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BOOK REVIEWS


The history of women’s struggle for emancipation dates back to the last century. In developed countries like Britain, for instance, women were for decades denied basic rights and it was not until the turn of the century that the status of women in that country rose significantly. British women did not get the vote until 1923 and, furthermore, it was not until the passing of the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 that the last of the injustices were made illegal in that country. In developing countries women have been struggling for a long time and, sadly, they are still struggling for their rights. In many of these countries women have been treated like second-class citizens in spite of the enormous contributions they make to the socio-economic, political and cultural life of these countries. Very often women are subjected to humiliation and sometimes to antiquated and degrading (mal)practices, including suttee in parts of Asia and circumcision in parts of Africa.

It is heartening to note that governments in many countries, particularly in the developing world, have joined the fight for women’s emancipation, principally through the passing of legislation meant to give women their full rights. Besides governments, some men have expressed sympathy with the women’s cause, although they might come short of actually engaging in the actual fight. The saying that ‘you don’t have to be in the army to fight the war’ does ring true here, and hence the contribution by these men (even if it is only moral support) should be most welcome to all concerned. In spite of these efforts, however, discriminatory practices against women still persist the world over.

It is in the light of this background that the two books Women and the Law in Southern Africa and Empowerment and the Law. Strategies of Third World Women are most heartily welcomed. Both publications are concerned with women and the law and the observation of both is that women the world over have received and continue to receive a raw deal; their rights are constantly being violated. While Empowerment and the Law casts a wide net and examines the situation of women in such diverse regions of the world as Asia, Africa and Latin America (ie the Third World), Women and the Law in Southern Africa restricts its analysis to the situation
in the Southern African countries of Botswana, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Both texts are basically a collection of contributions from different people in different countries who have been directly involved in the struggle for women's rights. The authors appear quite committed to the struggle for women's emancipation and they strongly believe that women and men are entitled to full equality both under the law and in practice.

There is a striking concordance to some of the observations made in the two books. For instance, both texts seem to agree that the problems faced by women everywhere are basically similar. They also both note that, although steps have been taken in various countries to give women full rights through legislation, it appears that there is still a lot of work to be done before the objective of full rights can be realised. The major snag, of course, is that the law says one thing while practice is often different. In my opinion this is a fair observation and can be seen in many countries. For instance, a recent article in The Herald (Feb 17, 1988), entitled “Role of Women in China Now Changing” notes that “The role and status of women in China have undergone great changes in recent years. But discrimination and prejudice still exist. Women, especially married women, cannot enjoy equal rights with men in many respects . . .”. The authors of the two books argue that these double standards are a result of the “existence of attitudes and behaviours that reinforce and condone the existence of inequitable laws and inconsistent application of the law” (Empowerment and the Law, p 3). The suggestion put forward in these two publications for righting this wrong is to try and change people's attitudes and behaviours in this regard. The authors are evidently unhappy about the progress made so far. For instance, in Women and the Law the authors lament that “over the past several years women in independent Southern Africa have called for explanations of the laws which govern their lives and for reform of the laws they consider oppressive” (p 5), but it would appear this has by and large fallen on deaf ears. By the same token, the authors of Empowerment and the Law regret that not much headway has been made and hence they are left with little alternative but to call on women everywhere to “deepen their understanding of the legal, cultural, political and economic underpinnings of their subordination” (p 1) if progress is to be made.

Empowerment and the Law has a total of 55 case studies and it painstakingly tries to show how society creates and reinforces female oppression. It is also concerned with strategies for empowering women who are underprivileged and calls on them to “challenge and even subvert” the system in order to realise their goal of total emancipation. It explores developments taking place in third world countries with regard to the plight of women and urges that more be done. The book is in six parts, with topics including a family law project in Nigeria, a legal assistance programme in
Columbia, women workers and the law in Peru, women, land ownership and development in Sudan, violence and exploitation in Sri Lanka, prostitution and sexual exploitation in the Philippines — to name but a few of the issues covered.

The final section, part 6, deals with the proceedings of the Nairobi Meeting of the Third World Forum on Women, Law and Development held in July, 1985 as part of the non-governmental activities connected with the United Nations Decade of Women. Some of the papers presented at the conference, as well as the recommendations, are reproduced in the book. The book also has a section on selected readings as well as a directory of contributors.

Women and the Law in Southern Africa has 14 chapters, also laid out in 6 parts. The different sections address diverse topics relating to the plight of women in the sub-region. The issues covered include women and property, women and marriage, the legal status of women and health matters. Like its counter-part, part 6 of this book is a reproduction of the Women's Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women as adopted by the United Nations on 19th December 1979 as part of the United Nations Decade of Women.

The two books both document the problems confronting women as they struggle to take up their rightful place as participants, contributors, and beneficiaries of development. They both call for action to improve the lot of women in various countries and agree that a knowledge of law is important and steps should be taken to educate women on laws that affect them directly. This is seen as being important considering the fact that women comprise a major social group who have been systematically excluded from full economic and political participation in the production and benefits of development. The authors of the two books are at pains to identify and expose those structures of society that are responsible for upholding and legitimising women’s social and economic subordination and marginalisation in the development process. The hope, in trying to expose the structures, is that change may be effected. They both lament that laws may be ineffective in practice because of extra-legal forces obtaining in the various societies, and they further regret that in some cases there is even a pattern of legally sanctioned and constitutionally guaranteed subordination of women — for example, labour laws, penal laws and civil laws which govern legal capacity, rights and obligations in marriage, guardianship, inheritance, income, land rights and participation in public affairs. These are all areas in which change is required without delay.

