

BOOK REVIEWS

Equity and Development: World Development Report 2006, Bruse Ross Larson, et al., editors, Washington: The World Bank and Oxford University Press, pp. xiv + 320, n/p.

Paul Wolfowitz is a worthy successor of Robert MacNannara – both as occupation warlord and as World Bank president. He has taken the bull by the horns and in his first World Development Report (WDR 2006) set out a strategy to harness equity for the Neo Con project of global capitalist exploitation. In this review I will try to show how Wolfowitz seeks to achieve this objective.

Wolfowitz begins by defining “equity in terms of two basic principles. The first is equal opportunity, a person’s life achievements should be determined by his or her talents and efforts. The second is the avoidance of deprivation in outcomes” (WDR 2006)* Capitalist equity – equity as defined by Wolfowitz – is claimed to be a means to enable all individuals to live a life of their own choosing. Equity is not defined as “equity of opportunity” or as “avoidance of deprivation” by the world’s great religious – this becomes evident from the World Bank’s crude and vulgar distortion of the Buddhist, Christians and Islamic doctrines on pages 76-77 of WDR 2006. The Prophet and Sayadna Isa (peace be upon them) and Gautama Buddha led lives of great voluntary deprivation. Poverty is extolled as a cardinal virtue by Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. Moreover talents, like race, gender social class and regional location are all un-chosen at birth. Why should the flourishing of talent based inequalities be regarded as equitable? Why should the less talented be less equal? Why should inequality be tolerated for the flourishing of only those “talents” which facilitate capital accumulation?

Capitalist moral discourse addresses these questions by developing a conception of the good which negates its claim that equality of opportunity and deprivation avoidance (i.e. capitalist equity) is a means for enabling individuals to lead any life of their choosing. Capitalist equity is compatible only with the capitalist way of life. This becomes clear from the thumbnail sketches of the thoughts of the Anglo Saxon capitalist apologists, Dworkin, Nozick, Roemer, Rawls and Sen in WDR 2006 (it is

*All quotations in the text are from WDR, 2006.

significant that the more profound work of the Continental capitalist apologists Batalle, Foucault, Gadamer and Habermas is not mentioned). These capitalist apologists assign value to choice alone. All specific choices are in themselves valueless.

A specific choice is relatively valuable only to the extent that it contributes to the expansion of the realm of choice (Sen would call this “capabilities”. Roemer “advantages”). This abstract realm of choice is nothing but the concrete circuit of capital. Capital (exchange value in perpetual motion for its quantitative expansion) is the choice of choice itself. Financial markets value all transactions in terms of their contribution to accumulation (abstract choice). There is no space in capitalist order for any other conception of intrinsic worth. Individuals and activities are assigned relative value solely in accordance with their relative contribution to accumulation.

Talents in a capitalist society are valued on the basis of the accumulative calculus alone. The talent of the monk and the mother can command no value unless they are facilitators of a capitalist transaction or a capitalist spectacle. Accumulation requires the flourishing of a specific set of talents – selfishness, lust, greed, jealousy, ruthlessness, cunning and cruelty. These are Sen’s capabilities. Capitalist equity is a means for the flourishing of these capabilities for they facilitate accumulation while the talents nurtured in the monastery and the madrassah do not.

The instrumental character of capitalist equity is stressed throughout WDR 2006. Wolfowitz argues that “broadening opportunities strongly supports the first pillar of the Bank’s strategy namely improving the investment climate”. Opportunity inequity is likely to lead to “wasted human potential” capitalist equity contributes to “sustainable growth”. Promoting equity can “correct market failures” and enable “resources to flow where returns are highest”. In the absence of efficient markets “re-distribution of access to assets can increase economic efficiency”. “Middle and poorer groups (should not be) allowed to end up with unexploited talent (otherwise) society as a whole (is) likely to be inefficient and miss out on opportunities for investment”. Capitalist equity promotes “reduced” conflicts, greater trust and better institutions with dynamic benefits for investments”. Bringing “equity considerations to the diagnoses of policy means integrating and extending existing framework” and not in any sense rejecting the World Bank’s time honored policy paradigms.

