

V. Lynn Meek, Leo Goedegebuure, Osmo Kivinen & Risto Rinne, (Eds.) (1996). *The mockers and mocked: Comparative perspectives on differentiation, convergence and diversity in higher education*. New York, NY: International Association of Universities and Elsevier Science Ltd. Pp. XII, 239.

Reviewed by Roseann Runte, Victoria University, Toronto, Ontario

Taking its title from Darwin's identification of species which imitate each other (p. 2) "so that in the same place, species of three genera of butterflies and even a moth are found all closely resembling a butterfly belonging to a fourth genus," this book attempts to go beyond many international, collaborative, scholarly collections. It provides a framework for a comprehensive study, based on three theoretical analyses. These are followed by brief presentations describing the situation of higher education in each of eight countries. The editors then apply the theoretical grid to the national examples in their conclusion.

In principle, this orderly, disciplined approach should have made the volume much more valuable than the average, scattered collection of essays. In fact, while providing focus, the structure of this work adds to its weightiness and makes it somewhat less than sprightly as a reading assignment. For example, one person could have simply made a synthesis of the whole, leaving illustrations to the appendices. As it is, one finds more than one definition of diversity and differentiation. Each author repeats the same codes or similar ones. In the conclusion, the editors summarize so neatly each of the theoretical articles, that one might almost read the conclusion and use the preceding text as illustration. Besides such repetition, the language employed in the volume is somewhat cumbersome and could be improved with editing, providing particular attention to the concordance of subject and verb, singular and plural adjectives and expressions which are not common coin in academic writing, (e.g., "He is not fussed by the substitution of terms," p. 5).

In critical terms, the volume falls short in that it includes mostly examples from the developed world, omitting the majority of the global village. Why were these countries chosen? It would appear that the nations were not selected for their special example. The methodology of selection appears to have been somewhat circumstantial (attendance by authors at a conference in 1993). In addition, we are not presented an international approach but a collection of national views.

There appears to be an underlying assumption that diversity is good. Although the authors state in their conclusion that this approach has allowed for a re-examination of many of the common assumptions about the "inevitability and the desirability of diversity" (p. 234), only in one other place is that assumption queried. M. Bauer asks "Is diversity of higher education a prerequisite for equality, or is it a hindrance? Is diversification an instrument for a general use of quality in all higher education, or does it imply a stratified quality concept with an accepted or even intended inequality of the higher education system? That is, are quality and equality of higher education incompatible goals, or are they interdependent values? (p. 162). The time frame of the work is also undefined. Some of the national examples are strictly contemporary, others historical.

Finally, this work is limited both in its concepts and its definitions. Students are considered a market factor and, at one point, students studying abroad are mentioned as part of this "market." Are students truly a market? What about other inter-national forces? The "environment" is considered important, but nationally, not internationally. What about global education efforts, UNESCO's standardization and measurement projects, Europe's ERASMUS programme, international trade agreements and the relatively recent discovery by governments and institutions that education can be a profit making business and their subsequent efforts at international development? And, to view all of this from the other side of the coin, what about those who would see this development as a form of intellectual colonization and cultural dominance? What about those who see and attempt to measure the social and cultural benefits of education, the benefits for democracies which require, as Montesquieu stated in *L'esprit des lois*, an educated citizenry?

The weakness of the volume is at once its narrowness of focus and its generalizations. It is neither visionary nor highly scientific despite its incipital references to the visionary scientific thought of Darwin. We will not comment on the nature of the affirmation which is, thanks to the fallibility of the human condition, an indisputable truism.

The quote from this book which I will retain and repeat is from the chapters on U.S. and Australian institutions.

. . . Before the collapse of each country's binary system there was a general belief that the non-university type institutions were much better at teaching than universities. There was also

an expectation that through combining the two types of institutions into one system, diversity in terms of teaching quality would be enhanced. The older research universities might come first when the competition involved research resources and outputs, but a different ranking would emerge with respect to teaching quality. This has not happened. The prestigious research universities have won all competitions, enforcing both a formal and informal status hierarchy, where those at the top impose their values on those at the bottom. This may be diversity of a sort, but not the type of diversity intended by policy. (pp .219–220).

The book offers three, theoretical perspectives on diversity. The internal perspective is an extension of Clark's 1983 *The Higher Education System*. His point is that increasing differentiation of knowledge, and ever-increasing disciplinary specialization, lead to increasing differentiation, diversity and structural disintegration within and between universities. This is expressed in the development of new fields, programme affiliation or the induction of professional fields in the academy, a hierarchy of subjects, and the dispersion of these subjects to new areas.

The systemic perspective describes the forces working for and against homogenization and integration at different levels: disciplines, institution or system. Government regulations which intend to produce diversity may result in the contrary due to the "law of anticipated results" (p. 208).

The environmental perspective attempts to account for the continual interaction of resource inputs (students, money, faculty, etc.) and product outputs (graduates, research results, services, etc.) When applied to the descriptions of the state of diversity in each of the countries studied (Canada, Germany, Australia, Finland, The Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom), the theories demonstrate both their insufficiency in predicting outcomes and their great value as a means to enter the issue and examine a broadly diverse field. They also demonstrate unequivocally, the infallibility of government policy in achieving desired outcomes because of other factors which influenced the system, because of the behaviour of the institutions in anticipating and reacting to legislation and because single-focus policy aimed at a specific outcome in a complex matter, sometimes misjudges and misses its target.

The book finally considers reasons businesses occasionally do not succeed when strategic and organizational recipes for success are known and suggests their application to higher education which is “not a field of study with its own specific theories and paradigms, but an important social phenomenon that can be researched from a number of disciplinary perspectives” (p. 233).

I agreed with the idea of research in education emanating from a number of disciplinary perspectives. I disagree just as strongly with the application of the business model. I refuse to see students as products or consumers, but as learning partners, members of an academic community. And, I believe so unshakably in the strength of knowledge and the nobility and necessity of the quest for it, that I would dare say that if higher education is a “social phenomenon,” it is one of the most important, precious and central to humankind’s history and future.



Randle W. Nelsen (Ed.). (1997). *Inside Canadian universities: Another day at the plant*. Kingston, ON: Cedar creek Publications

Reviewed by James A. McAllister, Finance Council of Ontario Universities.

This is a gloomy, at times cranky, book which finds very little that is right and a great deal that is wrong with the modern Canadian university. The university’s faults lie with the capitalist economy, the university administration, other faculty — especially white, middle-age, males — and some of the students (those white males again). These views reflect the attitudes of certain segments of the university faculty, views which I am sure have been shared with colleagues at the various faculty clubs around the country.

*Inside Canadian Universities* is actually a compilation of 11 articles plus an introduction written by 12 different academics. The editor, Randle W. Nelsen, adopted a story-telling emphasis and explains that he “encouraged all contributors to write in the first person — to tell the stories of their everyday lives as university employees.” (p. 1). He is from Lakehead University and more than half of the contributors are from Ontario. While the rest of English Canada is reasonably well represented among the authors, Francophone universities are ignored. Almost half of the contributors are sociologists, with most of the rest coming from