Since the early 1980s, the efficiency of public services, and more generally of state involvement in industrial organization, has been increasingly questioned. Privatization and deregulation programmes initiated in the UK and the USA have had an influence on economic policy throughout the world. Inspired by this movement, the European community has initiated several commercial public service reforms within the member states. The trend has been dual, towards more competition and towards harmonization of standards and national legislation (Henry, 1997). As a result of this liberalization policy, European public service organizations have undergone major changes.

The book written by Yannick Moreau in collaboration with Bruno Maquart analyses all these changes (their nature, causes and consequences), in five commonly highly regulated industries (railways and air transport, electricity, post office and telecommunications) and six European countries (Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, Spain, Italy and France). As its author announces in the foreword, the book is the synthesis of an exploratory study realized by the ‘Club Entreprises et Prospective’, whose members are Electricité de France (EDF), Elf Aquitaine, France Télécom, Gaz de France (GDF), La Poste, L’Oréal, Ministère de la Défense and SNCF.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is essentially descriptive, it introduces the five industries and the six countries. Chapter 1 describes the industries one by one according to a common structure: first a general overview and then a country-by-country analysis (the only exception being air transportation in Sweden, which is missing). The general overview gives an idea of the historical emergence, principal characteristics and recent reforms in European industry as a whole. The analysis by country amounts to describing the most important enterprise or institution which provides the service in question and in particular its organization, recent developments and planned reforms. Chapter 2 focuses on the countries. Each country is analysed separately. As a rule, the reader is first given general information (such as the country’s surface area, number of inhabitants and some country-specific striking features), followed by a more detailed description of the major characteristics of industrial relations. The second part is a development of the first. It analyses the previous elements, trying to make sense of them. It explains the causes of recent changes (Chapter 3) and reviews the changes themselves (Chapter 4), by bringing out the common trends and the major differences between the industries and the countries. The last chapter is devoted to the future; it briefly sketches possible scenarios for the French and European industries reviewed.

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Quite obviously, the book is aimed at a French audience. First of all, the positioning of France in comparison with the other European countries seems to be a key issue in the book. The introduction makes this quite clear:

. . . several very important changes have been initiated in neighbouring countries, partly under the influence of a new order decided at the European level; these changes seem to meet with particular resistance in France. Does a thorough examination of the facts confirm this hypothesis? What are the larger trends and the room for choice? How can the stakes be defined? These are the questions that we must explore.

Second, despite the similar, formal treatment of the six countries, the French case is in reality discussed in more detail than the other countries. In fact, though on average the French industries are presented in five pages, only half that space is given to the analysis of the industries of the other countries. Finally, the bibliography consists entirely of French writings, which is regrettable, considering that the book deals with the comparison of several European countries and that an ample and very informative English literature exists on this issue (see, for example, Bishop et al., 1994; Edwardes-Evans et al., 1997).

The book has several valuable features. It is very instructive in its comparison of the five industries in the six European countries; it is rich in information about the organization of these industries and contains a useful overview of the major changes they are undergoing. Particularly noteworthy is the focus on social relations, a domain which is still to be explored, despite the vast amount of literature on public services. Hence, the reader will find in this book information about the consequences of the recent workforce reforms (transformation of legal status, lay-offs and accompanying measures) and on management (commercial agreements, diversification, transfers to a subsidiary, decentralization) as well as a description of the role trade unions and employers’ associations have played in all these changes. Chapter 2 offers a rather good review of the major features of industrial relations in the six countries.

