

technologies work under certain conditions; however, this optimism is tempered with skepticism about the adoption of technologies on a wide scale. In many articles, participants report that they enjoyed research and development in higher education. This enjoyment may be a beneficial side-effect of introducing technology. By introducing technology into higher education instruction, we may refocus attention on teaching.

The organization of the book, including the absence of an index, makes these articles difficult to use efficiently. The book is definitely aimed at a knowledgeable reader or for use as a reference.

Mayhew, Lewis B., Patrick J. Ford, and Dean L. Hubbard. *The Quest for Quality: The Challenge for Undergraduate Education in the 1990's*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990, 320 pages. Price: \$29.95 U.S. Reviewed by Kathryn Bindon, Vice-President, Academic, Mount Saint Vincent University.

This commentary begins with an admonishment to the authors for underestimating their audience. Their anticipation that the work will be criticized as "...a worship of the status quo..." which "...does not encourage experiment, innovation, and change" (p. 271) is, hopefully, only a marginal possibility. It ought not to be heard from quarters in which the matter of undergraduate education and how we survive this decade and enter the next century are subjects of daily concern, reflection and action.

This is, however, the only negative criticism that merits inclusion in this review. *The Quest for Quality* is an articulate, scholarly, readable, pragmatic, provocative, and frank book that is valuable not only for its historical review of the development of undergraduate programmes in the United States, but also for its applicability to the present and the future.

The message of *Quest for Quality* is both simple and complex, as indeed are the institutions it discusses. The definition of quality in undergraduate education offered by the authors should be familiar to all who have designed and taught university courses: "Quality undergraduate education consists of using words, numbers, and abstract concepts to prepare learners to understand, cope with, and positively influence their environments" (p. 29). Yet if there is nothing startling in this statement, educating individuals to this level of knowledge is a complex task which requires careful and persistent recognition of standards and processes that, while applied within the scope of individual universities, must be

maintained as general yet distinctive principles within the fragile collective of higher education.

This whirlwind tour through both the anecdotal and the theoretical past is the best sort of history. Clear and comprehensive, it is neither rigid nor exclusive in its analysis of the intellectual and administrative waves that have characterized the evolution of undergraduate education. While major errors in undergraduate planning are a part of the retrospective, they are integrated into the larger patterns of development in a manner that underscores the critical process that is the dynamic of university education. The mix of inspirations and ideas, and the results of applying them in differing institutional contexts, are presented as instructive, not definitive, lessons from the past.

On the other hand, some basic principles are stated in a refreshingly clear manner in this book. First is the notion that the elements of “quality” in undergraduate education can be articulated and applied. Second is the precept that universities should not try to be all things to all people, or to act in ways that are incompatible with their essential educational tasks or their capabilities. Third is the fact that universities are human institutions, in which scholarship and learning are honourable and valuable endeavours that enjoy long traditions of success.

The consequence of forgetting this past, or of failing to embrace the fundamental concept of quality, is a dangerous confusion of roles. Without this kind of pragmatic philosophical clarity, students, faculty, administrators, trustees, and public critics and politicians can muddle, and even alter, the meaning of the undergraduate experience to the detriment of not only the university, but also society. In this, the point that the university must play a forceful role in preserving its traditional mandate to educate, rather than attempt to respond to external demands for any particular facet of knowledge that is deemed useful, is one tested technique for maintaining quality programs.

The authors’ notion of “parsimony”, which runs throughout the work, is an encouraging cautionary concept. The word, in this context, does not draw a Scrooge-like image of undergraduate education in which ledger-entries are duplicated in careful script and maintained with quantifiable security. Rather, it reflects a call for clarity of and respect for traditions, purpose, accomplishments and goals. In essence, the authors are merely suggesting that universities honour their own capabilities, and not discount either the principles or methodologies that have supported them in their tasks for centuries.

