

Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

Teather, D. (Ed). (2004). *Consortia: International Networking Alliances of Universities*. Melbourne University Press: Carleton. Pages: 272. Price: \$44.95 (AD) (paper).

Reviewed by Calvin Bowry, Queen's University.

There is a hint of irony in reviewing a book about university consortia just as the Roman Catholic Church—arguably one of humanity's broadest reaching networks—is about to select its new leader. Criticisms of the Church that have resurfaced with John Paul II's death (e.g., on the ordination of women, birth control, and homosexuality) remind us of social changes that have swirled around the Roman Catholic church since John Paul's accession in 1978, which some say challenge its relevance. Similarly, John Kirkland, a senior administrator at the Association of Commonwealth Universities and a contributor to *Consortia*, points out that each of the words "Association," "Commonwealth," and "University" has vastly different meanings today than in 1913 when that consortium was formed. A case in point: although ACU membership is now higher than ever (with a remarkable 500 member institutions), the network is quite vulnerable because of the hugely diverse set of demands of its member institutions.

Consortia begins with an interesting historical account of the changing demands on universities worldwide, especially after the second

world war. Massification of higher education from an elite system, which began in Europe and North America in the mid-1950s, has been driven by burgeoning student demand for degrees and government willingness to fund higher education expansion for its perceived positive impact on economic growth. The Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik in 1957 led to a massive increase in science and technology funding in the United States and a race between the two nations on many levels. David Teather describes five major changes faced by the reorganized British higher education system in the 1990s as it emerged from the Reagan-Thatcher era: increased orientation to the world of work; reduced autonomy for academics as their roles have become more closely associated with production (of knowledge); shifting epistemologies of knowledge and ways of knowing the world pragmatically; increased focus on accountability, efficiency, and performance; and an increased penetration of the language of business into higher education spheres (by example, see Chris Robinson's chapter about Universitas 21). Concurrently, advances in information and communication technologies that accelerated in the 1990s created new possibilities for the mobility of people, knowledge, capital, and skills. It was during the 1990s that the majority of university network alliances were formed.

In contrast to the majority of chapters in *Consortia*, which offer readers descriptive accounts of individual or institutional experiences within various university network alliances, David Teather and Hans deWit provide very informative syntheses of the changing context of higher education throughout the 20th century, especially the impact of globalization on universities and their response to it in the form of internationalization strategies. According to deWit, "International inter-organizational arrangements result from changes in the production of knowledge and in the regional and global environment in which higher education and the production of knowledge take place" (p. 29). Referencing Jane Knight and Peter Scott, he also distinguishes globalization, "the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across borders" from internationalization, the response of universities to the catalyst of globalization (p. 30).

International faculty and student exchanges, joint degree programs, curriculum development, research cooperation, and international development projects are all cited at various points throughout the book as key factors in a university's ability to respond to the needs of, and attract, internationally mobile students and researchers. DeWit goes on to describe four rationales for the creation of higher education network alliances. Whereas, he says, political rationales (e.g., to strengthen foreign policy, technical assistance, peace, mutual understanding) and socio-cultural rationales were dominant in the first half of the twentieth century, he observes economic rationales (e.g., institutional expansion, competition, labour markets, financial incentives) and academic rationales (new markets for academic products, institutional expansion, integrating international perspectives into teaching and research) as underlying today's "trends" in network creation and membership.

DeWit's particular choice of words in the above instance gives reason for pause to reflect on the degree to which university consortia are actually a trend, and if, indeed, they will follow other trends (witness the inflation of the dot com bubble). On one side, no author in *Consortia* disputes the theory that membership in a higher education networking alliance is necessary for a university to retain a strong reputation and relevance in today's world. Chris Robinson, for example, argues that "no institution, however strong or prestigious it may be, can continue to be entirely successful operating on its own" (pp. 46–47). Yet, the lack of superlatives used by contributing authors in describing their personal or institutional experience as a consortium member speaks rather loudly about the effectiveness of consortia in practice. In case after case, *Consortia* contributors refer to the outcomes of their involvement in international university networking alliances as being lukewarm at best.

A case in point is that of UNICA, the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe. UNICA initiatives included, among others, a working group on public health; a database for student mobility between UNICA member universities; colloquia on European topics; joint UNICA summer courses; and student mobility programs in postgraduate studies. Its failure as a university consortium was attributed to a lack of a clear mission and

objectives, coherent organizational structure, coordination problems, and diversity of its membership. An interesting factor related to the waning relevance of the UNICA framework is that UNICA provided highly desired access to the European Commission for central and eastern European universities. However, larger universities from European Union countries came to realize that they did not need UNICA to facilitate contacts in Brussels.

