

Unesco: *Planning and Management for Excellence and Efficiency of Higher Education*, Division of Higher Education and Research; Regional Centre for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Unesco-CRESALC), Caracas, 1991, 266 pp. ISBN 980-6226-54-2

This volume, put together under the auspices of CRESALC-Unesco is the outcome of a Round Table on the topic held in 1990, augmented by a small number of additional studies. The focus of the meeting was on approaches to excellence and efficiency in the light of contemporary challenges of coping with increasing student numbers; quality improvement in teaching, training and research; securing optimum employability of graduates; achieving all this in conditions of severe financial restraint. These issues are addressed in three sectors within the book, as follows.

- General Studies, including discussion on global higher education change; accountability for efficiency and effectiveness; improvement of management system; evaluation.
- Regional Studies, including essays on Latin America, Europe and the Arab world.
- National Studies of developments in Brazil, Tanzania, Rwanda, India, Czechoslovakia and the United Kingdom.

With such a wide remit, it is not surprising that the volume is rather uneven in terms of the analytical and critical content of the chapters, of the sophistication of treatment of the core topics and, indeed, of the extent to which a common framework can be perceived across the range of offerings. The book would have been much tighter had all the regional and national studies addressed a common conceptual framework, thus permitting a more systematic evaluation of generalizations and comparisons. Some essays are more successful than others in examining the mechanisms and instruments appropriate for systemic and institutional change, notably those on Latin America, Brazil and India.

As may be expected from a book which has its genesis in a conference, recommendations abound. How far they are picked up and by whom at whatever level in various national and international systems, one may only guess.

What one looked for, really in vain, was a treatise on the processes of systemic and institutional change, synthesizing the learnings from the studies, which could usefully have discussed typologies of systems with critical cultural, political and governmental and institutional management variables; change strategies appropriate to such typologies; the role and operations of internal and external change agents and interventions; the nature of planning systems appropriate to these shifts. Maybe this should be part of the next agenda: certainly a number of essays draw attention to this need.

At its least impressive, the book is a collection of interesting essays with some fascinating perspectives. At its best, it is a very useful reference work on the state of the art of a complex set of topics across a wide range of systems.

John L. Davies  
*Danbury Management Centre, United Kingdom*