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Avinash Kumar Singh



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The Poor B. A. Student: Crisis of Undergraduate Education in India[#]

Manoranjan Mohanty*

The NIEPA Foundation Day Lecture is usually a great occasion to raise an important question and draw public attention to grapple with the same. I have decided to take up the crisis in undergraduate education in India as the issue for discussion for I believe that this is one of the most neglected areas in India's educational system.

We are all happy that during the past decade a focused discussion and some determined efforts to universalise elementary education have produced some results. Though even there the overall performance is far from satisfactory, many active groups are engaged in efforts to ensure full implementation of the RTE Act of 2009 and fill in the gaps in the law itself. But very few groups and much less policy-makers have tried to acknowledge the magnitude of the crisis in undergraduate education. Except for nominal references in policy documents, the thinking and policy on higher education are mainly concerned with the post-graduate level, namely Masters and doctoral level and higher research. The current discussion on IOE (Institutions of Eminence) without going to the controversial aspects of the government initiative is an example of the priority of the Indian policy-makers. The structural reorganisation of the management of higher education in India stipulated under the proposed law to have a Higher Education Commission of India to replace the UGC to "maintain standards and monitor them" and transferring its grant-giving duties to the Government's Ministry of HRD pays little attention to strengthening undergraduate education.

This is an appeal to the education and public policy community to pay attention to the crisis and analyse its dimensions and causes and come up with ways of making it a worthwhile and meaningful stage of life of the vast number of youth who are victims of this crisis.

Strong foundations sustain and produce good outcomes. Just as without universal and good quality elementary education the base line for the development of talents in a society remains narrow, similarly without good quality Bachelor level education the baseline for talents for higher education and advanced research remains narrow. No amount of efforts to

[#] Edited version of the NIEPA Foundation Day Lecture delivered on 10 August 2018 at NIEPA, New Delhi.

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create islands of excellence, 'world class research' can be adequate. On the other hand, good quality education at elementary and undergraduate college level can produce a wide mass of talents out of which a range of high quality, innovative and creative minds can emerge who then become catalysts of further development. Then they contribute to the making of the world class rather than falling into certain criteria of excellence formulated elsewhere.

The crisis is manifest at three levels: learning outcomes are extremely poor while the burden on the students and teachers steadily increases; infrastructure facilities are grossly inadequate while the number of colleges and the volume of enrolment continues to expand; this sector has become yet another arena of growing inequality in society despite reservation for weaker sections. The last is the result of the first two. At present the undergraduate education is not only deficient in learning of the required knowledge and infrastructure, it is a vast sphere of generating greater and greater inequalities among social groups, regions, classes, castes, gender, religious groups, ethnic groups. The children of the farmers, dalits, adivasis, minorities and especially girls in general are particular victims of this situation. No doubt, through reservation of seats, special grants to certain colleges and regions some efforts have been made during the past decades to grapple with this. But the structural characteristics of undergraduate education - especially centralised management and norms for teachers' recruitment and curriculum control which are less sensitive to the local needs - are such that they are particularly unfavourable to the marginalised sections of society.

A word about the title - 'the poor B.A. student'. It is to provoke attention to their situation, certainly not to show pity for them. This mass of youth in the age group of 18 to 21 or 22 is today in a state of rebellion and they are going to be more rebellious by the day. They are citizens with voting rights for the first time. They are increasingly conscious of their democratic rights and will one day, demand equitable and quality education to grow as full-some and creative citizens. The student union elections which are increasingly violent and expensive despite Lyngdoh Committee regulations, the political mobilisation in each area by political parties using bulk of them are indicators of this new condition. Forces of religious extremism use them as volatile tools for their campaigns. The expanding drug and liquor use not only in Punjab but in the entire country in varying degrees in colleges, cities, towns and villages manifest a dangerous aspect of their life situation. The growth of the youth involvement in the social media and entertainment industry everywhere in different degrees provide the picture of their present preoccupation which has both positive and negative implications. The level of anxiety among the youth is visibly high. The suicide rate among the youth is a disturbing trend. On the whole, this group of the youth which has an institutional link to a college or a university is in a turbulent arena. Even though they form only about 20% of their age group in the society, they have the identity of a College student, somewhat privileged in the society. Their situation is symptomatic of the nature of the social situation as a whole. They will gradually know how and why they are neglected as a sector of society. The talk of the "poor B.A. student" is actually recognition of this situation - neglect of a turbulent generation that is potentially most creative.

A Teacher's anxiety

I make this presentation to express anxieties of a teacher and not as an expert on education. I no doubt speak as a social scientist, a teacher of Politics who has also been involved in the human rights movement for over four decades. I want to speak about my experiences and reflect upon them to make my point.

I had started as a Lecturer in Delhi College, now called Zakir Hussain College, Delhi, but taught there only for three years, too brief and too old an experience to make that as the basis of any generalisation. But I maintained that as a reference point to observe changes I saw over the next four decades. My experience as a member of a University Department was the key factor that has made me look at this particular problem. The overly exalted status of University Department teachers vis-à-vis College teachers of Delhi University perturbed me throughout my teaching career. In my student days and early in my teaching career the Colleges had many distinguished teachers. To take the names of only a few, Frank Thakurdas, Randhir Singh, Bhisham Sahni, A. S. Bhalla, and in my generation, Krishna Sobti, Uma Chakravarty, Dilip Simeon – I know there are many more names that would be always remembered in the history of Delhi University (DU). Randhir Singh joined JNU and moved to DU. The others retired from Colleges. DU was ostensibly patterned after Oxford and Cambridge where Colleges were the main pillars of the University and still are. But here in Delhi the university vis-à-vis college gap in resources, standards, results, teaching and learning facilities, working conditions and reputation had continued to grow. The community and the press only talked about this once in a year at the time of admissions and note the descending order of cut-off marks among colleges and subjects. (This year NDTV India's Ravish Kumar's series was remarkable in covering some crucial admission-related issues.) Being almost a helpless witness to this persisting gap between University Departments and Colleges, and the differential reputation of colleges has been a learning experience to me. I have tried to understand the reasons behind this phenomenon.

In small ways we tried to address this issue in the Political Science Department in Delhi University. Whereas in "prestigious Departments" such as Economics and Sociology involving college teachers in M.A. teaching had disappeared, in Political Science, thanks to Randhir Singh's leadership we steadily strengthened "cooperative teaching" by sharing courses with teachers from colleges. We created many forums such as the DCRC (Developing Countries Research Centre) in DU as joint initiatives involving college teachers across disciplines for research, seminars, curriculum development and social action. I have always believed that there were, and there are teachers and scholars in DU Colleges, intellectually far superior, than many in the University Departments. University appointments are not always only merit-based decisions but are results of the conjunction of a variety of circumstances including partisan, factional, and caste considerations even though some outstanding scholars do find place on many occasions.

As the gap continued to grow, teaching jobs became a second or a third option for bright students after corporate and civil services. The good candidates not only preferred careers other than teaching in a College, if they happened to join a college they looked forward to moving to University Departments. The work load for the College teachers was too heavy to allow them to find time for research. The UGC role in accentuating this gap was enormous despite the provisions for study leave. The introduction of the Semester system without necessary preparation further increased the teachers' work-load. Requiring their presence

in College for a certain number of hours, without providing proper sitting and working facilities, made it worse.

In Political Science we tried to ensure that each course was taught jointly by a University teacher and a College teacher. (I must confess that not all my colleagues welcomed such encroachment on their right to teach 'their' course.) Actually some innovative courses were offered by College teachers alone as they had been newly trained in such courses as Human Rights, Politics of Environment and Gender Studies. It was frustrating to notice that this practice was discontinued when some of those very teachers joined the Department. The perspective of 'cooperative teaching' which was an organic element in the concept of a 'federal university' that DU is supposed to be, was practically given up during the past two decades. At one time there were seven to ten teachers in the University Department of Political Science as against about two hundred teachers in Colleges. Currently there were nearly thirty teachers in the University Department and over one thousand in Colleges. The University Department and its Head treats this as an administrative domain exercising power in appointments, curriculum-making, examination, promotion and related matters. The original vision was to treat the entire body of teachers of a discipline as an organic whole – in fact the DU Statutes still contain that view – collectively owning and developing the discipline, developing curriculum jointly through committees, general body meetings, addressing concrete questions such as falling standards, how to make Hindi medium students equally competent and similar other issues. We made small gains in some of these initiatives. But they were overwhelmed by the strong currents of unequal development that swept all sectors of Indian society including education at DU.

My participation in the DUTA (Delhi University Teachers Association) activities was another major input to my thinking on higher education. DUTA's role as the champion of teachers' rights has protected the economic interest of the teaching community in India as a whole. That the teachers' pay scales today are comparable to the higher civil service scales – not quite really as the bureaucrats never allowed complete parity – was largely the result of the struggles waged by DUTA and the All India Federation of University and College Teachers Organisations. Even while the status of college teachers continued to decline and the power gap between University and Colleges steadily expanded, DUTA provided a close vigilance against arbitrary treatment and harassment of teachers. (But it was not always successful as was evident in the case of G.N. Saibaba despite its sustained efforts.) As competitive party politics acquired more intensity in India, teachers' movement contained within it different political formations. The different factions of Congress, Left and BJP now were fully occupied in building their support base and protecting their members' interests in Colleges of Delhi where votes were important. Correspondingly student politics got party affiliations and produced solid linkages. One positive outcome of this was the mutual checks by the groups each constantly trying to expose the lapses of the other especially when political power shifted from one party to another in the local level or the national level. But this meant less efforts to unitedly face the challenges of a deteriorating system. Thus campaigning for economic demands and maintaining support base preoccupied the teachers' movement so much that it did not find enough time or space, to pay greater attention to the trend of professional decay that had set in. Only on occasions when the central government took steps to curb teachers' rights, made unfair working conditions such as increasing hours of class room teaching or announced fresh policies on education with little or nominal consultation with the public at large, did the DUTA undertake to organise major discussions

and produce its alternative proposals. DUTA's achievements in protecting teachers' interests and failures in stemming the waves of commercialisation and centralisation of education in India through central government policies have lessons for all those who think about higher education in India. I have seen the rise of DUTA as an organisational force achieving significant gains for teachers. I have also seen the effects of its complex character with conflicting ideological groups creating deadlocks in the teachers' movement, thus making it difficult to grapple with the growing crisis in higher education and prepare the teaching community to face its new challenges. This was required in a much greater degree than what DUTA has done at a time of corporate take-over of education under neo-liberal globalisation and digital management. We all have to share the blame for the current crisis.

But the most important lessons that I wish to refer to the ones I learnt in course of steering the B.A. Restructuring Committee and subsequently chairing the B.A. Programme Committee during 2002-2005, my last three years at Delhi University. I still follow this process in Delhi and generally and reflect upon them. They form an important source for my comprehension of the crisis of undergraduate education in India. When the then Vice-Chancellor Deepak Nayyar invited me to head this Committee my first question to him was whether he would be able to implement our recommendations. His unambiguous answer in the positive had spurred our effort. I am pleased to notice that during the decade and more of its implementation the B.A. Programme, even with subsequent changes, it grew into a coveted programme of DU, often preferred over honours courses, attracting the best students while remaining the largest programme of the college. Transformation of the previous B.A. Pass course into a new and attractive B.A. Programme through a collective, consensus-building process involving college teachers and students as well as University teachers, taking Principals and Heads into the consultative process and addressing intellectual, pedagogic and organisational issues was a valuable experience. It showed the possibilities as well as limits of educational reforms in contemporary times.

At the same time, I should add that I have closely observed the colleges of Odisha and have been involved with a research society called Gabeshana Chakra which is devoted to doing research on Odisha for over thirty years. It is basically an organisation of college teachers that meets in colleges or university campuses in different parts of the State. Witnessing and analysing the crisis in education in Odisha and being a part of many studies on this and related aspects taught me many lessons. I should also state that my engagement with civil liberty issues has taken me to many parts of India as a member of the fact finding teams where interactions with local teachers, students, social workers and common people including alienated groups and social activists trying to address them, have been a great learning experience on many issues including the crisis in education.

Knowing fully well that one cannot talk about the all India situation with this limited experience and not having done systematic research on this issue I am still daring to put some propositions. All these disclosures are meant to convey the background I present a teacher's perspective, a democratic rights perspective on a significant question. I will now take up a set of issues identifying the magnitude of the crisis and make some suggestions for intervention by academics, social action groups and policy-makers.

The Big B. A. Crisis: Plight of Two And a Half Crore Youth

Welcome Expansion and Steady Undervaluation

Everyone is proud of the fact that education at every level has expanded progressively in India. In higher education one has to note that the number of universities has increased from 30 in 1950 to 795 (47 Central, 123 Deemed, 360 State Public, 262 State Private and 3 State Special Act) in 2016-17. According to the UGC Annual Report for 2016-17 from some 2.1 lakh students enrolled in 1947 we have reached over 294 lakhs in 2016-17 in universities and colleges. The number of colleges which stood at 700 in 1950-51 rose to 42358 in 2016-17 (pp.74-123). In the same years, the strength of the teaching staff rose from 24,000 to 14,70,000. Of the total enrolment as much as 86.39% are in undergraduate classes and 9.61% are in Masters level, while the rest are in research and diploma courses. Thus we are talking about over 250 lakh students in Bachelor level courses of whom 94.33% study in Colleges, the rest in universities. Of them the boys outnumber the girls by over 10 lakhs. It is the plight of this large body of two and a half crore young people that we are talking about. Let us remember that they constitute less than 20% of the Higher Secondary graduates and therefore are more privileged than the 80% who could not enter college. Narrating the hardships of their life conditions is another story. Together with their situation if we add the conditions of some fifteen lakh college teachers and forty two thousand colleges the magnitude of the crisis becomes clear.

