

such as a developing legal framework and economic shifts effect the possibility of change. The editors are to be commended for this timely and significant contribution to our understanding of the equity debate on Canadian campuses.



Dennison, John. D. (Ed.). (1995). *Challenge and opportunity: Canada's community colleges at the crossroads*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press. Pp. viii – 290. Price: \$24.95. Reviewed by Michael Hatton, Humber College.

Challenge and opportunity: Canada's community colleges at the crossroads, edited by John Dennison, is a text clearly designed to follow from its predecessor, *Canada's community colleges: A critical analysis* written by John Dennison and Paul Gallagher and published in 1986. The earlier offering stands as a seminal text in the development of Canadian community college literature; the 1995 work effectively builds and expands upon that base.

About one-third of the 1986 text documents the founding and history of community colleges, while the remainder is devoted to an examination of issues that the authors argued would or should be pivotal concerns for the future. Similarly, in *Challenge and Opportunity*, Dennison has penned a preface and first chapter that represent about one-third of the text. These provide a brief overview of community colleges and current issues, and then examine their development, province by province and territory by territory, since 1985. Six of the remaining nine chapters were written by half a dozen authors who address a variety of community college issues, and three additional chapters were written by Dennison.

Whereas the 1986 text was the product of two authors, the 1995 offering provides the reader with greater diversity in issues and styles, and very nicely profiles a small selection of the growing number of academic writers and researchers who have experience working directly within the Canadian community college environment. This factor alone makes the book more inviting for community college researchers *and* practitioners, the latter being a group that has in the past sometimes depreciated the benefits of “academic” studies related to the colleges.

The reader is easily drawn into Dennison's first chapter as it details a decade of enormous change within the various jurisdictions. The style, similar to the 1986 volume, is fuelled with facts, cautions, and optimistic challenges.

Dennison has dedicated much of this first chapter to identifying and examining many of the reports, commissions and analyses that have investigated, diagnosed and (sometimes) shaped community colleges, jurisdiction by jurisdiction, during the past decade. The level of detail in this chapter is remarkable, and clearly represents an exceptional research investment.

However, using recent or current reports as the basis for trying to anticipate or establish trends or directions is tricky business. In many instances, even the most immediate of the effects or results of many reports and commissions are not yet clear, and may not be for years to come. For example, Dennison lists "some of the most significant guides [recommendations] for future action" that came out of Ontario's *Vision 2000* (p. 49). Although these recommendations have spawned more committees and additional reports, the overall effects to date have been limited. Readers who are not familiar with these reports may assume dramatic change, when in fact the drama often is found only in the report, not in any subsequent action.

In the second chapter, John Levin argues that "the community colleges of Canada ... have a history of being directed and managed through a hierarchical system of authority ..." (p. 105), but now these "traditional approaches to organizational transactions have become obsolete or are at best only marginally useful." (p. 105). Any reader familiar with Levin's work will recognize this theme. A key challenge facing community colleges, according to Levin, is for the community college "to abandon the old conception of leadership (and its obsession with control) and to embrace a more vital and nourishing concept of leadership ..." (p. 107). Using a four quadrant paradigm, Levin suggests that: "The first act of recovery was a shift from a hierarchical to a managerial leadership model", but it "remains to be seen if the managerial approach will do the job" (p. 113). Levin challenges colleges to decentralize power and make leadership a collective process. Is this possible? Can organizations that are "vulnerable to dysfunction and to unplanned change" (p. 116) embrace and survive the challenge of creating and installing a radically different leadership and management model, all the while responding to the litany of challenges and pressures detailed by Dennison in the first chapter? Levin appears to suggest they must.

The chapter authored by Starr Owen focuses on organizational culture. The author argues that an understanding of "organizational culture is essential to understanding what happens in community colleges", even to the degree "that some difference in the cultures of any two colleges is likely to explain why the administrator may fail in one but succeed in another" (p. 141). One of the more interesting elements in this chapter is the discussion of the integration, differentiation and ambiguity paradigms, and how particular forces (i.e., reduced funding)

may lead a college culture towards a particular paradigm. In this regard, Owen acknowledges the broad contribution all parties make to the development of college culture.

