protagonists when they are nearer the twilight of their careers. As the volume of empirical research on the effects of the reforms slowly accumulates, yet another story will emerge. In the meantime, this book has succeeded in showing that sense can be made of this complex event of the very recent past by a well informed, detached observer.

The editors’ “scene setting” chapter does not quite meet the intentions set out in the introduction, “to put health promotion in a public health context and explore its relationship to health education.” The account of historical development and interplay of these fields is rather over simplified and presented as fact, despite later touching on issues of epistemology and the social and political influences on the field.

A conclusion is necessary – which addresses how insights from such diverse disciplines can be integrated and used in practice. Rawson’s chapter tackles this to an extent but the editors do not insist on the importance of these concerns. However, the important forces on professional and disciplinary development tantalisingly raised earlier in the book.

Such a book inevitably tread an uneasy path between comprehensive overview, basic introduction and discursive account of key concerns. This book provides a useful introduction to the multidisciplinary basis of health promotion. It could do more to clarify issues of interdisciplinarity. It is nevertheless, a valuable source for students and practitioners with an interest in health.


The training of villagers to offer basic health services to local communities is an important feature of health provision in many developing countries. This book assesses the current status of community health workers and their future role within health services. It begins with a comprehensive overview by the editor, followed by individual chapters from various contributors, outlining the situation concerning community health workers in countries from Africa, South America, Asia and Indonesia.

It is argued that the question is no longer whether community health workers are important for the provision of health care but rather how best to achieve their potential. An outcome of a community health worker depends on the links between the health sector and the community, with the community health worker being seen as a bridge between the two. The book has outlined the potential of the various components identified as important for the success of a programme, namely adequate support for the community health worker in areas such as supervision and continuing education, opportunities for patient referral and the availability of a regular supply of drugs. The features of a community health worker programme are then considered. Should the community health worker be acting in a mainly curative role or one of health promotion? Patterns of financing, hours of work, recruitment and training are discussed and the urgent need for evaluation of programmes is highlighted.

This is followed by accounts of the situation in individual countries. Descriptions of the background and development of community health worker programmes serve to reinforce the vital role played by the political forces in a country. In China, the socio-economic reforms of the last decade led to a situation in which threatened the very survival of the community health worker in the newly changed society. The problems of interaction between state and community are highlighted in the Indian situation where a campaign...