Some criticism can, however, be levelled at this book. First of all, neither the subject of the book, nor the approach used is properly discussed and defined. According to the title, the book deals with two main issues: public service enterprises on the one hand, and social relations on the other. Yet, it is well known that the notion of ‘public service’ is vague and does not cover the same reality in the different countries (see, for example, Quin and Jeannot, 1997). The legal definition and the broad interpretation of this concept show high variation from one country to the next (Thiry, 1995; Van der Mensbrughe, 1996; Grard et al., 1996). In France, this notion is particularly imprecise, since it is used to designate the substance of an activity, problems of public access, a status, a property and management form, and an ethic (Cohen and Henry, 1997). As far as the notion of ‘enterprise’ is concerned, its use in the title is at least misleading. The book deals in fact with what are a number of very different kinds of organizations, ranging from public administration to private enterprise, and pays particular attention to the legal status of those organizations. The lack of definition of these crucial concepts is all the more regrettable, as many efforts have been made in the French research context to define the specificities of the ‘public’ domain (see, for example, Glachant, 1994; and also more generally, the numerous
analyses developed within the framework of the Centre International de Recherche et d’Information sur l’Economie Publique Sociale et Cooperative (CIRIEC), about public and cooperative economics). Finally, what is meant by the term ‘social relations’ is very hard to understand. It sometimes seems to be synonymous with ‘industrial relations’ (see, for example the content of Chapter 2), sometimes it seems to cover a much broader meaning, since it is associated with the ‘social transformations that accompany the reforms at work’.

Second, and more fundamentally, the analysis remains at much too general a level. In fact, the breadth of the field investigated makes a truly detailed analysis quite difficult. Hence, on average only three pages are given to the discussion of each sector of each country as well as to the general description of each country (with the exception of the French case, which in general is analysed a little more thoroughly). In this respect, it is to be regretted that further cross-references to other publications are not given, in particular in Chapter 1 (only 12 references for 29 case studies). Yet the real problem lies in the second part of the book. Here, the feeling arises that the subject is sometimes handled rather superficially. The trends are in fact analysed quite hastily. For example, convergences are presented almost in list form (the seven points of convergence related to the changes are discussed in ten pages, and the seven points of convergence related to the causes are discussed in three pages). Moreover, each country’s specific characteristics are reviewed in a single page, leaving little room for other information (the main characteristics are the role of liberalism in Great Britain; reunification and social economy in Germany; social cohesion in Sweden; the obsolete nature of public service in Spain and Italy; and the specificity of public service in France). Finally, the scenarios are basically confined to the duality continuity/change, without any serious discussion of the underlying mechanisms.

In conclusion, the book makes a valuable contribution to the French literature on European public services. Easy to read, it provides a good overview of five industries in six countries and gives a general picture of the major trends at work. Despite the somewhat superficial treatment, it remains a solid reference resource.

References


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The increased attention to and interest in managing workplace diversity can be traced back to 1987 and the Workforce 2000 report (Prasad and Mills, 1997), which means that diversity is quite new as an academic research topic. This implies the presence of simplification and confusion within the idea of managing diversity. Although there is a lot of research left to be done, there already exist valuable contributions for developing and managing diversity as an academic topic. Three of these contributions are introduced here.

*Cross-Cultural Work Groups*, edited by Cherlyn Skromme Granrose and Stuart Oskamp, consists of texts written by scholars of different disciplines. The book offers a wide spectrum of contributions about cross-cultural contacts at national, regional, organizational and individual level. Even though the central issue is about informal systems of social relations, there are also discussions about plural societies, formal systems of social relations and the influence of the group’s and manager’s role in both international and domestic contexts.

In *Cultural Complexity in Organizations*, Sonja S. Sackmann proposes that membership of an organization is complex in the sense of belonging to multiple cultural identities, instead of monocultural identities. Sackmann challenges Edgar H. Schein through the possible combination of integrated, differentiated and/or fragmented identities in terms of gender, ethnicity, profession, department and so on. The aim of the book is to ‘address culture at various levels, including different national, industry, organizational, and suborganizational contexts’ (p. 5:3).

The writings cover a wide range of topics, all with a multicultural perspective: from the type of difficulties to overcome for managing cultural diversity, through
developing a higher degree of mutual understanding and adaptation without simply melting together all traditions, to a proposal of increased social responsibility among the management of human beings and the organization. The management is the core group in managing for diversity.