This emphasis on policy continuity – i.e. on incorporating capitalist equity promoting measures within the Neo Con policy paradigm to which Wolfowitz’s Bank is committed – leads to an emphatic rejection of conventional social democratic policies. “The policy aim is not equality in outcome” – i.e. equality in the actual distribution of income and wealth. Wolfowitz’s Bank emphasizes “the important role of income differences in providing incentives to invest and to work”. Promoting capitalist equity is merely promoting “(Capitalist) property rights for all”. Equity consid-

erations cannot trump capitalist property rights, since they are means for promoting them. Wolfowitz's Bank warns against socialist policies "The history of the twentieth century is littered with examples of ill designed policies pursued in the name of equity that seriously harmed investment".

A fundamental weakness of WDR 2006 is its inability to theorize the relationship between equality of opportunity and distributional equality. Capitalist order promotes equality of opportunity and reduces absolute poverty as a means for increasing distributional inequality. The human capabilities capitalism values are highly concentrated. Only a microscopic minority of individuals are sufficiently selfish, lustful, greedy, ruthless, vicious and cruel to rise to the top in capitalist society. (Moreover the critical minimum level of cruelty, selfishness, greed and ruthlessness required for success in capitalist society keeps on rising at an accelerated pace). It is this microscopic minority which appropriates power in the financial markets – the markets which value all individuals and activities on the basis of the accumulative calculus. As capitalist equity flourishes barriers to the social dominance of the selfish, the greedy, the ruthless, the cruel, the morally depraved individuals are eliminated and the financial markets – both global and local – colonize culture, politics and economy. This is the price paid for the reduction of absolute poverty.

Wolfowitz's Bank obscures the negative relationship between the growth of capitalist equity and the growth of distributional (income and wealth) equality by incoherently measuring capitalist equity on the basis of income and asset distributional characteristics. Growing distributional inequalities in the Western countries are not mentioned. Wolfowitz's Bank is embarrassed to admit that capitalist inequality as measured in a regression model using data from Brazil does not significantly explain distributional inequality (the results are in any case banal for they implicitly involve auto regression).

Wolfowitz's Bank is even more embarrassed to admit that capitalist equity enhancing policies – those emanating from the Washington Consensus – have contributed to an increase in distributional inequalities since 1990 – specially in the ex-socialist countries of East Europe where these Neo Con policies have been rammed down the throats of unwilling populations by the IMF and Wolfowitz's Bank.

Despite this, WDR 2006 fully endorses Neo Con macroeconomic policies. The primary emphasis is on growth even as a means for reducing global inequalities. It is stressed that "the distribution of opportunities and the growth process are jointly determined" – the invisible hand ensures capitalist equity if growth is enhanced "Each policy does not need to take equity into account" "Equity must not be an excuse for poor economic policy" – i.e. high budget deficits, industrial protection, employment subsidization, credit planning etc. In particular expropriation of capitalist property is to be avoided at all cost "A focus on equity does not change the fact that asset appropriation even in the face of historical grievances (has) adverse

consequences for subsequent investments”. The principal objective of macroeconomic policy is to support or substitute for markets because “markets are central for shaping the potential to convert human talents (into capitalist talents)”. The government should therefore “open up financial markets” and liberalize trade. “A concern for equity would lead to a highly prudent stance on macroeconomic management and financial regulation. Populist macroeconomic policy is bad for equity and bad for growth. Policy design can support equity through the pursuit of counter cyclical fiscal policy, building safety nets, reducing risky lending (and promoting) independent central banks and autonomous financial regulatory agencies” says WDR 2006.

This macro policy should be supplemented by meso initiatives to restructure institutions for allowing capitalist capabilities (greed, lust, ruthlessness, cruelty) to flourish and for markets to function efficiently. Power, status and wealth should not impede the flourishing of these capitalist capabilities and rationalities for if they do “they are also bad for investment, innovation and risk taking”.

The key institutional restructuring initiative advocated is privatization. This is seen as key to the provision of infrastructural services and for their marketisation. Privatization of utility services is strongly endorsed as an equity enhancing measure. Utility sector regulation should be market oriented and profit incentives should be provided for the production and distribution utilities (specially electricity and gas). Any subsidies that cannot be avoided should be targeted at utility market development.

