

It is Hargreaves refusal to provide easy solutions that I admire particularly, although it did frustrate my students! He leaves his reader to grapple with the tensions that exist between: teachers' individual voices and larger educational visions; school structures and cultures; trust in people and in processes; and finally, the tension that exists between the process and the purpose of change. Not unlike Ted Aoki, Andy Hargreaves invites us to dwell in the in-between where tension is generative of exciting possibilities.

Clearly, I enjoyed this book! *Changing Teachers, Changing Times* restores teaching to its original difficulty. It provides a Canadian context for its examination of the issues. It makes contemporary theory accessible and useful. It calls for commitment to and critical engagement in what we do in classrooms. What more could one ask for in an educational text?

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Hossain, M.H. (1994). *Traditional culture and modern systems: Administering primary education in Bangladesh*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 217 pp. (Hardcover).

This ethnographic case study of the administration of primary education in a Bangladesh upazila (municipal division) provides an illuminating picture of the bureaucratic structures developed to promote universal primary education in that country. Following the lead of the late Thomas B. Greenfield, the author does a laudable job of situating his study within the historical and social context of Bangladeshi culture.

The ethnographic nature of the study provides a lucid picture of the workings of government in administering education within a basically rural setting. It also demonstrates how the bureaucratic machinery involved in implementing government-mandated educational reform can get in the way of the actual teaching/learning process, particularly when the "dynamics of confrontation and negotiation" (where different levels of bureaucracy are

competing for legitimacy) interfere with the pursuit of the legitimate business of education.

Hossain examines the organizational structure of the Bangladesh primary education system against the backdrop of Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy which identifies "stability, predictability, and control" as prime characteristics of a hierarchical organizational system. The lines of authority are clearly defined, and written reports and detailed forms are necessary to provide documentary evidence of compliance in Bangladesh as in the model bureaucracy. As Hossain observes, it is tragic that in a system where funding is a major problem even outside donations may go unutilized for lack of the appropriate signatures on the designated forms. Hossain finds the inevitable conflict between traditional culture and modern administrative methods exacerbated by the large scale transfer of urban bureaucrats to positions of authority in rural communities where their mandate is to implement central government directives with little regard for local customs or values. In the opinion of one villager, "we need to change the character of the educated class. If that is not changed the educated class must be abolished." It is clear from Hossain's observations, well documented with the frank personal accounts of participants, that here as elsewhere things do not always work as intended.

More significant than the cumbersomeness of administration, which we all experience to some degree, is the question of how well the curriculum meets the needs of the students and the community. Also of concern is the parents' perception of the value of what is being offered. Teachers interviewed at one of the primary schools saw the centrally-mandated curriculum as being too theoretical and unrealistically demanding within the time and resource constraints of the local setting. One head teacher expressed the view that "modernisation of teaching appears to be more concerned with following certain rules than with imparting knowledge," and another teacher admitted, "I invent new rules, and slow down because I just cannot cope with the system's expectations." According to Hossain, "correct answers without comprehension characterized the intellectual life of the classrooms" (p. 145).

Teachers and their administrative supervisors agreed that local teacher training programs were devoid of value for the primary school teacher. The focus was on satisfying administrative requirements, and trainees found themselves forced to resort to the admittedly immoral practice of purchasing, and submitting for grading, lesson plans they were supposed to be creating themselves.

If we ask how primary education works in Bangladesh the answer from this book seems to be "not very well." Readers should remember, however,

that this was a case study focusing on events and personalities within a specific district. There may well be many upazilas in which the administration process is working more effectively than in the one examined. The selected district was near the capital city where, as the author had been advised at the outset, one could not expect to find the most exemplary education officers. Those offices, it was explained, would be occupied by individuals more interested in advancing their own careers than advancing the cause of primary education.

The book closes on a hopeful note as the author suggests that a more grassroots approach to educational development might better meet the needs of the population it seeks to serve. Traditional values can support local resource mobilization through effective organization of even the poorest, least educated, members of society, as demonstrated by the example of the Grameen Bank's lending circles.

Grameen Bank centers already provide nonformal schooling for members' children in some parts of Bangladesh. Although examination of those efforts was beyond the scope of the present work, their focus on working within an existing local structure to meet local needs demonstrates the feasibility of a less bureaucratic approach which could be applied more generally to broadening the base of effective education.

The weakest feature of this book is the author's tendency to generalize from the specific findings of the case study. It is also unfortunate that although he acknowledges that the qualitative researcher inevitably brings his own biases to the research process, but he does not identify his biases for us. One might suspect that he approached his task with the assumption that the bureaucratic process was not very efficient. He seems satisfied that his research, admittedly thorough within its own bounds, confirmed that assumption. However, he also implies that the old ways were better, a position not very well substantiated by the facts presented.

The topic of this book was of particular interest to me because of my longstanding personal ties to Bangladesh. However, I feel that all readers who see education as an important tool in improving the lives of children the world over will want to consider the broad implications of Hossain's rich description of a centralized educational bureaucracy transplanted to a rural setting.

In particular, we will want to ask ourselves whether this study's findings can provide a fresh perspective from which to evaluate our own individual and collective roles in furthering the important goal of universal primary education. Even further, we may want to ask whether the goal itself is too

simplistic and needs to be clarified to identify what *is* meaningful education in the context of less privileged societies than our own.

If we ask how we personally can contribute to the furthering of primary education in developing countries we will find few answers in this book. We will, however, find much food for thought. For example, if the translation of a national government's policies to rural society produces dysfunctional bureaucratic structures, how much greater might be the danger in assuming that Western educational theories and policies can be transplanted without a thorough understanding of the local contexts in which they are being applied.

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