

**BOOK REVIEWS – BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN –  
ANALYSES BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES**

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ATCHOARENA, DAVID, and GASPERINI LAVINIA (eds.). 2003. *Education for Rural Development: Towards New Policy Responses. A Joint Study Conducted by FAO and UNESCO*. Rome: FAO; Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning. 406 pp. ISBN 95-5-104983-1, 92-803-1220-0.

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The study co-ordinated and edited by two well-known experts in the field of rural development and educational policies, David Atchoarena (Programme Specialist Team Leader at the UNESCO Institute for Educational Planning) and Lavinia Gasperini (Senior Officer for Agricultural Education at the Extension, Education and Communication Service of the FAO) is highly ambitious. The task of (re-)making learning relevant for its beneficiaries or end-users is an issue as popular as is identifying the wider benefits of learning, capturing today any educationalist's attention. However, this book is much more than a study on education's role in improving rural people's livelihoods, offering to readers new and insightful perspectives on the educational significance of rural areas in developing countries and on rural development in general.

The correct understanding of this perspective involves a comprehensive view on new opportunities for rural development and, at the same time, on the structural development challenges faced by rural areas. The analysis presented here demonstrates that a new type of intervention is needed, one taking a multisectoral and interdisciplinary approach. Based on a clear and detailed conceptual framework, this study successfully identifies the most innovative and successful initiatives in developing countries in the field of education for rural development and also the complex links between different areas of intervention. Reviewing initiatives on the part of both national governments and the international community, the study succeeds in casting light on a wide variety of interventions combining measures from agriculture, education, infrastructure, health, rural institutions, combating discrimination etc.

An important aspect of the book is its prudent division of chapters, which makes possible their easy and independent reading, covering all major issues related to the area of education for rural development. The book starts with a list of (working) definitions – a *sine qua non* for the study, even if some of the key concepts defined are still highly debated among specialists (i.e., adult

education, non-formal education, rural areas). The first chapter presents the conceptual framework for educational impact on rural development and the new understanding of this process. The following two chapters explore existing policies in basic-education provision in rural areas, paying special attention to the link of formal schooling with the life-environment of students. The fourth and fifth chapters are devoted to the competences required in the new rural labour markets and the consequences for education supply. These discussions offer a detailed overview on the need for change and flexibility in secondary and tertiary education institutions, as well as for enlarging the policy focus. The final chapter offers a balanced overview of the study's results, setting the frame for designing future intervention strategies for both individual countries and the international community.

A very strong point of the book has to do with the great variety and the richness of thematic papers and case studies included, which paint a very detailed picture of contemporary challenges in rural development and construct a virtual laboratory for testing different educational measures in specific rural environments. The study highlights the need to reconsider 'traditional' educational programs targeting the rural areas of many developing countries; it offers new insights even for experienced education specialists. This work correctly presents education and training policies for rural areas as important mechanisms for building citizenship, aiming to increase public attention and returning the rural areas to the agenda of decision-makers. Other important topics analysed are: targeting mechanisms for rural programs, including all categories of at-risk groups; the challenges specific to reforming secondary and higher agricultural education according to emerging rural employment needs; and new, integrated methods of financing focusing on sector-based mechanisms of inter-donor coordination.

One highly controversial issue addressed in the study, yet not sufficiently detailed is the role of decision-makers in promoting education for rural development programs. A common feature of all successful interventions appears to be the active involvement of decision-makers, but on a large scale this is particularly difficult to attain. Reaching the rural poor is more costly and time-consuming than reaching the urban or peri-urban poor, and in many cases decision-makers are still unable or unwilling to think in the long term. Readers of the study will nonetheless discover some examples of recent developments addressing this issue.

