

BOEKE/BOOKS

D'SOUZA, Barnabe, Shelter Don Bosco (sdb) & Team. **Pivoting peripheries.**
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Pivoting peripheries documents a participatory action research (PAR) study undertaken to understand and enhance the holistic development of marginalised youth in Mumbai and Maharashtra. It provides us with a case study of how PAR can be used to empower people, to enable them to initiate actions on their own, so that they could participate and influence the processes and outcomes concerning their development.

The specific objective of the study was to develop and implement effective intervention strategies based on the needs of marginalised youth. A module specifying developmental indicators was formulated to collect baseline information. Upon implementation of the intervention strategies, the impact was assessed against the baseline information. Six non-governmental organisations (4 structured, semi-structured and two open communities) were participants in the study.

The book is divided into six chapters. It follows the sequencing of a scientific research report with captivating titles. Chapter one titled 'mapping the peripheries', contextualises the study and discusses the plight of marginalised youth within the broader context of Indian society. It contains the theoretical framework upon which concepts are operationalised. The research process and methodology used is discussed.

Chapter 2, 'entering the axial arena' describes the results of the first phase of the study. An account of the process used in the formulation of the criteria for the collection of baseline assessment data is presented. It identifies physical, economic, intrapersonal, social and moral aspects as being significant for the holistic development of youth. For each of these major areas a corresponding learning intervention strategy was developed and is presented in module form.

Chapters three and four, both document the results of data collected which includes a profile of each of the communities, the facilitative measures initiated and their impact on the different groups. The structured organisations included street shelters and institutional care. The semi-structured organisations targeted domestic workers and a treatment programme for substance abusers which was specifically designed to address the peculiarities of street life and sub-culture. The two open communities were slum communities that could be equated to the South African informal settlements.

Chapter 5, 'evolving paradigms', critically discusses the results and outcomes of the study in relation to the developmental framework outlined earlier in the book. Based on the results of the study three developmental models specific to each context emerged. The final chapter lists the recommendations in very practical terms.

The book will be of particular value to South Africa as in both countries a substantial proportion of youth are vulnerable and marginalised because of poverty and appalling living conditions. Thabo Mbeki, recognises India's expertise and capacity and has endorsed their assistance in achieving South Africa's goals towards reconstruction and development and the building of people-centered

societies (Mbeki, 2003:24). The contents of the book provide us with a good example of the role of civil society and the importance of the 'self' in the community. At the international level, both countries are members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Commonwealth. The commonality of views and approaches has been further cemented by the formation of the IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa) Dialogue Forum to deepen the cooperation between the three countries on various issues. The philosophical view adopted by D'Souza *et al.* (2005:13) which informs the development of intervention strategies corresponds to that of both Trevor Manuel and Fraser-Moleketi (Fourie & Ngqungwana, 2005:39). They concur that holistic development is about improving quality of life, equity and justice.

Pivoting Peripheries illustrates the application of this philosophy in bringing the concept of development to realisation. Shabalala & Gathiram (2005: in print) in their work on street-children in South Africa recommend that long-term strategies need to be developed and tested. D'Souza and team provides us with the 'know how' of doing this. The book will be a useful guide to those involved in research with third world communities. It describes a process on how to generate indigenous theories based on the voices of the people confined to the periphery whilst maintaining scientific merit. It also provides a good account of a report comprising a multi-stage sequential study, which is often hard to document. It is easy to read with careful bulleting, diagrams and tables. One is impressed by an explanation of the use of triangulation not only as a means for validity but also for analysis.

At a practical level the book is an example of how we can listen and respond to youth simultaneously. It is a way in which we can affirm our commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and involve youth in decisions affecting their destiny and community life. In addition it serves an important reference point for the implementation of the home grown 'Batho Pele' and 'ubuntu' principles. It reaffirms Mbiti's (1991) thoughts that "I am, because we are; since we are, therefore I am." The Ngunis share the same sentiments when they say, "...umuntu umuntu ngabantu - one becomes a human being through other human beings" (Mkhize, 2004:47).

The author's literary style is passionate, encompassing short biographic narratives. It makes the reader traverse the world of Babu, Shailesh, Sneha and other children of Mumbai. He uses the power of language to capture the emotion of the participants and often directly quotes in Hindi. A respect of local culture is demonstrated in the formulation of interesting intervention strategies. For the South African reader it is an added reminder of diversity in terms of its eleven official languages and a rainbow of cultures.

The usefulness of this book helps to understand the paradigm of marginalised children and the various concepts accompanying such development. Since the main thrust of the book is process-based much of the ideas can be tested and transferred to understand and enhance the holistic development of marginalised youth in South Africa. *Pivoting Peripheries* will be of value to academics, practitioners and policy makers. We would definitely recommend it to our postgraduate students as a guide to the application of the participatory action research approach and the interesting writing style.

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