

Leaders are also concerned with alternate funding sources in the face of declining government commitments, and with engaging in off-shore agreements that benefit both parties. As a result of such forces, some also see a pressing need to internationalize domestic curricula for both local and foreign students. Valid and reliable quality assurance mechanisms will have an equally important future impact. Will the Australian (carrot) or the British (stick) models that are in place and developing prove more attractive to various systems? How will federal systems work out answers to such issues?

This volume will principally interest movers and shakers in government, institutional practitioners, and their policy advisors. Public servants concerned with higher education policy formulation and review will want a copy. Institutional leaders labouring within imposed policy constraints or concerned to influence the shape of future government policy will learn from it. Those concerned with training university teachers or administrators in these systems may also find useful comparative information or background for their needs. I suspect, however, that the main appeal of this volume will be political scientists, political sociologists, and graduate researchers rather than educators.

Goedegebuure, Leo C.J. *Mergers in Higher Education: A Comparative Perspective*. Uitgeverij, LEMMA BV, UTRECHT, The Netherlands, 1992. Price: NLG 85,00. Reviewed by John Kirkness, Division of Humanities, Scarborough College, University of Toronto.

What motivates institutions to engage in merger; how can we explain the actual mergers that have come about in terms of institutions that form the constituent parts of the merged institutions; and what theoretical framework can be used to analyze the outcomes of the merger processes in the two countries (Australia and the Netherlands) from a macro perspective?

In his monograph on *Mergers in Higher Education*, one of a growing series of topical research studies sponsored by the Center of Higher Education Policy Studies in Utrecht, Goedegebuure addresses selected aspects of this "central research question." Recognizing the complexity of the theoretical and practical questions which arise in any consideration of the political and structural relationships between institutions of higher education and government, the author undertakes an initial, exploratory analysis, presented here in two distinct sections,

the one theoretical, the other empirical. The comparative perspective of the subtitle informs both sections: organizational activities in the corporate sector are compared with institutional change in higher education; the Australian experience is described in terms developed in the presentation of events in the Netherlands.

The first and longest section, devoted to establishing a conceptual framework to guide the author's assessment of the numerous institutional mergers which occurred in the 80s in both the Dutch and the Australian higher education systems, is itself composed of three discrete elements. In the first, the author explores merger as a concept, seeking to identify a typology which is applicable in all systems, particularly the two chosen to illustrate its "practical features." The varieties of merger identified are distinguished on the basis of the type of organization involved (university, college, institute), rather than on the goals or the results of mergers. In order to clarify the practical application of his preliminary definitions, Goedegebuure then reviews the literatures on merger in the private (corporate) and public (education and health) sectors. He draws heavily on the 200 references cited in the bibliography which report on mostly recent and current work in Australia, Europe and the U.S. The author bases his assessment of mergers on a three-level analysis: i) government restructuring of the sector in general; ii) inter-institutional efforts to coordinate or merge selected functions (attempts regularly driven more by financial expediency than educational ends); iii) intra-institutional concern to unite separate units within a single college or university. With respect to restructuring, he concludes as follows:

- Mergers are a reaction, inducing persistent stress to *external* change, particularly the threat of a loss of resources, i.e., student registrations on which government funding is based.
- Merger is more likely: i) if the differences (in size, in programs) between institutions are large; ii) if institutions are located near to each other.
- Mergers can improve programs, community relationships and quality, particularly if undertaken outside the framework of government initiated reforms.

On the basis of such considerations, the author attempts, in the most substantial single chapter in the study, to construct a conceptual framework for analyzing mergers. Initially he proposes a series of six assumptions, the first and pivotal being that "in order to secure survival, organizational action is directed at securing a continuous and sufficient supply of money and authority."

Subsequently, he complements his assumptions, all informed by the primacy of the resource dependence approach adopted, by presenting a series of propositions, these to be tested empirically in subsequent chapters. Typical of these propositions, all stated in probabilistic terms, is the second: "the more merger leads to system level concentration (of resources, programs...), the more it will initiate balancing operations by other institutions in the environment to counteract this effect."