Janet Knowles' chapter on entrepreneurship provides an interesting contrast to other chapters in the book. She describes the "current fiscal crisis" as "giving rise to entrepreneurship as a means of sustaining, and in some cases transforming, the college", and argues that this "is increasingly valued as an appropriate response to the growing need to 'do more with less' " (p. 184). The threat is clear, the response is innovative, and the emphasis is utilitarian. Issues such as collegial decision making, shifts in the cultural paradigm, job security and changes to the colleges' mission receive short shrift, though mention is made that for some, "the pursuit of overt entrepreneurial activity in educational programs and services is viewed as detrimental to the interests of educators and learners alike" (p. 200). Knowles' typology of entrepreneurial responses (advocacy, fund raising, international education, and business and industry training) is a good beginning for what could lead to an interesting series of longitudinal analyses to determine the relative involvement of colleges in these activities and their long term effects.

The chapter on aboriginal education by Douglas Baker provides a strong blueprint for responding to the needs of aboriginal learners. It identifies key issues, barriers to access, and factors which contribute to aboriginal success, the latter being a succinct and particularly effective summary. In the 1986 volume, little mention was made of aboriginal involvement or needs. The inclusion of this chapter is a comment in itself regarding the acknowledgement of aboriginal needs, though Baker makes it quite clear that "acknowledgement is not accomplishment" (p. 208), and it may be "necessary to legislate the inclusion of aboriginal institutions in the public postsecondary system" (p. 218).

Charles Joyner's chapter on the DACUM curriculum development technique and competency-based education (CBE) helps position the book within a community college context. DACUM and CBE are all about training and, hence, community colleges. In this chapter, Joyner neatly describes the origins and development of DACUM, recounts issues and trends associated with the technique, and in an understated fashion addresses a broader issue, noting that DACUM and CBE have not gained wide acceptance in community colleges. Why?

Despite the irrefutable logic and the theoretical merits of competency-based education, there has been mixed acceptance of both the concept and process in Canadian institutions. Perhaps the greatest

obstacle ... is ... resistance to modifying the values, customs, and practices of traditional education ... exacerbated by an insufficient understanding ... (p. 243).

By way of example Joyner points out that most Canadian community colleges have been and continue to be very traditional places for learning.

Paul Gallagher wrote the final chapter in this book, and it's difficult to imagine a more qualified author. For decades Gallagher has worked in, critically examined, and written about Canada's community colleges. His style is economical, direct, proactive, highly-readable, and practitioner-oriented. In this chapter Gallagher applauds the colleges for their achievements, and describes a very challenging future. He claims that colleges have been defined by two characteristics that set them apart from other institutions: their role as instruments for the implementation of economic or social policy and their high-quality teaching (p. 258). Now, he argues, is a time for renewal, and the prescription includes more national networking, shifting from a focus on student access to a focus on student success, creating learners who are more independent, increasing opportunities for personnel development within the colleges, and developing new forms of leadership (p. 272). The writing is provocative, and readers will question some of the assertions. In part, this is what makes the chapter valuable.

The three additional chapters written by Dennison tackle different issues - organization and function, values, and accountability - and all reflect his easy style and strong knowledge of the subject. These chapters, along with his concluding comments, bring a pleasant continuity to the overall text and reinforce the themes of challenge and opportunity.

This book achieves two objectives. First, it documents the current state of community college development in Canadian jurisdictions. In this regard it is the best, most up-to-date and extensive national perspective on Canada's community colleges. Second, it tables a variety of critical issues, all of which deal directly or indirectly with the need for colleges to renew themselves in order to remain relevant. Can colleges act as agents for economic development? Can colleges respond to the access needs of groups who have been under-represented in higher education? Can colleges develop models of leadership that are appropriate for the year 2000 and beyond? Can colleges implement successful strategies to deal with the fiscal realities of a vastly different economic climate? For the most part these authors are college champions, and their criticism tends to the gentle side. Colleges may have to change far more than these writers suggest.