The two books are quite easy and interesting to read and the sequence of topics seems quite logical. My main reservation with both texts, however, is that they seem to over-dramatise the plight of women to a certain extent. For instance they seem to argue that no progress has been made whatsoever
giving women their rights, when in actual fact it is common knowledge that
many governments have made quite substantial strides in this regard. Credit
should be given were it is due but, in my opinion, the books will be found
wanting in this respect. Another cause for concern is that the texts both seem
to blame everyone else but women for the plight of women. The authors
do not seem to want to acknowledge that in some instances some women are
to blame for their situation. Women, for a number of reasons, have failed to
stand up and be counted. In my opinion, they need to emancipate
themselves from themselves first, before they can seek liberation from their
male counterparts. There is a deafening silence in both books in this regard.
A statement to this effect is conspicuous by its absence, and yet, if included,
it would serve to strengthen, rather than weaken, the argument for women’s
emancipation.

I also sense a certain amount of agitation and emotionalism in some of the
statements made in the two books. Emotion, though sometimes an asset
where mobilisation is the aim, is capable of affecting objectivity negatively.
For instance, the call that women should not only challenge but even ‘subvert’ the system in order to achieve their goal is at best ill-conceived.
Harmony and peace must be the order of the day if women expect
unflinching support and co-operation from their male counterparts.

In spite of these criticisms, I should say the two books on women and the
law are quite useful contributions to the literature on women and
development and should be most valuable to those involved in women’s
studies at universities, colleges and similar institutions. The books should
also be useful to those working with women and indeed those interested in
women’s issues per se. Legal personnel should also find the texts quite
informative and useful and so should development workers in general. In
particular the books will be a companion to development workers from the
developed world employed by non-governmental organisations operating
in the rural areas of developing countries.

Both publications are highly recommended.

Reviewed by Roderick Mupedziswa, School of Social Work, Harare.

Money, Banking and Public Finance in Africa, Ann Seidman, ZED Press,
London, 1986 (363pp, £8.95 pbk, £22.95 hbk).

This book is an interesting attempt to construct an analytical framework
which is appropriate for an understanding of the nature of the economic
disequilibria which have wrought havoc with African economies and
frustrated their attempts to attain desired objectives. Cases in point are the
post-colonial declarations, genuine or otherwise, to carry out socialist
transformation, and the contradictory and invidious conditions in which the
various countries find themselves. The author seeks to depict the
peculiarities of the problems confronting African states, particularly in the areas of banking and finance, and the ways in which different countries in the continent have dealt with these problems. Among the topical problems identified in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s are chronic balance of payments constraints, mounting budget deficits, rising indebtedness, rising inflation and vulnerability to exogenous variables.

The book departs from standard convention first by combining in a single volume a treatment of money, banking and public finance. The author draws support for such an approach from the socialist view that financial crises can be overcome by state control and co-ordination of activities in the three fields. Secondly the book departs from standard convention by examining side by side two major theoretical perspectives, referred to as mainstream theory and Marxist theory, which adopt totally different methodologies and lead to different policy suggestions.

Policy makers are supposed to combine the three fields when taking policy positions. For example a country’s financial programme is essentially a set of synchronised policy measures in the area of money, fiscal policy and balance of payment measures intended to achieve given economic targets. If one considers the financing implications of budget deficits it becomes difficult to treat monetary and fiscal policies as strictly separate instruments (à la Tinbergen Mundell policy framework), especially in the context of the economies that this book is about. A mechanistic application of the conventional targets instrument approach would have limitations in such a context. This, however, does not mean that it should be rejected outright but rather that it should be tempered with a sensible judgement of reality.

The book explains phenomena in terms of the two theoretical perspectives and analyses the three fields in terms of perspectives held by either theory with a view to ascertaining which of them offers a better explanation and therefore a better guide to policies.

A problem solving methodology is adopted and the view that theories are not to be treated as dogmas but rather as guides to diagnose solutions is underscored. Indeed the linchpin of an effective development strategy is the setting up of a means-ends arrangement that is contextually germane. Such a relationship is essentially an empirical matter which if broken out of reduces hypotheses to a romanticisation of reality. The question that comes to mind concerns the extent to which the problem solving methodology is sustained in the book. The author clearly has predilections for a more radical theoretical perspective, which in itself is not necessarily a negative thing.

Reading through the book one gets an impression of an either/or situation with respect to theoretical perspectives. This stands in sharp contrast to the dictates of a problem solving method. If the focus is on the problem, ie poverty, then the choice is not so much between theoretical perspective A or B but rather between what is serviceable or otherwise at a practical level and
can lead to ways of tackling poverty. At a practical level there seems to be a strong case for an amalgam of useful theoretical perspectives which is not dictated to by ideological predilections. The problems experienced by the countries that the book is about, or anywhere else, do not present themselves in neat categories.

The author's thesis, on the brutalising effects of colonialism, the structural conditioning effects of development strategies adopted, and the difficulties in revamping this set up, is quite forceful and convincing. However, the same cannot be said about the suggested solutions. There are many problems associated with the approach, and not least among them is an underestimation of the problems that the setting up of a socialist system attracts and the extent of the plots against it by the forces of capital. The book seems to accept, without questioning, the theoretical pronouncements about the intention to carry out socialist transformation. The lip service paid to this intention may not be an unimportant contributor to the retention of the status quo, it is worth noting that the rhetoric of politicians is a poor guide to their real intention in the economic field.

While the author's broad categorisation of the mainstream theory and Marxist perspective is not incorrect, it is worth taking stock of the real differences between theoreticians within either category. Since these are not neutral to the policy positions advocated, contrasting theoretical perspectives is a useful expository device which can be misleading if applied too rigidly in the real world. It is not unusual to find economists or politicians whose views on particular subjects do not consistently derive from uniform theoretical perspectives.

The book has four main parts. The first five chapters deal with money and banking issues. Within that section, the author draws on evidence from the experiences of banking systems in Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. The role of money in the process of development and the part played by banks is discussed from the point of view of the two main theoretical perspectives.

The second part of the book examines the problem of public finance in African economies. The discussion is set against the background of an article which warns against the tendencies to financial irresponsibility to which socialist governments, and other developing countries, are predisposed because of their humane commitments. In developing countries, these tendencies are traced to the attempts to redress the distortions of colonial policies and to cope with crises of expectations.