It is for the most part true that policy-makers are keener on reading policy proposals than turning the pages of books. The authors made a wise choice in synthesizing as much as possible, in the "Policy implications" section of the last chapter, the main findings of the survey and translating them into a valuable guideline. While avoiding ready-made solutions, the study successfully creates reference points for increased development of education in rural areas, as well as, hopefully, a future communication platform for developing countries and the donor community. A good example of this is the fact that the results of the study support the initiative coordinated by

FAO and UNESCO: *Education for Rural People*, as part of the Education for All strategy. The book consequently gives an excellent demonstration of the fact that grasping the complexity and particularities of the rural environment can change the way we understand rural education. It is, then, a 'must' read for all those involved in education for rural development.

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CIPRIAN FARTUȘNIC

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BOWERS, CHET A., and FRÉDÉRIQUE APFFEL-MARGLIN (eds.). 2005. *Rethinking Freire. Globalization and the Environmental Crisis*. Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates. 204 pp. ISBN 0-8058-5114-3.

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Although an edited anthology, Chet Bowers' voice dominates *Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis*. But because he takes on the icon and the pedagogy that is "so widely promoted in leading colleges of education that criticism of [Freire's] ideas will, in effect, be a criticism of these institutions" (p. 133) the arguments of the book ought to be considered. Bowers has asserted these critiques in many books over the past two decades, but this time he adds fellow critics, which means that although his voice dominates, it is not the only one. Finally, although it is highly critical, the book is about "rethinking" and not necessarily "rejecting" Freirian pedagogy, which is an improvement to Bowers' past analyses. The book was recognized as a "Critic's Choice" in 2004 by the American Educational Studies Association.

There are two main themes in the volume, as the subtitle suggests. The underlying thesis is that Freireian pedagogy is founded in anthropocentric, individualistic, and rationalistic ways of being that are most predominantly a function of Western (European-derived) civilization. If Western ways of being-in-the-world are at the root of domination that surfaces as colonialism and massive global environmental destruction, more Western-styled education – which these critics assert is implicit in Freireian pedagogy – is unlikely to uncover alternatives to the current globalizing and anti-ecological path.

One of the two primary themes is that Freireian pedagogy applied in a universalistic manner undermines local cultures. Thus, even critical pedagogy is a way of reproducing the global hegemony of Western culture. Many of the book's authors address this point, usually from practical experience spanning decades of popular education. Refreshingly, the authors live and work in Mexico, the Andes, Bolivia, India, Cambodia, and the Canadian Arctic, making the book a genuinely international one. They conclude, as Loyda Sánchez Bejarano writes, "By making critical reflection the only reli-

able method of knowing, Freire's approach to emancipation has the ironic effect of negating all other forms of being and of living in the world" (p. 55).

The second primary theme regards the environmental question. If "All education is environmental education", as David Orr says, because it teaches *something* about the environment (even if all that is taught is that it can be ignored – then Bowers' lifelong work has been to articulate the "root metaphors" of Western culture which he believes underlie the widespread degradation. The criticism of Freireian and critical pedagogy is so sharp perhaps because this form of teaching purports to be different, yet, as the essays argue repeatedly, is just as colonizing. And the result is that the human species loses parts of the cultural diversity that may generate alternative ways of living with and on the earth. When "emancipation" seems to include liberation from the knowledge of previous generations, even Freireian pedagogy is "education for leaving home" (p. 76), inserting learners into the rapacious maw of the consumerist, individualist, anti-ecological Western civilization that devours more and more of the planet.

While I am sympathetic to this analysis, I find a number of problems with its presentation in *Rethinking Freire*. First, Bowers links the two primary themes much better than do any of the other contributors. Secondly, many of the contributors tried for many years to apply Freireian pedagogy, finding only partial success, and abandoning it for "alternative" approaches that value local knowledge and context. That this *is* the Freireian approach is the third problem. Freire's own writing emphasizes compassion, dialogue, educator as facilitator, and the substantive place of learners' existing knowledge. Other analyses, such as, Roberts, P. 2000. *Education, Literacy, and Humanization: Exploring the Work of Paulo Freire*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, emphasize that the problem with applying Freireian pedagogy is that of *mechanistically* applying it, as a universalized method.