The argument that recent developments in higher education require a clearer understanding of what is possible and appropriate in the university is also

related directly to resources, both human and financial, and their administration. The primary resource is the human one, and program planning must focus on the effective application in teaching, advising and research, on the disciplinary expertise of faculty, on the intellectual and motivational capacity of students, and on the meaning of an undergraduate degree to society. In this vein, the bifurcation of the role of faculty to include psycho-social counselling, the tendency to minimize the interconnectedness of teaching and research at the undergraduate level, and the denigration of the degree through the proliferation of credit courses and student-initiated programmes or curriculum design are all faulted as detractors from the aim of quality.

If there is an hierarchical basis to this analysis, it is one that merely reflects the relationship that parallels the acquisition of knowledge and the process of learning rather than any narrow social elitism. Just as universities must limit their endeavours to ensure the quality of their programs, faculty and students must understand the limits of their relationship, and recognize their differing responsibilities and abilities in the undergraduate process.

As the authors state in a number of ways, the possibilities of building an undergraduate program are many, but not infinite. In realizing this, the authors also provide a convincing argument that academic administration is important. The need to balance and integrate resource management, to sustain and mould the mission and ensure that the academic integrity of the institution is respected is included in a discussion of leadership and governance that ranges through the role of the president and Boards of Governors to governmental agencies and accreditation and monitoring associations. Again, there is no template for success in these analyses, but a great deal of illustrative thought about the composite of skills and experiences, sensitivities and individualities that have contributed to institutional success or failure in the past is offered.

It is this *leitmotif* of the human nature of the university that saves the authors from any final accusation of rigidity or narrow intellect in their definition of education as a conservative process. Within the parameters of their definition of quality undergraduate education, the expectations and responsibilities of students, faculty and governors are explored, and the marvellous possibilities of individuals in the university, either alone or in intellectual combinations, are manifest.

The discussion is both pragmatic and optimistic, for the commonsensical suggestion that individuals meet their obligations when they know what they are, are motivated to achieve, and are professionally equipped to act is infused with a clear statement of the need to trust that people will do their jobs, and that

in the academy there is a core of understanding and commitment that will respond to academic leadership. In this sense as well as, the authors make clear that education is the intellectual equivalent of the environment, in which the implications of decisions taken today will not be fully understood for years. As such, a cautious approach to change and innovation is a warning we should be able to appreciate.

While the book addresses the American experience, its contents are critically relevant to the contemporary Canadian university. There are experiences to be learned from, avoided or emulated, in these pages. From the dangers of responding unthinkingly to market definitions of quality or discounting the meaning and value of undergraduate education in favour of numbers, through to the pitfalls of looking for management solutions that are superficially comfortable but not rooted in the scholarly and humanistic traditions of the academy, those involved in the operation and governance of Canadian universities would be wise to reflect upon the contents of this work.

If, as the authors contend, "...the greatest enemy of the good is often the perfect" (p. 271), then the greatest threat to undergraduate education in the current public debate is the sense that quality is a static institutional goal. Universities have an accumulated base of knowledge and wisdom that has consistently integrated successful innovations and approaches, and left the failed experiments behind. In this, as *The Quest for Quality* so eloquently demonstrates, quality does not just exist in the eye of the beholder, but is built upon proven traditions applied, refined, developed and championed by those who have dedicated their skill to university education.

Stewart, Lee. *"It's Up to You": Women at U.B.C. in the Early Years*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press for the U.B.C. Academic Women's Association, 1990, pp. xii, 176. Illustrations, 16 pp. Reviewed by Diana Pedersen, Department of History, Concordia University.

Published by the U.B.C. Academic Women's Association, *It's Up to You* commemorates the seventy-fifth anniversary of the University of British Columbia and inaugurates a new monograph series on Women and Universities. A promising beginning that bodes well for the series, Lee Stewart's examination of women at U.B.C. in the first half of the twentieth century is the strongest Canadian contribution so far to the flourishing literature on the history of