

BOOK REVIEW

Differential Development and Demographic Dilemma: Perspectives from China and India edited by Kuttan Mahadevan, Chi-Hsien Tuan, Jingyuan Yu, P. Krishnan, and M. Sumangala, Delhi, B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1994, xxiv + 416pp.

The present selection is an attempt to compare population policy and population dynamics in China and India and investigate the influence of demographic factors on development. The volume, which was planned by the five editors while attending several international seminars held in China up to the early 1990s, quite interestingly focuses on the differences that have existed in the population-related policies implemented by the two countries. It consists of the following four parts, which have been divided further into twenty-one chapters: Part 1: Population Policy and Programme (Chapters 1–6), Part 2: Population Characteristics, Fertility and Mortality (Chapters 7–12), Part 3: Development and Demographic Dilemma (Chapters 13–20), Part 4: Profile of Dr. (Mrs.) Nafis Sadik: A Festschrift (Chapter 21). The reader will find the sets of statistical data attached to the end of each chapter to be very useful sources.

In the developed countries, the process of demographic transition has coincided with social and economic development, within a process by which resulting increases in population have become labor supply sources with the potential of creating effective demand. On the other hand, the developing countries have faced rapid population growth accompanying sharp declines in mortality in their processes of demographic transition. What happens under such conditions is that the population increases precede any social and economic development and tend to cancel out any real gains when actual growth is realized, resulting in a vicious circle of low-level per capita income, the so-called “low-level equilibrium trap.” Population dynamics in many developing countries which gained national independence after World War II were characterized by rapid declines in mortality as the result of the introduction beginning in the 1950s of public health- and medical-treatment-related technology; however, the fertility in these same countries remained at the previous high levels. For developing countries facing this kind of dilemma between population growth and economic development, controlling fertility has now become a very large policy issue.

Demographic trends in two countries making up, as of 1991, 37.6 per cent of the world’s population, China (16 per cent) and India (21.6 per cent), have greatly influenced what is happening on a global scale. Although population policies emphasizing fertility reduction were first introduced by India in 1952 and by China in 1962, the former still lags far behind the latter in terms of policy effectiveness. In Part One, the authors compare the two countries in terms of their respective population policies and implementation methods. Prior to introducing population policy, there were common factors in both countries of maintaining

high fertility, such as pro-natalist ideas and customs of early and universal marriage. The problem facing both countries was whether or not their population policies could bring about a change in pro-natalist tendencies and existing social norms. As to the policies themselves, which are outlined in Chapters 1 through 4, China chose to promote late marriage and single-child family policies, while India passed legislation restricting the age of marriage.

There is also the question of how to solve the problem of the preference for sons, which is the predominant tendency in both countries. In developing countries where social welfare institutions have not yet been sufficiently put into effect, sons are not only important providers of labor, but also bear the burden of providing for their parents in their old age. In India and China, social security systems that could supplement such a burden are still undeveloped. This situation is most serious in the rural areas. To solve this problem, the Population Commission of China relaxed population control measures in rural areas. This move has resulted in fertility differences between urban and rural areas becoming greater. The problem that exists in the area of policy implementation is whether or not each government will continue to be politically committed to the measures now in force. In the case of India, while a definite consensus has been formed concerning policy implementation, follow-up measures have not been very successful. While an implementation framework for family planning programs discussed in Chapter 4 has been completed, the fact that commitment is lacking at the community level of implementation is one important factor in why India lags behind China in population policy effectiveness.

Concerning declining fertility, China has been very successful with its family planning programs, while India has in general not achieved very good results. On this point, the authors compare China and India in terms of problems in policy implementation, etc., but this reviewer, at least, is not satisfied with how the results were actually compared. Population policies, especially policies concerning birth control, are extremely sensitive issues, and while they are perceived as important in many developing countries, there are definite problems in actually carrying them out. Given such a situation, it would seem that comparing and evaluating the achievements in India and China would be important for effectively implementing population policies in other developing countries.