The fourth problem is that the book does not take enough account of the ways that Freireian scholars and practitioners *are* responding (according to some, even Freire had begun to think more deliberately about ecological conscientization before his death). Such contributions "rethinking Freire" would have been valuable. Finally, Bowers' forty-page "Afterword" repeats too much of what has been expressed before. I am left with a good critique, but without a good practical strategy of what to do differently.

Nevertheless, this book is a valuable read. The best current research shows the accumulation of environmental problems to be maybe the most significant challenge ahead, and the extinction of human cultures and languages appears to be accelerating. There are convincing arguments that current systems of education are part of the problem. *Rethinking Freire* helps make that case.

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DURU-BELLAT, MARIE. 2004. *Social Inequality at School and Educational Policies*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning. 97 pp. ISBN 92-803-1243-X.

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Equality of opportunity for all students should be a fundamental goal of educators worldwide. This means that all members of a society should have an equal chance through their educational preparation to compete for positions. This unfortunately is rarely a reality, even in the most developed systems of education. In light of this reality, Marie Duru-Bellat examines the relationships between school and societal inequalities. In providing a sound review of the international research literature, Duru-Bellat attempts to touch on the socio-cultural causes underlying educational outcomes. Exploring studies from the family and community to the system level, her examples question what factors lead to inequalities and how might they be addressed or eliminated. With such a broad scope, perhaps the booklet is mistitled, as it provides more than a cursory look at social inequality at school and educational policies. The studies cited and subsequent discussions go well beyond the walls of school.

The issues identified in this volume continue to be pertinent and indeed common to policy-makers and educators. Many factors create social inequality both inside and outside of the school environment, and Duru-Bellat examines how students' socio-economic backgrounds function to limit or ensure equality of access and or attainment as she reports on studies conducted in both developed and less-developed countries. These do not show a definitive compatibility between social environment and performance, suggesting that there may be other factors at play which determine outcomes. A finding that Duru-Bellat does relate is the cumulative effect of social inequality: Students beginning school at a social disadvantage continue to become more disadvantaged over time. She tells us that according to the studies she has reviewed, "social inequalities established among one level will exert persistent influence via the level of attainment they have achieved by the time they begin the following school year" (p. 26).

In addition to socio-economic background, the role of the family is examined. Arguing that parents are able to employ direct and indirect strategies which impact the educational outcomes of their children, Duru-Bellat points to the fact that systems in which there is greater choice evidence more positive outcomes when parents are able to select the best schools and practices for their children. These include having access to greater resources, being able to influence the educational process or having the opportunity to exercise this greater choice within the system, as well as providing children with the kinds of 'capital' which may best prepare them for success. Duru-Bellat does a good job of providing counter-examples to studies which suggest direct causality. Families in which either parent has completed higher education appear to confirm notions of cultural reproduction and can often

influence the educational outcomes of their children. Overall, Duru-Bellat points to the finding that while family-specific factors appear to affect student outcomes, and that there is definitely a correlation between parent's involvement and outcomes, the impacts are all relative and cannot therefore be used comparatively.

Taking a look at schools, Duru-Bellat questions their effectiveness in addressing inequality. She suggests that the role which the teacher takes on has a direct impact on student outcomes. The research supports this to varying degrees, but once again, not enough to be used comparatively. However, those students who enter the system at a disadvantage continue to show the cumulative effects mentioned earlier.

Policies aimed at the reduction of inequalities in access and attainment have generally begun with increasing access to education at all levels. However, Duru-Bellat suggests that this does not respond to issues of inequality and may in fact serve to privilege the privileged and leave those less privileged behind. She points to the reality that all the research along with our common sense tell us that there are no simple answers when so many factors are involved. Very few systems appear to have found the answers to the problems at hand. While we are aware that there is a need to create policies that go beyond the system level and definitely outside of the schools themselves, it is our responsibility first and foremost to ensure that schools provide students with equal opportunities for equal outcomes. Duru-Bellat ends by calling for "schools based on more democratic principles, which can thus contribute to the development of a more democratic society" (p. 92). This call echoes the ideals of liberal reformers like John Dewey, who held that education on an equal basis for all would make possible fair competition for jobs and income. What we have here, then, is a great overview of sources, but really nothing substantially new.

