

L A T I N A M E R I C A :
Education in a World of Scarcity

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- WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOMES.* By AUDREY CHAPMAN SMOCK. (New York: Praeger, 1981. Pp. 293. \$39.95.)
- FINANCING EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PROCEEDINGS OF AN INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR HELD IN MONT SAINTE MARIE, CANADA.* By the CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY and the INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1982. Pp. 142. \$8.00.)
- THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION: CULTURE, POWER, AND LIBERATION.* By PAULO FREIRE. Translated by DONALD MACEDO. (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey, 1985. Pp. 240. \$24.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper.)
- EDUCATION AND POVERTY: EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING IN THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA.* By MAURICE R. BERUBE. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1984. Pp. 163. \$27.95.)
- EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ENVIRONMENTS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD.* Edited by SHELDON SHAEFFER and JOHN A. NKINYANGI. (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1983. Pp. 288. \$15.00.)
- INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS.* Volume 3: ASIA, AUSTRALASIA, AND LATIN AMERICA. Edited by ROBERT COWEN and MARTIN MCLEAN. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1984. Pp. 844. \$60.00.)
- EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN.* By ERROL L. MILLER. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1984. Pp. 199.)

In the centuries preceding Latin American independence, schooling was a luxury and was oriented toward religion. Although private and state schools existed, the latter often established in urban areas by the *cabildo*, Spanish monarchs gave the church a free hand in educating Spaniards and civilizing Indians. Secondary schools and universities grew out of the desire by clerics to educate their prospective members. These schools were also attended by lay persons, usually the

sons of the well-to-do. Thus the colonial era left a tradition in Latin American education that was religious and elitist.

After the upheaval of the wars for independence, French concepts of education began to be accepted for state-run and centralized education (Cowan, p. 559), together with classical studies. These concepts were mainly implemented in urban areas, while the larger rural populations of Latin America remained unschooled. After World War II, U.S. influence on education began to be felt as the industrializing societies of Latin America looked to North America for models of development and a growing middle class demanded education for its children. Also, multilateral agencies such as UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, and the World Bank sought to foster education in the rural areas of Latin America as the gap widened between urban and rural education in the Third World.

In the 1960s and 1970s, private foundations such as Carnegie and Ford underwrote educational research and programs. Literacy and universal primary education were promoted, but often the result was increased support of secondary and higher education that benefited the urban middle classes. Radical theorists lamented the dependency of their societies on the First World and tried to tie education to overall national development. During the 1980s, pessimism has grown as severe economic depression and inflation have led to cutbacks in state education budgets. Other factors that placed constraints on educational development worsened, including population growth, lack of job opportunities, poverty, scant educational resources in rural areas, competition from military expenditures, and the inflexible and centralized programs of education ministries in some countries.

But grounds for optimism also existed in the 1980s. Most Latin American nations remained committed to education, despite decreasing support from international agencies. Campaigns for literacy continued, as did the publishing of textbooks and universal primary education. Nonformal education was stressed in rural areas with the aid of radio, television, and self-taught programs. Health, nutrition, and on-the-job training programs found their way into the curriculum. Teacher education and curriculum development were stressed. Institutions of research and higher education, as well as individual professors and government bureaucrats, affiliated themselves with universities and regional and international networks in developed countries. This trend helped end the isolation of researchers in the Third World and changed a dependent relationship into one of members cooperating in a global community (Gordon in *Financing International Development*, pp. 12, 96–97).

These socioeconomic changes since the 1950s are noted by the authors of the seven books listed above. The contribution by Keith Lewin, Angela Little, and Christopher Colclough to *Financing Educational Development* reviews the worldwide constraints on education budgets and the reasons for growing pessimism about education being a panacea for economic growth, fertility, and health. But Lewin and his coauthors remain optimistic about educational programs that seek to promote social equality, especially if implemented in primary schooling, the years “crucial for determining who eventually will end up in different positions in society and the economy” (p. 38). They call for more educational expenditures in Third World budgets.

Another paper in this collection stresses the key political factors in allocating resources to education, a joint effort by Martin Carnoy, Henry Levin, Reginald Nugent, Suleman Sumra, Carlos Torres, and Jeff Unsicker. Carnoy and his coauthors note that church and business representatives may also enter the political decision-making process on educational budgets. After reviewing the studies of income distribution, the authors conclude that education has had a positive effect on income in Latin America but one smaller than such variables as regional disparities in earnings, wage structure, and the rate of unemployment. Although state investment in primary education benefits the poor, investment in secondary and higher levels benefits the rich. In addition, data on educational spending are often exaggerated by governments hoping to promote a populist image (see *Financing International Development*, Lewin et al., pp. 13–38, and Carnoy et al., 39–68).