*Journal* readers interested either in theory construction in higher education generally, or in ways of thinking coherently about the relationships between government and institutions specifically, will find material here more to react to than to build on. This is not because of serious deficiencies in the critical appraisals and theoretical proposals, but because the role of affiliation and amalgamation, the balance between colleges (with a vocational emphasis) and universities (and their academic commitments) are, in a variety of respects in Canada, distinctive. The author's review may well prompt fresh thinking about such initiatives as the restructuring project in Ontario, within current college-university sector boundaries, and the on-going transformation, across such boundaries, of several colleges into universities in British Columbia. This initial section can also serve as one illustration of the pros and cons of developing "higher education theory" on the basis of an analysis of practice in other sectors. Much theory construction in higher education remains derivative, as scholars seek preliminary means of organizing system, institution or function descriptions which also explicate characteristics and trends. In this reviewer's opinion, the approach adopted by Burton R. Clark in *The Higher Education System* (1983) remains the more promising route to effective theory in higher education.

The second section presents descriptive accounts of the recent histories of Dutch higher education (with special reference to the non-university sector) and to the transition in Australia from a well-established binary system (universities and colleges) to the new Unified National System of higher education. The two chapters comprising this section play a dual role: firstly, they record recent events in Australia and the Netherlands prompted by government interventions designed to reshape the system by use of "financial incentives;" secondly, they illustrate the applicability in two specific, and distinctive, cases of the author's theoretical propositions. The Dutch experience, described in some detail (particularly when the comprehensive data tables presented as appendices are considered), reveals that external pressure to merge can be effective, if judged by government according to the numbers of institutions amalgamating. Prior to

intervention, only 2% of the 359 institutions involved had over 2,000 students; after such pressure 35% so reported.

Intervention in Australia took a different form, with minimum enrollment targets being set: for example, only universities with over 8,000 students were to qualify for full *teaching and research* resources. This section will be of particular interest to those *Journal* readers concerned to learn more about the issues identified by Robert Pike in his recent review in these pages (*CJHE XXI*(2), 1991, p. 114) of Susan Davies' study of the binary policy of higher education in Australia. Goedegebuure's study, which is based on his collaborative work with Lynn Meek at the University of New England, demonstrates the first effects of a governmental decision to eliminate the binary distinction between institutions of postsecondary education. Prior to intervention, only 13 of 74 institutions (=18%) had over 8,000 students. Three years later, in 1991, 24 of 40 (=60%) qualified for "full resources;" nine of the original 13 large institutions involved participated in mergers.

In both cases, the government achieved its objective. As the author acknowledges, it is too early to assess the impact within the institutions on policy, practice and morale of these political actions. It is, however, already clear from the analysis that survival outranks autonomy as a guide to institutional action, that institutions which can avoid merger prefer to do so, and that merging institutions both large and small seek not only to secure resources, but also to improve their position relative to other universities and colleges in the community.

In general, Goedegebuure's analysis is of interest to scholars and students of higher education in Canada for at least two reasons. Firstly, the material presented constitutes an argument in favour of using a conceptual framework to guide description and analysis in higher education. Persuaded by such an argument, we can be more attentive than we are at present to linking theory with the distinctive knowledge- and community-building features of universities and colleges, rather than deriving our frameworks principally from institutions with similar forms, but different goals. At present, we tend to find both our theory and practice -- if the current interest in total quality management in higher education, for example, is indicative -- in organizations our universities resemble only in some formal rather than functional respects. Goedegebuure's attempt, partially successful as he notes, challenges us to seek a balance between accuracy in description and creativity in explanation.

Secondly, Goedegebuure presents a recent history of events in the Netherlands and Australia relevant to the impact of national government

policies on established binary systems. The sequence of government reports and directions is both instructive and provocative for Canadian readers, particularly those who rely on "education is a provincial matter" as a means of protecting what, in comparative perspective, are relatively high levels of institutional autonomy here. It may well be that we will increasingly see in Canada a different set of procedures, with potentially similar results to those described for Australia. Thus, the readiness of Canadian universities to assist in the development of research centres of excellence with both federal and provincial funds, their interest in provincial and federal tax-based income contingent repayment schemes for student loans, are indicators -- or portents? -- that Canadian universities may well find some merit in trading autonomy for resources, independence for survival. Here, too, Goedegebuure's analytical and descriptive "work in progress" can serve to challenge our current preconceptions.