In between these topics there are contributions on the simultaneous existence and successive appearance of consensus, dissent, harmony and conflicts. Managing a multicultural organization is a complex, but not impossible mission.

Managing the Organizational Melting Pot, edited by Pushkala Prasad, Albert J. Mills, Michael Elmes and Anshuman Prasad, focuses on theoretical and critical dilemmas of workplace diversity; ‘the cracks in the mosaic’ or ‘the tears in the guilt’. The authors’ aim is to focus on obstacles to a constructive diversity, such as problems with tolerance, acceptance and tendencies towards prejudice. This is done in regard to feminism, the role of corporate masculinity, problems with organizational culture, the social construction of the Other, racial and gender discrimination, and so forth.

The approach

... represents an attempt to go to the very roots of some of the keys issues which invariably arise whenever diverse social and human groups are made to interact with one another within an overall matrix of power which accords a position of routine, unacknowledged, and frequently unchallenged privilege to one group (e.g. white males) at the expense of others. (p. 371)

The roots lie in sociohistorical and organizational historical aspects of gender and ethnicity.

All three books offer different perspectives on diversity, and will therefore constitute a valuable source both for academic researchers and practitioners.

References


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In the introduction of the book, Chris Argyris states that there are two requirements to making further progress in managerial theory and practice. The first is a greater emphasis on ‘integrating the managerial functional disciplines into a coherent, actionable whole of managerial governance’. The second requirement is a theory of effective implementation, ‘where the effective use of the technical theories is
adequate for effective implementation’. In Argyris’s view, the papers in the volume constitute an important contribution to these two challenges.

The book consists of ten chapters by researchers active within two different fields, those of strategy and ‘organizational learning and development’, respectively. In the volume, especially in the introduction written by Amy Edmondson and Bertrand Moingeon, two observations are noted. First, many organizational learning theorists are paying increasing attention to disciplines such as strategic management. Second, a new emphasis on ‘organizational capabilities’ raises the question of how to develop them.

In the first part of the book, organizational learning processes and tacit knowledge as ‘potential sources of competitive advantage’ are discussed. The conclusions are that ‘different kinds of learning processes are appropriate in different environments’, and that ‘organizations differ from one another based on the kinds of learning processes they employ’. In the second part, ‘Organizational Learning and Strategic Capability’, the resource-based perspective of the firm is presented. One of the chapters is based on studies of information technology. In the third part, ‘Strategic Change and Organizational Learning’, the problems of implementation are discussed.

I am not convinced by Argyris’s statement that the book presents a major contribution in integrating the aspects of strategy and organizational learning. I have even become only more sceptical about setting this aim at all. Why should, at least in the present situation, all these aspects, covering so many disciplines, so many different kinds of actions and activities, necessarily be integrated into one framework? I suspect that many readers of the ‘organizational learning’ theories who come from other disciplines think that the school has more problems to overcome than those mentioned by Argyris. I have the impression that after Argyris’s pioneering writings about organizational learning, the school is moving in a single-loop kind of learning, repeating old findings and presenting conclusions and results which are quite evident. Not totally unexpectedly, the strategic aspect seems to be integrated into the organizational learning framework by the addition of another learning loop. There is a never-ceasing flow of new concepts and new kinds of learning in the texts. But the empirical facts that are presented are weakly supported and presented as anecdotes where the conclusions cannot be controlled by the reader. Having read the book I am really longing for texts with formulas or regressions. I also feel frustration with the way the authors deal with teams, groups, firms and organizations. The concept of ‘organizational learning’ is not easy. Although in some chapters it is emphasized that both individuals and ‘organizations’ learn, the relation between these levels of learning is not discussed. Of course, as Japanese researchers often emphasize, it is only individuals who learn. The concept of ‘organizational learning’, as I understand it, is a metaphor of the fact that individuals’ firm-specific and tacit knowledge are complementary to the knowledge of other individuals in the organization, so that the ‘value’ of the organization’s knowledge is more than the mere accumulation of individuals’ knowledge. The extent to which this synergy effect can be realized depends, among other things, on the firm’s organization and on its system of rewarding cooperative behaviour. Interactions between individuals are formally treated within the field of game theory, a theory carefully avoided by scholars within the ‘organizational learning’ school. Again, it seems that in order to avoid problems the scholars take the easy way out.

