

BOOK REVIEW

PATEL, L. *Social Welfare and Social Development* (2nd Edition)

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Leila Patel, the Director of the Centre for Social Development in Africa and Professor of Social Development Studies at the University of Johannesburg, offers a comprehensive and nuanced view of social welfare and social development in the second edition of her authoritative text. Her experience as a community worker, manager, policy maker and academic shapes the book, providing insights for the practitioner, researcher, teacher and government employee.

In revising the book, Patel has taken considerable care to ensure that the discussion is located within a contemporary context. The current situation and recent events shaping the welfare environment have been carefully and elaborately explored.

The book also provides a thorough history of the progression of social welfare in South Africa from colonialism through apartheid to the post-apartheid era. She adopts a critical eye, interrogating all stances, and identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each. She recognises the damage done by residual discriminatory policies, but also acknowledges the positive legacy regarding a state pension system, a diversified delivery system and a public-private partnership. She notes the ways in which subsequent changes have both benefited and eroded social care.

Having situated social welfare in global, regional and local contexts, Patel examines the theoretical underpinnings of social welfare and social development. Her considered review of social welfare paradigms and the emergence of social development is relevant not only to a South African audience, but to any academic or practitioner wanting a fuller understanding of these issues. The examination of social development contributes enormously to the international academic debate on the nature of social development. Although this is a book directed at social workers, it has an interdisciplinary flavour, and this aspect should be appealing to the international reader.

After discussing the theoretical perspective, Patel moves onto describing the application of the social development approach. She does this by presenting methods of social development implementation in the various fields of social work. She provides illustrations of both how social development can be done and has been 'done' in these different settings. This is where the student, novice and experienced social service professional can gain insight into the practicalities of this theoretical model and can see clearly how theory should be translated into practice.

I do have some quibbles with the book. The incredible detail and intensive discussion of the issues may be overwhelming for those new to the idea of social development. Students might wish for more headings as well as visual aids, and summaries that do not just reference the issues discussed in the chapter but synthesise the key points. There is

also room for improvement in Patel's application of social development to the various fields of social work. For example, the overview of the field of criminal justice needs to present a critical discussion of the assumptions underlying criminal justice in South Africa today and how these may or may not intersect with the values informing social development, and how these then inform practice. Interestingly, Patel raises the value of mediation for social work practice, but falls short of expanding this discussion to an examination of the relevance of restorative practices in social work. The section on older persons might well have included a salutogenic framework, highlighting not only the challenges of ageing and how social workers might respond to this, but also focusing on how older persons can use and maintain their strengths and capacities. Nevertheless, these gaps demonstrate Patel's crucial point that the social development approach is an evolving one, and clears the ground for experts in the different areas to contribute to the discussion.

The accessible, coherent argument and the thoroughgoing scholarliness of this timely revision make this a book to include in the library of every South African social service worker. It provides precisely the foundation needed to understand social welfare and social development, while also provocatively raising issues for further debate.