Privatization is a means for the legitimation of capitalist property. A comprehensive overhaul of the legal system is advocated to achieve this end. Customs such as those incorporated in marriage and kinship systems which inhibit the flourishing of capitalist capabilities (greed, lust, ruthlessness and cruelty) should be deligitimized. The “playing field is to be leveled” for the exercise of these capitalist talents and of course no play is to be permitted outside the field. “legal institutions should uphold the (capitalist) rights of citizens and curb the capture of the state by (non capitalist) elites”. “Protecting (capitalist) property rights ensures non discrimination. (The protection) of property rights is central to unbiased dispute resolution so important for investment” Customary practices should be subordinated to “the rights and responsibilities of (capitalist) state law” as is being done in South Africa.

Most important, there should be no land reforms. “Broader access to land does not come through ownership change”. Improving the “functioning of land markets and providing greater security of tenure (is) fruitful”. “Expropriating land is the most disruptive redistribution instrument” and should be rejected for the promotion of capitalist equity.

Similarly capitalist equity requires the universalities of the practice of “employment at will”. The firm has the right to dismiss the worker at the time of its choosing. The firm should be free to determine the terms of the employment contract.

“State regulation for workers reduces the flexibility of labor markets and are a poor deal for the workers”. Employment regulation regimes should not impede the type of economic restructuring imposed by Washington Consensus policies on developing countries. “Worker security is provided by stringent forms of employment protection legislation which makes it costly to hire and (fire) workers”. “Leveling the playing field” in the labor markets means bringing down the formal full time contract workers to the level of the casual laborers.

“Leveling the playing field” also requires reducing the tax burden on the rich. “Developing countries are best served by avoiding high marginal taxes on income and relying on a broad base specially for taxes on consumption”. Taxes on consumption are notoriously regressive but they are necessary means for promoting capitalist equity.

With its strong emphasis on the need for regressive taxation and small and falling budget deficits Wolfowitz’s Bank cannot ask for a major increase in public funding of safety net and health and education services. It opposes expansion in public health services. “Relying on public hospitals works badly”. Here too privatization is the key policy. Promoting capitalist equity requires “incentives for (health services) providers to be responsive to markets”. Marketisation and privatization of educational services is also strongly advocated. Schools should ultimately be accountable to the markets and should produce a labor force capable of accelerating the pace of capital accumulation.

WDR 2006 presumes that the optimal level of capitalist equity has been achieved by the West and therefore it has nothing to say about the domestic policies of the West. In the view of Wolfowitz’s Bank global policy has only a marginal role to play even in reducing global capitalist inequities. “Reducing global inequities will depend primarily on the domestic policies of poor countries”. The global policy proposals in WDR 2006 therefore need not be taken seriously. Wolfowitz’s Bank has neither the intention nor the resources to significantly influence the West’s global policy agenda.

America is held up as a model throughout WDR 2006 – as a provider of the correct incentives promoter of domestic markets, effective regulator of institutions etc. But these are not America’s principle contributions to the promotion of global capitalist equity. Far more important are its merciless slaughter of thirty five million Red Indians in the 17th to 19th century, its 20th century slaughter in Vietnam and Cambodia and its present day slaughter in Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombia, Bolivia and Puerto Rico.

Wolfowitz’s appointment as the World Bank president is appropriate for he, like MacNannara is a major strategic of this slaughter. American slaughter is necessary for the universalation of capitalist order and for the globalization of capitalist capabilities – selfishness, greed, lust, ruthlessness, cruelty. A policy framework focusing

on the provision of opportunity, equalities and the elimination of deprivation (i.e. capitalist equity) is a necessary means for the universalization of these capitalist capabilities – selfishness, greed, lust, ruthlessness and cruelty. It is hardly surprising – as WDR 2006 recognizes – that similar policies are required for the promotion of both capitalist equity and capitalist growth. Capitalist equity, is after all, only an instrument for the acceleration of capital accumulation and capitalist exploitation.

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Vimala Ramachandran, Editor: Gender and social equity in primary education: Hierarchies of access, Sage Publication, New Delhi: India, pp. 381.

