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Manisha Priyam, *Contested Politics of Educational Reform in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2015. 320 pages. ₹895.

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The skewed expansion of modern education in India, the high levels of regional disparities, inequitable social opportunities and issues of questionable quality have posed considerable challenges to Indian democracy. Since Independence, there have been several attempts at reforms, offering policy prescriptions and practices to various levels of education. However from the 1990s, educational reform has implied an entire sectoral shift triggered by the federal government's adoption of the new economic policy. These structural adjustments included substantial reduction the government's role and federal expenditure with serious repercussions on the social sector budget. To spare the shock of the shifts, the educational sector received external aid to augment domestic funds in primary education. The reforms have subsequently included reprioritization towards the base of education, adopting the terminologies of human resource development, reducing fiscal expenditure and emphasizing cost efficiency criteria during educational budgeting.

Several commentators and researchers of education have written about different aspects of the agenda, processes and implications of the reforms. However literature based on empirical findings are scant, making Manisha Priyam's book, focussing on primary schooling, a needed addition to the literature. And that is not the only way in which the monograph is unique.

Focussing on the period 1994–2012, when the author led and conducted most of the field work, it presents an almost real-time documentation of the processes of primary school reform, based on the field as it was changing. Yet the book overcomes the risks of non-generalizable descriptions by locating

The book nevertheless offers new ways of looking at educational reforms. Its methodology provides a relevant approach towards studying institutions. The meticulously organized data offers vast information on policy-making within India's federal set-up. Public administrators and education policy-makers in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh will find it particularly useful as a post-1990s reference. Students of educational

policy, school planning analysts, political researchers of development as well as social science methodology students would gain substantially from the book.

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