This large section of the youth has experienced a steady trend of undervaluation of the B.A. level education. It has been caused mostly by central regimes who were guided by their favourite educational advisers whose line of thought at the time shaped the fresh policy. Even before education was moved to the Concurrent List by the 42nd Amendment during the Emergency the central government used the instrument of financial control through the UGC to impose new system of school and higher education throughout the country. Violating the spirit of federalism and norms of such significant exercises in launching new policies that affected the lives of millions of young people, they often declared new educational policies without sufficient deliberations. Except for the Kothari Commission all the other exercises in making a "New Education Policy" have been done with mostly nominal or carefully guided consultations to announce and carry through their current thinking. The latest push on instituting a Higher Education Commission of India is no exception.

The four year IA and B.A. courses had continued from before Independence. That was replaced by a Three Year Degree Course for B.A. level on the one hand and Ten plus Two at the school level on the other. Until then 11 years of schooling and four years of college had also provided for 15 years of education after the age of six. It has taken many years to implement this scheme throughout the country. Even now not all States have higher secondary as a normal part of schools.

Undervaluation of B.A. became expedited when Masters level was followed by another master degree called M.Phil. in the 1970s. This was done ostensibly to improve standards of higher education in India at the doctoral level. From then onwards the prevailing leadership's obsession to achieve 'world standards' has led to frequent introduction of arbitrary changes in the structure of programmes – a process that continues even now. Lack of self-confidence in setting one's own high standards based on adequate consultation and careful planning through building national consensus has been a recurrent phenomenon in

Indian educational policy. Being a norm setter rather than a norm follower has never been an aspiration of the Indian elite since the 1970s. By adopting prescriptions made by western think tanks serving institutions of neo-liberal globalisation they go on integrating Indian academic institutions with the world capitalist system.

In universities of Europe and US students go into Ph.D. or Graduate Studies as they call it after the B.A. level. In the process of fulfilling some courses or writing a dissertation they may choose to get an M.A. degree as a part of the Ph.D. programme. In many universities, a student who is considered not good enough to proceed for Ph.D. is given M.Phil. or M.Litt. as a terminal degree and is asked to leave. In India since the 1980s, the strategy of the rulers was perhaps to keep students at the University longer before letting them to join the job market. And the job market was not expanding well enough to absorb the new entrants. This policy of adding the M. Phil. programme was not only unfair to two generations of students who suffered it, but it devalued the M.A. degree which in turn devalued the B.A. degree. The attempt in 2012-13 in Delhi University to further enforce a structural change by introducing a four year bachelor degree programme with the ostensible goal of making it in conformity with the US universities was another adventure encouraged from the top. Fortunately, it did not materialise due to opposition of teachers and students.

In the job market where a Bachelors degree was adequate, we found hundreds of M.A., M.Phil. degree holders applying for jobs. UGC norms for lecturer appointment now took M.Phil., later Ph.D. as essential qualification. That led to mass production of Ph.Ds with questionable quality. Remedial measures such as introducing NET examination for selection as lecturers or Accreditation Council to check the standards of education in colleges and universities were hardly adequate to arrest the structural decay of higher education caused by thoughtless policies from the top.

Having just a B.A. degree was a great achievement until forty years ago. It had equipped the graduate with a reasonable acquaintance with some subjects, writing skills, linguistic competence and commitment to liberal values. The restructuring through the decades and expansion without accompanying measures of support have turned it into a degree programme that does not have much worth today as on each of the fronts today's graduate is extremely poor. Incidentally, a Bachelor degree is still the only requirement for civil service examinations though the UPSC has reduced itself to a body that produces en masse millions of robotic youth who train themselves in mastering some techniques of passing general studies and discipline examinations rather than gain any knowledge in depth about anything. It has resulted in the mushrooming of a private industry of coaching institutes producing them. Those who pass enter the colonial frame of managing state, economy and society with that kind of 'knowledge' and enjoy enormous power to maintain status quo or serve the agenda of political masters rather than the agenda of the Constitution. The ninety-five per cent or so who fail to get into the services enter other life world with that amount of robotic training. The decay in undergraduate education has been consistent with the transformation of the UPSC examination system.

Many business enterprises also look for fresh graduates from "good colleges", though most of them recruit from the IIM system or the private management institutes which have also come up everywhere. Direct recruits of B.A. to corporate jobs who train them on the job has declined drastically as the devaluation of B.A. degree hastened.

Undervaluation of the B.A. is particularly tragic because the expansion of college education indeed gave opportunities to the children of poor classes, especially peasants,

workers, dalits and adivasis and more and more women went for higher education. Colleges came up in remote areas and every MP and MLA worked to set up a college in her/his Constituency. The central government decision in 2006-07 to give OBC quota in admission to colleges was a significant decision that was overdue. But again this welcome decision was implemented without adequate facilities. (A college teacher who otherwise supported the policy said to me that her classroom which could seat maximum of 40, now had to accommodate 60 students, with a lot of them standing outside the door to mark their attendance that was compulsory. Such situations, she said, took away one's "joy of teaching" as it was now impossible to know the students and build rapport with them.)

Like the poverty eradication programmes that gave temporary relief, or at best short term gains to the below-poverty-line population, expansion of higher education provided a bloated sense of doing B.A. when the degree was actually getting devalued. The politicians of course boasted for achieving a new college in their area or more seats and subjects or scholarships in their colleges. Permission was readily granted to open colleges and even universities to respond to political pressures or to show the ruling party's concern for the region. But allocating adequate funds, building the requisite infrastructure, appointing regular teachers, providing the necessary reading facilities to students and such other steps were lacking. In fact the phenomenon of ad hoc, part time or guest lecturers or lecturers in a lower scale fast spread all over the country and created much disincentives to the profession of teaching. The expansion of colleges was necessary and did provide opportunities to some to achieve some mobility. But for the vast majority of the students it was an illusion of having higher education to move ahead in life. No doubt even in such conditions a few students came up and steadily moved on. But the vast majority encountered utter negligence. Even though some privileged colleges in different parts of the country found ways to improve their infrastructure and maintain certain standards, they could not escape the consequences of overall trend of decline of the value of undergraduate education. They may not account for more than one lakh students in the country as a whole out of some 250 lakhs. But every college had to reckon with the prescribed curriculum which may vary from state to state or university to university but was monitored by the UGC to link the sanction of grants with the adoption of certain curricula recommended by them. From 1992 onwards, the UGC has framed guidelines for restructuring of undergraduate courses' and has insisted on their adoption by colleges. That brought about not only increasing centralisation of the educational system but enforcing curriculum that was consistent with the regime's economic policy rather than being the outcome of the local consultation process. That is how we landed in the current phase of crisis.

Where are the Educational Visions of Tagore and Gandhi gone?

Shift of focus from Knowledge to Skill education

In Tagore's vision, education was a creative experience enabling a student to learn about the integral relationship of self, society and nature, discover and understand the ways that operate among them and acquire a capacity to better serve the universe. The making of a Visva-manav –universal human was the goal of Visva-Bharati in Santiniketan. Several aspects of Tagore's perspective need to be recalled today. One, every level of education was important and worthwhile –pre-school, school, college and university. Two, all teachers taught at every level and earned equal respect. Three, every aspect of life formed a discipline and was interconnected with other aspects. Humanities, Sciences, Music, Arts and Technology formed an organic whole. Not until after Independence did discipline departments along the lines of the European Universities were introduced in Visva-Bharati under UGC directives. Four, Santiniketan, the abode of peace and learning was connected with Sriniketan where the local people's handicrafts formed the experience of 'doing' with hands with indigenous craft people as teachers. Five, Knowledge was sought from traditions and history from all over the world, West and East and not only from western sources. Study of non-western languages and cultures, Chinese, Japanese, Persian were promoted consciously along with European languages. Indian languages and culture were at the centre. Six, living, learning, teaching and working were a fulsome experience each impacting the other reflecting the values which were upheld by the institution. Holding classes under the trees, farming in the fields of the campus, caring for the animals, taking part in the production process, singing, painting, acting in plays, writing and reciting poetry were as important as attending lectures, reading books in the library and doing experiments in the laboratory. Seven, Santiniketan did not believe in granting degrees for a long time. Just learning and living experience in Santiniketan was the certificate that placed several thinkers, artists, musicians, social scientists in different parts of the country.

All of it may not be seen today if one visits Santiniketan. It has been transformed as a Central University into one of the normal institutions following UGC norms. But if you know the history of this great institution and have met some of its products – sorry for using this word product – of that era you can still find traces of that practice. I do not know if they still observe Thursday as their weekly holiday! But compare that vision with what we have in our colleges today and see how we have proceeded in the opposite direction.

Gandhi's Ashram was a learning place through work and study in course of the freedom movement. But we can take the Gujarat Vidyapeeth in Ahmedabad as a reference point with its unique focus on studying labour and creative processes of rural India and relating them with western knowledge system. Of course Gandhi's Nai Talim perspective spelt out the principles governing his vision. Much research and publication exist on this. But it has had little impact on Indian educational policy.

Three aspects of Gandhi's educational philosophy warrant emphasis in today's context. First, reducing the growing gulf between mental labour and manual labour by making everyone take part in productive work along with classroom study was central. Second, education is about acquiring ability to pursue truth throughout one's life. Not only Gandhi's life was one of 'experiments with truth' that was his perspective on every aspect of human life and work. Third, education in school or college and outside was a part of human life in

striving for swaraj – self-realisation a constantly evolving process of realising creative potentiality of one and all. The 'swa' self was not conceived against the 'other', but in relationship with others seen as self. Relationships of domination, exploitation and inequality were to be transformed in course of struggle. These would seem very distant ideas for the current policy-makers. None of these principles inspire our education system today.

Both Tagore and Gandhi despite their differences were sharp critics of colonial education system and provided their alternatives. These alternatives contained a fundamental critique of capitalist Industrial Revolution and its cosmology. In the early decades after Independence, the Radhakrishnan Commission, and the Kothari Commission had carried some of that philosophy into their frameworks even while taking the Nehru agenda of building a modern industrial nation as their main focus. For them realising the Constitutional vision of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice for all men, women and children and all social groups was the main goal for which the state had to play the central role. This agenda was gradually altered in the 1980s. After the adoption of economic reforms in the 1990s, the neoliberal agenda made education an instrument of capitalist development. At the same time, operation of liberal democracy compelled the rulers to maintain the reservation for the SC, ST and later OBCs and take measures to expand higher education. It was more a legitimisation strategy of the ruling classes rather than serious steps for structural transformation. Today this constitutional provision was regarded by the rulers as a stumbling block for India's economic growth. Periodically we have heard of the desire of Party leaders to scrap reservation.

It is in this context that the present crisis in education has emerged. Expansion of colleges and seats was to respond to the demands of electoral democracy. Shrinking of public funds for education and the fast pace of privatisation was to enable the corporate sector not only turn education, a public good into a profit-making business but have its own way of shaping the growth of knowledge in the state sector as well. The Ambani- Birla Report of 2000 decisively charted this course which the Knowledge Commission pursued. Having even one representative of industry in the proposed Commission on Higher Education continues that trend. Content and nature of education underwent perceptible change in this process from imparting knowledge to training in skills. The Skill Mission's active programmes and initiatives attract far more interest of state and capital than the crisis in higher education.

Academic disciplines were now further graded in the market. Professional courses of engineering and medicine were already the first choice for students. Technology was given more value than basic science. Study of Literature, Philosophy and Humanities was considered less important than Sciences. Among Social Sciences once upon a time Economics, History and Political Science were much sought after. Gradually Commerce and Business Management became the first choice. In the drive for covering more items and achieve up-gradation, curriculum was made so vast that students were left with little time to read books, take part in other activities – which are damned as "extra-curricular activities". Market provided its pain-killers in the form of key-books – kunjis. Students found short-cuts and managed to get marks- beating the system alright but not gaining knowledge.

In the digital era of the recent years the state and the corporates worked even more closely making computers, laptops available to schools and colleges. Political leaders vied each other for securing praise for such measures. Technology and capital took over the

education system, both the public and private institutions adopting themselves compulsively to this demand from the top. Industry was happy making profit out of this. Finding that funds did not permit to provide resources to all colleges in the country, the policy of selecting some colleges and calling them as 'autonomous Colleges' was launched. Education which was to promote equality in society had already become an arena of accentuating inequalities. It was further widened with the concept of autonomous colleges. This policy has been the common recommendation of all the commissions since Ramamurti Committee in 1990.

It was in the midst of this wave of commercialisation of education and devaluation of undergraduate education that we in the B.A. Restructuring Committee in Delhi University had taken up the challenge to intervene. We could only attempt restructuring of courses within the existing structure and funding. After two years of deliberations with teachers, students and invited experts we formulated a package for the new B.A. Programme having four components: Foundation Courses, Language and Literature courses, Discipline Courses and Application Courses. They were spread over three years. Some foundation courses such as Social Enquiry; Contemporary India; Human Rights, Gender and Environment; and Language, Literature and Culture, made every student learn about their environment irrespective of the discipline they came from. Unfortunately, in some cases narrow notions of foundation courses were introduced taking advantage of this and pet themes of the then Vice-Chancellor or the ruling Party got into the course. Application courses ranged from Statistics and Computer Application to Appreciation of Hindustani Music, Legal Literacy and Tourism. From the list of 27 originally it seems to have gone up to 56. Colleges could propose and add new courses and take the help of colleagues from other colleges making arrangements to teach either in their own college or in another college. This linked the college students with the great talents available in the city who came to take classes or received students as interns. The disciplines curriculum had to now be more interesting to match the others. Language and Literature courses too had to be reconceptualised to provide the critical ability to the students. The programme seems to have attracted lot of students who find it relevant to their life.