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CLAUDINE BONNER

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HOLMES, KEITH, and YANNICK TSCHANZ (eds.). 2004. *Promoting Skills Development: Report of an Interregional Seminar, Paris, 22–23 January 2004*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning. 96 pp. ISBN 92-803-1261-8.

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In spite of international consensus on the need to fulfill the basic learning needs of all children, youths and adults, initiated first by the World Conference on Education for All in 1990 and reaffirmed by the World Education Forum in 2000, equitable access for all young people and adults to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes has been neglected in plans of action both by international donor agencies and national educational authorities,

focusing as they do on universal formal primary education. This is perhaps because skills, especially those associated with income generation and livelihood, are believed to be 'less academic' and thus less accountable for the selection of college candidates and because vocational skills training has been, traditionally, of an informal nature and hence not accepted as an integral part of the education system.

In light of the fact that skills development is the most-felt learning need of the excluded poor, the IIEP aims to highlight the EFA potential for improving the livelihood of the target population. Skills development is considered here to be the "development of the skills and knowledge needed by excluded groups in order to participate fully in the labour market." Therefore, it is said that "the provision of vocational skills training no doubt plays an important role in equipping young people and adults, especially those whose learning opportunities are limited, to lead more fulfilling and productive lives." Moreover, skills development is recognized as integrating knowledge, competencies and attitudes in the world of work, thus bringing actual benefits to the right clientele, that is, the rural poor. The volume thus intends to reassess the validity of EFA in its domains and practices at the local, national and international levels.

The four country case studies from Lao PDR, Mali, Nepal and Senegal, supplemented with resourceful discussions from an interregional seminar, present the current status and challenges with regard to skills development. An appeal is then made to support the integration of a vocational skills training component in EFA National Action Plans in order to meet the poverty-reduction needs of excluded groups such as out-of-school and out-of-work youth and the rural poor.

Useful comparative lines are drawn in Chapter Three between formal and informal learning systems. Formal education is said to concentrate so many resources on preparing the very few who are likely to go on to study at university level that it needs "to adapt to the needs of the various disadvantaged groups". Only in this way can it genuinely function as a prerequisite for poverty reduction, improving the living conditions of rural people. On the other hand, informal skills-training activities, responsive as they are, also require validation and sustainability.

In the later part of the volume, a framework together with operational mechanisms are proposed for national educational authorities and international donor agencies useful for planning skills-development programs. This seems to be the most instructive item for EFA planners for promoting skills development among excluded groups for poverty reduction. Yet the outcomes of skills-development programs remain uncertain in many rural contexts with respect to both the target audience and context. This is especially so in impoverished communities where there is a lack of motivation among local youth and adults to learn vocational skills, as well as little chance for gaining economic returns from such skills development. It might be necessary for skills-development programs

to cater to income generation in urban contexts, that is, to address rural–urban migration.

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TIEDAO ZHANG

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KALMAN, JUDY. 2005. *Discovering Literacy: Access Routes to Written Culture for a Group of Women in Mexico*. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education. 157 pp. ISBN 92-820-1137-2.

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This book portrays the work surrounding a literacy research project that received the prestigious 2002 UIE International Award for Literacy Research. It does so by examining the approaches which a group of women living on the edge of Mexico City has taken to achieving full participation in written culture. The aim of the project was to investigate the literacy practices of a specific community and how the women who lived there appropriated and used them in their everyday lives. The focus was on the reading and writing of “unschooled and underschooled women in light of the well-known education-related reality of females in the developing world”, in which the majority of illiterate people are women (p. 5).

