

Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Baudoux, Claudine (2005). *La passion de l'université. Les femmes cadres dans la gestion collégiale et bureaucratique*. Cap-Rouge, QC; Presses Inter Universitaires. Pages: 552. Price: 50.00 CAD

Reviewed by Rebecca Rogers, Université Paris Descartes (France).

The subject of women's place within modern universities has long interested scholars working in the area of women's and gender studies. But for the most part these studies have focused on students or professors exploring the obstacles to women's access to higher education and then the nature of their integration into a profoundly masculine university culture. In this innovative study, Claudine Baudoux examines the lives and careers of women involved in the *administration* of Quebec universities, women who have been promoted to positions of authority both in academic and administrative capacities. Her research seeks to uncover the mechanisms and the effects of masculine domination within the university as a structure and an organization while also hoping her work will offer "strategies capable of transforming the existing material and symbolic relations between the sexes" (p.14). As a result, the book offers a primarily sociological perspective on the gendered power relations at work within contemporary universities, while at the same time suggesting ways to achieve more egalitarian relations despite the increasingly managerial organization of universities.

The material for this lengthy book comes from the responses to 1006 questionnaires (776 men and 230 women responded out of a total of 1445 who received the questionnaire) and thirty interviews with women administrators. Two groups of individuals are systematically compared within this study: academic administrators (*cadres*), constituted by male and female professors who have been appointed to administrative positions and administrative higher staff, who are not from the professorial ranks. These groups are both divided hierarchically in two, reflecting the increasingly bureaucratic organization of university life. Despite years of feminist research in Canada, accompanied by programs to promote equality between the sexes (the *Programmes d'Accès à l'Égalité*), Baudoux highlights the fact that women remain very underrepresented in university administration, constituting a mere twenty-two percent of the total, echoing the low percentage of women in the teaching corps (23,5% in 1996). Her study then is an effort to understand the nature of this "glass ceil-

ing” although she acknowledges that not everyone would accept that the move into university administration constitutes a promotion.

Following two introductory chapters that present the situation of women within the universities and the characteristics of the academic and administrative culture currently in existence, Claudine Baudoux analyzes the different factors that contribute to the persistence of male domination within administrative circles. Drawing on the results of feminist scholarship, particularly in the field of sociology, the author classically begins by considering the influences of the family in individuals’ social mobility, paying careful attention to the quality of father-daughter and mother-daughter relationships in the encouragement given to pursue relatively challenging careers. The socio-cultural determinants that lead women into university careers are not, however, the focus of the study, but rather the characteristics of a university culture that continues to envision leadership and administration along masculine lines. The remaining seven chapters dwell then in considerable detail on the reasons for this state of affairs. Nor surprisingly, the interviews and the questionnaires reveal the persistence of a double standard in judging male/female commitment to juggling the demands of a career and family life. Maternity remains a “problem” for the women in this study. More significantly, university management itself reinforces the obstacles that contribute to women’s lesser participation in administration. By examining the hiring procedures underlying a pervasive meritocratic discourse within the university, Baudoux highlights the way these procedures, particularly nomination and co-optation, are unfavorable for women who have lesser access to the networks necessary to attract attention. In positions where management experience is necessary, women traditionally have greater difficulty acquiring such experience. The women interviewed for the study have, of course, managed to break into university administration, but their experiences all testify to the highly gendered characteristics of the recruiting process, and most notably the persistence of stereotypes that influence this process and determine the understanding of leadership qualities. Interpersonal qualities, more than degrees and diplomas play here a role, allowing gender discriminations to function more insidiously.

Although Baudoux emphasizes the structural factors at work in reproducing masculine domination, the interview material brings to light the importance of individual strategies in women’s efforts to achieve a form of power within the university system. Above all, she shows that women demonstrate ambition to attain administrative leadership positions if they perceive that possibilities exist. Hence the oft-repeated argument that women are not present as leaders because they don’t aspire to such positions is clearly false. Indeed, the interviews reveal to what extent knowledge of the system is important to navigate the ranks. The exercise of power depends on the ability to mobilize informal political influence and the women testify in particular to the importance of male mentors who allowed them to achieve positions of influence, most notably in academic administration. Here, as elsewhere, a patriarchal and paternal male

culture weighs more heavily within the administrative positions in university management than within the academic sector.