It is worth noting at this point the characteristics of new global university consortia. They tend to be dominated by Western, English-speaking countries and strongly oriented towards Asia. Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Central and Eastern Europe tend to get ignored by global university networks, which reflect the economic rationale as the driving force behind university internationalization, the dominance of the English language in higher education, and the perception of globalization as Westernization. One wonders, then, about the subject fields that thrive in consortia, but more importantly which ones get overlooked.

Consortia's central chapters are grouped in pairs to provide overviews of different university networks and glimpses into specific initiatives that have been undertaken within their frameworks. These chapters reflect the broad range of purposes underlying networking alliances. For example, John Kirkland and John Fielden discuss the Association of Commonwealth Universities and CHEMS, the Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service. CHEMS was established to facilitate and promote the exchange of best management practices between university administrators on different continents, especially to help weaker institutions learn stronger ones, using a management evaluation tool well known in industry. The process adopted for this project is quite instructive for the reader; however, the overall success of the CHEMS benchmarking project was impeded by distance between members. A remarkably low percentage of ACU's 500 member institutions took part.

Herbert Tsang and David Teather's overview of LEWI, the David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies, is another illustrative example of how the external environment surrounding any system constantly evolves, and

how a system must continually evolve with it to remain relevant. Tsang and Teather illustrate how LEWI was designed to facilitate all LEWI member interactions between mainland China and western European and North American universities by positioning Hong Kong as a conduit. The authors point out that the recent dynamic development of mainland China poses opportunities and challenges to the LEWI network.

Chris Robinson and Michael Goldberg contribute two chapters about Universitas21, a network of North American, Asian, and European universities incorporated in the United Kingdom that provides a distinct contrast to the other initiatives of publicly funded universities outlined in the book. U21 Global is Universitas21's for-profit "e-education" venture developed in partnership with the Thomson Corporation to offer an on-line MBA program. Fully half of U21 Global's US \$50 million initial capitalization was put up by member universities. These two chapters are wonderful examples of the degree to which education has evolved into an international commodity governed by global trade rules, and provide grounds for debate on the opportunities and threats that globalization poses to higher education.

One of the key messages throughout this book is that for higher education networks to be successful, their mission must be clearly defined. Creation or membership in a university network alliance may be initiated by university administration or at the grassroots level by an individual faculty or staff member. Regardless, *Consortia* points out that what matters most is that one level convince the other of the usefulness of membership and that the institution commit to full participation.

Overall, I found *Consortia* to successfully achieve what it sets out to do. Spun out of a 1998 international higher education networking workshop held at Hong Kong Baptist University, the chapters provide pragmatic overviews of academic consortia. This book would be a useful read for higher education administrators who are either considering joining an international consortium or assessing their institution's current membership in one. Higher education researchers will likely find little in the way of seminal ideas in *Consortia* on the phenomenon of university

internationalization, but that doesn't mean to say that *Consortia's* descriptive accounts of university networking strategies can't inform theories of organization and internationalization of higher education.



Axelrod, P. (Ed.). (2004). *Knowledge Matters, Essays in Honour of Bernard Shapiro*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill/Queen's Press. Pages: 127. Price: \$27.95 (CDN) (paper).

Reviewed by Rosa Bruno-Jofré, Queen's University.

Knowledge Matters is a distinguished collection that grew out of a seminar in honour of Dr. Bernard Shapiro on the occasion of his retirement from the principalship at McGill University. All contributors to this book of essays, including the editor, Paul Axelrod, are respected scholars and administrators. Each chapter tackles the central question, "Whither the contemporary university?" from different vantages that reflect the areas of expertise of the authors. Although these timely essays honour Bernard Shapiro and his work as an educator, civil servant, writer, and administrator, the collection also pays tribute to the public education system to which Dr. Shapiro has dedicated his life.

The first part of the book is devoted to historical perspectives, which provide a frame of reference to understand paradigmatic changes affecting the vision, mission, and governance of universities in Canada. Claude Corbo, former rector of the Université du Québec à Montréal and specialist in higher education, calls attention to the relevance of distinctive cultural and regional contexts in the first essay. His analysis of the historical conceptual forms that the idea of the university took in Québec between 1770 and 1970 (theological, humanist, functional, utopian—even revolutionary) leads to an understanding of how concepts of the university do not appear in a state of purity. The chapter shows that current conceptions, such as the functionalist one, have been part of the history of the university in Québec