The author documents the genesis of the dilemma of public finances in African economies, and highlights the emergence of the recurrent cost problem, the widening gap between revenues and expenditures and the debt problem. The divergent conceptions of mainstream theories and Marxists in public finance are attributed to differences in views on the role of the state in the development process and money and banking. Debates on
balanced budgets versus deficit spending, taxation structures and strategies and public debt are discussed in this framework. Among some of the author’s findings is the tendency for the burden of taxation in many African countries to fall more heavily on indirect taxes, the underutilisation of tax capacities, the inability of many countries to incorporate the expanded public sector into coherent plans to restructure economies, and the perpetuation of the status quo.

Part III deals with the evolution of the international monetary system, the original sins of the Bretton Woods System, the integration of the African economies into the capitalist system and their vulnerability to disorders in the system. The main actors in the international monetary systems and their roles positive or negative over time are discussed. Among those the authors discussed are the transnational banks, the Euro-currency market, the Bretton Woods institutions and the African Development Bank. In simple terms the theoretical position attributed to Marxists suggests a 'conspiracy theory' and that attributed to mainstream theory argues economic rationality and therefore non-interference with the 'efficient' operation of market forces.

Part IV draws on the experiences of socialist countries in their efforts to build socialism. The conceptual framework for socialism is set up and the way in which national budgeting and planning are conducted is discussed. It is shown that the traditional policy instruments, such as monetary and fiscal policy, assume a different significance in terms of the way in which they are deployed.

While the author acknowledges the raging debates among socialists and the reform taking place in centrally planned economies, she does not sufficiently highlight the underlying problems necessitating the reforms, especially if other aspiring countries are to derive lessons from these experiences. It could also have been useful to bring in the experience of developing countries that have made serious attempts to chart socialist paths. It is only through an intimate knowledge of the problems that African countries, intending to chart such a course, can stand a chance of success. By drawing too much on the experience of fully fledged and more developed socialist economies, the author’s efforts could be criticised along the lines that the appropriateness of conventional economic theory, is also being questioned in developing countries.

The book makes an interesting description and analysis of the problems facing African economies, but it is rather short on solutions and could be frustrating to policy makers. This simply goes to show that there are no panaceas for the development problem, the search for solutions should continue. Whatever the criticisms, the author has made a laudable attempt to plug the theoretical lacuna which still endures. There is a real need for concerted efforts to conceptualise African problems and develop more appropriate theoretical frameworks. Hopes for the future seem to lie with an
approach that engages in some amount of positive eclecticism rather than being parochial. The author’s annotated bibliography is particularly helpful for students and economists interested in further research in this important area.

One could not agree more with the author’s suggestion that scholars and practitioners need to re-examine their theoretical views and policy prescriptions. Such re-examinations must be undertaken even if it turns upside down the very basis of conventional wisdom. Together with the author one would hope that the text will stimulate further research and evaluation and thus advance the cause of development.

Reviewed by Obert Nyawata, African Development Bank, Abidjan.


This slim volume sets out to discuss the theory and practice of social work with rural people in North America, examining from an avowedly Marxist materialist perspective the nature of rural people’s lives, experience and needs, and the impact social work can and could have on them. It is explicitly not a ‘skills’ book but a discussion of the need for social workers to ‘interpret’, ‘analyse’ and ‘construct’ the realities of the rural setting so that their practice may be effective and supportive rather than irrelevant or oppressive. It aims to be of use to human service workers in rural areas in general, and to rural people themselves.

Crucially, the author draws attention to the need for different approaches to social work practice in rural areas from those typically learnt and experienced in the urban setting, and he points out the problems inherent in the (urban) ‘outside expert’ arriving in a rural area and expecting to be taken seriously.

The author begins by outlining historical processes of economic development from foraging to agricultural and industrial economies. He draws attention to the similarity of present day foragers and agriculturalists, rural peoples, living on the periphery of centralised urban-based capitalist economies, to the position of developing countries vis-a-vis the developed world. Recognising that the relationship between the developed and underdeveloped world, and likewise that between the centralised urban sector and rural sectors within one country, are relationships of oppression, inequality and exploitation, he examines what role human service workers can play in ameliorating this situation. He argues that if such workers are not conscious of the reality of this exploitative economic and cultural relationship, then they will by default serve to promote the process of exploitation by assisting people to adapt passively to the loss of their land, to family and cultural breakdown, and to impoverishment in general.
To play a valid and meaningful role in the lives of these people, social workers and others must understand the material conditions that have led to their marginalisation and the disruption of their communities, and must help people to find ways of reducing the negative impact of ‘development’ and of maintaining their dignity, rights and cultural identity.

The author recognises that there is no single blueprint outlining how social workers should achieve this, particularly given the cultural and economic diversity of rural communities themselves — small nuclear family farmers, extended family farmers, different ethnic groupings, migrant labourers, the poor and unemployed — facing the rural penetration of advanced capitalism in different ways. The underlying necessity is for sensitive understanding and analysis and the capacity for widely diverse, flexible ‘generalised’ approaches, rather than narrow specialisation which precludes a holistic understanding of both the problems and of methods of tackling them.

To achieve such understanding, the author argues, it is essential that social workers live ‘with the people’, sharing in their social and work activities, and learning their priorities and problems first hand. This might involve learning a specific practical skill such as sheep shearing, or aspects of agriculture, so that the social worker is seen as having practical relevance as well as the more esoteric relevance of intellectual skills. This is argued to be particularly important when working with people who traditionally keep their problems to themselves, even when they lack the wherewithal to resolve them. The social worker must be seen to be aligned closely with the rural people rather than being an apologist for the urban and alien centralised system.

The message of the book is both a positive and a critical one. Rural peoples can successfully limit the predations of capitalism, and preserve important aspects of their lives, culture and livelihood intact, and social workers do have a constructive role to play in achieving this. On the other hand, in rural areas the insensitive and inappropriate application of ‘traditional’ social work skills, values, knowledge and methods is at the least irrelevant, and at worst downright destructive.

