. Operating budgets that have, in terms of real dollars, been decreasing have led most universities to forego any curriculum expansion in favour of "hanging on" until the economic climate changes. But the political pressures on universities to move in the direction of short-term vocational and professional job training can only be expected to increase in a time of recession and growing unemployment. We may be faced with the need for curriculum change which will not be viewed by most academics as "reform," but will be unavoidable for many institutions. If so, we shall be reassessing the undergraduate curriculum in some very sobering ways. Geoffrey Squires has written a book about the undergraduate degree in Britain that may be of some help to Canadian university faculty members and administrators not because the British experience is directly transferable to Canadian institutions, but because it may provide us with a different perspective from an individual who has obviously thought a great deal about the matter.

Squires summarizes his book as follows: "This is a book about what is taught to undergraduates during the three or four years that lead to their first degree in

this country...the first chapter is descriptive...the final chapter discusses current policy...the three middle chapters explore what seem to me to be the three main frames of reference for thinking about the curriculum, about what to teach: the nature of knowledge, the culture or society of which higher education is a part, and the development of the individual student.” (p. vii). The least amount of time is spent discussing policy implications and the most time is given to the three chapters on knowledge, culture and development.

In the first chapter Squires comments that while there are good reasons for the undergraduate curriculum being what it is, we should not forget that it could be different. To help us see that, he presents a survey of widely varied curricula from institutions ranging from Oxford and Cambridge through the polytechnics and “red brick” colleges to the Open University. He does this within the framework of a discussion of the nature of curricula in which he raises three kinds of questions that he believes academics engaged in curriculum planning and revision must consider. They are questions relating to the elements or components of the curriculum (prospectus, admissions, syllabus, timing, locations, staffing, methods, materials and assessment), the functions of the curriculum (access, selection, induction, structure, sequence, teaching, environment, materials and accreditation) and the contingencies which affect these functions (aims, content, level, staff, students, consumers, regulations, resources and setting). Two conclusions he draws from this discussion are 1) “curriculum is not a plan but an experience, not a script but a play,” and 2) “curriculum planning is always to some extent a contingent matter, in which there will be few across-the-board answers. Much depends on the who, what and where.” (p. 7). Squires ends this chapter by introducing three dimensions of *the curriculum* - *the curriculum as knowledge*, *the curriculum as part of a society or culture*, and *the curriculum as a means to student development*. These, in turn, become the themes of the following three chapters.

He begins his discussion of the curriculum as knowledge by noting the extent to which assumptions about the nature and structure of knowledge are built into many aspects of higher education. He believes that, “any account of the undergraduate curriculum has to address such issues, not because the questions must be asked, but because they have already been answered - in the institutional, professional and curricular structures that exist - and these answers must be examined.” (p. 42). An interesting part of this discussion deals with three dimensions of the curriculum as knowledge. The first dimension involves the “object” of study - what the program is about. The second dimension involves the “stance” of the program - its intention (knowing, doing or being).

His third dimension refers to the “mode” of the work in the program (normal, reflexive or philosophical). These are meant to be continua, not pigeonholes, and he concludes, “...it is better to think of disciplines as occupying a certain space in a universe of knowledge, rather than a certain level in a hierarchy or place on a map.” (p. 59).

Within his discussion of curriculum and culture, Squires distinguishes among three kinds of programs - professional, academic and general - and relates them to employment. He also covers such issues as the modularization of curricula, interdisciplinarity and the question of whether our programs contain a “hidden” curriculum - things we are teaching without necessarily realizing it.

In his discussion of the curriculum and student development Squires points out that what we expect the curriculum to do for students may well change as our traditional 18 to 21 year old student population becomes older, more diversified and more socially mature. There is a very nice discussion here of the traditional claim that university education develops the “general powers” of the student’s mind, as well as some comments on cognitive styles and multiple intelligences. He concludes, “...it is one thing to talk about ‘knowing oneself’ in a culture which is sure what it means by knowledge and the self (even if the latter is held to be illusory); it is quite another to do so in a pluralistic culture.” (p.137).

Squire’s final chapter is an attempt to make explicit the application of some of the points he has discussed to curriculum policy. Early in the discussion he notes that, “...Higher education institutions cannot live without curriculum structures, but neither can they live entirely within them.” (p. 152). There is a brief discussion of the point with which I began this review, that with governments urging universities to move in the direction of a market driven model, new problems arise for curriculum planning and for both faculty and students who are attempting to make intelligent decisions, often with a minimum of reliable, long-term information. He ends by noting, “Unless we understand what it is we are producing, for whom and in what context, we are unlikely to be able to manage it effectively. (p. 162).

On a frivolous note, university administrators may find Squires’ book useful as a source of quotations for their speeches. Consider, “...higher education can be said to institutionalize not the structures of knowledge, but the experience of uncertainty.” (p. 112); “...higher education...embodies a kind of ‘long-termism’...But such long-termism is out of step not only with the more immediate demands of industry, but the drum of government policy.” (p. 117); “To the extent that we are moving away not simply from the specific-skilled,

well-demarcated modes of production to the more fluid and multi-skilled ones, but to a knowledge-led economy in which the value added is mainly the result of the application of knowledge and skills, any under-emphasis on such knowledge and skills - and the opportunity to use them productively - becomes not merely undesirable but critical." (p. 156). There are also heresies such as, "There are few occupations which are so tightly professionalized as the academic profession...But if academic courses are a de facto preparation for a professional occupation which few will ever actually enter, how is this rationalized and defended?" (pp. 107-108), and "We tend to assume a little too easily that higher education is a positive affair. But it could have effects or side-effects on its students which are unwanted and undesirable, which limit them as individuals, misfit them for society, disequip them for their jobs and undermine their development as lifelong learners." (p. 146). Academic administrators may well decide not to include these in their public observations.

Even after twenty-five years of university administration, much of it spent in curriculum development and reform, I found this book interesting and informative. Again, much of Squires' data and many of his insights will not be transferable directly to the Canadian university scene, but he raises problems and asks questions that will make any academic think about curriculum matters in some new ways. One person on every committee considering revisions of the undergraduate curriculum should read this book and raise some of its questions at appropriate times.

Seldin, Peter and associates. (1990). *How Administrators Can Improve Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1990. Reviewed by George L. Geis, Professor, Higher Education Group, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Systematic problem solving beings with extensive problem explication. Primary questions include: What precisely is the problem? What evidence is there for its existence? Who says it is a problem? What are some probable causes of it?

Poor teaching in postsecondary education is often accepted as a problem and, without further ado, solutions are offered. In fact, the evidence is hard to come by to support the existence of that problem. Students tend to rate teachers rather highly; teachers rate themselves even higher. However, there are public perceptions that the cost of teaching is too high, due in part to inefficient and