Book Reviews

Institute of Pacific Studies (Fiji); University of the South Pacific (Fiji) *Pacific Universities: Achievements, Problems, Prospects*. IPS, Suva, 1988, 427. p. illus. Incl. bibl. (\$15)
 MFN: 1890 – CALL No.: ASI-23 IPS
 ISBN 982-02-0039-3

The wealth of data and information provided in this comprehensive volume on higher education within the vast space of the Pacific is testimony to the spread of that particular gospel throughout the region. It provides a useful illumination on the variety of institutions and systems that have grown up since the initial establishment of the University in Cenderawasih in Irian Jaya in 1962. Not surprisingly for an area as indigenously culturally diverse as this (and subject to a diversity of neo-colonial cultural invasions), there is a baffling myriad institutional forms and models, some holding parity with universities, some merely posing by default as models for higher education, although it would be invidious from the outside to judge which is which. Undoubtedly the success story, and a model of multi-national provision elsewhere, is the highly prestigious University of the South Pacific. Its growth, consolidation, diversification and unique outreach programmes are discussed in minute and overwhelming detail, consuming the greater part of the book, and this provides an important archive of this unique institution. Lilliputian institutions, eg Universitas Cenderawasih, the Universities of Papua New Guinea, the University of Guam, the French University of the Pacific, Atenisi University, the University of Samoa, and 'lesser' tertiary colleges, many of them typically smaller, multi-functional institutions, are all accorded greater or lesser detailed description and emotionally (even reverentially) sympathetic treatment. This, though, is rarely subjected to a tight organizing framework or critical analysis. These mini case studies are complemented by descriptive surveys of national provision – in the Cook Islands, Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. Despite much flaccid description, there is a clear sense that the major achievements of the region have been to proliferate access and opportunity to as wide a population as the slender base to the systems permit. Discussions of opportunity and access are counterbalanced with subtle confrontation of inevitable issues of equity for a widely divergent clientele. The curriculum and staffing debates equally focus on questions of national versus regional interests and these, too, raise the questions of the directions that, especially, the University of the South Pacific will take in the future. The book provides a clear insight into the origin of these systems but a substantially less clear focus on the problems of planning, management and policy.

Kevin M. Lillis

*Department of International and Comparative Education,
 Institute of Education, University of London, UK*