The final two chapters explore the continued influence of what are termed the “doxa de sexe” within university culture and the ways in which women’s presence in this culture may be changing the nature of university management. Interestingly, the answers to the lengthy questionnaire (171 questions) reveal a globally positive vision on the part of women leaders who consider themselves to be well integrated, respected and listened to within the university community. The interviews reveal a considerably more complicated story and one that suggests the importance of denial strategies on the part of these women. Indeed, despite an ostensible commitment to promoting equality between the sexes within the university, attention to the more symbolic aspects of this culture reveal the persistence of these “doxa de sexe” that reinforce women’s position as a minority and render more fragile their influence. As a result, it’s not particularly surprising to note there is no clear evidence that women’s presence in management circles has for the moment “humanized” or produced a more feminine model of management within the university. Although women describe themselves less as leaders than as mediators, the quantitative results of the study reveal in reality few significant differences in the way men and women envision their role. In the end, Baudoux concludes women should be encouraged to take up administrative positions, less from a conviction that because they are women they will introduce more democratic practices, than because their presence challenges the university’s masculine culture and is a basic precondition for more egalitarian relations between the sexes.

This brief summary cannot do justice to the rich material and analysis provided within this book. Claudine Baudoux draws on her own experience analyzing the gendered characteristics of school management and school culture as well as decades of feminist scholarship in such varied disciplines as sociology, anthropology and history. Each chapter offers summaries of relevant theoretical literature, drawn from scholars working mainly on North America and France (Bourdieu in particular is a frequent reference), and she is careful then to situate her own arguments within this literature (the book concludes with 37 pages of bibliographical references!). The book includes annexes detailing the methodology used, the questionnaire, as well as the overall quantitative results of the questionnaire. The cumulative effect, however, is rather overwhelming. The sheer weight of so many pages, so many quotations, so many tables, and so many interpretations, leaves the reader at times both gasping and depressed at the continued weight of gender stereotypes and the persistence of masculine domination within the supposedly meritocratic university system. Fortunately, most chapters conclude with an incisive summary of the main arguments and the conclusion impressively summarizes the arguments of the book, while offering as well suggestions to counter the effect of sex discrimination within the university. Certainly, women’s presence in university administration demonstrates that the university can change and the interviewees transparent “passion” for

the university offers hope that their example will lead more women into these positions. But Baudoux's analysis of the university as a socio-political system highlights the capacities for resistance to gender change and the evolution toward more managerial rather than collegial administrative practices does not augur well for the future. ♣

Bryan, C. & Clegg, K. (2006). *Innovative Assessment in Higher Education*. Routledge: New York. Pages: 256. Price: 49.98 USD (paper).

Reviewed by Laura April McEwen, Queen's University.

As a mature female doctoral student in the area of assessment in higher education (HE), I have been engaged with this literature for almost ten years. It has been an exciting, sometimes confusing experience as our field struggles with the often thorny, always multifaceted issue of assessment. Over the course of my academic career at three major Canadian universities I have come to realize that although the assessment literature is a reflection of struggles experienced in practice, the leap from the literature to inform practice is a significant one. For where as assessment is a challenge common to students, faculty members, and administrator, few can allocate the time to attain sufficient expertise necessary to negotiate this burgeoning area of research. *Innovative Assessment in Higher Education* provides an accessible entry point for those eager to engage with new directions in this field. This work is an eclectic grouping of writings across a diverse range of disciplines, dealing with a broad scope of assessment issues, in various institutional settings. The predominance of contributors from the UK with several notable exceptions accurately reflects the active research agenda that has been underway in that area of the world for some time.

The volume is thoughtfully organized into four parts: Pedagogical context, Implementing feedback, Stimulating learning, and Encouraging professional development. The Pedagogical context section begins by providing a valuable introduction to the contextual factors driving current adjustments to assessment regimes in UK and beyond. The theoretical foundations of this movement are then presented, grounded in the extensive research literature. The relationship of assessment to student learning is highlighted and optimal conditions for learning are defined. Issues concerning the validity and reliability of assessment judgments are then considered within a discussion of faculty members' professional preparation for the task of assessment. Further, the movement towards providing formalized professional development in this area is advanced as a positive outcome of these new directions in assessment. Institutional characteristics that can promote a culture of learning are then explored through the lens of Alverno College. In closing, this section links assessment practice with the development of self-regulating skills, whereby learner responsibility and autonomy are emphasized and encouraged. The potential to lever technology in service of this goal is also discussed.