But the general trend of devaluation of undergraduate education has persisted and the crisis has reached massive proportion all over the country. The modern college has become a factory manufacturing disabilities. It produces millions of youth with stunted minds, crippled hands, blurred vision, surcharged emotions, tottering feet and aggressive values. Their mind that is capable of questioning, creating and innovating things are put under immense pressure and not allowed to grow into its potential. They are no longer willing to soil their hands working on the fields to create things of beauty and utility with their hands. Use of the finger tips on the key board of a laptop or a cell-phone is their major preoccupation. Their vision is blurred by strong reversals of their faith in history, in the plural multi-religious tradition of India when they are told that this is the nation of one religion. The future is defined for them by their rulers rather than giving them the right and ability to envision their future. On issues of culture, religion, partisan interest, ethnic identity, loyalty to a leader or organisation they are easily provoked to become highly emotional and charge upon others. Education should have committed them to use reason and debate with a cool mind. They can hardly stand on their own, literally and figuratively. They are insecure to the hilt, so they need a group to support, a guard to defend or a weapon. Freedom from fear which was a goal of education is a far cry today. And what values are

cultivated today? Not love and service or question and reason, not struggle for justice, but defend yourself, your community and a particular interest or cause that you have been mobilised to uphold. Committing aggression upon others through competition, manipulation or fight is the second nature of the modern youth. One realises that what we call disabilities may actually be treated as abilities by some and modern college well be regarded as their achievement. It is also true that even in the midst of this crisis and disabling processes, many students stood out and have passed with great values, talents and creative ability. But their number is miniscule. The evidence on the ground is that there is a widespread decay of higher education. It is a big B.A. crisis.

What is to be done?

Knowing fully well that these suggestions are put against the tidal wave of neo-liberal policy on education strongly pushed by the rulers, they must be put on the table for discussion as an agenda for debate among the teachers, social action groups and policy makers. Otherwise the posterity shall not forgive us. These proposals are based on the belief that education and health must be given the highest priority in a country's development. In this particular case of undergraduate education, efforts must be made to support this mass of critical talent in the age group of 18-21 to flourish comprehensively and graduate into purposive adult life. These ideas follow from our analysis of the crisis.

- (i) *Decentralise educational management:* States and regions or districts must get the proportionate funds and power to enable colleges to manage their educational institutions. Central and State funds should be allocated directly to the college according to the agreed norms without partisan interference. The district representatives should also demand that in addition to central and state funds, those who utilise local resources must contribute a certain portion of their income towards education and health in the region. Central and State government bodies and agencies may formulate ideas for circulation and reference. They should not be imposed on colleges and universities. University is a civilizational institution located in society which state supports with funds and respects its dignity and autonomy to serve society and civilisation. The institution in return has to constantly prove itself by self-assessment that it fulfilled the trust put on it. Even if a private trust sets up a college it has to operate in this framework. This view is in total divergence from the recent Bill to create a Higher Education Commission of India that centralises the entire higher education system.
- (ii) *Collective self-management of colleges:* Teachers, students and the community should jointly manage the college through their representatives who should have fixed tenures. The democratic process involving the community must ensure that weaker sections such as landless, unorganised workers, dalits, adivasis, women, minorities are represented in decision-making. How they try to achieve academic and social objectives will be their responsibility to design and implement. They can emulate aspects of other institutions. They are accountable to themselves and the district council which represents the public. Their reputation shall be judged by their community through the achievements of the graduates of their institution.

This makes every college an autonomous college located in a region but always with a wider, national and global vision.

- (iii) *The B.A. and M.A. programmes in the same college:* Every post-graduate teacher must teach also at the B.A. level. There can be colleges where M.A. teaching is not provided for practical reasons. But there should be no exclusive M.A. teaching. All University Departments must offer B.A. and B.A. (Hons.) programmes. College teachers should closely interact with school teachers on the one hand and have adequate access to research facilities on the other. The particular methods of breaking the existing barriers and promoting free flow among different levels of teachers should be worked out without overburdening them.
- (iv) *Knowledge for seeking truth and serving humanity:* All disciplines are important. The College can decide on the choice of disciplines which may or may not conform to the recommendations of the state or capital and their councils. Foundational courses and application courses are both important just as language ability and study of disciplines in all field humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Instruction in the local language must be the norm along with training in English and other languages as Languages where a student can acquire proficiency in three to four years. The current push for add on, self-financing professional courses is causing disruption of the main programmes. If they are important they should be part of the curriculum.
- (v) *Continuous collective assessment:* The annual or semester examinations whether objective or essay type should be abolished. Instead there should be continuous self assessment and mutual assessment by student groups in class with the help of teachers. At the beginning of each segment of the course they should collectively decide how to help each other best comprehend and remember the subject and implement it according to a schedule worked out by them. They devise multiple forms of mutual assessment – essays, papers, discussions, debates, field visits for application of what they learnt, taking the place of the teacher and so on. The present system is based on distrust of the student and is full of tensions for all. Assessment should be a normal tension-free enjoyable experience. This is possible if the maturity of the college student is recognized and the student is made a party to the assessment process which is in their interest. The teacher is not to be in the role of the 'Master', a 'giver of knowledge', an authoritarian commander directing students, the receivers of knowledge by command. The teacher must be a friend of the student, a co-learner helping one another in their pursuit of truth and creative ability.

These or similar ideas are going to be demanded by the 'poor B.A. student' who is already awakened. They are bound to challenge the agenda of the state and capital which has turned education into a commodity called skill. They demand their right to good education for after all education is an important path to equality and freedom. Teacher must stand with the student, so should the community who together must make the college a place for the joy of learning. It would be the joy of discovering one's self, society, nature, environment and civilisation. Many people, young and old are engaged right now in going ahead along this path of transformation. So there is hope. NIEPA has often demonstrated that.

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Total Quality Management Practices in Autonomous and Non-Autonomous Colleges: A Study

J. V. R Geetanjali*

Abstract

Prior to the collegiate system, India played a significant role in the global higher education system. Ancient universities like Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramshila, Vallabhi and others attracted scholars from all over the world. Contrary to it, however, Indian universities today are unable to take a seat in the top 100 universities in the world QS university rankings. At the same time, to meet the demand of a growing population, many educational institutions have come up in the private sector. At present, India has a total of 759 universities and some 42,000 colleges. But this very higher education system is being held responsible for the increase of degree mills; rather they are busy producing unemployable graduates. Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education enhances the capacity of the institution to make an edge over others. Also, various benchmarking practices, such as ISO standards, Six Sigma etc., are being followed worldwide to measure the quality of higher education. Under the aegis of the University Grants Commission (UGC), the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) initiated a system of accreditation and assessment in the year 1994 in order to ensure quality in education. The grant of autonomous status for colleges was an initiative of the UGC, aimed to provide them financial assistance as well as to maintain and to promote academic standards in education. This autonomy also confers upon them freedom in curriculum designing and to conduct exams. The present study aims to analyse the perceptions of stakeholders, i.e., students and the faculty of autonomous and non-autonomous colleges, towards the TQM practices in their respective colleges.

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Introduction

Higher education in India underwent a structural change from the late 1990s. The LPG (liberalisation, privatisation, globalisation) policy initiated the entry of private universities and establishment of private colleges. Quality assurance then became the buzzword of the day and was needed to administer the mushrooming of institutes. This created a plethora of regulatory bodies for governing the higher education system in the country. The University Grants Commission (UGC), an apex institution which was established in the year 1956 to preside over the administration of entire higher education system in India, established a voluntary body called the National Assessment and Accreditation Council in the year 1994, to take up the process of quality assurance methods and accreditation process in higher education. The major responsibility of NAAC is to assess and accredit the institutions of higher education in the country. This was motivated by the very diversity of our education system with its central and state, private and other universities/colleges. This has raised the concern of quality in curriculum, dissemination methods, quality of teachers, infrastructure needed to facilitate the capacity building and, finally, the employability skills of their students. Accreditation is a process of validation in which colleges, universities and other institutions of higher learning are evaluated. The standards for accreditation are set by a peer review board whose members include faculty members from various accredited colleges and universities.

The system of affiliating the colleges was originally designed when their number in a university was small. Then the university could effectively administer and control the working of the affiliated colleges. This system, however, became increasingly difficult with the need to govern all these colleges and attend to their varied needs. The regulations of the university are alike, irrespective of individual performance of the colleges. Colleges having the potential to offer higher courses do not have the freedom to do so. The Education Commission of 1964-66 recommended institutional autonomy for promoting academic excellence. Then the parent university was expected to award an institution the autonomous status on the recommendation of a committee appointed by the UGC. Such an autonomous college is then made free to start new courses and conduct examinations. However, it is still the parent university that awards degrees to the students. At present we have 566 such autonomous colleges all over the country.

Review of Literature

David H. Entin (1992) conducted a survey of 10 Boston institutions in order to examine their Total Quality Management (TQM) practices. The study revealed that TQM was well institutionalised in only one college while the remaining nine institutions were lagging in implementing the TQM. Hogg and Hogg (1995) conducted a study on quality imperatives in undergraduate colleges in the United States. The study highlighted an alarming fact --- that undergraduate attrition amounted to about one-third, that the failure rates for various courses were often about one-tenth, that the absentee rates for relatively large lecture courses were sometimes over one half, and that most universities had low alumni retention rates (about a quarter). It was felt that implementation of continuous quality improvement may help resolve all such problems. Treehan (2000) analysed the TQM in management education to address the effectiveness and efficient use of TQM approaches. The study

critically examined whether it matched a product or process based model to define the customers of education. Under product analogy, students were the inputs, and they underwent a transformation process. Education was imparted to them and the graduates were the products. It was concluded that each quality assurance system needed to consider both the process of teaching and the evaluation of student with a view to influencing the outcome through quality teaching- learning. Pillai and Lukose (2003) found that TQM is in itself the “Complete Food” --- with its own principles, methods, work habits, systems, tools and techniques --- which were all to be integrated harmoniously. They said total quality should be a passion and way of life for those institutions which strive for TQM. Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) observed the drawbacks in the attempts to apply TQM models, taken from industry, to the service sector. The study reviewed a number of TQM models existing in the learning environment. It established the fact that the approach so far attempting to implement the TQM models in industry line across in the university system was followed with a view of its tenuous fit with the core operation of teaching and learning. They developed a comprehensive Holistic Quality Management and Teaching Learning (QMTL) Model. Pandey (2004) established the fact, through a study, that the higher education institutions (HEIs) should strive to strike a balance between the needs of their stakeholders, the demands of the society and the three areas of autonomy. These thus involve the academic, administrative and financial aspects.

Narayan (2005) critically examined the present higher education system in India. The study has identified the factors affecting the higher education, such as the rigid curricula, lack of autonomy, existence of islands of excellence amid oceans of mediocrity in the HEIs, disproportionate allocation of major resources for higher education, etc. Haque *et al* (2013) conducted a study to identify the factors influencing teachers’ perception regarding TQM in the Malaysian institutions of higher learning. It was concluded that faculty members should be empowered to participate in quality improvement process which will ensure effective and constant communication to motivate students.

Pandu, Rao and Jeyathilagar (2007) developed a model for achieving quality in higher education, i.e., Integrated Total Quality Management, which is a vital tool for achieving global quality in technical institutions. Students are considered as important stakeholders of the institutions along with the faculty. Agarwal (2009), through his study on workforce development, felt that with many inadequacies in course and curriculum higher education institutions do not provide skills for the 21st century worker. Oduwaiye *et al* (2012) carried out a study to examine the relationship between TQM and students’ academic performance in the secondary schools in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between (1) availability of adequate number of faculty and student’s performance; and (2) TQM practices and student academic performance. Swamy (2015) recommended that the government has to make a crucial reassessment of activities as well as budgets so as to create necessary improvement in higher education sector.

Objectives of the Present Study

The study aims to achieve the following objectives in order to know the effectiveness of TQM practices:

- (i) To analyse the NAAC’s best practices to achieve the Total Quality Management in educational institutions.

- (ii) To compare the perceptions of students and faculty of autonomous and non-autonomous colleges regarding the TQM practices in their respective institutions.

Hypothesis

The study meant to verify the following hypothesis:

“There is no difference in the perceptions of students and teachers of autonomous and non-autonomous colleges regarding the total quality management practices.”

Sample of the Study

On the basis of proportionate stratified random sampling method, a total of 617 respondents from 35 colleges, viz 9 autonomous and 26 non-autonomous colleges, across the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad were chosen as the sample.

Methodology

Stakeholders’ opinions were obtained by administering a structured questionnaire. However, the present study also used the information collected from secondary sources like the UGC reports and from websites. The responses were analysed by considering the NAAC criteria as the measuring tool.

NAAC Criteria for Accreditation

Various benchmarking practices are being followed worldwide --- such as ISO 9000 standards, Malcolm Baldrige Awards and Six Sigma etc. --- to measure quality in higher education. After considering the Baldrige Benchmarking model, IEQE model of UK, the NAAC has identified, through national consultations and consensus, the following seven criteria to serve as the basis for its assessment procedure:

1. Curricular Aspects
2. Teaching-Learning and Evaluation
3. Research, Consultancy and Extension
4. Infrastructure and Learning resources
5. Student Support and Progression
6. Governance and Leadership
7. Innovative Practices.