In focusing on these issues, the author makes a useful contribution to a general, basic understanding of the rural situation, and he illustrates his points now and then with highly pertinent and vivid case studies. However, the main text tends to state rather than seriously to analyse his perspective on development, and also to become rather repetitive in the process. There is a tendency for the writing, apart from the case studies, to contain generalised abstracts rather than concrete, specific examples, and this makes for a rather dry presentation, and for unclear and incomplete analysis at times. For example, when describing foraging and agricultural communities and their kinship and other social formations, not one specific ethnic or cultural
group is mentioned by name to illustrate a point. North American Indians are either grouped together or described as diverse, with no concrete illustration. Further, there is no attempt to link the oppression of rural minorities and that of the urban poor, or to examine the relevance and appropriateness or otherwise of social work in urban contexts, let alone in the rural one. This narrow analysis seems to the reviewer to be a considerable weakness.

Because of these limitations, it is perhaps unlikely that this book will do a great deal to convert those who do not share the author’s perspective on development; and, for those already converted, it may serve to clarify and confirm some of their ideas, but may not take them very much further along the road of critical analysis (not to mention skill development): it is too general, too unclear, and too brief.

But if to some degree it does promote a critical and concerned understanding of the rural situation, and stimulates discussion and a diversity of approach, then to that extent the book will have succeeded in its undeniably valid and constructive central aim.

Reviewed by Helen Jackson, School of Social Work, Harare.


This short monograph discusses the dual discrimination faced by disabled women seeking education, training and employment. It concludes that discrimination because of gender is probably of greater significance than discrimination because of disability, basing this assessment on a review of literature in both developing and developed countries.

Because of the wide geographical scope of the text, the author can only make rather general observations and proposals, and she acknowledges a great shortage of hard data and research on the subject which in itself reflects how hidden are the problems faced by disabled women. A computer search in the USA for references in psychology on disabled men and disabled women found 7,500 of the former, and only 19 of the latter. Nevertheless, some useful general points emerge from the review:

“...The literature discussed indicates that underlying attitudes result in disabled women being offered fewer options, having lower aspirations and accepting a greater degree of dependency than their disability requires. It has also shown that vocational rehabilitation has not come to terms with the real pattern of women’s work and their dual role of homemaker and income earner.” (p 24).

The author points out that sexist public attitudes are also internalised by the (predominantly male) professionals in all areas of vocational rehabilitation, and by disabled women themselves.
Disabled women, more than any other grouping, have been excluded from educational and vocational skills training programmes, material and financial assistance and work opportunities. At the same time they have difficulty in fulfilling home-making roles too. They are often over-protected or neglected by their families, so cannot fulfil traditional female roles in the home or subsistence activities, and their marriageability is low.

Measures suggested to improve the position of disabled women include proposals for more focused research; for extended action programmes at different levels to improve the status of women and of the disabled; recommendations specifically on vocational rehabilitation, and proposals for changing attitudes of the general public and of disabled women themselves. It is argued that improvements in the status, education, training and employment of women in general will have repercussions for disabled women in particular.

Whilst having too broad a focus to provide very much practical detail and example in the analysis, the monograph nevertheless makes a useful and readable contribution to the subject of women and disability by highlighting the extent of the neglect, and encouraging a more developed sensitivity to the needs and rights of disabled women — and indeed, of women in general. Points are made clearly and concisely, and a manageable and up-to-date bibliography is provided for further reference. It also makes the essential point that disabled women themselves need to be included and actively involved in the struggle for recognition and improved life chances.

In summary, this is a brief but valuable introduction to a much neglected subject.

Reviewed by Helen Jackson, School of Social Work, Harare.

The Importance of People — Experiences, lessons and ideas on rural development training in Zimbabwe: Hlekweni and beyond, Martin de Graaf (Editor) and Brigid Willmore (Assistant Editor), Hlekweni FRSC, Bulawayo, 1987 (191pp, Z$8 plus s/tax).

In 1987, Hlekweni Friends Rural Service Centre celebrated its 20th anniversary. Besides an Open Day at the Centre, Hlekweni staff, past and present, in collaboration with the Centre’s friends and supporters, decided to produce a publication, as a more permanent tribute to the Centre and the people it serves. The Importance of People not only tells the story of Hlekweni and the philosophy behind it, but includes several contributions discussing current rural development training in Zimbabwe. Whilst Hlekweni is the starting point, the book as a whole provides a broader look at some aspects of development, and of training for development, throughout the country, with particular emphasis on the role and work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
Part One of the book focuses on Hlekweni itself — the history, the idea and the context. We follow, through the five directors in post since 1967, the changes in the work of the Centre in the context of the changing political situation during the struggle for liberation, and into the early years of Independence. Based on a philosophy of service to its constituents — the people of Matabeleland — training was organised in response to the needs of the trainees and was geared towards learning relevant to the improvement of rural life, with particular emphasis on agriculture.

We see, though, how the concepts of extension work, follow-up and flexibility in programming, whilst initially a response to the social and environmental upheaval during the liberation struggle, were eventually modified by those very factors, although management and personnel problems also played a role. The increasing isolation of the Centre — from other Centres and programmes, and from the people it was established to serve — has continued into the post-independence years, as a result of the current security situation in the south of the country.

A participatory evaluation in 1985 recommended the way forward for Hlekweni, in terms of regaining the original commitment to service, dialogue, flexibility and full involvement in the local community. As de Graaf. Hussyey and Ncube indicate, in their brief overview of Zimbabwe with particular reference to Matabeleland, development in the region remains hampered by the effects of long-term drought, the lack of peace and political stability, and an under-estimation of the community’s ability to articulate its own needs. It is no doubt hoped that the recently negotiated unity accord will ‘open up’ Matabeleland again, allowing development to proceed. The practicalities of how Hlekweni will fulfil a meaningful role within this development are not, however, spelt out. Maybe this is because Hlekweni has stopped listening to its constituents; perhaps because it is pursuing a ‘strategy’ rather than responding to a ‘need’.