As an institutionally oriented labour market economist I also feel somewhat irritated by the fact that ‘organizational learning’ is never connected with the
development of the employability or skills of the employees, that the relation between individuals’ learning and their motivation is never discussed, that unions are never or seldom referred to, and so forth.

Seen from this perspective, I think that a deepening through hard and serious integration with findings from other disciplines – psychologists, labour economists, game theorists, industrial economists and so on – of the many loosely grounded perspectives which the scholars have opened up, is a more important task than further integration. Maybe such an integration with more fundamental scientific theories of other disciplines and more empirical research is a necessary condition for the creation of this new meta-theory of management.

These comments have bearing upon the ‘organizational learning’ theories in general and concern not only the authors of this book. Nevertheless, Moingeon and Edmondson reflect the development in managerial and organizational learning theories in a grasppable way. Those who want to integrate the firm’s strategic considerations with, for example, the development of employees’ employability may find some ideas for inspiration and many references of value.

Researchers interested in why and under what circumstances firms should learn something new or whether they should routinize, why people are motivated to learn, what has been changed in the competitive environment during the last few years, and so forth, have more to learn from other disciplines. People involved in practical work and whose primary aim is to develop the competitive advantage of their firm, have probably more to learn from a practical handbook written by a skilled business accountant.

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Times are changing. This trivial reflection – most popularly expressed in the song by Bob Dylan – is not only something which comes up because of the turn of the millenium; to many of us it is a lived reality. We have all experienced many waves of new and exciting ideas, concepts, modes and fashions. Some of us have enthusiastically embarked on the boat and perhaps later denied that we have been one of the crew. Others have in a stoical mood told their audience that things are of a temporary nature and that there always will be new ideas coming up, which also will pass. And they are right of course! A glimpse of the last ten years of management concepts gives the impression of an increasingly shortening half-life. New concepts – and perhaps most important, their abbreviations – are invented every week. We all have heard – and sometimes quickly forgotten – concepts like downsizing, rightsizing, flattening, value creation, outsourcing, reengineering, TQM, IT, JIT, TBM, etc. (In writing this, the field is open for new song writers like Tom Lehrer – is anybody ready?)

Yet for many of us some ideas and concepts were real and important, and for some they were so important that they not only wished to study and analyse the changing reality but also to use them to actively change reality. Words and concepts
like participation, co-determination, *Mitbestimmung*, *medinflytande*, were all words with a meaning both for researchers, workers and activists. Some of these went on pilgrimage to places in the industrial part of the world, others reported from various parts of society including today strange-sounding countries like Yugoslavia. One group, including Frank Heller (Tavistock Institute), Eugen Pusic (Zagreb University), George Strauss (University of California at Berkeley) and Bernhard Wilpert (Berlin University of Technology), collaborated for many years and published between 1983 and 1993 three international yearbooks of organizational democracy and three volumes of international handbooks of participation in organizations. The group is now publishing a valedictory book – *Organizational Participation – Myth and Reality*. Here one may ask whether there really is a need for yet another book on participation, especially – as indicated above – as concepts have been abandoned and new concepts are popping up. Or is this a retrospective full of sadness, which some of us can sympathize with and perhaps also stoically verify that times are changing?

