

been expanded to give a fuller account since the Zimbabwean experience which has been relatively successful would be of interest to many outside the country.

There is a very good review of what elements make up the culture of a nation, including the negative effects of colonisation on the culture of Zimbabwe, and a critical analysis of some of the negative aspects of traditional Zimbabwean culture. This is followed by a call to develop a new culture, taking suitable elements from Western culture as well as from indigenous African culture.

On development; it is the people who develop. So it does not mean the construction of prestige projects, but the elimination of poverty, disease and ignorance, for which the increase in national wealth is essential. We are not to confuse the welfare state with socialism; socialism does not necessarily mean free education and health services. There must be a planned economy, but planned with the participation of all those who will be taking part in the programme and all those who will be affected by the programme, to be achieved through *democratic centralism*. Parents committees are praised for raising funds for building, but how much say are these parents to have in the education of their children?

This short, well written book would be very useful as a basis for group discussions, for teaching, as well as an introduction for anyone involved in education or development in third world countries.

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How do you Spell Development? A Study of a Literacy Campaign in Ethiopia, Margareta and Rolf Sjöström, Scandanavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1983, 196 pages, price not quoted.

If you can spell the term 'development' it implies that you are literate and if you are literate then it implies that you are capable of contributing meaningfully to the development process. This apparently sums up the 'silent' hypothesis held by the two researchers Margareta and Rolf Sjöström when they set out on the study which culminated in the present book. One might also add that this statement also appears to be a fair reflection of the view that has prevailed in Ethiopian society where it has been more or less taken for granted that literacy is a necessary prerequisite for the development of the rural areas of the country. People needed literacy skills, it was agreed, in order to comprehend information about agricultural techniques, health, etc.

The book 'How do you spell development' is yet another welcome addition to the fast growing body of literature on the theme of literacy training. It was published in 1983 and is based on a study of the Yemissrach Dimits Literacy Campaign (YDLC) in 12 Ethiopian regions. The campaign was started in 1962 but the study was only carried out between 1974 and 1976. Its theme was 'role of literacy for development', and it was done under the auspices of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. At the time of the study, Ethiopia was one of many developing countries which had a very low literacy rate. The study was essentially an evaluation of the literacy campaign with the major aim being to describe and analyse campaign activities, taking into cognisance such important variables as teaching processes and student achievement. However, it must be pointed out that the study did not limit itself to the main assignment since "the researchers were also interested in studying effects other than student achievement" (p. 181). In the study, literacy was defined as an agent for development both in economic and humanistic terms.

The book is in four parts (although due to typographical errors, the 'contents' section indicates otherwise). Part one is basically a theoretical look at such pertinent concepts as development, literacy and education. This part further gives a brief overview of the political and social history of Ethiopia. In this vein, the authors give a brief account of the Ethiopian revolution, its causes, conduct and consequences. They argue that during the Selassie era the aim of development effort had not really been to raise the living standards of the poor, there had been too much emphasis on the export market. They then conclude that the political upheavals of 1974 were a direct consequence of non-participation by peasants in the economy.

The question of education in Ethiopia is also looked at in some detail, again from a historical perspective. It is apparent from the account given that Ethiopian education was very much influenced by traditional values. To give credence to this observation, the authors quote Levine (1972) lamenting that "Amhara formal education in no sense seeks to cultivate the individual but solely to prepare cultural specialists who will be able to perform the rituals and perpetuate the teaching of the Ethiopian Church" (p. 33).

The authors capably paint a picture – albeit a bleak one—of how education was elitist in nature and how the majority of the population were denied education, particularly during the Selassie regime. They then contrast this with the more positive approach of the post-revolution era where the new government is shown as having gone out of its way to rectify the situation. They quote a 1979 proclamation by the new regime which stated that "For socialist thinking to thrive, for production and research to develop and for

theory and practice to be matched, the essential condition will be created only when education is related to the daily life of the masses" (p. 40).

The historical account is both useful and welcome if only to try and put the study into perspective. However, with no less than 40 pages devoted to preliminaries which includes a large portion of the historical account, many readers might be forgiven for thinking that they had mistakenly picked up a history textbook. The motive might have been to provide the reader with an adequate background to the Ethiopian situation but my feeling is that it is unnecessarily long.

Parts II, III and IV of the book concern themselves with issues pertaining to the study proper, its findings and the authors views and comments on the various issues unearthed through the investigation. As mentioned elsewhere the YDLC study was of an evaluative nature.