However, this study does not include the seventh criterion of innovative practices as a measuring tool, as such practices may not be implemented in all the NAAC institutions uniformly. Descriptive statistics of all the six variables, based on UGC-NAAC criteria, is listed and the two-way ANOVA is applied to check the significant differences between the institutions, stakeholders and their interaction. (The following abbreviations have been used here: ATC = autonomous college, NATC = non-autonomous college.)

Reliability of the data

Cronbach Alpha is used as an estimate (lower-bound) of the reliability of a psychometric test. Cronbach's α is a function of the number of items in a test, the average covariance between item-pairs, and the variance of the total score. Reliability refers to the context to which responses are consistent.

Reliability statistics

Cronbach Alpha was found to be 0.884, suggesting that the items have relatively high consistency. This result indicates the validity and reliability as good. Hence, the data is used for statistical analysis.

Gender Distribution

TABLE 1
INSTN * SKHLD * GENDER

GENDER		SKHLD		Total	
		STUDENTS	TEACHERS		
MALE	INSTN	ATC	46	19	65
		NATC	85	39	124
	Total	131	58	189	
		69.3%	30.7%	100.0%	
FEMALE	INSTN	AT	78	61	139
		NATC	183	106	289
	Total	261	167	428	
		61.0%	39.0%	100.0%	
Grand Total		392	225	617	

Source: Primary Data

The gender-wise break-up across institutions vs stakeholders is given in the above table. There were totally 189 male respondents of which, 131 (69.3 per cent) were students and 58 (30.7 per cent) were male teachers. Out of the 131 male students, 46 were from ATCs and 85 from NATCs. Out of the 58 female teachers, 19 were from ATCs and 39 from NATCs.

There were a total of 438 female respondents, of which 261 (61 per cent) were female students and 167 (39 per cent) were female teachers. Out of the 261 female students, 78 were from ATCs and 183s from NATCs. Out of the 161 female teachers, 61 were from ATCs and 106 from NATCs.

Curriculum Aspects (CA)

Quality of the institute may be measured through the indicator of performance which is included in the curriculum aspects. It comprises five elements, namely (1) Curriculum design and development; (2) Academic flexibility (3) Feedback on curriculum; (4) Curriculum update and (5) Best practices in curricular aspects.

The following sub-hypothesis was then tested:

H₀ (1): "There is no difference between autonomous and non-autonomous colleges in the total quality management practices with respect to curricular aspects with the factors contributing to TQM."

A 2 x 2 ANOVA test was conducted to study the response score differences between stakeholders as a function of the type of institutions.

TABLE 2
CA - ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	109626.551	3	36542.184	3.612	.013
Intercept	471971.378	1	471971.378	46.647	.000
INSTN	38487.425	1	38487.425	3.804	.052
STKHLD	12932.896	1	12932.896	1.278	.259
INSTN * STKHLD	43249.480	1	43249.480	4.275	.039
Error	6202291.066	613	10117.930		
Total	6987267.000	617			
Corrected Total	6311917.618	616			

Source: Primary Data

$F(1,613) = 4.275$, $p = 0.039 < 0.05$; hence the interaction effect between the institutions and the stakeholders is statistically significant. The stakeholders' perceptions are consistent with the type of institutions they belong to. Thus, the null hypothesis H₀ was rejected. There is a difference in the perceptions of students and teachers towards TQM practices with respect to curriculum aspects.

Teaching, Learning and Evaluation (TLE)

Teaching and learning are two interdependent activities. Evaluation determines the outcome of the entire process of teaching and learning. The Indian philosophy describes teacher as GURU. The guru is not just a teacher but one who dispels darkness. This term guru has now acquired prominence at the international level. Sallis (1996) described Deming,

Juran and Crosby as Quality Gurus. This term prompts the relationship between teachers and taught. In undergraduate colleges, effective teaching depends on various factors like student-teacher ratio, academic strength of faculty and interpersonal relationship with students. Here the following sub-hypothesis was tested:

H₀ (2): "There is no difference between autonomous and non-autonomous colleges in the total quality management practices with respect to TLE with the factors contributing to TQM."

TABLE 3
TLE - ANOVA
Dependent Variable: SCORE

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	103184496.826	3	34394832.275	10.503	.000
Intercept	163775742.573	1	163775742.573	50.009	.000
INSTN	20475331.813	1	20475331.813	6.252	.013
STKHLD	85797097.809	1	85797097.809	26.198	.000
INSTN * STKHLD	12583300.663	1	12583300.663	3.842	.050
Error	2007509429.582	613	3274893.034		
Total	2212765907.000	617			
Corrected Total	2110693926.408	616			

Source: Primary Data

When comparisons were made to analyse the perceptions of stakeholders of the ATCs and NATCs, it was observed that there is a significant difference with respect to TLE aspect of TQM practices. The calculated F value (1,613) was 6.252 and p value was .013 which was less than 0.05. It denotes significant variations in the perceptions of stakeholders in the ATCs and NATCs. It is concluded that there is a significant difference between the ATCs and NATCs.

The stakeholders' opinions are compared between teachers and students by using a 2 x 2 ANOVA between the subjects of autonomous and non-autonomous institutions. The F (1,613) value was 26.198 and the calculated p value was .000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the opinions of teachers and students. It was noted that ATC teachers have more exposure towards new teaching methodologies than NATC teachers. Value added courses like spoken English, calligraphy and other interdisciplinary courses are offered only in ATC institutions. Hence hypothesis H₀ (2) could not be accepted, as there were differences between the ATC and NATC stakeholders with respect to TLE. There was found a noteworthy disparity in the opinions of stakeholders regarding the admission procedures, best practices in teaching, learning methodologies and evaluation. Hence hypothesis H₀ (2) was rejected, as the perceptions of stakeholders with respect to institutions for TLE are significantly different.

Research, Consultancy and Extension (RCE)

In the present dynamic world, teachers have to be more competitive to face the current generation by upgrading their knowledge in a consistent manner. There is a famous axiom for teachers: *either publish or perish*. One of the major requisitions for want of quality in teacher is their professional up gradation and career growth. At present the minimum eligibility condition for appointment of a teacher is a second class masters' degree. Dev & Pillai (2004) assessed that an excellent teacher has to be a good researcher and must be abreast of the latest development in his field of specialisation, so that he can function as super conductor for elucidating and transmitting his knowledge to students. Teachers' perceptions only were obtained on this criterion as the present study covers maximum number of undergraduate colleges. Undergraduate students have less exposure towards research and consultancy in India.

Here the following sub-hypothesis was tested

H₀ (3): "There is no difference in the perceptions of teachers of autonomous and non-autonomous colleges towards total quality management practices with respect to RCE under factors contributing to TQM."

TABLE 4

RCE - ANOVA Dependent Variable: SCORE

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	96.193	1	96.193	.651	.421
Intercept	25774.024	1	25774.024	174.362	.000
INSTN	96.193	1	96.193	.651	.421
Error	32963.736	223	147.819		
Total	60197.000	225			
Corrected Total	33059.929	224			

Source: Primary Data

From the above table it can be observed that the computed F value was 0.651 at (1, 223) df and at 5 per cent level of significance. Its significant value was 0.421, which was greater than 0.05. This shows that there was no difference of opinions among teachers with respect to research, consultancy and extension. Therefore hypothesis H₀ (3) could not be rejected as there are no significant variations between the ATC and NATC institutions, for teachers as stakeholders, towards RCE.

Infrastructure and Learning Resources (ILR)

According to the NAAC quality indicator for best practices, infrastructure and learning resources comprise six components, viz, (1) Physical facilities for learning; (2) Maintenance of infrastructure; (3) Library as a learning resource; (4) ICT as learning resource; (5) Other facilities; and (6) Best practices in the development of infrastructure and learning resources. Considering the students' perceptions on various physical facilities and their accessibility, their responses are compared between the ATC and NATC institutions.

Here the following sub-hypothesis was tested: $H_0 1 (4)$

"There is no difference in the perceptions of students of autonomous and non-autonomous colleges towards total quality management practices with respect to ILR, with the factors contributing to TQM."

TABLE 5
ILR - ANOVA

<i>Source</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Corrected Model	213924.015	1	213924.015	.548	.459
Intercept	807093.505	1	807093.505	2.069	.151
INSTN	213924.015	1	213924.015	.548	.459
Error	152170962.921	390	390181.956		
Total	153704155.000	392			
Corrected Total	152384886.936	391			

Source: Primary Data

The opinions of stakeholders are not significantly different between the ATC and NATC colleges. Calculated F value was 0.548 at (1,390) df at 5 per cent level of significance. The significant value was 0.459 which was greater than 0.05, indicating that the perceptions of students within the groups are the same with respect to infrastructure and learning resources. It was therefore concluded that infrastructure facilities in the ATC and NATC institutions were not significantly different. Hence hypothesis $H_0 1(4)$ with respect to the NAAC benchmarking criterion of infrastructure and learning resources failed and was rejected.

Student Support and Progression (SSP)

According to the NAAC benchmarking practices, under the fifth criterion, viz, student support and progression, the key aspects which focus on quality benchmarking are (1) Student progression; (2) Student support; (3) Student activities; and (4) Best practices

in student support and progression. The role of the institution in supporting the students starts from admission and continues even after employment.

Here the following hypothesis was tested

H₀ 1 (5): “There is no difference between autonomous and non- autonomous colleges in regard to the total quality management practices with respect to SSP, with the factors contributing to TQM.”

TABLE 6
SSP - ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	8935.338	3	2978.446	17.445	.000
Intercept	10982.662	1	10982.662	64.327	.000
INSTN	464.489	1	464.489	2.721	.100
STKHLDR	5384.414	1	5384.414	31.537	.000
INSTN * STKHLDR	594.771	1	594.771	3.484	.062
Error	104657.878	613	170.731		
Total	135542.000	617			
Corrected Total	113593.216	616			

Source: Primary Data

Stakeholders’ perceptions are compared between students and teachers F (1,613) value was 31.537, and calculated p value was 0.000, which was less than the significant value 0.05. This value denotes the significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and students with respect to student support & progression. The campus placements in the conduct of NSS/NCC activities by the ATCs are found better than in the NATCs. Hence we had to reject the hypothesis H₀ 1 (5) with respect to the SSP.

The analysis of interaction effect between the institutions and the stakeholders found that F (1,613) value was 3.484 and p value was 0.062 which was more than 0.05. The interaction effect between stakeholders and institutions is same according to the perceptions of stakeholders under student support and progression. Hence hypothesis H₀ 1 (5) was accepted with respect to the SSP.

Governance and Leadership (G&L)

The NAAC has identified institutional governance and their protagonist way of administration as the sixth tool for measuring quality management. The key elements under this criterion are (1) Institutional vision and leadership; (2) Organisational arrangements; (3) Strategy development and deployment; (4) Human resource management; (5) Financial

management and resource mobilisation; and (6) Best practices in governance and leadership.

Here the following hypothesis was tested

H₀ 1 (6): “There is no difference between autonomous and non- autonomous colleges in the total quality management practices with respect to G&L, with the factors contributing to TQM.”

TABLE 7
G&L - ANOVA

<i>Source</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Corrected Model	6540315.003	3	2180105.001	1.398	.242
Intercept	44212234.090	1	44212234.090	28.347	.000
INSTN	3725344.334	1	3725344.334	2.389	.123
STKHLDRS	2181110.224	1	2181110.224	1.398	.237
INSTN * STKHLDRS	3074653.667	1	3074653.667	1.971	.161
Error	956093497.801	613	1559695.755		
Total	1003380392.000	617			
Corrected Total	962633812.804	616			

Source: Primary Data

Similarly, considering the perceptions of stakeholders, students and teachers, no difference in the opinions of stakeholders was found with respect to G & L. The corresponding F value was 1.398, and calculated p value was 0.237 at df (1,616) at 5 per cent level of significance. This value was more than the probable significant value of 0.05, which denoted the insignificance in the perceptions of stakeholders, i.e., students (Mean = 267.262, SD = 67.935) and teachers (Mean = 306.506, SD = 89.479) with respect to governance aspect of institutions. Hence we had to accept the hypothesis H₀ 1 (6).

The interaction effect between stakeholders and institutions too was statistically not different. The F value at (1,613) was 1.971 at 5 per cent level of significance. The calculated p value was 0.161 which was more than 0.05.

Higher education is an investment in human capital. But the stakeholders are of many kinds, like parents, management, staff and students. The managements of both ATCs and NATCs were found satisfactory to the expectations of stakeholders. This denoted that according to the perceptions of stakeholders, management of both ATC and NATC institutions, with respect to governance and leadership, was satisfactory

Conclusions

It is proved statistically that there is no difference in the perceptions of stakeholders of both ATC and NATC towards benchmarking criteria in regard to the RC&E, infrastructure and learning resources and governance and leadership. It was pragmatic that even NATC teachers were encouraged towards research activities, and these non-autonomous colleges include 10 accredited institutions. However, significant variations were found in the perceptions of students and faculty with respect to the curriculum aspects, teaching, learning and evaluation and student support and progression. The study indicated that affiliating colleges did not have freedom in curriculum design since they are bound to deliver the tailor made curriculum in the stipulated period. It was also noticed that a number of affiliated colleges were run under private self-financing managements and their financial sources were limited, which made it difficult for them to adopt new teaching methodologies and to extend the student support services. Hence the research hypothesis failed to be accepted.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted only in the state of Telangana, with the sampled colleges affiliated to the Osmania University alone. Also, the study could not investigate the perceptions of other stakeholders such as parents, industry and management members of the sampled colleges.