First of all, the book is not a melancholic retrospective, but an insightful and well-written account of research on participation. It starts with perhaps the most intricate and annoying question, namely, the terminology. The terminology changed over the years; once the concept of co-determination – at least in Germany – was widely used, then involvement became fashionable and, in the 1990s, ‘empowering’ has become the catchword. The authors have chosen ‘participation’ because it is the oldest and still most used term. But the choice also reveals the fact that there are at least four constituencies which use such terms – organizational actors, researchers, consultants and governments or political parties. We can suspect that changes of terminology are part of the construction process which takes place between these actors. The authors therefore continue with chapters where they discuss different ways of conceptualizing the term, e.g. from the field of psychology, organization theory, collective bargaining and unions, and other chapters. The book ends with a chapter about the myth and reality of participation, a chapter which also should be seen as a valediction.

Why participation? The starting point is three broad arguments. The first is humanistic, which means among other things that participation contributes to personal growth and job satisfaction. The second argument is power-sharing, which includes redistributing social power and protecting employees’ interests. The third argument is that participation will promote organizational efficiency (Dachler and Wilpert, 1978). All arguments seem to be important but they have different weight in different periods and among different actors. The authors’ long-standing experience enables them to see changes of the arguments. Even though many countries today have laws or regulations concerning participation, the focus is changing, e.g. other forms of participation – or measures which can include participation – like TQM, problem-solving groups, etc. are now more widespread. The authors therefore focus more on the formal than the informal approaches to participation.

From the psychological point of view, Bernhard Wilpert, after reviewing the literature on participation, concludes that there are at least two differences in theoretical and methodological approaches between Anglo-American and European continental writers, the first category usually emphasizing the instrumental role of participation for social and economic efficiency, and the second emphasizing the role of participation for personal development. But the psychological conditions and consequences of participation are, according to the authors, poorly understood and in need of deeper theoretical penetration and empirical scrutiny. The author of
the chapter concludes that because of developments in new technology, changing competence of the workforce and new methodological approaches to the study of participation, there is a promising future for research in the field of psychology.

Even in the field of organizational theory and participation, changes are manifold. One example is the switch from the Weberian concept of power as the chance to impose one’s will against opposition, to the meaning of power as authority, responsibility, facility and influence. Most important is that organizations are seen as changing through a dialectical process of their integrated framework which includes all dimensions of organizational structure and action. According to Eugen Pusic, the emphasis is no longer on numbers and variety of positions, but on the growth of quantity and quality of information. This includes the replacement of traditional means of control and coordination by hierarchy by a wider pattern of teamwork, networking and other organizational forms. But this does not include a reduction of power distance in organizations; instead, power appears in other forms. And, therefore, also participative forms will change, perhaps, as the author claims, independent of convictions or ideologies.

George Strauss’s point of departure in the chapter about collective bargaining, unions and participation, is mainly formal participation, therefore it is the most extensive chapter in the book. The chapter describes different forms of collective bargaining in different countries, contrasts collective bargaining and representative participation, and surveys unions’ attitudes to participation. The conclusion is that representative participation can be viewed both as a substitute for and supplement to collective bargaining. Both direct and representative participation is more effective when it has the support of a strong union. In case of weak unions, participational forms can fill the gap. On the other hand, as the authors suggest, as every form of organization tends to oligarchy, this tendency should be counterbalanced by forms of direct participation.

Are there limits to influence sharing in theory and practice? Frank Heller plays the devil’s advocate in this chapter and points to several issues discussed in other chapters, e.g. new organizational forms, networking, etc. But he also points out three important assumptions regarding the development of participation: motivation, competence and trust, which he finds especially in the development in Scandinavian countries, e.g. the so-called Democratic Dialogue in Sweden. But even despite these indications, Heller claims that ‘theoretical considerations as well as practical experience and research evidence converge to set fairly narrow limits to the development of substantial and lasting participative practices in organizations’ (p. 187). But, as he also states, this does not mean that more favourable conditions may not enable us to do better in the future.

