

Capitalizing Knowledge: Essays on the History of Business Education in Canada. Edited by Barbara Austin. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. xiii +371 pp. Index, figures, tables. Cloth, \$60. ISBN 0-8020-4234-1.

Reviewed by Ben Forster

This ambitious book of essays attempts both to provide an overview of business education in Canada and to analyze the course of its development at many major Canadian universities. As is normal in such undertakings, the scope and character of the individual essays vary considerably. However, the quality of the work is generally of a high order, and some interesting lacunae have been filled. Barbara Austin has managed the editing function with skill and has provided an outstanding essay on the development of the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC), under the stimulus of which the book as a project first emerged.

Barry Boothman has written two ambitious essays as bookends. The first is by far the longest chapter in the volume, and it traces business education from the mid-nineteenth century onward. In the process, he does himself some disservice, as the nineteenth century is a context in which he is not entirely comfortable—moreover, the source materials are less rich and encompassing, given the analytic and modeling approaches he favors. He is much happier writing about the unfolding of business education in the twentieth century, the topic of the book's concluding chapter. In that chapter, he revels in developing complex understandings of the pedagogical and structural stances that have emerged in business schools over the last thirty years, and his prescriptive suggestions grow out of a retrospective analysis. Boothman faced some significant difficulties in developing a synthetic perspective, for while there are common touchstones, such as the ASAC and the influential Ford and Carnegie reports, business education developed in idiosyncratic ways at various universities. ASAC, as Austin points out, was a loose body that had limited success in developing common standards for university business education for much of its history. However, as is clear from a number of the essays, in universities where business education emerged more recently, American models were crucial.

The chapters vary considerably in approach and content. Robert W. Sexty and Gina Pecore's analysis of Memorial University is based almost completely on a tightly defined private-sector model. This tells us a great deal about the model and generates well-defined data sets, but the analytical spotlight is too harsh and subtlety is lost. Something similar might be said about Robert Ellis and John McCutcheon's short chapter on the School of Business and Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University, which attempts to develop critical distance by a comparison of

leadership styles and a rough periodization. The discussion of the development of business education at Queen's University in Kingston authored by Mervin Daub and Bruce Buchan strikes a better balance between the analytical and the narrative, and the reader can thus better appreciate the dynamics of growth and change in that institution. Pierre Harvey's assessment is limited to the formation and early development of the *École des Hautes Études Commerciales de Montréal*. Harvey shows that the basis of the school was a continental European model, unusual in the Canadian context. The brief, effective discussion of the emergence of the Faculty of Management at the University of Calgary undertaken by Vernon Jones and George S. Lane has, despite much restraint, a certain whiggish tone. The assessment of the emergence of business education at the University of Toronto by John Sawyer is intensely presentist and the essay, from an historian's perspective, is the least satisfying of the collection. In comparison, the essay by James Gillies and Colin Dickinson's essay on the planning, founding, and growth of the Schulich School of Business at York University—over its thirty years of existence—offers a thoughtful sense of developmental dynamics and context. However, the chief actor in establishing the Schulich School is one of the authors of the essay, and he chooses to write about himself in the third person. Is this mode of presenting the self not the special preserve of professional athletes?

This curious obscurantism highlights one of the difficulties of the volume. It is challenging for individuals closely tied to and often living within institutions to write about them with appropriate distance and perspective. Austin and Boothman here have a distinct advantage over other authors, as neither discusses the universities with which they are affiliated. Sexty and Pecore, in examining Memorial from the inside, escape the problem in part by sticking to a relatively rigid model, which dictates the type of evidence used; Queen's Daub and Buchan have the advantage of being professors emeriti. So when Boothman quite rightly criticizes the Ivey School at the University of Western Ontario—generally thought to be the best business school in Canada—for failing to contribute to this volume—and dismisses their in-house history as too self-congratulatory, he ironically touches on one of the weaknesses of the book. There is in some measure, in most of these essays, a certain lack of critical distance, which occasionally displays itself in touches of unbecoming pride, and crops up elsewhere in carefully muted and oblique references that the reader, only with some thought, might understand as critical. So while the reader learns a great deal, he does not learn enough. That failing is compounded by the shortness of some of the assessments and by the absence of chapters on some institutions of merit. Despite the resulting unevenness, the book is a significant addition to work on postsecondary education in Canada, and it opens up an important new territory in Canadian business historiography.

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Ben Forster is chair of the Department of History at the University of Western Ontario. He has written on the business origins of tariff formation, and his article, "The Diversity of Industrial Experience: Cabinet and Furniture Manufacture in Ontario," is scheduled to be published in Enterprise and Society (2003).