**The Holy Grail: India’s Quest for Universal Elementary Education**

The remarkable progress made by India in reducing out-of-school children from a third (during the early 1990s) to a minuscule 0.3 per cent of the world’s out-of-school children by mid-2000s is universally acclaimed. This book narrates the saga of that transformation as well as the changing trends in developmental cooperation through the eyes of an administrator who steered that transformation in its formative stage.

The book locates the developments in the education sector within the larger socio-political and global contexts.The distinctiveness of the Book lies in the fact that for the first time for a book on education, and unusual even for books on policy and development cooperation, it illuminates the inner working of Governments and international development agencies, and the political and administrative processes and policy conflicts that are inherent to the conceptualisation and implementation of policies and programmes. The book also unravels the relations between central and state governments in a federal polity and describes educational developments at the state, national, and international levels. It traces changing trends in developmental cooperation, as well as the functioning of bilateral, regional, and multilateral organizations like the World Bank. Using theoretical concepts of decision-making, negotiation theory, and international relations, this book helps open the ‘black-box’ of policy-making in India. The Book provides information and many insights few, even experts, possess, and should be of interest to not only to educationists, and educational administrators but also to scholars and practitioners of development cooperation and policymaking.

**Reviewer’s Comments [You have to remove the yellow highlighting**

This is truly an exercise in preserving the ‘institutional memory’ of India’s multi-pronged educational endeavours, complemented by a historical analysis of views of eminent educationists in the country as well as a genealogy of the major legislations and commission reports. ..

We find here a meticulous documentation of the processes of making a policy, drawing upon his vivid experience, of actively participating in the ‘nation’s quest for universalizing elementary education’. ..

Turning from the supra-national to the national and sub-national, the manuscript opens up a window into the inner workings of the policy apparatus that is multi-local, ranging from central to state to sub-state levels, shedding light on how inter-personal relationships among senior policy makers contribute to the making of key policy proposals as well as determine their success or failure. How the interplay of ideas, concerns, and even personalized interests of different constituencies within the policy apparatus both at the central and state levels shapes the contours of a particular educational programme has been vividly documented by the author through an ethnographic lens. This kind of anthropological view of higher echelons of educational administration is what adds value to this