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RTE Act and Minorities: An Inquiry into Procedural Issues[#]

Ranu Jain*

Much has been stated about the relationship between schooling and community. Majority of these works focus on the impact of the economy and culture of the community on schooling, reflecting positive equation between the poverty of culture and weak educational achievement. One witnesses a pathological correctional approach in the policies of Government of India, which aims towards helping individual members of the deprived communities or disadvantaged minorities in positive discrimination mode. These policies do not take into cognizance minority – majority dynamics especially the practice of discrimination and institutionalized exclusion or the dynamics that impact policy making and its implementation hence, these policies have not been found effective in addressing the problem of educational backwardness of these communities. Cast in 'rights' based approach, one wonders whether the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009 is an answer to the problem.

The RTE operates on the principle of liberal democracy, promising equality and social justice to all citizens of a nation, and offering uniform opportunities to everyone irrespective of their ethnic affiliation. The Act reflects a critical relationship between an individual citizen and the State, where citizens play a proactive role in asserting the rights granted to them constitutionally, and where the State is compelled to extend these rights to its citizens. However, in the present socio-political scenario, one wonders if all citizens of a State have similar access to these rights? Isin and Woods (1999) have talked about multi-layered citizenship and the need to look at the citizens from the perspective of “multiple subject-positions,” which implies that behind the veil of universal citizenship lies systemic forms of oppression and exclusion that marginalise certain sections of population mainly,

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the poor and the minorities. Although the concept of minority is a heterogeneous concept, reports on minority show that disadvantaged minorities like the Muslims dominate in the poor segment. The “secular” State attempts to address the problems of marginalised/excluded minorities through a uniform and equality oriented approach, negating minority–majority dynamics. This dynamics affects the capacity of the members of the minority communities to avail the State offered opportunities (Jain R., 2012). Hence, the academic discourse on minority rights has moved beyond class based equality paradigm to include local and community specific structures and processes that obstruct minorities, especially the poor, from availing State offered opportunities. The paper submits that policies like RTE Act do not take cognisance of structures of inequality that affect the minority communities. They do not take into account the structures and processes of discrimination and exclusion that keep the members of the minority communities from accessing rights extended to the citizens of the nation.

Before commencing the paper, it is important to reiterate that minorities do not form a homogeneous entity. One witnesses gender, class, regional and ethnic heterogeneity in the minority population. The socio-political reality of voluntary minorities is much different to that of the involuntary ones (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Further, treatment extended to all involuntary minorities is not similar. Some of the poor involuntary minorities, especially the “sons of the soil,” might enjoy better negotiability for public resources, while the others, especially those who carry the stigma (as different from reality) of being migrants, might not be considered, in popular conception, entitled to the State resources, especially under the prejudiced view of the minorities being violent towards the majority community. Here the reference is being made to the Muslims in India. Looking at the educational status of the Muslims and facilities that are offered to the community, the paper would examine whether a generic fundamental right extended through the Right to Education Act could be utilised by the poor Muslim population. With reference to the poorest of the poor Muslims residing in ghetto like situations, the paper attempts to locate the structures and processes that obstruct educational achievement of the Muslims and would explore whether it is possible to address the same through the RTE Act.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first one looks at the RTE and its inclusive nature and the promises that it makes to facilitate universalisation of quality education. The second extends information on the educational status of the Muslims and infrastructure available to those residing in a ghetto. As such statistics are not available for all ghettos, an attempt has been made to draw inferences from the ghetto of Mumbra-Kausa (Thane, Maharashtra). Insights would also be drawn from the ghetto of Johapura (Ahmadabad, Gujarat). The last section of the paper summarises where the right based approach has failed in extending education to the Muslim community.

RTE Act: Some Significant Features

Since the colonial period, one comes across demands for universalisation of education, especially for making education accessible to the poor and socio-culturally disadvantaged population. William Fraser in north India (1816), Thomas Munro in Madras Presidency (1826) and Robert Shortrede in Bombay Presidency (1839) established schools in rural India for common people. Again in 1870, attempts were made to introduce compulsory and free education in India. To quote Rao P. (2014: 154) “...Governors-General Mayo,

Northbrook, Lytton and Ripon and the Lt.- Governor of Bengal, George Campbell attempted to introduce compulsory education in India. They were supported by Indian social reformers and Sanskrit scholars like Mahadev Govind Ranade, Jotirao Phule, Kashinath Trimbak Telang, Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar.” Dadabhai Naoroji was also one of the reformers who supported free education for the entire nation. In 1888 and 1891 Congress sessions, resolutions urging the government to introduce compulsory education were passed. In 1908 Gokhale urged the government to abolish school fees. He introduced Elementary Education Bill in 1911. It is interesting to note that “In a rare display of solidarity, the state, the nationalists and the Muslim League joined hands to defeat the bill.” (ibid : 171). It is significant to note that in 1944 the Sargent Plan was formulated, which aimed to achieve universal elementary education within 40 years of its introduction, i.e. by 1984.

Universalisation of education is a vision of independent India. Article 45 of the Constitution of India directs Indian states to make “provision for free and compulsory education for children.”¹ The national education policy of both 1968 and 1986 reiterated the provision, and many programmes have been initiated to realise the vision. Examples can be given of Shiksha Karmi Project, District Primary Education Project and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The year 2002 can be considered a turning point in the history of universalisation of education. In this year through the 86th Amendment to the Constitution, Article 21-A was introduced. The Article made free and compulsory education till the age of 14, a fundamental right for Indian citizens.² This enabled the passage of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Elementary Education Act (RTE), 2009.

The significance of the Act is twofold: it declares education at the elementary level a fundamental right of the citizens of India. The approach is child centric and employs public private partnership model to make “quality” education accessible to all. Secondly, the Act recognises the socio-cultural bases of educational inequality witnessed in India and hence it has an inclusive character. It prescribes reservation of 25 per cent of seats in private schools for children belonging to economically weaker sections of population and socio-economically disadvantaged groups. To quote from the Act, “Child belonging to the disadvantaged group” means a child belonging to the Scheduled Caste, the Scheduled Tribe, the socially and educationally backward class or such other group having disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economical, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factor, as may be specified by the appropriate Government, by notification” (I.2 d). Whereas “child belonging to weaker section” means a child belonging to such parent or guardian whose annual income is lower than the minimum limit specified by the appropriate Government, by notification” (I.2 e). Leaving specifications to the discretion of the state authorities has made the clauses ambiguous. A visit to the MHRD website shows differences in defining the categories by various state governments. Consensus lacks even on the annual income to declare a weaker section. For instance, in Nagaland the annual income ceiling has been put at

¹ “The State shall endeavor to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.”

² The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment Act, 2002), 12 December 2002. Right to Education: “21A. The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.”

the level of Rs. 40,000,³ while in Gujarat, it is Rs. 68, 000 for urban area and Rs. 47,000 for rural areas.⁴ Namala and Mehendale (2016:1) state, “Not only have these categories been problematic in terms of who they include and who they exclude, the approach of lumping together these categories in the provisioning does not help in addressing the specific reasons for their exclusion.”

The Act is proactive. It promises “free education,” which means no child admitted under 25 per cent RTE quota is liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him/her from completing elementary education. “Compulsory education,” on the other hand, casts an obligation on the government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance, and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6 to 14 age group. The Act entrusts responsibility of mapping “out of school” children to schools. However, prime responsibility of locating and enrolling “out of school” children lies with the State. To make schools accessible to all the poor and the needy ones, there is a provision for primary schools within 1 km of the child’s residence and elementary school within a distance of 3 km. Such schools may be government or private schools. As stated earlier, the private schools whether aided or unaided, are supposed to reserve 25 per cent of their seats for economically weaker sections and socio-culturally disadvantaged groups.

In popular notion, the RTE quota is admissible in Standard I or below. However, the Act states, “Where a child above six years of age has not been admitted in any school or though admitted, could not complete his or her elementary education, then, he or she shall be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age” (II. 4). Idea is to provide “free education till completion of elementary education even after fourteen years” (II. 4). The Act further states that in case of a school where admission is sought and where “there is no provision for completion of elementary education, a child shall have a right to seek transfer to any other school... for completing his or her elementary education even after fourteen years” (II. 5 (1)). The onus of bringing the child to the standard of the class lies on the teacher.

Significantly, the Act states that the State has to “ensure that the child belonging to weaker section and... disadvantaged group are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing and completing elementary education on any grounds” (III. 9 C). Further, while laying down curriculum of the school, the relevant authority is supposed to ensure that the child should be “free of fear, trauma and anxiety and (the school should be) helping the child to express views freely” (V. 29. 2 g; parenthesis mine)

The Act has specified minimum infrastructure required to run a quality education institution. It has prescribed teacher-pupil ratio and has mentioned guidelines for developing syllabus and curriculum of the schools. It advocates regular monitoring of the school through School Management Committee. In absence of the school fulfilling the prescribed requirements, the Act has advocated closures and mergers of the schools and shifting of the students to more appropriate school as it is the responsibility of the State to “ensure availability of a neighbourhood school” (III. 9 b).

With this Act, India has moved towards a rights based approach that casts a legal obligation on the government to implement the fundamental right enshrined in the Article 21-A of the Constitution. States are advised to establish grievance redressal mechanism.

³ MHRD website.

⁴ Vernekar N & Singhal K, 2017, “Oversight during RTE Implementation in Gujarat Has Bred Feelings of Caste Antagonism,” *The Wire*, 4.5.2017.

Establishment of such mechanism is still in process. In absence of effective functioning of this mechanism, a citizen is entitled to approach courts for admission of a child in an appropriate school.

The Act is exhaustive in its address to the possible obstacles towards universalisation of education in India. However, despite completion of approximately nine years, the Act is not adequately implemented. As per a news article of Business Standard (March 27, 2018), the consortium of civil societies working on RTE at their national stocktaking convention stated that only 8 per cent schools across the country comply with the provisions of the RTE Act. The 92 per cent schools fall short of the RTE Act. They were found lacking on several measures like, separate toilets for boys and girls, availability of drinking water and student-teacher ratio. To quote from the news item, "India is spending less than three percent of GDP, compared to its obligation of spending 6 per cent; India's per capita spending on education is approximately four time less than the spending incurred by middle income countries." Newspapers talk about late and inadequate advertisements failing to generate awareness about the Act. Admission process, in general, is delayed forcing students to seek admission by paying fees and other kinds of admission expenditures. Newspapers report money being taken by the students under one pretext or other. Schools buy time for implementation of RTE quota under lame excuses like, short or late notice and improper response from the State. One of the major hurdles in the implementation of the RTE Act is its requirement of documents, which is difficult for the slum dwellers to procure. Reason may lie in their stay in illegal buildings or in the loss of documents due to natural or man-made disasters.

Not even a decade has passed after RTE Act implementation and the government appears in the compromising mode. According to a news item in The Asian Age, the chief minister of Maharashtra has assured regularisation of schools that may not conform to RTE Act norms. To quote, "According to the BMSS (The Brihanmumbai Mahapalika Shikshak Sabha) the BMC commissioner received a letter from the urban development department asking him to compromise the rules as much as possible on overall grounds and take a sympathetic approach at the non-fulfilment of compulsory norms by the schools" (The Asian Age, July 13, 2016). Maharashtra government has given a call for revision of the Act.

In light of the above discussion one wonders, how is the Act being implemented in the poor Muslim dominant slums? Promising elementary education to every citizen of India, has it been able to reach out to the minorities in India? Minorities, who have significant presence in BPL category⁵ and against whom rampant antagonism has been witnessed? Has it been successful in enhancing educational achievement of the minority communities? In the following section of the paper, an attempt is made to explore the extent to which the Act has helped the Muslims of Mumbra-Kausa in upgrading their educational achievement.

⁵ The Sachar Committee reports 31 per cent of Muslims in the BPL category. According to Arvind Panagariya and Megha Mukim (World Bank's Policy Research Working Paper 6714, December 2013), "The incidence of poverty amongst Muslims in India is higher than Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs..... Almost 34 per cent of all Muslims in urban India were below the poverty line compared to 19 per cent of Hindus. And whereas poverty for Hindus in urban India declined by 52 per cent between 1983 and 2009-10, the rate of decline for urban Muslims was much slower at 39 per cent (as quoted in Haider, M, "The Persistent Poverty among Muslims in Urban India," The Dawn, 18 December, 2013.

Education in Mumbra-Kausa: Status and Facilities

Before commencing the discussion on the Muslims of Mumbra- Kausa, it is important to note that despite the constitutional directive principle of free and compulsory primary education since independence and implementation of the RTE Act since 2010, the educational statistics of the Muslim community has remained dismal. In this paper, due to space constraint, no attempt is made to provide detailed statistics on educational achievement of the community as such statistics are available in various reports.⁶ However, it is important to reiterate that the progress in terms of basic education at all-India level has been slowest among the Muslims. NCPCR report⁷ on magnitude of child labour in India reveals significantly high percentage of child labour in the Muslim community. To quote from the report,

.....the WPR is higher among Minority religious communities than that of the children hailing from Hindu groups and others during 2004-05. During the same period, 6.5 percent of children in the age group 10-14 among Muslim children were engaged in gainful employment as against over 4.5 percent of Hindu children. The data..... also indicates that the decline in WPR among Muslim children is slower than other groups over a period of time.