If this is the case, the Centre will be in good company with most of the authors who contribute to Parts Two and Three of the book. As one goes from one contribution to the next — firstly in Part Two on “Training for Rural Development: Strategy” and in Part Three on “Training for Rural Development: Some Issues” — a number of questions spring to mind, and the lack of answers becomes increasingly frustrating:

— what exactly is a training ‘strategy’, and if people are important, how important are they relative to strategy?
— if people are important, how important are they relative to ‘target groups’? (my understanding of a target is something which is shot at)
— having defined a growing diversity of target groups through reference to various lowest common denominators (as per the contribution by Kidd and Kelly on training farmers in Binga), what are we to say to those who are no longer targeted (being shot at)? What are they going to say to us?
Are they now less important as people?
— if people are important, why do they not have much of a say in the case histories which the authors discuss?
— why does the reader increasingly get the impression that training is something one ‘does’ to people, however hard the well-intentioned try to ‘do’ it?

In his contribution in Part Four — “Who Calls the Tune — Training in a Changing Environment” — de Graaf raises some of these questions but never really concludes them. Other contributors — for example, those who discuss appropriate technology, networking and the relationship between donor agencies and recipient organisations — touch on similar as well as other problematic areas, but, again, in a somewhat irresolute manner.

All the contributors stress the need to involve, motivate, conscientise, empower, network with and listen to trainees — they variously describe how training centres must proceed about their training in a fundamentally participatory and democratic manner (as Hlekweni has endeavoured to do). But one major question remains unanswered, as far as I can see. Can a training centre, given its very nature as an institution, as an organisation, comprised of buildings, timetables, staff, menus and mealtimes, structures and a physical and geographical rootedness, ever hope to achieve this ideal? Probably not; and sadly the book does not give us one practical example of how a training centre has managed to break the mould, as it were. Perhaps that was not its purpose — but so many contributions relating to theories of training and development would have been well off-set by some papers describing real-life efforts to make people important in the manner prescribed by those theories.

I am not a trainer, although I find myself ‘doing’ it from time to time. Perhaps, therefore, I am over-critical of a publication in which trainers may find the scope of the discussion and the issues raised of use in thinking about their approach to their work. All of us with a commitment to development in this country, however, should congratulate and thank our colleagues who contributed to this book for doing what the rest of us never get around to — putting pen to paper, opening up the debate and drawing together the issues on the agenda. Hopefully this is the first of many Zimbabwean publications about Zimbabwean development.

Reviewed by Frances Chinemana, Freelance Consultant, Harare.


This is an excellent reference book for anyone interested in knowing why, despite all the advances in science and technology, hunger is still present in all countries including highly industrialised capitalist societies. The book
encompasses all aspects of nutrition, and interaction with population, agriculture, environment, economics, ideologies and development, in a readable manner, with plenty of references so that it is easy to find out why there are problems of hunger everywhere in the world. The author proposes solutions in a provocative manner, providing some information on how different countries have tackled the situation of hunger. Although proposing solutions, he does not impose his ideas on the readers, but invites thought; what may be applicable in one country is unlikely to be applicable in all.

The book is about food and combating hunger. So there are chapters about agriculture and economic development and their relationship in highly industrialised countries, and in countries in Latin America and Africa which are still developing. The author mentions the different ideological approaches to world hunger in Chapter 2. In Chapters 6 and 7 he talks about the industrial food system which exists in all states, but notes that the extent varies according to the degree of industrial development. This leads to the problems of unequal distribution of populations, and of land which can produce food easily because suitable soils, water and energy are all present. Chapter 8 is about the loss of food land-resources as seen particularly in the industrialised countries, and chapter 9 is a discussion on how much food the world can produce. Chapter 10 is entitled Food and Agriculture under Capitalism, and Chapter 11 discusses the alternatives that are available for underdeveloped countries. The author does his best to put forward differing points of view and gives plenty of references.

One weakness of this book is that it seeks to cover such a broad field that generalisations are inevitable. However, Zimbabwean social scientists and students could benefit from applying the knowledge within this book to the local scene. As the author says, countries are unequal in many forms, and, until modern communications and technology linked all countries more closely and made them more interdependent, their first need was to feed their own peoples. A basic staple, be it maize, rice, wheat, or potatoes, together with meat or fish, if and when available, and supplemented by local vegetables and fruits, provided an adequate diet when people ate what they grew or produced locally. Now in the more highly industrialised societies people eat a much wider range of foodstuffs and expect a larger choice of these in the shops. The comparison between the foods stocked in the local rural general dealer's and the supermarkets of the urban areas is testimony to different eating patterns. Malnutrition can be both under and over nutrition, namely kwashiorkor and obesity. People cannot be compelled to eat certain foods because they are good for them, any more than they can be ordered to grow certain foods, ranch cattle, or limit the size of their families. This book seeks to educate on the choices available.

The decisions that have to be made are different for Zimbabwe or for Cuba, for example. Choices depend on the costs and benefits of the different
food alternatives, and what might be the most efficient option in the field of, say, improving agricultural production might not be the most economic option. Economic efficiency requires the minimisation of costs, and the maximisation of food production. Inefficiency is unethical. How does this fit in with the global food system? The author having provided the information, leaves the readers to think this out for themselves.

Each chapter in this book could be expanded to a book in itself. The last chapter is called 'Summary and Conclusion', but it would be a mistake to think that by reading the last chapter one could save oneself from reading the whole book. There is so much food for thought here that the book should be required background reading for those interested in social development.

Africa cannot be isolated from the rest of the world, and this book highlights the interdependence of countries whatever their stage of development. I would highly recommend this book for sixth form and undergraduate students, and all those interested in knowing about food production and distribution and the effects this has on energy resources, the environment, pollution, population pressures, and finally the approaches made to these problems by the different ideologies.