The campaign was initiated in 1962 and by 1975 more than half a million people had participated in the programme. The target group was said to be the 15 – 25 age group. An evaluative study particularly in literacy is always difficult to do, but the evaluative method adopted for this particular study was based on behavioural objectives and decision making, and the researchers were at least aware of the need to be systematic and objective. The evaluation design had three principal elements, namely frames (which are defined as factors which constrain the instructional process going on at a school), processes (which constitute the actual manner of literacy instruction in the campaign) and outcomes (ie achievement in literacy and relevance of skills acquired). The basic purpose of the study was stated as being to show the relationship between outcomes and goals.

The study consisted of three sub-studies, namely literacy achievement study, observation study and interviewing. One of the central concerns of the researchers was to establish whether literacy as a skill had been instrumental in developing the village and whether literacy brought any tangible benefits to the neo-literates. With regard to this pertinent question it is disturbing that the students stated that they had not experienced substantial benefit from the newly acquired literacy skills. This can only mean there was a discrepancy between the goals of the sponsors and the benefit expected by the learners.

Yet another conclusion reached by the researchers was that it took up to two years for a student to become literate. Unfortunately the all-important question of literacy retention was not fully addressed in the study. Considering that the study was carried out over a period of three years, it would have been

interesting to find out how long students managed to retain the imparted skills, on average. Relapse to illiteracy is a major topic in the field of literacy training and it is my feeling that, since this was an evaluative study, it would have been appropriate to look at this. Maybe the researchers felt that the topic was too large and would require a whole book of its own.

From the interviews, a picture of the role of traditional attitudes emerges, and for those interested in the volatile issue of women's rights the study did look at how the campaign catered for the needs of rural women.

Interestingly, however, 77% of all students who participated in the campaign were male. This is very curious, particularly since in many countries it has been found that it is the men who shun literacy training. It is difficult to imagine how so many men were attracted to the campaign, especially when in the end a lot of the participants said the exercise had been futile and fruitless.

As mentioned elsewhere, the researchers did not confine themselves to the main assignment which was to evaluate the YDLC in Ethiopia, they looked at other effects of the programme as well. Many readers might be aware of the many intricacies which are associated with doing field research in a foreign country, but it may still be worthwhile to review a few which were experienced in the present study. These serve as valuable lessons.

One important lesson from the study is to do with the whole question of the application of Western models to third world situations, particularly the problems of bias and ethnocentrism. There were other problems which, although seemingly specific to Ethiopia, could be important in other countries as well. For instance, besides the volatile political climate that prevailed in Ethiopia at the time of the study, (notably due to the deposing of the Emperor), there were other problems such as the rigorous formalities required for entry into certain areas, shortage of schools in which to carry out the study and lack of competence in local languages (which had obvious detrimental effects), to name but a few major ones.

Perhaps the most important lesson, particularly for foreign researchers, to emerge from this study was the need to do reconnaissance work before sitting down to plan statistical strategies. The authors point out on the question of evaluation that the study had forced them to review their thinking on the subject and that they now "share the opinion that it is high time for evaluators to start approaching their task from the development mode reflected in a certain programme rather than to base their approach on hand books which generally

reflect a functionalist outlook" (p. 186). Thus critical discussion about what are to be considered the main goals for development, argue the authors, is a necessary element of such an evaluation exercise.

The book, while fairly comprehensively compiled, does fall short in certain critical respects. For example the authors' insatiable quest to provide the minutest of details on various topics is questionable. In discussing the study findings, the researchers go into too much theoretical discussion of concepts before presenting the actual study data. In my opinion this is uncalled for and is a weakness evident throughout the book. Another issue on which I take the authors to task is in connection with the question of samples and sampling. The sample of 149 individuals used for the interview section of the study appears to have been too small considering the magnitude of the study. Also, the fact that sampling was not random but haphazard robbed the study of some of its glamour and it follows that the results of the study have to be treated with due caution.

Having said that, I must be quick to add that the greatest attribute of a true academic is having the audacity and presence of mind to acknowledge weaknesses and shortcomings in his or her work and this the authors have unashamedly done. For example, they concede in one part, "We are aware of the risk that we have misinterpreted our interview data since, as foreigners, we are influenced by a Western culture and Western notions" (p. 158). All the same, one important attribute of this book is that it does utilise diagrams, sketches and makes extensive use of tables and other illustrations. While I have some misgivings concerning some aspects of the detail to do with methodology (e.g. lack of scientific sampling), I still feel this book is valuable not only to those engaged in research work at home or in foreign countries but also to those engaged in literacy work in particular and in development work in general, particularly in the developing world.

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The Field Directors' Handbook: an Oxfam Manual for Development Workers, edited by Brian Pratt and Jo Boyden, Oxford University Press, 1985.

The title of this book may deter ordinary development workers from reading it because it may be thought that it pertains only to Oxfam workers. On the