In the year 2014 Kundu report was drafted as a follow-up to the Sachar committee report. It states that around 15 per cent of Muslim children never attended school in comparison to about 4 percent of general category children in the year 2011-12. At the age of 7 years nearly 100 percent attendance was observed among other minorities and Hindu OBC and upper castes. But the percentage was only 90 percent among Muslims. The Kundu report further states that drop out occurs in all social groups, however, occurs early for Muslims and SC/ST children.⁸ In order to understand impact of the RTE Act, a comparison made between the DISE reports of 2009-10 and 2014-15, shows an increase of only around 1 per cent in the enrolment rate of the Muslim community since the time of the inception of the Act. At primary level, the increase is from 13.5 per cent in the year 2009-10 to 14.37 per cent in the year 2014-15. A similar trend has been witnessed for upper primary level. Although higher than SC (49.35 per cent) the retention percentage for Muslims at elementary level (69.84 per cent) falls much below the percentage for the general OBC category (72.94 per cent).

The data discussed above has to be taken with caution as it does not reflect internal stratification in the Muslim community. Jain & Shaban (2009) have discussed the sect-wise difference in educational achievement in the Muslim community. The report shows that the educational achievement of certain sects like Khoja, Bohra, Memon and Konkani Muslims is

⁶ Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Committee of India: A Report, New Delhi: Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India; the Post-Sachar Evaluation Committee Report, 2014; Report of the National Monitoring Committee for Minorities' Education (NMCME), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India; Hasan, Z & Hasan, M (ed) (2013), India: Social Development Report 2012: Minorities at the Margins, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁷ Magnitude of Child Labour in India: An Analysis of Official Sources of Data (Draft), NCPCR, n d.

⁸ Post-Sachar Evaluation Committee Report, 2014.

enviously high (Jain & Shaban, 2009). Again, Alam (2013) has discussed the class dynamics in the educational achievement in the community. He stated that the statistics of the achievement of the rich Muslims is almost double to that of the poor. This implies lower statistics for poor (mainly Sunni) Muslims, especially those residing in a ghetto. Not many studies have been conducted on the application of RTE in ghettos/slum areas hence for this paper insights have mainly been drawn from a study conducted on Mumbra-Kausa⁹ and a few on Johapura.¹⁰

The ghetto of Mumbra- Kausa forms a dominant part of the Mumbra division of Thane (Maharashtra) municipality. It witnessed an increase in population after the communal riots in Bhiwandi (1984), Mumbai (1992-93) and Gujarat (2002). At the time of data collection, i.e., 2012-13, Mumbra division had a dominance of Muslims belonging to both, lower and middle, income groups. The middle income groups were forced to migrate to Mumbra-Kausa due to discrimination experienced in the housing sector and also when attempts were made to make “Mumbai shine like Shanghai” around the year 2005-06. During the time of data collection, i.e., in the year 2012-13, Mumbra division was recorded as sprawled over 9 km, administratively organised in 19 wards and having a population of around 7 lakhs. There were 21 primary schools administered by Thane municipality (TMC now onwards) in the Mumbra division but these were concentrated mainly in four wards, with another three wards having one school each. It is interesting to note that Mumbra division had only one TMC secondary school prior to the year 2010. This school was situated at Diva, a Hindu dominant area. In the year 2012, after migration of the middle class, four TMC secondary schools were established in two wards of Mumbra division.¹¹ The location of the schools implies a lack of government/municipality schools in twelve wards of Mumbra division, especially the hilly terrain.

We could not trace lists of “out of school” children in any school or with the government authorities in Mumbra-Kausa despite the RTE making survey of “out of school” children mandatory for the government and private schools. However, one school teacher of the TMC school no. 123 shared a list of 20 children who were not enrolled in schools. All of these children lived on the hilly areas of Mumbra Prabhag Samiti, where primary and secondary schools were not established. These children were enrolled in the government schools situated on the plains but were not regular in their attendance as they found difficulty in travelling across the hilly terrain. Again, three madrasas situated on the hills gave us lists of around two hundred students enrolled in their madrasas, but keen on joining

⁹ Jain, R (2014), *Mumbra: A Status Report*, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India.

¹⁰ Janvikas, *Gujarat's Internally Displaced: Ten Years Later, The 2012 Survey of Gujarat's IDP Colonies: A Report from Janvikas: 2011, Justice before Reconciliation: Negotiating a 'New Normal' in Post-Riot Mumbai and Ahmedabad*, India: Routledge.

¹¹ *Conditions and Plight of Mumbra* (Press release) on February 10, 2010 <https://sabrangindia.in/ann/conditions-plight-mumbra-press-release>; accessed on July 14, 2016) “...Through KHOJs consistent RTI applications we found that twice in 2006 and 2009 GRs to start a secondary school had been passed but because deputy commissioner's dept. forgot to deposit Rs. 5000 before 20 May 2007, because of which the order to start 8th Std. classes in school get cancelled.”

regular schools,¹² we also found three non-government schools established on the initiative of an individual, which catered to out of school children. All together, these schools had an enrollment of 150 children. In short, Mumbra-Kausa had a substantial number of out of schools children, record of which was not readily available. Around 13 per cent of the surveyed Muslim population was recorded as illiterate and 30 per cent as having completed primary education. Only around 21 per cent had secondary education certificate. The study reported that 84 per cent of the surveyed Muslim population had not opted for higher education.¹³

Situated in close proximity to Mumbai and Thane districts of Maharashtra and also due to significant migration from Mumbai (63.57% per cent), the Muslims of Mumbra-Kausa appeared to have positive disposition towards education. As government schools were not adequate in number, mushrooming of private (both recognised aided/unaided and unrecognised) schools was witnessed in the ghetto. Almost every building had a school. The researcher realised later that establishing a school was more a strategy to save illegal buildings from demolition than a concern for children's education. The most important aspect of these private schools was ambiguity in the records shared with us by the education department. A list of 48 recognised schools was acquired, however, the research team found many more making such a claim. The Indian Express ("Avoid These Thane Schools," January 18, 2012) has mentioned a list of 22 illegal schools published by District Education Officer of Thane Zilla Parishad and, interestingly, the list contained some names which were included in the government list of recognised schools shared with us. The Mumbra report mentions one unrecognised school projecting itself as recognised on the school board. One section of the school was recognised and the school took the liberty to mention it in general terms for all sections and levels of education. A news item (Un-Schooled in Thane, Mumbai Mirror, June 17, 2016) states that out of 65 illegal schools in the district of Thane, 20 were found located in Mumbra-Kausa. These schools were "Schools with room-size classrooms, no loos, labs or playgrounds, classes clubbed together for several grades with a single teacher presiding, and no recognition from the administration. One does not need to review the Right to Education Act (RTE) statutes to reckon that imparting quality education is a long slog for such establishments." On a penalty of Rs. 1 lakh and a daily fine of Rs. 10,000, these schools were allowed to run without a valid license. BJP leader Jaweed Akhtar Khan, who filed a RTI query, said "The corporation's yearly list of illegal schools is a mere formality as

¹² It is important to note here Gujarat Government has taken cognisance of such problems in implementation of RTE. To quote from the report of Janvikas, "Rules and Regulation Formulated by the Government of Gujarat: III 3.2.cm, February 2012: In areas with difficult terrain, risk of landslides, floods, lack of roads and in general, danger for young children in the approach from their homes to the school. The State Government/Local Authority shall locate the school in such a manner as to avoid such danger, by reducing the limits specified under sub-rule (2) III 3.2.d: In areas with high population density, the State Government/local authority may consider establishment of more than one neighborhood school, having regard to the number of children in admissible age groups in such areas." These rules, it is important to note, are not applicable to all states of India, especially Maharashtra, hence in the ghetto of Mumbra.

¹³ The study was conducted in the year 2012-13. Data was collected from 1065 households covering 4320 individuals. Report is available on <https://mdd.maharashtra.gov.in/Site/Upload/Pdf/Mumbra.pdf>

the parents never come to know of it.... Hundreds of illegal schools have cropped up in Kausa-Mumbra in the past years and the owners are minting money. How can they have been running for 4-5 years despite being served notices? Why are the authorities avoiding action?"¹⁴ The major problem is that the area did not get regular RTE inspection and monitoring. Some of the schools have mentioned this specifically on their web sites. In the past one year, almost all the so called good schools of Mumbra division have mentioned a School Management Committee on their website but these appear more on paper. Not a single school has mentioned RTE inspection though a few have mentioned inspection by CRC. In general, Mumbra-Kausa residents face high fees structures, demands for donations and practices like wavering of fees in case the parents could get a couple of students for the schools. Rude behaviour of the teachers has also been reported by many respondents. It would be significant to mention that some parents knowingly made the conscious choice of unrecognised unaided schools, due to the absence of either government or private recognised schools in the area.

"Budget private schools" could be witnessed in the area. Almost all of these were established and administered by the minority community. These schools, in general, were more commercial than academic institutions. The quality of education in these schools was poor and infrastructure inadequate. These poor quality unauthorised schools were mainly attended by the poor especially the floating population, who generally do not possess relevant documents to get admission in regular schools. Time of migration to Mumbra-Kausa is yet another reason behind the floating population joining private budget schools as regular schools were not ready to admit this population in middle of the term. Slum dwellers, especially those keen about education in English medium schools, are also vulnerable to seeking admission in these schools. It is important to note that in Mumbra-Kausa, TMC runs only one English medium school and establishment of additional English medium schools does not appear plausible in view of the fact that the RTE Act recommends education in mother tongue not taking into account public demands for education in English medium. Some renowned minority schools could also be witnessed in Mumbra-Kausa. However, these had been established mainly due to the availability of cheap land in the area and, in general, did not extend admission to the poor Muslims from the area as, according to the school authorities, the residents of Mumbra- Kausa could not afford fees of these schools. Now with exemption granted by the Supreme Court to these minority education institutions, there is less likelihood of Mumbraites benefitting from these schools.

Lack of basic facilities like that of toilets and water in schools is cited by the respondents as an important reason for discontinuing education. As many as 9 government and 3 private schools did not have adequate water facility. Not a single TMC school had clean toilets and only 6 had water facility in the toilets. Private schools reported having library and laboratory facilities, which are important educational resources. In contrast, only 3 TMC schools claimed to have a library and only 2 a laboratory. Playgrounds were reported in only 16 out of 28 private schools and 5 out of 26 TMC schools. No TMC school had an auditorium. All TMC schools claimed to have less than required number of class rooms. In this context, it is important to mention that the report on Mumbra mentioned a TMC school, which converted its toilets to a classroom. Toilets were constructed outside the school,

¹⁴ <http://www.mumbaimirror.com/mumbai/civic/Un-schooled-in-Thane/articleshow/52787860.cms>; accessed on July 14, 2016)

which soon got claimed as facility for general public. Teacher-pupil ratio, on an average, was found as high as 60:1.

It is significant to note that Bibhuti Bhushan Malik's study on the minorities of Lucknow presents as dismal a picture as that of Mumbra-Kausa. Malik reported basic infrastructure in schools of Lucknow but class rooms were found inadequate with more than one class being taken in many classrooms. "In most school premises where toilet facility was available, students were not allowed to use it. In 83.75 per cent of cases toilets were not used by students and were kept locked. Likewise only 2.50 per cent of toilets were used separately by girls. No separate toilet for boys and girls were present in schools, if such a facility was available they were used by teachers" (Malik, 2015:26). He further adds, ".....all schools are bereft of libraries; 60 per cent of schools do not comply with the mandated teacher-pupil ratio of 1:30; 28 per cent of schools do not have a playground; 16.6 per cent of schools have no provision for drinking water; around 45 per cent of schools do not even have their own boundary wall; more than half of Class 2 and Class 4 students sit together in one classroom" (ibid: 27).

On face of such deprivation, it does not require much imagination to understand that the quality of education being imparted in Mumbra-Kausa schools is extremely poor. The report on Mumbra shared difficulty in tracking the pass-out rate. Majority of private schools did not share this data. Among the 14 which shared, 8 claimed cent percent result for the year 2009-10, the number increased to 10 for the year 2010-11. In two schools the failure rate was reported as 2 per cent to 5 per cent. However, in the case of one Marathi medium school of Diva and another English medium secondary school of Kausa, the failure rate was reported as high as 22 per cent and 31 per cent respectively. The attempt to track the passing out trend through the HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) results of Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education¹⁵ revealed a different story. It mentioned only 16 Junior colleges from Mumbra division as having sent students for secondary and higher secondary board examination for the year 2011. The results of only 10 schools/colleges could be traced for the year 2007 and the results were extremely poor, as low as 25 per cent to 35 per cent.

RTE and the Disadvantaged Muslims

At the outset, it would be pertinent to note that the RTE Act is not applicable in the Muslim dominant state of J&K, and thus leaves a large Muslim population outside its purview. Further damage is caused by the non-mention of a religious community in its category of the weak and the disadvantaged. The Act extends only generic guidelines and it has been left on the states to define these categories as per their demographic profile and requirements. Omissions of this nature bring in ambiguity, making inclusion of religious minorities a political consideration. MHRD website on the Department of School Education and Literacy¹⁶ mentions only three states that have included religious minority in the

¹⁵ <http://in.rediff.com/mobile/updates/H4-COLP.HTM>; <http://msbshse.ac.in/newsite/H4-COLP.html>. Downloaded on February 20, 2012.

¹⁶ mhrd.gov.in; surfed on August 2, 2017.

category of the disadvantaged. These states are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Manipur.¹⁷ Non-inclusion in the category of the disadvantaged, results in absence of any direct policy and programme to address the issue of educational backwardness among the religious minorities like Muslims, a population dominant in the BPL category and reported as one of the most educationally backward community in India. Nevertheless, as the approach of RTE Act is generic and uniformly applicable, it is supposed to have helped the poor Muslims by default.