It goes without saying that population policy significantly influences population dynamics, which is why the authors devote Part 2 to describing such influence. Fluctuations in vital events in turn tend to influence population structure. For example, in the case of China, the 1970s experienced rapid increases in its labor force, while the second half of the 1980s saw a sharp decrease in younger age groups, corresponding to a phenomenon of rapid population aging. In the case of India, where family planning programs are being implemented at a slower pace, changes in population structure have not been as rapid as in China. However, India's high percentage of younger age groups has given rise to educational problems, including an increasing fiscal burden, and increases in the economically active population has caused serious employment problems.

It would be better to reconsider the chapter structure of Part 2 (Chapters 7 through 12), which has been organized into two chapters on the characteristic features of population structure, followed by two more on fertility, and ending with another two on mortality. That is to say, both China and India have designed consolidated population policies, including a

eugenic policy in the former and mother and child health programs in the latter; however, basically all of these programs are connected to the problem of mortality levels (especially the infant mortality rate), which accelerates the demographic transition process. If it is recognized that a low level of infant mortality will mean a low risk, steady growth of children, the practice of giving birth as insurance against high infant mortality can be avoided, giving rise to an important motivation for practicing birth control. Therefore, it would seem more proper for the authors to have reversed the order of chapters and first discussed mortality and its influence on fertility, then turned to the problem of how such vital movements influence population structure. In addition, although the authors point out regional differences in both countries with respect to mortality and fertility levels, their analysis as to the causes of such differences is regrettably insufficient.

Part 3 is a discussion of how the population transition process is progressing and its relationship to social and economic development in both countries. In contrast to the descriptive nature of Parts 1 and 2, Part 3 contains a lot more explanation and analysis. In Chapter 13, the authors look at regional differences in population increase in India in terms of literacy rates, per capita net domestic product, road length per 100 square kilometers, and infant mortality rates. These four indices were chosen as representative indicators of social and economic development, infrastructural facilities, and population parameters. The authors emphasize differing degrees of social development as the cause of regional differences in population growth. In the case of China, as well, the education factor seems to be most influential. This discussion is repeated in the chapters on demographic transition and development, and here as well emphasis is placed on education level as the factor that has guided the demographic transition process in both countries.

In addition, urban-rural differences are mentioned as one regional difference arising out of the demographic transition process; and as to the causes, in China limitations on the city's ability to absorb rural labor and differences in the quality of urban and rural labor are emphasized and cited as problems that will soon have to be dealt with through new policy moves. In India the basic problem that has to be solved is population migration for economic reasons.

Concerning Part 3, the analysis offered on India in Chapters 13 and 19 lacks any discussion about the contribution that has been made by family planning programs. While Chapters 17 and 18 do discuss such programs in both countries in relation to the social status of women, one would expect that for the sake of more effective implementation of population policy, such programs should be discussed in relation to overall living standards and changes in industrial structure. Unfortunately, development and the demographic dilemma from the above viewpoint is not fully discussed in this part.

The characteristic feature of the demographic transition processes of both countries is the policy effects on declining mortality and then on declining fertility. As the book's organization indicates, policy-induced demographic transition processes take place before social and economic development. Accompanying increases in population and distortion in population structure become the dilemmas between population and development. However, we are not given a clear indication by the authors concerning the effects of population policy on economic development. If the problem is whether to place population policy in the context of fertility control policy or in the context of problems caused by rapid changes going

on in population structure, the present book is in favor of the former approach to the evolution of population policy. If the latter approach were to be taken, a much clearer explanation of the connection between the content of Part 1 and Part 3 would have to be made.

In addition, the effects of population policies in India and China are very different; and in order to clarify the factors of these differences, it would be necessary to use the same methodology in analyzing each country's policy effectiveness. Also, a similar methodology is necessary for clarifying the interrelationship between demographic transition and development. Moreover, a chapter debating the results of such analysis would have been very useful for future population policy making in the developing countries. (Yuiko Nishikawa)