

universities which does a fine job of describing some of the issues which prompt government attention and action, while being highly sympathetic to the traditions and needs of universities. That report, together with this book, would be a good starting point for a further collection of essays on this important and timely subject.

REFERENCES

Taylor, W. (1987). *The Role and Functions of the Universities*. Paris: OECD. (Report ED (86)4).

A Profile of Postsecondary Students in Canada. Ottawa: Department of Secretary of State, 1987. Reviewed by John D. Dennison, Professor of Higher Education, The University of British Columbia.

This report, published in 1987, presents a summary of national data on postsecondary students from 1983–84. The stated purpose of the report is “to highlight some of the main characteristics of the Canadian student population”. In particular, the issues which are addressed include students’ income and expenditures, mobility, language usage, socio-economic background, and interest in Canadian studies. For some reason, not all objectives are covered in the body of the report.

There is much in this report which is both interesting and valuable and any reader, even with a very general interest in higher education, would gain considerable insight into the kinds of individuals who pursue advanced education in Canada, and the many qualities which distinguish them.

However, as is often the case with national surveys and massive data files, there are certain deficiencies in the study which for serious students of higher education might constitute an ongoing source of frustration. Part of the latter lies in the timeliness of the data. For reasons which are presumably explainable, it appears to take three years to reproduce important information into published form. The characteristics of 1983–84 students do not have the same appeal to contemporary researchers in 1987.

While, as already noted, the study objectives were somewhat selective and the results provided through the various tables were even more so, some readers may well wish that, given the size of the survey, other important research questions might have been included.

There are, of course, several “pluses” in the study. The size of the data base (45,000 useable returns for a net response rate of over 70 percent) is impressive in itself and lends credibility to the results. Furthermore, for the first time, a national study of this kind has attempted to provide data on part-time as well as full-time students at the community college level. Given the importance of part-time students as a target population in the college sector, this is a welcome innovation. For some reason, the data on these two groups of students is not comparable. For

example, there is no breakdown by gender or age for full-time students, and no financial data respecting their part-time counterparts.

Some highlights of the survey results include: only about 2 percent of college students are studying outside the province, whereas the comparable figure for university undergraduates is 7 percent; foreign students constitute about 4 percent of the undergraduate university population.

Students seem to prefer job related, rather than academic, reasons for choosing postsecondary study. However, there were some notable variations among part-time students on this question.

The socio-economic related data are not surprising and tend to reinforce conclusions from a variety of research studies on this issue. Nevertheless, as the report notes, there are some trends in evidence which indicate increased accessibility to more disadvantaged groups of students in Canada over the last ten years.

The data on financial needs and costs of education, albeit limited to full-time students, provide a rich source of material on which to base policy initiatives in this area.

All points considered, the survey is a useful addition to the data base on students in postsecondary education. Nevertheless, there are many important questions which researchers from various disciplines might raise with respect to the timing, the scope, and the level of data analysis.