Reviewed by Alison Brydone, National Committee of Zimbabwe Freedom from Hunger Campaign, Harare.


This interesting publication is the product of the work of a number of North American individuals and organisations, specifically InterAction (USA), the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, the Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction of the University of British Columbia (Canada), and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (New York). The Preface and Introduction note that this handbook is also the product of a number of programme evaluation workshops, some of which utilised preliminary written materials, and this process element is reflected in the general approach that the publication takes, viz to provide a practical framework for understanding and approaching evaluation.

The publication provides a framework, as the title suggests, for evaluating development education programmes and so utilises examples from this area to illustrate the various stages, techniques, issues, etc that are presented. However, the framework identified is also valuable for the evaluation of any other development programme or project, and the handbook's usefulness is not restricted to evaluating development education programmes per se. The publication is referred to by the authors as a handbook, and the consistent
step by step approach to evaluation presented in it, and the easy to follow format, does give it the advantage of a handbook which could be used by individuals and groups who wish to introduce themselves to, or increase their skills in, evaluation, particularly in relation to planning and research methodologies and techniques.

After a general introductory chapter which looks at the what, why and when of evaluation, the balance of the publication is divided into seven stages or chapters, as follows:

Stage 1: Setting Aims
Stage 2: Launching the Evaluation
Stage 3: Formulating the Design
Stage 4: Constructing Instruments
Stage 5: Collecting Data
Stage 6: Analysing Results
Stage 7: Delivering the Pay-Off.

Each stage is then further subdivided into major component areas, which are presented with more or less detail in keeping with the complexity and involvement of the particular area.

The publication is generally presented in a simple and logical way, in a step by step manner, which leads the reader through both a planning and a research process. This is one of the particularly valuable elements of the book, as it presents evaluation as part of the planning process, and based on a sound research methodology and technique, with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of development education programmes by increasing the effectiveness of the planning process itself. Evaluation is, therefore, not presented as an end in itself nor simply as a means to secure further funding for programmes. Both planning and research are presented as major underlying concerns in any evaluation process which is to have both credibility and reliability.

In addition the continuing theme of participation is established from the introductory chapter and in Stage 1 and is continued throughout the book, focusing on all those who need to be involved in an evaluation if it is to be successful in the end — ie if its findings are to be utilised. The definition of the evaluation 'stakeholders' as all those who have a concern with the results of the evaluation is useful. However, an even more direct emphasis on the question of participation as it relates to the 'recipients' of programmes would have been appreciated, particularly during the course of the unwinding of the various stages. In this respect the TALC publication Partners in Evaluation (Feuerstein: 1986) is a useful adjunct to How Are We Doing?

Stage/Chapter 2 concentrates on establishing and spelling out the mandate for the evaluation and ethical principles of procedure. This is an area that, to my mind, is not often enough considered in the research design,
but an area that is very much in keeping with the publication’s emphasis on participation and responsibility in evaluation.

The detail found in the discussions of Stages 3 and 4, stages which come to grips with the actual design and construction of the evaluation research process, is important and particularly valuable to workers new to the evaluation process. However, the incorporation of some practical examples to work through may have helped to begin the process of developing skills in these areas, skills which are not readily learned through simply reading and discussing an area, but which require practical experience and a reflection on that experience.

The Table of Contents is very clearly laid out and identifies the main components covered in each stage/chapter. The glossary at the end of the publication is particularly valuable and provides, in one place, useful definitions of the major terms used in the book. The Selected Readings lists provided at the end of each chapter look useful, but, as may be expected, are, with the exception of one British source, all North American publications. This may make these references less useful for Third World readers who may not readily have access to them.

This publication is a very useful tool for the introductory training of fieldworkers and programme staff in the elements of evaluation, based on a knowledge and understanding of research and planning techniques, and was used successfully in this way by this reviewer during the course of this review.

My major reservation about this publication is the terminology used at various points, terminology and colloquialisms that may be appropriate in the North American situation in which the publication was formulated, but which are not particularly appropriate for many Third World readers and practitioners. Specifically the title of the last chapter, “Delivery of the Pay-Off” could be a problem — why not simply “Presenting and Using the Results”? Additional examples include the use of the word ‘standards’ where indicators or criteria are more usually used, and the use of the terms ‘the stake’ and ‘stakeholders’.

I consider this publication, and the evaluation framework it presents, a valuable resource for training for evaluation, and for field and programme staff working in development programmes and projects. The step by step approach taken presents evaluation in a way that can be understood and appreciated with some ease, while the emphasis on planning and research, and the reference to participation and the ethics of evaluation, are points well made. My reservations relate, as noted above, to some of the language and terminology used, and the lack of clear practice examples in the text, particularly in relation to the construction of a research design and the research instruments, and in the analysis of results and the use of various statistical procedures that may be required for this analysis.
This small publication is highly recommended as an introduction to and overview of the evaluation process for anyone working in a development agency.


References


This book certainly lives up to its name — there are a great variety of examples of conflict situations, and consideration of their solutions from almost every conceivable sector. In all there are 40 individual contributions, including situations of divorce, family mediation, community relations, dispute reduction in prison settings, environmental mediation, labour-management disputes, terrorism and hostage negotiation, East-West relations and the prevention of nuclear war. These contributions and statements vary considerably, both in depth of analysis and content, but are linked by their common concern for dispute resolution and the solution of social problems. As such this volume genuinely may be seen — as stated in the Introduction — as an ‘outcome of multiple convergences’ (p 1).

Specifically the book is the culmination of a series of lectures given at the Center for Conflict Resolution at George Mason University in the United States. The contributors not only include staff from this University, but also prominent academics and practitioners in this field.

As we read the book we become aware that the field of conflict management is a growing scientific discipline in its own right (or perhaps an ‘interdiscipline’), with its own body of literature, theories and methodologies in the process of formulation. This book should contribute in large measure to a further definition of this subject matter. Of additional use is an extensive list of books, monographs and articles on this topic at the end of the book, which is certainly worth consultation.

