

D.S. Anderson and A.E. Vervoorn. *Access to Privilege: Patterns of Participation in Australian Postsecondary Education*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1983.

While "Access to Privilege" is essentially a summary of research respecting socio-economic and related characteristics of students in Australian higher education, it is also a very complete and well organized summary. The studies reported cover the entire spectrum of the system over a period of fifty years, 1933-1983.

There is much in the Australian system of higher education which is also to be found in Canada. There are, however, several important differences which prevent the Canadian reader from experiencing a sense of "déjà vu". With respect to the differences, the firmly entrenched class structure, reflected in the pattern of attendance among Australian private, catholic-private and public schools, is somewhat of a contradiction to the commonly held view of Australian egalitarianism. The centralization of the system, particularly in the last ten years, holds interesting implications for federal-provincial relations in Canada. Furthermore, the data presented on aboriginal and ethnic participation in Australian education cries for comparative data from North America.

The conclusions are not particularly profound, nor could they be described as unexpected. However, the discussion which accompanies the conclusions, with a combination of the authors' assumptions, theories, explanations and hypotheses, are worth careful reading and even more careful consideration.

For example, after reporting that higher education has remained the path of the privileged for fifty years, despite the development of a diverse variety of new institutions, the authors insist that this is no reason for pessimism about education as a force for social change. . . .

"If we believe culture, freedom and social justice to be fragile things which can be retained only with constant vigilance and effort, then even maintaining a very imperfect status quo can be regarded as something of an achievement: at least we have not slipped back."

With reference to the recent overall decline in participation rates, (a phenomenon not unfamiliar to Canadians), the authors propose that the increase in degree holders in society has debased the currency and diminished its value to the current population of young people.

Only in the last chapter is any reference made to the issue of the abolition in Australia of all tuition fees in 1974. Again, in response to the charge that the social spectrum of higher education has not changed Anderson and Vervoorn propose that participation would have fallen even more without this particular policy change. Furthermore, those most affected would have been those least able to participate — women, rural residents, mature students, and the economically disadvantaged!

The concluding chapter also includes some challenging policy alternatives for those involved in managing the system. In each case, there are useful implications for Canadian counterparts.

In all, while some of the book presents familiar material and ideas, often applying to an educational organization not fully comparable to Canada, there are also several sections which are of great value, particularly for social scientists engaged in research in higher education. There is more to recommend in this book than just its thorough approach to the subject.

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Robert Birnbaum, *Maintaining Diversity in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1983, 187 pp.

Institutional Diversity has been one of the ideological cornerstones of American higher education, and educators in the United States have taken great pride in having the most varied array of higher education institutions in the world. During the past decade or so, however, numerous concerns have been expressed that diversity is being steadily eroded, with unfortunate consequences for accessibility, relevance, and resilience of the higher education system.

Diversity is a difficult concept to measure or even to operationalize in a meaningful way, and research on this subject has been limited by observational difficulties. There is an almost unlimited number of institutional characteristics which could be considered when attempting to determine whether institutions are becoming more alike or more dissimilar, and indices of diversity may vary according to which characteristics are included in the analyses. Surprisingly, some studies of diversity have focussed upon just a few characteristics of institutions. After an incisive review of the literature on diversity and discussion of measurement problems, Professor Birnbaum settles on six characteristics: proprietary status (private, public, church controlled, etc.); highest level of degree or certificate awarded; programmatic concentration (liberal arts, professional, comprehensive, etc.); size; sex segregation; and minority status (predominantly white or non white). The categorization of these six variables provides 768 possible combinations for classifying institutions. In 1980, the 885 institutions in the eight states which Birnbaum studied occupied 138 of these 768 cells, compared to 614 institutions occupying 141 cells in 1960. According to all five indices of diversity which the author calculates, there has been a perceptible decline in diversity between 1960 and 1980.

If this book consisted solely of a report of the author's findings regarding measured diversity in eight states between 1960 and 1980, it would be of limited interest to Canadian readers. After all, diversity has not been a pre-eminent policy variable in Canadian higher education, and at least three of Birnbaum's six variables (proprietorship, sex, minority status) would be of little relevance in