The *International Handbook of Education Systems* relies on data sent by governments to UNESCO but also includes reports from British embassies and High Commissions to the British Council. In this third volume compiled by the British Council, Robert Cowen wrote the introduction on Latin America and revised the section on Brazil, while Martin McLean wrote the introduction on Asia and Australasia and reported on Cuba. Section B covers eight countries in Latin America—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. Each synopsis includes information on geography (with a map), population, history and politics, society and culture, economy, the education system, educational administration, educational finance, and development and planning of the education system. The sections on education are replete with statistical charts on numbers of students and teachers at all three levels, and diagrams of the structure of each ministry of education and the basic cycles of grades. It is hoped that all Latin American educational systems will be covered in a future volume because these well-organized reports make good reference sources, despite occasional typographical errors and incorrect dates.

In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, education was deemed especially

important for women as a means of widening opportunities and increasing status. The outcomes have been mixed, however, as depicted by Audrey Smock in her excellent survey of the literature on women, education, and their range of roles in five countries (Mexico, Ghana, Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines). *Women's Education in Developing Countries* is Smock's third book on women in developing countries. She focuses on formal education (because information about nonformal education is so slight) and asks how it affects three aspects of women's lives: marriage and family, labor force participation, and fertility. In societies with traditional restrictions on women working, highly educated women are more likely to pursue a career after marriage than are uneducated women, but they remain a minority who must overcome many sex barriers. More education does not necessarily decrease fertility, although women with a tertiary education tend to have fewer children. To lower fertility, family planning services must be available to women in these Third World countries. The findings of various studies demonstrate that governmental policies are more important than cultural values in determining female educational opportunities and that governments are not inclined to eliminate the bias favoring males. Given this situation, investments in programs other than education—such as agricultural extension for females, family planning, and the creation of jobs—are more likely to benefit most women and improve the quality of their lives (p. 279).

Findings questioning education's contribution to overall economic development are not reflected in educational plans drawn up by governments. But a shift in rationale has occurred over the last two decades. Unlike the First World experience, calls for mass formal education in Latin America preceded the transition from agricultural to industrial societies. But the impoverished rural sectors received little benefit, and schooling meant advancement only for those who reached the urban areas. This outcome also skewed the use of education for nation-building toward the cities. In the 1960s and 1970s, governments enjoyed growing incomes and began to address rural-urban imbalances. Educational research was fostered by the universities and later by governments but was always considered a luxury; only the wealthier nations of Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Mexico could support private research. Plans to improve the quality of schools usually centered on curriculum reform and teacher training. By the end of the 1970s, when resources again became scarce, concern shifted toward improving the educational system by reducing rates of illiteracy, repetition, and drop-out, as well as by cutting costs (Lewin in *Financing Educational Development*, p. 27).

The last four books under review have grown out of recently improved climates for educational research in Latin America. *Educa-*

tional Research Environments in the Developing World assesses the variables that foster or hinder research in the developing world and is attributable to Pablo Latapi of Mexico and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. (Indeed, the Research Review and Advisory Group of IDRC is responsible for three of the books listed above.¹) *Educational Research Environments* contains studies of such environments in Colombia, Mexico, the English-speaking Caribbean, Thailand, Jordan, Kenya, Uganda, Mali, and Senegal. In Colombia research on education has been carried out by social scientists rather than by educators. The paucity of administrators and coordinators of research has diminished policy and quality, however, and little public support exists for research. Researchers divorce theory from practice when they decry social stratification while maintaining elitist upbringings for their children. In Mexico research centers are found in universities, government ministries, and the private sector. One-half of all researchers hold the licentiate degree and thus lack research training. Most research is oriented toward operating the school system and is neither theoretical nor action-oriented.

The section in *Educational Research Environments* by Errol Miller on the English-speaking Caribbean posits that freedom of inquiry exists in all of the ten countries except Guyana. Almost half of the 370 educational researchers working in twenty-two institutions were Jamaicans as of 1981. The "intimacy" of Caribbean society softens the impact of research that would be considered controversial elsewhere. Half of these researchers, who are mainly part-time, investigate teaching, curriculum, or development. In spite of large governmental expenditures on education (20 to 25 percent of their budgets), the poor still do not benefit as much as other social classes. Interestingly, females are more literate than males, and women teachers outnumber men primary and secondary teachers.

Miller calls for increased funding of educational research, expressing the belief that educational research has matured enough to be more original and independent of Western and Marxist concepts. He conceives of a more nationalistic mode of thinking that can interpret Caribbean society vis-à-vis the world according to Caribbean concepts. To use education for nation building implies that Creole and English should both be taught in the schools. The desire to decolonize or end dependency has meant that most educational research deals with curriculum development. Other related research involves nutrition and early mental stimulation of poor children.