Substantial sections of the book are devoted to the elaboration of a theoretical framework for conflict resolution, and to a significant extent this is achieved. Of particular interest to me were the discussions on the ‘Prisoner’s Dilemma Game’ (introduced by Morton Deutsch) and the ‘Joint Outcome Space’ of Roger Ricftman. These outline the competitive ‘Win/Lose’ (zero sum) option as opposed to the co-operative ‘Win/Win’ (positive sum) option, the former is normally selected in protagonist
situations. The cooperative option, also termed 'integrative negotiation', emphasises the need for the parties to a dispute to try and establish some relationship and trust with each other. This can only come about through the process of direct exchanges between the parties, even though they may go through stages of 'adversarial contact' with each other. However the commitment to joint outcomes, as opposed to unilateral outcomes, means that each party should be able to achieve some positive result for themselves, without necessarily destroying or undermining the other side. Dean Pruitt in his chapter outlines a typology of integrative agreements which can assist in achieving collaborative bargaining. One example here is the 'bridging' proposal, where the 'interests underlying the interests' of each party are examined to a depth that allows development of a bridge between the parties concerned.

It is obvious that parties to a dispute may not be able to settle the conflict on their own, Hence there may be need for outside or third party intervention. James Laue identifies five of these conflict intervention roles — viz activist, advocate, mediator, researcher and enforcer, each of which can be seen as one stage removed from the actual conflict itself.

Surely the most valuable 'spin-offs' from any theory of conflict resolution are the applied possibilities. We keep encountering these through the book, although it is again clear that more use needs to be made of the elaborated theory and researchers need to consider the practical applications more seriously. However in many cases this may not be for want of trying on the part of the researchers involved. A good example illustrated here was the combined effort of 'a group of scholars and practitioners of international dispute settlement' (p 286) to offer its services to the parties to the Malvinas-Falkland Island dispute (ie Britain and Argentina), in an attempt to prevent the situation deteriorating into armed conflict. Unfortunately, and as history bears witness, the offer was not considered seriously and the two nations fought a brief limited war over the issue.

Considerable insight is shown into the dynamics of the super-power rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, in particular how mutual distrust creates a spiral of 'force-counter-force' that may lead inevitably to a nuclear exchange. Sensible alternatives to this escalation are presented to us, and the point is emphasised by several writers that the Soviet Union has little, if any, desire to enter a major war, following their disastrous experience during the Second World War. However, in spite of the obvious good sense of these options, one contributor (Ralph White) gives us a pessimistic prediction of an even chance of a major nuclear war between now and the year 2000. Apart from any other argument advanced, the fact that such an event is a distinct possibility for mankind should underline the urgency for research into the area of conflict resolution.

The multiplicity of chapters is to some extent daunting to the reader, yet
some degree of coherence is retained by the fact that authors often refer to points made in previous chapters, and by the well-ordered layout of the book.

The Third World does not feature as an area of interest in this book — despite the fact that the majority of the world’s major conflicts are fought in this arena! This probably has to do with the backgrounds of the contributors, who are predominantly American, with many having held senior positions in governmental agencies in the United States. However it is also likely that some of the authors would contend that Third World conflicts are primarily symptomatic of global super-power conflicts in any case. Yet the book still has much to offer us in this part of the world as it provides a great deal of insight into the processes and mechanics of conflict generation and ways to seek its resolution. It is a useful and practical contribution to the serious task of seeking solutions and alternatives to the often violent conflicts that continue to plague our world.

Reviewed by Nigel Hall, School of Social Work, Harare.


I approached the review of this publication, advertised as a comparative social welfare volume focusing on Africa, with some anticipation and interest. There is no doubt about the need for more published and accessible information about social security and personal social service systems in Africa. In addition the need for more comparative analyses from which models can be derived and built and used for future planning is more than clear.

Social Welfare in Africa is the third volume of a six volume series, edited by John Dixon, which looks at comparative social welfare in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, under socialism and in developed market economies. In this volume on Africa, for each of the ten country studies presented, the overall format for each chapter is the same and includes the welfare system environment, the welfare system an overview, the aged, children and youths, the handicapped, needy families, the sick and injured, the unemployed, an assessment of the welfare system, and references and further reading. Each country is presented as a separate chapter and the only point of active comparison undertaken is this common framework of presentation of information — and even this framework is only the very general framework in which specific approaches to information are then taken by each chapter author.

As noted earlier, ten countries are presented using the framework indicated, all of these countries are from sub-Saharan Africa, only one is a Francophone country and none are Lusophone. In the absence of any
explanation of the reasons for the choice of countries included I seriously doubt the wisdom of calling this collection of country studies Social Welfare in Africa. Would it not be more honest to call this collection Social Welfare in Sub-Saharan English Speaking Africa? It certainly would, with the exception of the Ivory Coast and possibly Ethiopia, have been a more accurate indication of what is contained in the volume. This general point is even more important because of the lack of an active comparative analysis, as mentioned earlier. Were these countries to be seen as atypical, or typical of certain systems, are they the ones which have definitive policies, or on which information of a coherent nature is available, or was it simply that the editor could identify resource people in these countries? Or does the explanation lie in a sentence from the Preface (no page number)

“It is pointless to attempt to compare countries that are fundamentally different, hence the regional focus of this tightly structured anthology.”

The lack of any other explanation of the choice of countries is a serious omission — furthermore I wonder if the editor means to imply that there are no fundamental differences within the ‘region’ of Africa? What is the point of comparative analysis if we cannot compare different approaches, and their effects, as they emerge from different histories and ideologies?