Despite problems of both a theoretical and practical nature, participation works. In a short chapter, George Strauss claims that participation works if conditions are appropriate, and it can take many forms. Even here, the complex character of participation is obvious. Formal participation must be reinforced by informal participation. If there are formal programmes, they have to be supported by a ‘high-commitment’ culture. In general, without cooperative relations on a higher level, cooperation on a lower level cannot survive.

The book ends with a chapter by Frank Heller – ‘Myth and Reality: Valediction’. In this chapter the concept of participation is broadened and special emphasis is placed on the societal environment and technical decisions made. The author points especially to the discussion in recent years by Ulrich Beck, who, in his book
Risk Society (1992) points to the production risk, the cause of which is our way of producing. Here, participation by some of the stakeholders could be a solution. After summarizing the main issues concerning participation, the author comes to the conclusion that democratizing organizational life through participation depends on more contingencies than the current literature leads us to believe. But all the obstacles mentioned can be overcome, for instance it is possible to overcome resistance, low competence can be upgraded, other problems can be handled, etc., but also inadequate measures of conflict management, etc. can be improved. But, as the authors state, there are still too many myths surrounding participation which in the future have to be brought back to reality.

This volume offers an excellent view of participation research, including both a theoretical perspective and empirical evidence. It is highly up-to-date, as witness the 34 pages of references, and it is written in a very lucid and easy style. It is perhaps not the most conclusive book on participation, but it certainly constitutes a cornerstone for students, researchers and practitioners alike.

References


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Since the Independence of India, the establishment of democracy in all fields of life has become the major concern in the country. The seeds of industrial democracy were sown formally with the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947. Many follow-up programmes were also initiated. But its institutionalization has often been hampered, partly by the people already in power and partly by those at grass-root level, who could not break the shackles of slavery rooted deep in their minds. In order to introduce democracy in the workplace in a real sense, government has made efforts to the extent of amending the Indian Constitution. Nevertheless, the results have not been very encouraging in the industrial sector. However, the move towards democracy has not been in vain. It has created awakening among the masses and, in due course, many leaders have emerged. It has given birth to many social movements, some of which have been successful. This is shown by the prevailing network of co-operatives in India, the largest in the world, and the studies thereof which have gained international importance.
The present work is an attempt by the authors to bring to light the local models of democracy because they can inspire and offer examples to the larger society. The issue of democratization at the workplace is a complex one and they have tried to unfold intricacies involved in the system. The study reveals the origin and survival of a workers’ co-operative in the unorganized sector of a competitive capitalist economy. More specifically, it is the story of Kerala Dinesh Beedi Workers’ Co-operative Society Ltd (KDB) – one of the world’s largest and most successful experiments in industrial democracy (p. 2). It speaks for the development of social movements and the role of the state in promoting alternatives to capitalist development.

The beedi industry is one of the country’s largest employment sectors after agriculture and handweaving but, at the same time, it is one of the most exploitative industries. The bulk of the literature available on the field shows the pitiable plight of the beedi rollers, who are impoverished, exploited, abused and desperate. The conditions of the bonded labourers, women and children are even worse. There are also instances of sexual abuse. KDB is situated in Malabar – the northern part of Kerala. Its ancestry can be traced back to the 1930s but a major breakthrough occurred at the end of the 1950s, when the government of the newly formed State of Kerala sponsored beedi co-operatives. The small co-operative existing in the region served as a foundation for the formation of KDB. It began production on 15 February 1969, on a very small scale. Dinesh – the morning sun – became the brand name of the beedi produced by KDB. And, in 1993, it emerged as the fourth largest beedi firm in India.

KDB, being a well-known co-operative in the area, has attracted many researchers. As a result, a number of published and unpublished accounts of its history and structure are available. It has been the subject of newspapers in the region also. The strength of the work in hand is that the authors, besides using their own experience, observations and information acquired through detailed interviews with the employees of all cadres of KDB, have used secondary sources of all kinds. As such, rich data have been collected and analysed to make a meaningful study of industrial democracy. This saves the work from any superficiality; an occasional drawback of studies based on data collected using simple questionnaire methods.

