

Shorter Notices*

John Robert Shotton. *Learning and Freedom: Policy, Pedagogy and Paradigms in Indian Education and Schooling.* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 209 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 295.00.

This critical study reviews educational development in India since 1947 and considers some challenging issues, which rarely come up in the discussion on education. These are the emphasis by the government on higher education; unequal structure in terms of both opportunity and achievement; and a system in which development of personal and collective freedom has failed to emerge. The author outlines a new philosophical perspective where there is a commitment to personal and social freedom, a commitment to public education, and a determination to shift the large sums of money spent on defence to public education.

Evaluating the Indian educational system which still employs teacher-centred methods, the author argues in favour of an alternative, the learner-centred method, i.e., to achieve successful learning by centring the curriculum around the learner, to enable him/ her to think logically and participate in the educational process under the guidance of a teacher. A series of successful projects or initiatives across India and in other developing countries are provided as evidence of working models for the new philosophical base. These initiatives fall in three different categories: learner-centred literacy projects; rural-based education schemes, and experimental schools. Finally, in the conclusion, those key factors are considered which will influence any educational policy in the twenty-first century.

Sureshchandra Shukla and Rekha Kaul (eds.). *Education, Development and Underdevelopment.* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 308 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 395.00.

Education is believed to be an agent of social change. It improves the quality of life and is a source to provide more opportunities for individuals in society. However, by the late 1970s, this concept of education has been seriously questioned as it leads only in the direction of growing dominance, inequality, and related outcomes.

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This volume is a collection of 12 articles where contributors view education as having the potential to improve the quality of life for human beings but not necessarily for all groups in a given society. These articles explain the colonial legacy, relating it to the present-day debate on the issue of growing privatisation in education, in the current environment of liberalisation and globalisation. They analyse the stratified system of education, i.e., differential access to education that has emerged in the past five decades. Other issues covered are constraints in educating the poor and the marginalised, the role of NGOs in empowering the poor, and the phenomenon of brain drain, which in India links higher education to the world market for labour.

The contributors view the low level of education and literacy, poverty, and unequal development in India as matters of urgent concern. Their emphasis is to rediscover the basic aim of education, which brings about a real social change instead of distorting the goals of justice and equality, favouring the privileged, and eventually bringing about more underdevelopment. This critique of the educational system in the Indian context is good reading for educationists and policy-makers.

Kamal Siddiqui. *Land Management in South Asia: A Comparative Study.* Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997. 484 pages. Hardbound. Pakistan Rs 595.00.

Despite rapid urbanisation, an overwhelming majority of South Asians still live in villages and are dependant on the land for their livelihood. The population explosion has crippled the entire ecosystem of this region through indiscriminate use of scarce land, forest, and water resources. Given the growing demand for sustainable land utilisation in the world, it becomes necessary to understand the complexities associated with it in this part of the world.

This comparative study develops a framework for a land management policy in three South Asian countries, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. It outlines and evaluates the current practices in land management and the changes since independence in these three countries. In the analysis, the degree of internal decentralisation, procedural consistency, maintenance of basic records, information flow, the capability of the policy-making apparatus, commitment of the policy-makers and implementers are also taken into account. Similarities and differences between different parts of Asia are identified. The motive is to bring out the best practices in various fields of land management. In addition, successful experiences and innovations are highlighted and negative practices are pinpointed to avoid any future mistakes. Suggestions are also made for the orientation of the existing land management set-up, which includes updating and modernising the land records arrangements; ensuring greater participation by people; and simplification and rationalisation of the existing land management system.

The data, information, and analysis generated in this study will be useful for researchers, trainers, and practitioners in the field and will help them in discharging their duties better.

Anirudh Krishna, Norman Uphoff, Milton J. Esman (eds). *Reasons for Hope: Instructive Experiences in Rural Development*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 322 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 250.00.

Two contrasting trends are prevalent in the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Growing poverty accompanied and often caused by environmental degradation and the rapid growth of urban centres. There also exist two divergent views for the future of these countries. The optimistic one emphasises urbanisation and industrial growth potential, presupposing that macroeconomic policies, liberalisation, marketisation, and export orientation will produce the take-off into technology-driven, trade-dependent economic growth. The other view foresees dissolution of Third World countries due to growing population, environmental collapse, and civil disorder. The contributors to this volume are not ready to accept either of the two. With their vast experience of rural development around the world, they see some hope. They argue not to rely too much on the urban sector but to find ways to make rural life more productive and attractive, to support urban societies and economies.

This volume is a collection of eighteen success stories of rural development. Seven of these case studies are from South Asia, three from Southeast Asia, and four each from Africa and Latin America. These studies describe the life of millions of rural households improved by their own and government initiatives; some of them conceived and promoted by remarkable individuals, others the product of team efforts or the result of institutional initiatives. These present some techniques, approaches, and principles, a suitable combination of which can promise change following the enforcement decision.

Philip G. Altbach and Damtew Teferra (eds). *Publishing and Development: A Book of Readings*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 190 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 325.00.

In this age of technology, little attention is paid to the publishing industry in low per capita income countries. Since publishing plays a significant role in the creation and distribution of knowledge and to the growth of an independent intellectual culture, technologies used in the publishing industry of the developed world also have their effect in the developing world. The latter is dependent on the developed world for the latest technology, which in turn endangers its control over the communities of relevant ideas and knowledge.

This volume focuses on the issue of book publishing in the developing countries. Nine separate readings highlight the critical topics relating to publishing in the developing world. These show the variations as well as the common elements in the development of publishing across the developing world. The main focus is on the

broad issues and trends in publishing which relate to social, political, economic, and cultural factors within a society as well as internationally. The topics covered include the role of government and its educational policies *vis-à-vis* the publishing industry; the problems of publishing in multilingual societies; the impact of NGOs on publishing, specially of the World Bank; and the need for encouraging vernacular publishing.

Savitri Goonesekere. *Children, Law and Justice: A South Asian Perspective.* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997. 420 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 310.00.

In any civilised society, the welfare of the entire community, its growth and development, depends on the health and well-being of its children. There has been a growing awareness amongst the people of South Asia with regard to the rights of the child, a consequence of debates generated not only at the national but also at the international level.

Children, Law and Justice deals with different aspects and dimensions of the rights of the child, according to the concept contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and confirmed by all the states of South Asia. It provides a detailed account of the 1989 UN Convention. The objective is to indicate the space available for using the Convention and to create a legal environment favourable to the realisation of the rights of children in the countries of South Asia. The concept of the rights of children, as expressed in the Convention, discussed thoroughly; the problems and prospects of its application in the context of the region's realities are also analysed.

Chapter 1 briefs the reader about the international legal environment and the new features in the Convention, while Chapter 2 describes and critically evaluates the legal environment in the South Asian countries. In the next two chapters, the focus is on the conceptual framework of the Convention: the definition of the child; the status of the family; parents and the state in relation to the child; and the relationship between social, cultural, and economic rights. Chapter 5 elaborates on the principle of the "best interests" of the child. The next three chapters throw light on three basic rights—provision, protection, and participation. Some other significant issues discussed are trafficking in children, the status of the girl child, adoption and foster care, child prostitution, and the child as the victim of abuse and violence.

This book is bound to serve an extremely useful purpose in familiarising judges, lawyers, and legislators with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A wide range of comparative material has been used, and the information provided would be of use not only for South Asian countries but also for all developing countries.