The major setback to the Act was experienced in the year 2012, when RTE quota was challenged in the Supreme Court. In the case of *Pramati Educational & Cultural Trust & Other Petitioners Versus Union of India & Others*,¹⁸ the constitutional validity of section 12 (1) (c) was questioned. The court gave its decision in favour of Article 30,¹⁹ thus exempting minority education institutions from implementing the RTE quota. Since then the minority education institutions are exempted from reserving 25 per cent of their seats for the poor and the disadvantaged from the neighbourhood. The decision of the Supreme Court gains significance in view of the fact that a substantial number of private institutions are established and administered by minority trusts. Quite a few of these have already been recognised as minority education institutions and the process of seeking such a recognition has strengthened since the above mentioned *Pramati Educational & Cultural Trust case* (2012). Talking about the state of Maharashtra, Kanchan Srivastava (*Daily News and Analysis*, May 8, 2014) states,

80 per cent of schools in Maharashtra have already got religious or linguistic minority tag; with more schools applying, only schools run by Marathi trusts will be left to fill the 25 per cent RTE quota..... The rush to seek minority status touched a new high in 2012-13 when the RTE Act was functionally rolled out in the state...The department expects a fresh surge in applications post the SC verdict. According to an estimated figure.....2,200 (minority) trusts operate nearly 28,000 schools, both aided and unaided. This is nearly 77 per cent of the 36,000 private schools in the state.

The story is somewhat similar in other states of India. Exempting minority education institutions from RTE quota makes the PPP model defunct, while it is supposed to be the strength of the RTE Act as the exemption would result in substantial reduction in the number of schools practicing RTE quota. Although the problem would be faced by the entire

¹⁷ It is important to note here that 14 States though not mentioning minorities as a disadvantaged category, mentions it along with the caste, class and gender against which discrimination should not be practiced. Maharashtra is not mentioned in the website but a news item has stated inclusion of minority in the category of the disadvantaged (*The Times of India*, 10 May, 2013)

¹⁸ <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/32468867/>; downloaded on August 2, 2017.

¹⁹ Article 30 in the Constitution of India 1949: Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions (1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

(1A) In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of an educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to in Clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause. (2) The state shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

poor and disadvantaged population, the impact would be intense in ghettos, where government institutions are small in number and where the community (minority) institutions dominate. The inadequate number of government schools and their uneven spread in Mumbra-Kausa has already been discussed. The trend is similar for Johapura. Janvikas, an NGO operating in 83 colonies of communal riot displaced Muslims, found only 90 per cent (76) of the colonies to have access to government primary schools and not within 1 km but 3 km of the residence of the students. Vipin Tripathi conducted a study on RTE implementation at Johapura but unfortunately detail report of the study is not available. He, however, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of India on August 21, 2009. In the letter, he pointed out that there are only four government schools in Johapura that can accommodate only 10 per cent of the school going population. The matter acquires further gravity in view of the policy decision of the Gujarat state, under which it refrains from establishing new grant-in-aid schools except for the tribals.

Just like Mumbra-Kausa, reports on Johapura talk about a total lack of support from government. In such ghettos²⁰ where, in general, private professional operators/companies do not operate, the space left behind State intervention, gets captured by the rich (relative term) and the affluent. To quote from the Indiatogether website,²¹ in Gujarat, there is “no government support so they (the community leaders) planned to take education in their hands. In 2002, there were 200 Muslim educational trusts in Gujarat. Now, there are more than 800” (paranthesis mine). One does witness some philanthropic interventions with a genuine desire to do good for the poor. However, majority endeavours are political and commercial in nature. Example can be given of a school in Mumbra-Kausa, where under the pretension of philanthropy, commercial instincts were witnessed. To quote the trustee of the school, “I had space and used it for a good cause. The new regulation of one-acre land for school is not feasible here. I have recognition of the Urdu Education Board. We are not going to stop good work because people want to find faults with everything.” His philanthropic statement was contrasted in a bulletin on the school walls announcing a fees of Rs 1,000-1,900 for books. “These are fees for those who can afford it. We waive it for those who can’t,” was his justification. It makes one wonder about the affordability of the school in a population, whose average income is reported at around Rs. 11,000 a month. Further, the private interventions in education sphere reflect a high possibility towards consolidation/shaping of the community identity (Harsh Mander, 2006), which may go against the interest of poor individual members of the community and the national ideal of unity in diversity. The upliftment of the poor does not appear as the main agenda of these interventionists, their interest lies more in gaining control on the community in order to enjoy surplus labour as well as to gain political mileage from the population. This makes one wonder whether the absence of the government schools in ghettos, leaving spaces for the community leaders/members to intervene, will ever result in realising the goal of universalisation of “quality” education to the level of elementary education.

²⁰ The Mumbra Prabdhag Samitit came into being in the year 1984 only and secondary schools started getting established after the migration of middle class in the area.

²¹ <http://indiatogether.org/embattled-education>; <http://www.siasat.com/news/riots-education-changing-face-gujarati-muslims-810701/>

Exemption from RTE quota and lax monitoring by the RTE Commission allows these schools to run unchallenged, charging unaffordable fees and extending poor quality of education. The inadequate infrastructure and pedagogic standard of the schools in Mumbra-Kausa has already been discussed. The study by Janvikas reports similar trends in Johapura. In both ghettos schools with very poor infrastructural facilities were witnessed. Under the RTE Act schools are supposed to have playgrounds and auditorium. One agrees with the state authorities that such provisions are not feasible in space crunched slum areas and that such prescriptions are difficult to follow in budget private schools as well as those situated in congested slum areas. To quote Manoj Kotak, chairman of the education committee of the municipal corporation that runs Mumbai schools, "There is a difference between implementing the Right to Education Act in other parts of the country and in a thickly populated city like Mumbai.... The scarcity of space and infrastructure makes it nearly impossible for schools that have been running for many years to fulfil these criteria."²² However, minimum can be and should be provided. This refers to an adequate number of classrooms, proper blackboards, teacher-pupil ratio, library, laboratories and of course toilets. Many students, especially girl students, have been reported to drop out of school due to infrastructural deficits experienced in the schools. Yet another point worth mentioning is inadequate implementation of educational schemes in ghettos whether these schemes relate to scholarship, mid day meals or provision of uniform. In Mumbra-Kausa, we found NGOs and social workers struggling to get scholarship for the poor and needy Muslim students. Similar stories can be heard from Johapura.

Problem multiplies when the community comes across faulty prejudiced text.²³ Reports on discrimination and exclusion being practiced in school situation are also plenty. To quote Malik (2015: 26-27), "The study reveals that 62.50 per cent of students feel discrimination on the basis of gender, caste and religion. The behaviour of teachers is governed by these categories. Hierarchical mindsets and attitudes which are prevalent in the larger context of society, affect interactions between students and teachers in schools". Picture is more universal in nature. Stating from the report of the RTE forum, Firstpost (April 3, 2013) states, "Highlighting the prevalence of social exclusion in schools, the study finds that the most predominant form of discrimination was not being allowed to sit on benches; which varied for Dalits (9.4 per cent), Adivasis (5 per cent), Muslims (7.3 per cent) and children with special needs (7.7 per cent)." Segregation of RTE children, checking their tiffin boxes, using derogatory language while addressing them and considering them thieves are some of the general behaviour pattern that has been reported. Additionally, children are asked to sit in back benches or side benches with bad view of the blackboards. It is needless to state that

²² "Private Schools for Poor Pressurised by Right to Education Act," The New York Times, 2 January, 2014; similar reporting has been done in The Asian Age, 13 June, 2017.

²³ "Five Bizarre 'Lessons' in Indian Textbooks," BBC News, 23 September, 2015 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-34336826> downloaded on July 24, 2017); "Saffronising Textbooks: Where Myth and Dogma Replace History," Hindustan Times, 8 December, 2014 <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/saffronising-textbooks-where-myth-and-dogma-replace-history/story-CauM4dmmsPGrjZ3APAvNxO.html> downloaded on July 24, 2017); Gaikwad, R, "Gujarat Textbooks never far from Controversy," The Hindu, Ahmedabad, 30 July, 2014 (<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/gujarat-textbooks-never-far-from-controversy/article6261520.ece> downloaded on July 24, 2017).

such practices have a high possibility in making schools unpleasant for the students and making them drop out of the schools.

There are reports on the closures of schools that are not abiding by the RTE Act guidelines. The Save the Children report²⁴ states that such closures cause an increased rate of drop outs among the poor and the disadvantaged, who neither can afford to travel long distance nor can afford private schools available in the vicinity. This further deprives the children of a ghetto from education. In this context, it would be important to note that prior to commencement of the RTE Act 2009, some madrasas and makhtabs were receiving financial support under SSA. After commencement of the RTE Act, financial support under SSA scheme has been discontinued on the ground that these institutes were covered under the RTE 2009. The amendment of 2012 to RTE Act, has excluded madrasas and makhtabs from the provisions of the RTE Act 2009 (Soni, 2013), however, this has not resulted in reinstating the financial support. One agrees that madrasas and makhtabs cannot replace formal schools, but these institutions do extend an alternative in a deprived situation where formal schools are found to be missing (Jain & Shaban, 2009).

Can we afford a school closure in an area which already is facing inadequate number of schools? The query gains significance when we realise that the residents of ghettos, in general, are structurally confined to the ghetto not free and inclined to utilise from the institutions situated outside the ghetto. This refers to floating population of contractual workers but more to the communal riot/discrimination affected minority communities. In Mumbra-Kausa, the residents were found to be discouraged to travel outside the ghetto even if it was to earn money. Young boys, who had to travel outside were advised not to open their mouth outside Mumbra-Kausa. Afzal M Memon, a businessman and social worker who started a school in Danilimda (a relief colony, Ahmedabad) in 2004, stated that the Muslim community does feel the need to ensure that their children receive a modern education. "But Muslims won't send their children to other areas as the non-Muslims behave badly with them," he added. Just over two years after Memon started the school, it runs in two shifts, and has over 1,000 students, says Nazneen U G, the high school section principal. "Those numbers are indicators of many things: a community's desperation for a school with a roof and teachers, the Gujarat Government's refusal to help, and the shoddy way in which the few, if any, municipal schools are run in areas where Muslims have sought safety in numbers."²⁵

Writing on post communal riot situation Deepankar Gupta (2011:64) says:

The situation of children also needed urgent attention. Their schooling had suffered not only by the disturbances that surrounded them, but later by a fear that would not leave them..... In many of the relief camps, schools were run by the management or Trust, but these were not along formal lines. Later, when the camps closed down, it was found that some Muslim children were afraid to go back to their regular school.

²⁴ Save the Children, 2017, School Closures and Mergers: A Multi-State Study of Policy and its Impact on Public Education System – Telangana, Odhisha and Rajasthan; See also eduExcellence, "7000 Maharashtra Schools Served Closure Notice due to Non-Compliance of RTE Norms," 28 January, 2017.

²⁵ <http://www.siasat.com/news/riots-education-changing-face-gujarati-muslims-810701/> Segregated and building their own schools.

In the absence of government support, the rich and the affluent have started working for education in Johapura. Certain Muslim organisations like Jamaat-e-Islami and IRF have started establishing Gujarati medium schools and desire government recognition, which is not granted and this discourages these civil society efforts. Gupta further states, "I was told by an official of IRC that there was no point in setting up schools that were not going to be recognised by the government. Hence, they needed permission to build such schools, and this permission took a long time in coming; in some cases, they complained, the order never came" (ibid: 65). This adds complexity to the issue of schooling in a Muslim ghetto. To reiterate, these ghettos lack adequate number of government schools and quality private schools. The budget private schools established by the community members, in general, suffer from inadequate infrastructure, not meeting the RTE requirements and hence closing down, further depriving the ghetto residents of education. In any case the schools established by the non state members cannot be established on a large scale and cannot meet the requirements of the entire population of a ghetto. Further, as stated by Gupta, on many occasions such schools do not get established due to bureaucratic hurdles. The RTE Act has failed to take cognisance of these very issues and has thus been ineffective in addressing the objective of universalisation of education till elementary level --- at least in the Muslim ghettos.

The idea was to strengthen the existing (even small) schools through effective monitoring of the RTE Act rather than ensuring their closures. Without providing adequate alternatives for such closures result in the loss of whatever minimum resources the slum dwellers have to their disposal towards education. Idea is to develop guidelines for infrastructure keeping in mind the constraints of operation in slum areas as the minority slum dwellers may not find it easy to leave slums and to utilise the resources available in areas dominated by the majority community. It is not only the question of financial requirement but also of a feeling of insecurity, which gets strengthened with every incidence of communal riots or any kind of practice or perception of discrimination and exclusion. RTE monitoring can be extremely effective in this context as such a monitoring would not only facilitate optimum usage of existing resources but also would compel the government to establish more quality schools in these areas. Such a monitoring would also keep in check interventions from conservative or fundamentalist forces in school education thus controlling the process of developing sectarian mind set. Attempts should also be made to review the Supreme Court judgement exempting minority education institutions from 25 per cent RTE quota. A majority of the schools administered in these areas are established by the minority communities and can acquire the status of a minority education institution thus being exempted from practising 25 per cent quota for the poor residing in the neighbourhood. The Supreme Court judgement deprives the slum dwellers from quality education.

Conclusion

The paper submits that, like all other State policies and programmes, the RTE Act has a general class oriented framework and not mentioning religious communities in particular, it fails to encourage a proactive approach towards education of religious minorities, especially the Muslims residing in a ghetto. Hence it has not been able to reach out to the very

population it aims to support, i.e., the marginalised and the excluded sections of the Indian population.