The narrative begins with the introduction of Kerala and the Kerala model of development, which involve the empowerment, the high wages and the benefits achieved by so many of Kerala's beedi workers. In other words, the Kerala model refers to unexpectedly high quality-of-life indicators for a relatively backward economy. The role of KDB in the Kerala model is also discussed. The background for understanding the working and success of the co-operative has been set by describing the social and political milieus of Northern Kerala, where the beedi co-operative originated and began functioning. The discussion of the emergence of the beedi working class in Kannur and the enumeration of the main sources for the origin of the strong radical democratic consciousness in Malabar further facilitate this task.

Chapter 3 addresses the formation of the co-operative, the initiative for which came from the workers rather than from government. The atmosphere in the late 1960s in Kerala was full of long struggles for change in the lives of colonial subjects, agricultural tenants, labourers and workers in different economic sectors. The close ties of KDB to the large social movement in the area contributed to its success. The whole process of procurement of raw materials and quality control that binds together the small units into the central society is described in chapter 4.
22 primary societies working in a federal system, with one at the central level. The federal structure of KDB and its constant creativity in evolving shelter mechanisms that offer economies of scale, adequate finances and shelter from the market’s competitors have helped it to survive so far. The central society handles its crucial financial issues and saves it from the downfall that has been the fate of many co-operative experiments due to their lack of shelter provision.

Chapter 5 examines the management of the co-operative in terms of workplace democracy, focusing on the primary societies and work centres. Certain features of KDB, like its mix of empowerment and supervision, have prevented degeneration without affecting its capacity for market competitiveness. The chapter also points out the invisibility of women on the important bodies in KDB. The male feudal outlook inside its institutions prevails, like that in Indian society at large.

Chapter 6 contains statistical analysis of various factors that determine the relative efficiency and profit of the primary societies at KDB and the market problems faced by it. The discussion is divided into three sets of variables, such as infrastructure of primary societies, their organizational components and workforce composition. In chapter 7, the authors take up KDB’s experience in light of general literature on workers’ co-operatives, including the debate over whether or not they are practicable and desirable. The literature also shows the psychological and political consequences of worker ownership and control of the workplace in capitalist or mixed economies. Besides this, the success of KDB’s egalitarianism has been shown. Though managers are not strictly going by written rules KDB, unlike other co-operatives, has not degenerated. The authors attribute this to Malabar’s radical, activist workers’ culture, combined with the several sound business structures which built up KDB to create a workers’ co-operative.

The final part of the book takes up the problems of workers producing a tobacco product, which all know is ethically wrong because of the harmful effects on workers and consumers. KDB’s leaders are aware of the growing opposition to the use of tobacco and the resultant declining market for beedis (p. 219). So, in the interests of safeguarding the future of KDB, they have initiated diversification plans. Steps have been taken to start a non-beedi project such as manufacturing coconut curry sauce or pickles and condiments, etc., on an experimental basis at central level and there are plans to expand this further at primary level. This process has the potential to strengthen the co-operative’s democracy and broaden its impact on Malabar, besides contributing to the renewal of the Kerala Model.

Thus, the whole study is well planned, informative and analytical. The discussion throughout shows the authors’ command of the subject. They have presented a useful blend of theory and empiricism in the field of industrial democracy. Many fruitful questions have been raised here, some of which have been answered while others have been left for readers to think over. Near the end of chapter 7, the authors have tried to record the lessons from the KDB experience for others, but this part could be further improved. Here the vast data already generated in the text about the structure of organizations/institutions surrounding socio-cultural economic and political milieu, composition of labour force, working conditions, absence of child labour and corruption etc., could have been analysed under some common sets of variables. This could have settled the issue better and added to the usefulness of the study for all those interested in the field.

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