The ten countries presented here — Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe — are presented with a wealth of information, almost in too much detail in some cases. This wealth of information is very valuable, but a little difficult to digest in the manner presented, particularly in the absence of any other comparative framework than the common chapter outline. I am forced to wonder what the role of the editor is in a publication of this kind, as the editor seems hardly to impinge on the publication after defining the initial outline. At the very least I would have expected an introduction and conclusion that assisted the reader to develop a framework for the analysis of the contents, pointing out similarities and differences, particularly successful or problematic areas, the influence of ideology and history, the different options recognised in view of similar histories, emerging trends for social welfare in Africa, and so on. How much more valuable would this publication have been if this had been done, and how much more seriously comparative in its nature (and in terms of its promise). Can we seriously call a selection of contributions by different authors on different countries (in the editor’s words an ‘anthology’) a comparative study simply because the articles are included in one publication, and are presented using a common framework? Does not the notion of comparison imply that some conclusions or trends would be drawn out, and indeed compared. Doesn’t the notion of social welfare in Africa imply that the selection of countries to be included would have defined criteria and run the full gamut of backgrounds and present positions in Africa? Indeed in other writings by
Dixon (for example, Dixon and Schuerell, 1987) the comparative element
has been much more pronounced and the information presented, therefore,
that much more useful.

There are also a number of smaller items of format that need attention
and were distracting to this reviewer. In particular a map of Africa showing
the geographical location, and perhaps other graphic information, of the
countries presented was missed. The length of the presentations varied quite
considerably, and with little relation to the size or (dare I say it) importance
of the country — for example, Mauritius and Ghana use well over 40 pages
each while Nigeria and Ethiopia barely 20 pages each. The appendices too
are presented in a rather strange manner, without any explanation or real
reference to them, and using whole and half pages without any explanation
for this. Happily, however, the volume is indexed quite thoroughly.

In brief then, this volume of writings on the social welfare systems of a
selection of African countries is useful and valuable in the wealth of
information it presents. However, there are serious limitations to its being
presented as being of a comparative nature and a more explicit drawing out
of some themes, trends, conclusions, etc in an introductory and concluding
chapter (at the very least) would have made the publication, in my opinion, a
more useful text.

Reviewed by Brigid Willmore, Journal of Social Development in Africa,
Harare.

References

United States: A Comparison of Value Premises and Practices” in The
Journal of International and Comparative Social Welfare, Vol III, 1
and 2, Spring and Fall, 1987.

Plantations and Plantation Workers, J P Sajhau and J Von Muralt, ILO,

This book has been written by two senior members of ILO and published by
that organisation. It follows the previous approach of ILO reports on
plantations and is basically descriptive, depending on questionnaires sent to
countries combined with case studies. The book reviews the origins and
concepts of plantations but skirts around controversy.

The trends in production, consumption and the price of plantation crops
are well described. The general pattern of increasing production combined
with static or declining consumption leading to declining prices is
documented. The export dependency of countries on primary commodity
plantation crops is described, but the vulnerability these countries face due
to the vagaries of international prices is neglected. The efforts to stabilise
prices through International Agreements are described, though the outlook
for most primary products is gloomy. The great diversity of structures within plantations and plantation economies is commented upon. Three themes are identified:

(1) The shift of multinational corporations out of primary agricultural production into processing of primary products.

(2) The shift in the pattern of ownership either to local control or to state ownership.

(3) The development of joint ventures.

Developments in technology in relation to production (genetic improvements, disease control and mechanisation) are described. Contrary to experiences in other industries these innovations may increase the demand for labour due to increased yields.

The effects of government policy in relation to plantations are considered in relation to a number of countries. Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Cuba are cited for their nationalisation of estates. Ghana, Jamaica and Kenya are used as examples of countries which have attempted to support small holder production. Mauritius and the Dominican Republic are described as economies dependent on a plantation crop. The efforts to diversify crops in the Philippines are mentioned. The Malaysian example of how Malaysian business and government capital were used to buy out multinational corporations to establish national control is described. All of these country studies are long on description and short on analysis. Why did productivity fall in Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Jamaica? In Sri Lanka persistent undercapitalisation for the period 1960-1974 occurred. In Tanzania the international price of sisal fell while oil based products quadrupled in price. In Jamaica, while there was an attempt to redistribute land, the control of processing and thus the price paid remained in the control of multinational corporations.

The patterns of labour availability, employment and conditions are described. In some countries, eg Malaysia and Kenya, shortages occur. However, the reasons for these shortages (low wages relative to other sections and bad working and living conditions) are not mentioned. The unemployment and underemployment of workers in Sri Lanka are documented. The fact that such Tamil workers are not safe to seek work elsewhere and are thus captive within the sector is ignored. The shift from permanent to temporary, from male to female and child employment, and from wage employment to piece work payment is described in many countries.

The setting of wages through tripartite agreements occurs in many countries often with governments setting minimum wages. The section on wage comparisons is most disappointing as the wages are given in nominal terms. In real terms the wages actually fell. The section on living conditions and occupational safety and health is disappointing. The origin of the
provision of housing in slave labour is mentioned. The recognition that productivity is related to housing is accepted. The legal provisions for housing in many countries is described, but the uneven implementation of these acts is skirted over. Innovative housing schemes, as occur in Malaysia, are mentioned as is the Plantation Labour Act of India with the attendant grant and loan schemes.

The poor standards of health, child care, primary education and occupational safety are all mentioned. Innovative schemes, such as the Comprehensive Labour Welfare schemes in South India, are described. The weakness of unions in the plantation sector is highlighted as a problem for effective mobilisation to improve conditions. The conclusion of the book relates to the respective roles of government, employers and unions in relation to plantations.

This book is essential reading for anybody interested in studying plantations. It should be read in conjunction with other ILO publications (e.g. Kurian, 1982; ILO, 1984) and the bibliography by Kirk (1987). The publication "People in plantations — Means or Ends" (IDS, 1987) covers similar ground to this book but is more analytical and critical.

The ILO, by its tripartite structure, has to balance on an unsteady path. This book reflects the problems this causes. The book is strong on description, weak on analysis and neglects controversy. Plantations are changing but where are they going? In many of the countries which have consented to remain primary producers for Western consumers, the outlook is grim.

Alternatives exist, but these have been neglected. This book may be seen as the first word but definitely not the last word on plantations.


References