Such research topics were not stressed thirty years ago, when the English-speaking Caribbean's University of the West Indies (UWI) was established in 1948. The University of London and British expatriates helped the UWI staff its Department of Education, which spon-

sored research with the help of the Carnegie Foundation. British and North American themes of economic development dominated educational research. The Ford Foundation helped establish the Institute of Education in 1962 to train teachers for the West Indies, Belize, and the British Virgin Islands. The Carnegie Foundation also helped the University of Guyana (which was created in the 1960s) to found its Faculty of Education in 1966. Faculty at both universities were expected to do research and publish, but without much institutional support. Research related to education was also carried out by the social science and medical faculties. Subsequently, governmental ministries of education hired individual researchers to carry out curriculum development and planning. Today West Indians staff twenty-two research centers that must compete for continued funding, given the low budgetary priority placed on educational research. Freedom of inquiry and expression exist more fully in university-based research than in the ministries, which are regulated by the Official Secrets Act (*Educational Research*, p. 25).

Radical, Marxist, and nationalist researchers calling for an end to dependency attack researchers who use Western models. Yet few indigenous responses and educational theories come from Latin America. One exception to this generalization is Paulo Freire,² who has outlined his pedagogy of literacy training in several books. In Freire's home country of Brazil, Comunidades Eclesiais de Base have been pioneered by the Catholic Church to teach literacy along with certain ideologies and life styles. In *The Politics of Education*, Freire is less concerned with pedagogy than with affirming his activist approach to education and his belief that education can transform society. This book includes two interviews with Freire and an excellent introduction by Henry Giroux, all of which help elucidate Freire's somewhat difficult writing. Freire envisions education as an ideal representing a forum for cultural politics wherein the relationships between the dominant and dominated reflect the greater social context. Becoming conscious (*conscientização*) of this sociocultural reality of dependence can lead to cultural action for freedom.

Education also becomes an instrument for change in the service of a new kind of society. For Freire, it implies more than formal schooling—it represents a struggle for meaning and power. Freire's goal is a liberated humanity that speaks a language of annunciation and enunciation and does not reproduce capitalist rationality and other tools of oppression. He combines history and theology (from the prophetic church) to create a theoretical base for a radical pedagogy of hope, critical reflection, and collective struggle. Education as a humanistic and liberating task is not the transfer of information but an act of knowledge involving the dialectical relation of consciousness and world. According to Freire, a radical transformation of reality (social

structures) must take place to end exploitation; knowledge of reality will not end it. Because most education is not neutral but is molded to preserve the status quo, any transformation of an educational system can take place only when society is also radically transformed (*Politics of Education*, pp. xi–xxv).³

Maurice Berube's *Education and Poverty: Effective Schooling in the United States and Cuba* is more difficult to place among these other works because it is impressionistic and derivative rather than based on original research. He sidesteps the issue of freedom of inquiry in Cuba, and although he mentions that Jonathan Kozol helped him gain admittance to Cuba, he says nothing about other researchers who were not allowed to enter Cuba. Berube started out to compare the urban poor, especially blacks, in socialist Cuba and the capitalistic United States but changed his mind because the United States was far richer (p. ix). Having made this observation, he then proceeds to compare the two educational systems and concludes that there is more opportunity and training for the poor in Cuba.

Cuba serves as an example of a country that implemented a stunning literacy campaign and the extension of primary and secondary education to the masses. Yet Berube does not focus on these feats. Instead, he concentrates on discipline in the schools and pupil motivation, based on his observations of groups of parents and pupils (Los Jóvenes Pioneros) who enforce discipline in Cuban schools, and he concludes that discipline and alienation are not scholastic problems in Cuba as they are in the United States. Later on Berube concludes that eliminating poverty was the most important factor in extending education to all. Berube recommends that the United States create a centralized national school system and national urban student and parental organizations. Curiously, he decries a uniform educational system in the United States that would not offer a variety of alternatives. Berube affirms that the poor are educable in the United States and that the obstacles to their education are the existing schools and poverty.

All these books attest to the considerable educational research going on in the Third World, particularly in Latin America. Currently, however, issues of social equity and economic development are festering as stagflation affects economies. The traditions of religious and elitist schools in a dual system, with impoverished public schools for the poor and in rural areas, hang on doggedly. Indigenous educational researchers and members of the elite, themselves struggling for survival, are not likely to improve the situation, despite the innovations of Paulo Freire and a few others. Curriculum remains a copy of European systems when it should seek instead to assist economic growth in such areas as math, sciences, economics, management, agronomy, home economics, health, nutrition, and the industrial arts. But due to the

current enforced austerity, educational advances are bound to be slower in the 1980s than in the preceding three decades.

NOTES

1. The U.S. source of publications by the International Development Research Center is UNIPUB, Box 433, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10016.
2. Paulo Freire's literacy program is original and indigenous but nonetheless ran into implementation problems. See Cowen's introduction, *International Handbook of Education Systems*, 561.
3. *The Politics of Education* was translated by Freire's friend and educational collaborator, Donald Macedo, who also conducted one of the interviews included in this volume.