The book is divided into four chapters. The first is entitled “Literacy in Context”. This chapter provides the reader with the background of the research project, describes its purpose and sets forth the research questions. In this chapter we also find the presentation of the theoretical tools employed in the study. Kalman and her research team make use of the work of Brian Street to provide representations of the multiple uses of written language (as opposed to the purely oral language practices that are generally attributed to Street). Kalman argues that “*being* literate refers to the ability to use written language to participate in the social world ... [which] involves learning how to manipulate written language in a deliberate and intentional way in order to participate in culturally and valued events” (p. 9). For students and young researchers, the methodological section in this first chapter provides a good look at how a qualitative research project is conceived and conducted, giving details concerning the ways in which the team approached the research questions, data collection and analysis. One of the most important contributions in the book found in this chapter surrounds the discussion between the difference between *access* and *availability* for social and material conditions for literacy.

The second chapter examines the availability of printed material in Mixquic and the opportunities the people living there have for participating in reading and writing activities. This chapter paints a portrait of the town as the context of these literacy many activities. The author analyzes social spaces in order to identify the literacy opportunities that exist there.

The focus in the third chapter is on the literacy project proper that Kalman and her team carried out with a group of women in Mixquic. Here she presents a detailed description and inner workings of the women's study group along with the theoretical premises that oriented her and her colleagues in their actions, including the relations they attempted to establish between the local culture and the organization of content and learning activities. The reader gains first-hand knowledge of the attitudes, experiences and reflections that the women have about their encounters with literacy, both in the past and during their participation in the project. The voices of the women themselves are used to describe these insights, providing the reader with a rich contextualized presentation. Kalman maintains that through their participation in the study group the women gained "access to different kinds of social participation and [this] enhanced their ability to express themselves" (p. 119).

In the fourth and final chapter Kalman presents her conclusions and reflections on the research surrounding the literacy project. She pointedly maintains that "today we know that education alone does not necessarily guarantee major changes in the daily lives of those involved in such programs; its effects are more limited, and we recognize that deeper changes in the living conditions of marginalized populations require socio-political policies and actions on a different scale. What education can offer, however, are new cultural options, including access to new knowledge and know-how, the expansions of existing knowledge, and the development of tolerance, understanding, and coexistence" (p. 127).

I found this volume not only to be well written: It provides useful insights into the issues surrounding adult literacy, particularly for unschooled and underschooled women. The main contribution in the book involves the difference between *access* and *availability* that emerged from the fieldwork along with the related methodological discussion. It will likely be of most interest to those readers who are already concerned with adult literacy both at a theoretical and a practical level. Thus, it should be useful to researchers, policy-makers and practitioners in the field. However, it is also a valuable source of information for students, as it traces the process surrounding an exemplary research project.

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HALLA B. HOLMARSDDOTTIR

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MAHIRI, JABARI (ed.). 2004. *What They Don't Learn in School: Literacy in the Lives of Urban Youths*. New York: Peter Lang. 284 pp. ISBN 0-8204-5036-7.

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The acquisition of literacy is basic human right, hence the emphasis by the United Nations on the provision of access to literacy for all as a fundamental objective. The present publication makes an important contribution to the

promotion of literacy at a time that the world seems to have admitted its wholesale failure to have made this basic human right accessible to all.

Numerous countries have sought ways of encouraging people to become literate, and that for a variety of reasons. In many cases, there has been success in the recruitment of learners, but often these quickly leave classes for lack of satisfaction and/or fulfilment. Motivation, recruitment and retention of literacy learners has, then, constituted a major problem for literacy promotion. The Jomtien Conference of 1990, the Dakar World Education Forum of 2000, and the subsequent education program and the United Nations Literacy Decade launched in 2003 have all sought to address the issue of how to get learners to school, or endow them with learning skills.

The present volume suggests that “there do not have to be inherent discontinuities between young people’s authentic life experiences and their experience of life in schools” (p. 14). Yet it also qualifies the appropriateness of the school curriculum, the intensiveness of school teaching, touching on the limitations of the formal school system and the validity of the de-schooling movement, thus launching an honest discussion of the real value of out-of-school learning and of removing learners from formal schooling.