Though, India has made impressive strides in increasing literacy rates and in enabling access to education. The country now seems well set to provide universal and good quality basic education. Yet, behind this otherwise rosy picture lie serious concerns relating primarily to gender and equity. If we continue to leave vast sections of the people of the world outside the orbit of education, we make the world not only less just, but also less secure. Basic education is not just an arrangement for training to develop skills; it is also recognition of the nature of the world, with its diversity and richness, and an appreciation of the importance of freedom and reasoning as well as friendship.

The book *Gender and social equity in primary education: Hierarchies of access* by Vimala Ramachandran's, is a review of Indian primary education following a decade of concerted efforts on the part of Government of India's District Primary Educational Programme and various non-governmental organizations to close the gap between education for the rich and the poor, between urban and rural areas, and between the education girls receive compared to boys. The target audience ranges from educational professionals to policy makers at all levels. The book provides information about the notion of gender mainstreaming, a strategy for ensuring women's rights be addressed through policy, planning and implementation. It focuses on the issues arising from a lack of clarity about the meaning of gender equality in education. The book provides an overview of the rationale that have informed policy development in girls' education and encourages a change towards a rights-based framework. The gender-gap related to education in some countries

presents a challenge for social policy development. The book also defines phrases such as gender parity, gender equality and gender equity.

This volume provides an insightful understanding of the ground realities of primary education programmes, particularly those run by the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). Combining secondary research with field studies conducted in six states, the contributors explore gender and social equity issues in primary education. It recognizes the importance of mainstreaming gender and making it an integral part of DPEP, the need for gender focus in tackling the problem of access, retention and achievement levels as well as the importance of reaching out to children from the most disadvantaged groups/communities. Educationally backward districts with female literacy below the national average were taken as priority districts. Equally, the programme stressed on education for socially disadvantaged groups. The historic 2001 Census of India revealed that 65.4 percent of the people 75.85 percent among men and 54.16 percent among women are now literate, and that for the first time the absolute number of illiterates has actually gone down.

The author formulates this book into two sections with thirteen chapters. The first section comprises six chapters and section two consists on seven chapters. She brings to the project extensive experience in Indian politics, education, and women's issues; therefore she is well positioned to help readers who are unfamiliar with Indian educational policy and politics to gain an understanding of some of the systemic forces that continue to undermine efforts to achieve genuine educational equity. However, many of the chapters provide detailed reports of statistical data from individual local studies. The first chapter presents the introduction of the study with understanding gender and social disparities at a district levels with an overview of the DPEP. The author used a desk study as its methodology with documentation of some best practices. The starting point of the desk research was a listing of gender and equity issues highlighted in existing documents. The author tried to examine if gender and equity issues has been 'mainstreamed', or whether they remained sporadic and localized. An important focus of this research related to a subtle but nevertheless discernible hierarchy of access in education. While overall enrolment and access to primary schooling has shown significant improvement in the last decade, there continues to exist a hard core of children from socially and economically deprived strata and remote areas who escape the net of primary educational facilities. A particularly useful section in Chapter 2 focuses District Primary Educational Programme (DPEP). The tabulated measurement indicators are a useful model that might be adapted to other disadvantaged social groups when exploring the concept of education. This chapter analyses the education situation in India and at a district level by using different census/ surveys and different education indicators on the basis of gender and regional disparity in primary education. It also discussed the weakness in the current methodology of computing the

gapes both social and gender specifically in the reliance on gross enrolment data. By using an intensive statistical work it gives a comprehensive picture of primary education situation in India. The author brings the findings from a desk review of reports and data on education in 1990's shows that there has been a significant increase in overall literacy rates and school participation rates across the country. Gender disparities have declined with an overall increase in school attendance. It also explores the different reasons for non attending the primary education between boys and girls and between urban and rural children, at a district level.

