I have found the *Indicators* to be very useful in my own work. For example, in completing a review of rates of return to schooling in OECD countries, I have used the earnings-by-schooling indicator to compute “short-cut” rates of return to schooling for OECD countries (Cohn and Addison, 1998). This was particularly useful because rate of return studies were not available for many of the countries, especially for recent years. But it should be emphasized that the data are extremely aggregative, providing only an overall glimpse of the structure of education in OECD countries. For serious decision making analyses, more detailed data are required.

Finally, the data are available on the Internet. The URL is: http://www.oecd.org/els/stats/els_stat.htm

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Reference


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Since the mid-1970s, in American higher education, the interrelated offices of admissions, records (the registrar), financial aid and student accounts (the bursar) have undergone a sea of change in organizational philosophy and operational mechanics. In the registrar’s office and student accounts, this change has been largely an operational adaptation to technological changes in data storage and information processing. Admissions and financial aid, however, have evolved from institutional shepherds of student quality and social justice to complex marketing functions at the nexus of institutional decision making. In both instances, this evolution occurred before admissions and financial aid practitioners, faculty and other administrators, and other observers within and without academia had fully grasped these offices’s changed roles. For the financial aid officer, this role evolution tracked a course from dispenser of institutional charity to, after the founding of the College Scholarship Service and the profession’s wide acceptance of a uniform methodology for determining student financial aid need in the 1950s, to an agent of social equity in apportioning student financial assistance to, more recently, the institutional implementer of variegated pricing policies. Today, understanding within academia of the changed nature of financial aid is still piecemeal and haphazard.

Similarly, admissions evolved from an adjunct of the registrar’s office to a counseling center and recruitment center to a sales and marketing operation of considerable, if not sophistication, then, at least, complexity. Reactions to this change within the academy, in general, and the admissions profession, in particular, have ranged from denial to blind acceptance. The former has resulted in more than a little hypocrisy; the latter has resulted in egregious marketing and ethical faux pas that would make even the most cynical carnival Barker blush. The appearance of Swann and Henderson’s *Handbook for the College Admissions Profession* under the aegis of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers, with contributions from representatives of the other major admissions associations (The College Board and the National Association for College Admission Counseling), signals a profession’s coming of age.

This new professional maturity manifests itself in two ways. First, the acceptance by admission practitioners that their’s is a craft that combines both counseling and recruitment (sales). Rather than fighting this apparent paradox, admission practitioners have come to realize that these activities are not mutually exclusive, but rather the obverse and reverse of the same dual responsibility – serving the interests of students and institutions. Secondly, in order to serve these dual responsibilities, admissions practitioners have realized that their craft really is a profession in the strict sense of the word – it has a history, a philosophy of professional behavior and an organized body of knowledge and skills both common to the craft and required of anyone who would be a member of it.

As a primer of that history, philosophy and body of knowledge and skills, Swann and Henderson’s handbook advances the profession. Consisting of 19 essays by veteran admissions and enrollment professionals, the handbook provides a broad overview of the newly emergent profession. The handbook is subdivided into six subsections: 1) Perspectives and History, 2) The Admissions Officer, 3) Understanding Enrollment Management, 4) Admissions Tools, 5) Admissions Programs, and 6) Perspectives on the Twenty-First Century. As to be expected in such a collection, the quality ranges from the banal (former College Board President Donald Stewart’s “Perspectives on Educational Reform” and Greta Mack’s “Students of the Future”) to the obvious but useful (Michael Dolence’s “Strategic Enrollment
The author presents a historical perspective of the evolution of Brazil’s public education system in the context of its political economy. Given the title of the book, one might have expected an emphasis on the strengths rather than the weaknesses of the education system. The main theme of the book, however, is about the politicization of the country’s education system. It is made up of seven chapters. Chapter two gives an overview of the economic (one of the ten largest economies in the world) and political (alternation of military and civilian governments and weak political parties) characteristics of Brazil. It presents a statistical documentation of its income, population, urbanization, and labor market conditions as well as accounts for its public revenues and expenditures. The remaining chapters capitalize on the “backwardness” of the education system under different political leadership. The discussion focuses on three specific issues: 1) the distribution of authority and resources, 2) the relationships between the public and private schools, and 3) the inequalities of educational opportunities by region, race, gender, and class.

The book presents an internally consistent view of the author’s findings that are based on interviews with administrators and policy makers conducted between 1986 and 1990. Judging by the elaborate listing of notes at the end of each chapter (for a total of almost 600), it appears that the author must have turned every leaf in Brazil to grasp the intricacies of the system. He exposes the inefficiency of Brazilian public education as complicated by the “special” role accorded to private schools within the system. He patiently reiterates, over and over again, the inept political meddling in the education system. The message comes across loud and clear reflecting a very high level of frustration with the status quo. After six decades of policy debate over education reform, Brazil is still a laggard behind many Latin American countries. The education crisis in Brazil takes on several dimensions. First, Brazilian governments have not accorded top priority to education, despite upholding the promise of achieving universal primary education and eradicating illiteracy. Second, the education administration at all levels is highly dependent on the political system. Instruction and learning become, therefore, secondary in importance. Third, the proliferation of controlling agencies (including funding) has resulted in the creation of a complex web of multiple autonomous systems leading to accountability and duplication problems. Fourth, education segregation is maintained by a dualistic setting of high-cost, high-quality private schools for the elite and middle class kids and low-cost and low-quality public schools for the remaining children.

The evaluation identifies both input and output measures. Under-investment in education has been the norm with a disproportionate share allocated to higher education. Basic education has been neglected. Teachers in public schools receive low pay and poor training. Enrollments (reported by states) have expanded over time with slower growth in the very recent years. A high dropout rate (close to 50%) at the primary level is quite common. The quality of the Brazilian schools is basically very low.

Perhaps, the best part of the book is offered in chapter 4 (Public Purpose and Private Interest) which portrays the true dynamics of the Brazilian education system. Advancing private interests over the public good (Clienteismo) is pervasive. Public resources for edu-