The authors have all been involved with identifying issues related to literacy practices. As doctoral candidates, they explored possible innovative approaches. As African-Americans, they have tried to address the contribution of the Black voice to the discourse on literacy in general and the subject of communication in particular. In the process, the authors have examined prejudice and bias against African-American urban youths who may be categorized as criminal, violent, and irresponsible, and “represented in the society as dangerous Others” (p. 14).

In examining literacy in the lives of urban youths, this publication draws attention to several cases where the school has proved incompetent and incapable in dealing with real life issues – the same situation that has given rise to the home-schooling movement which allows families to raise their children apart from the perceived inflexibility and inappropriateness of the schooling system. As one author expresses it, “I used to go to school. Now I learn.” Home schooling and unschooling are related, as both explore alternative modes of education: “families identify themselves as unschooling when they do not follow traditional school curricular and schedules” (p. 105). As Holt in his *Growing Up Without Schooling* is reported to have put it, unschooling can be interpreted as “allowing for children’s natural learning rather than giving them unasked-for teaching”. Many mothers opt for home schooling, preferring to encourage their children to learn through doing, choosing what, when, how, why and to what depth, that is, to let the learner decide to learn. Not only parents, but scholars increasingly argue that school can kill initiative, destroy originality and along with it the mind, and stall the growth of self-confidence in the learner.

The orientation of these reflections on real life comes to the fore in the chapter on “Learning to Serve”, which explains restaurant literacy, the teaching of food

service and enabling the customer to enjoy the meal – in contrast, the intimate knowledge of a menu is hardly taught in school. In a similar way, the chapter on cyber literacy addresses questions about the kinds of literacy practices that cyberspace (the virtual reality that is now a part of real life) makes possible, or what literacy practices in cyberspace mean for school literacies and formal literacy instruction. The work also throws light on critical literacy and post-modernism (p. 129). Jane Stanley, writing on “Practising For Romance”, describes how adolescent girls make use of lessons learned from reading romance novels: “The books offer guidance to the girls as to what kind of behaviour is culturally permissible for them. Romance offers them insight into the inexplicable behaviour of adolescent boys. These texts feature female protagonists, something their school-sponsored reading doesn’t often do. They’re simple to read, and predictable; this is comforting in a world that changes particularly rapidly for adolescents. These novels are a site for the exchange of emotional currency” (p. 178).

The present volume is especially welcome at this period of educational history when most countries in the world are engaged in school reform. The lessons learned from the various stories and accounts given here should assist education providers to reflect on how to use the school system to meet the Millennium Development Goals, especially, poverty reduction. The work also confirms the validity of the assertions of Alan Rogers and his school of thought, namely that beyond the literacy taught in the school there are the real literacies practised in the market, on the street, and evident in sign-posts and drug prescriptions.

This book does not pretend to address the world literacy situation. It has been written by Americans for an American audience, and with special attention to the poor and the voiceless. However, it provides important lessons on motivation for learning, and for making the school respond to the challenges of livelihood, self-confidence and human dignity and, in a broad manner, life-long learning. The participatory nature of the writing project through which the book itself was developed and the peer assessment used in the form of responses to the chapters deserve wide emulation in educational practice.

One thing this publication has not paid adequate attention to are the changes brought by new technologies and the increased access to the internet which has further reduced the importance of formal schooling and made out-of-school learning more attractive. They promise that new learners can now do all of their learning in their own way and are free to learn what they wish to learn, without time-tables – moreover, that there will be no more drop-outs, or the possibility of being excluded.

On the other hand, the book has also not given attention to the dangers in abandoning the school system, where lasting friendships can be made early in life, and the potential resultant isolation. For in spite of the limitations of the formal school system, face-to-face contact has the potential of furnishing young learners with the benefits of the experience and care of the teacher, the community and peers.