Chapter 3 discussed issues related to hierarchies in the access to education and whether the current trends of a shift by the better off to private schooling and policies, while enhancing universalisation may simultaneously be resulting in segregation with poor, socially deprived groups being clustered in government and alternative non-formal schools. Moreover the author also highlight that there is unanimity among researchers and administrators about the need to increase children's access to upper primary and middle schools. The absences of post primary educational opportunities continue to create greater inequalities in the system. Gender bias and Social inequalities are more prominent at this stage due to lack of meaningful access to upper primary school for girls. Chapter 4 elaborates on the various institutional mechanisms and strategies specifically DPEP to improve schooling and reduce inequalities. Ramachandran's "hierarchies of access" analysis, on the other hand is suited to a much wider audience, and might in fact provide a useful framework or, more accurately perhaps, a cautionary tale for addressing the persistent educational inequity within our own borders. Chapter 5 on alternative and education guarantee schools explores the strengths and weakness of various non-formal education initiatives in addressing the specific constraints of those with low access to formal schools. The final chapter analysis classrooms process through a content analysis of DPEP initiated innovations and whether they have been successful in, at least partially, mitigating and negative attitudes towards girls and children from socially deprived communities.

Section 2 of the study contains six qualitative micro studies and in addition to editing the volume, Ramachandran has authored or co-authored five of its thirteen chapters, and her work provides much of the substantive theoretical background and analysis for the various studies. The desk based reviews of secondary data and evaluation reports suffer from certain limitations, particularly in assessing the differential impact of educational initiatives at the village level or on different groups of people within the village. In these chapters the author brings its attention on the micro level studies through process that is more interpretive and is able to provide an in depth exploration of the extant quantitative findings. It was proposed that a series of qualitative micro studies be carried out to provide depth of information regarding the underlying motivations, feelings, values, attitudes and perceptions of ordinary parents, teachers, children as well as the community regarding primary schooling

and the impact of DPEP. The objective of the exercise was to recognize the human face behind the sanitized statistics. This chapter is also devoted to briefly outlining the specific methodology used in the micro studies as well as capturing the similarities and differences of the DPEP experience across the six states and highlighting the chasm, at times, widening and sometimes narrowing, between the rhetoric and reality of policy initiatives.

Long life the alphabet! egarim panchayat is also the subject of the next chapters and shows that egarim panchayat has been successful in achieving total access, enrolment as well as retention in primary schooling. This study broadly attempts to locate this phenomenon within the larger context of innovative educational planning in Madhya Pradesh in the last decade and the continuing need for a decentralized and localized approach of educational planning embodied in the DPEP initiative. It is primarily qualitative study and focuses on the state sponsored primary education initiative introduced in the egarim panchayat in the last five years and its achievement of universal elementary education. It explores the local dynamics of gender, class and community participation that frame this achievement and highlight its implications for social and gender equity. In chapter ten the author highlights on the hidden picture of primary education system in Haryana by raising what is needed as a more textured and analytical understanding of issues related to gender and social differentiation inside the classroom, in teacher training, in educational administration and in the community and family/kinship contexts. This micro study confirms that inequalities remain hidden in this bigger and better picture of a quantum leap in enrolment and retention rates. The cultural and social barriers faced by the disadvantaged groups in terms of attitudes, perceptions, ignorance and prejudices of the education hierarchy remain unaddressed. Elimination of Gender, caste, community and other social biases of the school administration, teachers and the community still remains a big challenge. The next Chapters discuss the second generation, gender issues in equity and education in selected districts on the basis of its heterogeneous social composition. This shows that the social disparities in school achievement are in actuality to a complex interplay of the multiple social forces of class, region, community, family and the state. By examining how these strategies are woven into the fabric of existing public education, the micro study attempts to look at the texture of this weave.

The book is readable and providing appropriate academic and documentary references and offers all the recent recipes in the space of social equality in the context of access to primary education by gender. This book is useful not only for researchers and policymakers but also for trainers in various fields. The case studies that are included in the book are very interesting, they help to provide context and colour to the general conclusions. This book has served a valuable purpose by demonstrating clearly that the Indian educational system is not a neutral and autonomous identity, it is deeply embedded in the existing social fabric and will reflect the

perceptions and biases of that society. Anyone seeking a book to support initial teacher education students in understanding classroom practices to eliminate gender bias might find the book disappointing since it provides little practical advice. However, Education Studies and other similar programmes, where discussion of broader issues are debated and the opportunity to examine international concerns exists, might find this book a useful addition to the library shelves. It is interesting and thought provoking to read and provides a useful set of starting points for developing critical debate.

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