The 11 well-written chapters of this book are easy to read; they speak with a strong voice to an audience in the vast literacy community. Hence, we

share the conclusion of Soraya Sablo Sutton that “this project confirms my belief that non-school literacy practices can play a crucial, empowering role in the lives of those who participate in them” (p. 232).

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OUMA, WANGENGE G. 2004. *Education for Street Children in Kenya: The Role of the Undugu Society*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning. 123 pp. ISBN none.

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The problems experienced by students at risk of dropping out or not having access to schools continue to plague many countries. To address this, the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 re-affirmed the commitment of the international community to “ensuring universal access to basic education of high quality by the year 2015”. This commitment is vital, as there continues to be a high percentage of students who do not achieve the necessary educational requirements to allow them to integrate successfully into society. Already in 1973 the Undugu (‘solidarity’) Society of Kenya was formed by Arnold Grol to provide education and training for street children – the pioneer provider of such a service in Kenya, at a time when there were very few children on the streets. It remains one of many such organizations which undertake this and similar roles, catering to a group that has grown astronomically.

In this volume, Wangenge Ouma takes a look at the strengths and weaknesses of the non-formal education program offered by the Undugu Society. His study was aimed at uncovering the lessons to be learned from this program in the hope of sharing these with other groups working to educate at-risk youth. The book arose out of a Master of Education thesis and is set up in that particular format, with an executive summary, followed by four chapters, references and appendices.

The introductory chapter provides a background to the problem, a bit of history of the Society, a statement of the problem and an outline of the objectives and questions guiding the study. Ouma provides a short list defining what he calls “significant terms”, among which is missing a reference to the “parking boys”, the initial clientele of the Society’s program. This leaves the reader to wonder if the groups being served have remained the same since its inception – whether the parking boys were simply the street children the Society educated. Interestingly, further research indicates that the parking boys are children who find parking spots on busy Nairobi streets for motorists for a fee. Strangely, this practice is not mentioned once in the study as a means of employment for any of the street children. The author also appears throughout the study to distinguish between “drop-outs” and “push-outs”, but defines only the former in his list.

The review of the literature provides an international perspective from the developing world as well as a local one, with a look at how street children are characterized – as a by-product of multifaceted and complex political, historical and economic problems; it also suggests what education programs are and should be offered to them (with a list of other Kenyan programs included); addresses issues inherent in the education of street children; and gives an explanation of non-formal education programming.

Chapter Three, with its presentation of data, analysis and discussion of the findings, is informative, as it provides an overview of the process the Society follows in its programming; who is enrolled and how; who exactly is involved in the process, from the children to their community, parents, the teachers etc.; what the programming entails in terms of curriculum; and the problems faced by the main actors in this process – the students and their teachers. In spite of somewhat dismal reviews all around, Ouma finds that there has been a gradual increase in enrollment in the schools operated by Undugu over the years. Throughout this chapter, the author provides recommendations aimed at addressing concerns/issues uncovered through the process of the research.

Chapter Four concludes with a list of recommendations, many of which are insightful and would perhaps be extremely beneficial if undertaken. Ouma obviously sees the Undugu Society as providing a positive service within communities by being a viable and alternative form of education for those children unable to participate in the formal system. He recognizes its limitations, but suggests a reduction in some of the services offered; an increase in the involvement and participation of parents and communities; and the re-evaluation of its financial circumstances. He suggests the program is in danger of being discontinued if not re-structured, for financial reasons as well as some of its programming being out of touch with today's job markets.

In light of the changes Ouma alludes to having taken place since this study was conducted, it would be interesting to see how the Undugu program has evolved since then and if any of the questions raised by this study have been answered.

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CLAUDINE BONNER

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ROGERS, ALAN (ed.). 2005. *Urban Literacy: Communication, Identity and Learning in Development Contexts*. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education. 312 pp. ISBN 92-820-1145-3.

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The present volume represents the product of an international seminar on 'Literacy and Livelihoods in Urban Contexts' organized by three Delhi-based institutions together with Upphingham Seminars in Development from the United Kingdom in December 2002. The seminar was part of

an international research project on urban literacy initiated by the editor, Alan Rogers.

The aim of the project was to contribute to the discussion and understanding of issues related to urban literacy, particularly in relation to adult literacy. The seminar included participants from 13 different countries. The goal of the seminar was the sharing of ideas, experiences and practices in the field of urban literacy. In large part, this volume is an offering of the results of the contributions in the seminar, and it is, as mentioned by Adama Ouane in the Preface, "dedicated to illuminating the manifold uses of literacy in the urban environments of developing countries" (p. vii).

Among the major contributions made in this book is the way in which it draws attention to the term 'illiterate' and highlights that "literacy is not a constant: one person may be literate in one context but 'illiterate' in another context" (p. 8). This notion is particularly well described in the first section of the volume in the chapter by Chander Daswani, who provides us with some examples of individuals from Delhi. They have acquired literacy in their native languages, but they are not literate in the languages of wider communication and thus are unable to make full use of their literacy skills.

After the introductory section, the next part of the book focuses on the concerns of an increasing urban population and some of the responses of adult literacy programs. The chapters by Denzil Saldanha and Ajay Kumar draw attention to the gap in literacy programs in recognizing the diverse contexts of literacy in rural and urban settings and that in most 'developing countries' programs still largely focus on rural areas. The next chapter in this section is by Brian Street, who focuses on numeracy in looking at ways of promoting literacy in urban contexts. Street suggests that "exploring the relationship between literacy events and literacy practices ... provides a useful basis from which to examine numeracy as a social practice" (p. 88). He draws attention not only to the formal practices of numeracy, but also the informal practices through the research in the field of ethno-mathematics.

The third section of the book deals with urban literacy practices in a range of settings, with examples from South Africa, the Philippines and Brazil. These settings include a number of different contexts that demonstrate various urban literacy practices. The first chapter in this section concerns a police station in South Africa, as Moeain Arend describes the "gap between past and present literacy practices of police officers in the station" (p. 99) and how the current literacy practices in the station lead to a "disorder of discourses" between "insiders" and "outsiders" as well as between "insiders" and "insiders". Another chapter by Guilherme Rios draws attention to the simple and often generalized assumptions of literacy and non-literacy (instead of 'illiteracy') and how, in many urban contexts, there is actually a considerable amount of informal learning taking place.

The fourth part of the volume deals with the teaching of literacy skills in urban contexts. Judy Kalman's contribution is the first in this section, in which she describes the process of creating new identities in a number of

urban women's literacy classes in Mexico and how this is part of a transformation for these women from daughter to mother and from rural to urban residents. The contribution from Tonic Maruatona describes how the massive migration of people with low literacy skills into urban centers in Botswana has led to workplace literacy programs. However, Maruatona points out that the programs failed to address the needs of the participants because "workplace literacy education in Botswana has been characterized by a heavily centralised and decontextualised curriculum, the use of standardised literacy materials, and conventionally trained teachers" (p. 243). Thus, he argues that workplace literacy programs would be more effective if they used contextually responsive approaches.

In the conclusion, the editor pulls together some of the key lessons from the various chapters in the book along with the other studies in the research project. Rogers highlights the assumption made that one all too often finds "a 'one size fits all' approach to adult literacy programs", which he argues is both "inappropriate and ineffective" (p. 301) and that "what is needed is a panoply of learning opportunities suited to the different and changing identities of urban residents" (p. 11). In closing, we are reminded that the crucial element of this is not generalized urban and rural solutions, but local solutions designed to meet the needs of the local contexts of the various literacy programs.

I found this volume to be well written, offering valuable studies on the issues surrounding adult urban literacy. It would likely be of most interest to readers who are concerned with adult literacy both at a theoretical and a practical level. It should be useful to researchers, policy-makers and practitioners in the field.

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