The Act appears to have lacunae at the level of policy making as well as in its implementation. At policy level, the vision of extending access to quality schooling to every citizen appears to have got lost in meticulous prescriptions. The Act appears rigidly structured, not taking into account the spatial and resource constraints in which the poor and the disadvantaged operate. Further, in its zeal for the “ideal,” the Act has not taken into account the immediate practical public demands, whether in terms of instruction in English language or in managing learning without a playground or an auditorium in a slum area. While acknowledging the socio-cultural basis of unequal educational achievements, it does not refer to the local dynamics and in case of minorities, the minority-majority dynamics. When taking an over view of the Act from the perspective of Muslim community, the implementation of the Act appears disappointing. In fact, the implementation makes one think that the Act is drawing one’s attention away from the structural bases of inequality which is being experienced by the poor and the disadvantaged, crippling their efforts, entangling them in bureaucratic and judicial web.

It is important to understand that the Muslim community has differences in income, sectarian leadership, permissible individuality and historical political experience of “othering.” These differences shape minority-majority dynamics, which impacts the rights based approach. Rights based approach implies an assertion in the part of individual citizens and collectivities for their rights however, disadvantaged minorities are noted for their lack of proactive assertion and negotiability. The ethos of citizenship is lost in the minority-majority segregation. The top-down (State sponsored) rights based approach negates dynamics prevalent in the civil society; dynamics that prevents or shrinks spaces for the minorities where such rights can be demanded especially in view of the rightist ideology which is reluctant to extend citizenship rights to certain sections of population silencing them effectively. The minority-majority dynamics gets unfolded, to a large extent, in communal riot affected ghettos. Ghettos operate in a context of restrictive opportunities as, in accordance to the theory of social closure (Murphy), in such unfavourable conditions, the privileged segment of the population tend to monopolise scarce resources including education by closing off opportunities for the less advantaged segments in various ways.

The practice of discrimination in the sectors of education, job and housing has been well documented, almost as much as the impact of direct violence in the form of communal riots on the social and psychological organisation of the minority communities. Importantly, such impacts are subtle, not easy to witness. For the majority community, it strengthens the feeling of hatred and exclusion and for the minority, their identification with the nation and the State apparatus, weakening their faith on availing their citizenship rights. Lack of action taken by the State against the rioters or discriminators furthers this disillusionment. Lack of social justice or delay in getting justice from the court and the police machinery further reduces their confidence in negotiating with the State on their citizenship rights. Deepankar Gupta in his study on post riot victims of Gujarat and Mumbai states, “After the earlier established relations between communities in the old normal have been severely disrupted, it is no longer possible to quietly slip back to status quo ante. We must recognise that the..... state of normalcy..... (is) not a “natural” outcome, or a spontaneous life world, but that too had been carefully crafted through multiple negotiations” (Gupta 2011:142; parenthesis mine). He adds, “The dust will eventually settle, but living a life will be a stealthy operation

where one will perpetually have to be on guard, especially if one is a religious 'minority' and cannot speak in the name of the 'people' " (ibid: 142). As a result minority population starts believing in suffering injustices and inequalities and accepting them as fate accompli.

One can state that activism implied in the rights based approach can put pressure on the political leaders to take cognisance of the needs of the heterogeneous population of the minority communities. But then what is the history of activism among the minority communities? One feels that the minority-majority dynamics not only affects the identification of the minorities with the State but also takes away the confidence required to organise the community members as a pressure group. One does witness some activism in case of minority women and OBC population but, in general, the population appears either withdrawn or over aggressive and dependent on the community/religious leaders for sustenance in absence of the support from the State institutions.

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Subaltern Languages: The Question of Vernaculars in 21st Century India[#]

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Abstract

In a changing world, the modes of resistance are also changing. The present paper attempts to draw a theoretical frame to re-engage the conceptual site of subaltern in the light of the vernacular movements and the growing hegemony of English in the post-colonial Indian context. Post-GayatriSpivak and RanajitGuha, Subaltern has often been seen as outside and its consciousness as irretrievable. While this might be true in the context of history, it also needs to be redrawn to address the new age movements. In the context of attempts to resurrect the vernaculars and the 'local' back in the domains of everyday cultural existence, the paper argues that subaltern agency and consciousness no longer exist outside the dominant frames. Instead, it proposes that these are spaces where the subaltern experiences get shape and form in the language of its big other and where it demonstrates a new dynamism of going back and forth between experience and knowledge.

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In the current social scenario English occupies an undeniable role of being the global language exercising its dominance over literally all realms including education, communication, information technology, entertainment and so on. In contexts like India, starting from the colonial times, English has had a progressive growth with the full support of policy makers and administrators. In fact India's material development has been closely tied with the spread of English, just as it was imagined by the 19th century British administrators. Keeping in mind the "uncivilised" and the "non-progressive" nature of the native society, the erstwhile East India Company's administration --- under the influence of the utilitarians and the Anglicists who for long demanded for introducing western education in Indian schools --- passed the English Education Act in 1835. This in a sense literally sealed the long held debate, from the 1770s onward, about the form of education to be imparted through schools and about the medium. The hegemony of English was, thus, officially consolidated through the 1835 Act and the subsequent Woods Dispatch of 1854. While the ill fate of the vernaculars and other oriental languages was often discussed and addressed, and their roles sustained, at times through official policies, in the British and post-British India, English continued to remain, the "powerfully ambiguous sign that spans knowledge, literature, desire, fashion, virtue, labour and sex" (Chandra 2013: 6).

Notwithstanding all that, the role of English in the Indian context was consolidated through the 19th century debates on education, and its impact now spreads much beyond. As the quote above articulates, its influence is literally spread much beyond the realms of education and other obvious spaces such as the ones related to questions of employment, administration and/or technology. As a language that regulates the dreams and ambitions of an entire population, English now has a significant role in regulating the entire spectrum of culture across regions. While this overwhelming influence immediately assumes the form of hegemony, it often happens at the cost of the local vernaculars --- triggering movements, sporadic and sometimes violent, those which attempt to counter this cultural hegemony.

This paper attempts to work on a frame for the ongoing movements to resurrect the vernaculars back into the domains of everyday cultural existence and, broadly speaking, "knowledge." While doing this, it considerably draws from the post-colonial and subaltern theories to make sense of the power structures that are both hegemonic and mundane. The first part of the paper consists of a brief attempt to see and understand the theoretical complexities and the historical genealogies of the subaltern as a concept in the Indian context. This becomes pertinent in the context of massive changes in all realms of our social existence where meanings and forms of resistance have also changed substantially. The concept in its classical forms --- the way in which Ranajit Guha and his interlocutors have imagined and made use of it to provide an alternative narrative of the past and present from a post-colonial perspective --- has already undergone several mutations. While an elaborate treatment of this is definitely outside the scope of this paper, such engagement still becomes pertinent as there are questions of hegemony and marginalisation/exclusion involved. This is particularly so as the situation with the vernaculars in the pan-Indian scenario has drastically altered in the face of neo-liberalism and the changes it brought forth.

The power structures which this paper talks about are the products of colonialism, although they later entered into the current, post-colonial domain where they operate in more or less full dynamics. The lack of an epistemology that is free from Western and colonial assumptions and that could be held more judiciously accountable for a post-colonial, non-western context has enabled the old colonial systems to survive and reinforce

themselves in very determinant ways in the current times. The paper discusses this aspect in the context of the augmenting space of English and the dwindling presence of the vernaculars in the Indian cultural contexts and in the public as well as private spheres.

The Post-Colonial and the “Epistemological Break”

The term “post-colonial” has by now become a part and parcel of our academic parlance although its usage would be better justified with an adequate and plausible explanation. The paper draws from Neyazi, Tanabe and Ishizaka (2014), where a somewhat lucid explanation, without compromising its rigour, is readily available. According to them, “post-colonial is used to indicate..... the government institutions, social and economic structures, and frameworks of cultural perception that were established during the colonial period [which have] continued to operate after Indian independence, although there was an aspiration to transcend the colonial” (2014: 4). In other words, Indian independence --- as already argued by scholars including RanajitGuha, Partha Chatterjee and SudiptoKaviraj, to name just a few --- was only a signifier of political freedom. It did not result in an epistemological break which is still pending, albeit without any sign of such a ‘break’ anywhere, sought after in our mainstream social spaces. The paper identifies the emerging vernacular sites, pitching themselves in opposition to the hegemony of English, as consciously responding to this lack in the Indian civil and national consciousness.

The 21st century language movements are responsive and mostly spontaneous to the global and local shifts in language policies and the rising hegemony of English in the Indian context. Nevertheless they reflect the long brooding unhappiness with the persisting colonial elements, aggravated in the context of globalisation and neo-liberalism, and the non-agential roles consistently imposed on the local. The unhappiness is also a response to the failure of the post-colonial state to free itself from the colonial epistemological and structural-institutional frameworks. The language polices of the post-colonial, neo-liberal state are also often moulded in the erstwhile colonial frames. Such policies have gathered more popularity and acceptability in the period of globalisation. Thus what were once looked upon as “imperial language policies” are now accepted as “solutions” for India’s state of poor development (Rao 2008: 63).

It would be more appropriate to state that even before neo-liberalism became prominent, the mainstream institutional and power structures in India used to operate in a non-vernacular space. Barring a few regional and local contexts, they were by and large mediated with English and, in some Northern and Central belts, in Hindi. Thus English, and to a certain limited extent Hindi, played a central role in bringing the local, the region and the nation into a defined linguistic-communicative network. The vernaculars were, by default, outside of this space of imagining the nation. Except in the much hyped ceremonial demonstrations of national integration and discourses of unity in diversity, the vernaculars did not have much role in defining the space of the Indian nation; albeit their presence remained prominent in the regions or pockets within the regions. With globalisation, the acceptance of English as a global language has increased multiple times. Even in small regions, the influence of English is massive and the regional/local vernaculars often feel threatened, with their usefulness increasingly being questioned for a global existence. The growing acceptance of English as an empowering language and as a solution to the socio-economic difficulties of individuals and societies has captured the linguistic imagination of

the regions and the local within regions. The cultural and symbolic capital of English, a factor that reasserts its hegemony and sustains its status as the “language of aspiration” (Gooden 2011: 171), its uncontested role in organising the virtual realities and associated technologies all play an adverse role against vernaculars in the changing regional-cultural locations.

Even languages assigned special classical status and provided constitutional immunity, feel the heat as their popular base consistently dwindle in the current language transitions. This is in addition to the various social and cultural divisions that the language hegemony aggravates in the society along the structural divides already operating. As VaidehiRamanathan observes, that “English.... [in the Indian context] is entrenched in the heart of a class-based divide (with ancillary ones of gender and caste as well) and issues of inequality, subordination and unequal values” (2005: vii). The unequal socio-economies have created language economies where the local vernaculars are often spelt as outside --- for they are deemed unfit and incompetent with the fast emerging global spaces that are heavily corporatised and rooted in techno-science and development rationalities. Movements to protect vernaculars from the danger of extinct have sporadically appeared in the different parts of the country from the 1980s. Originating from what is addressed to in several social science scholarships as language nationalism or cultural nationalism, we argue that they at times transform or make space for their sub-cults to initiate a knowledge politics.

While neo-liberalism is threatening to set the stage for a complete hegemony of the English language, and thus for a potential situation of the death of vernaculars,¹ it seems that movements to counterpoise and balance the situation are pertinent and inevitable. Sporadic and lacking a clear direction or organisation, the vernacular movements nevertheless have a key role in breaking the silence which, as Crystal (2014) has argued, prevails despite the global phenomenon of language death. They resist the progressive discourses of a universal language that, as Gooden (2011) and Crystal (2014) have narrated, stems from the biblical myth that having multiple languages was a curse imposed on humanity and/or seen as impeding the progress towards a global solidarity. As I shall attempt to show below, these movements also respond to a situation that is both historical and rooted in global asymmetries that are reproduced through the language hegemonies. In a slightly old but yet very relevant observation, Debi PrasannaPattanayak commented that “the developed countries treat their respective dominant languages as resources, call them world languages, and use them to further their national interest, while the Third World elites who follow the West deride their mother tongues in their own countries as dialect, slang, patois, vernacular, and condemn them to marginal use, or completely ignore them (Pattanayak, 1991, quoted in Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008: 13).

Such movements gather special theoretical and conceptual significance as they consciously pitch themselves against the global currents. In the process, they also, as I shall argue here, invariably move against the precedents set by the Indian cultural politics rooted in the colonial frameworks. In other words, the struggle to revive vernaculars cannot survive by solely resorting to explicit political strategies loaded with the spirits of regionalism or national cultures. It has also to incorporate the knowledge exercises that can convincingly

¹ See Phillipson (2009) for an elaborate discussion on linguistic imperialism and hegemony of languages of the erstwhile colonisers continued in the post-modern times

uphold vernaculars to match the rising demands of global economy rooted in the logic of development, science and technology as well as aesthetics. Thus, on the one hand, I pitch them as offering far more scope beyond the questions of regional politics of national fervour. For this purpose I also propose to keep regional politics, which is a form of negotiation in power politics, and the vernacular movements which may or may not adopt an explicit language of power politics, separate from each other. On the other hand, which is my focus here, I label the vernacular movements as knowledge politics that are undertaken with a conscious intention to go beyond what the dominant epistemologies (call them colonial or neo-liberal) suggest otherwise.

Reconceptualising the ‘Subaltern’ and Resistance

Who is subaltern? This is a long contested question yielding not one but different answers, all pointing to the categories and groups of people specific to the contexts of discussion. These are people who have been historically and politically marginalised and treated as inferior, who have a rather invisible existence in the annals. In the Indian context, this is rather stark for the structural hierarchies that have operated for a long period in the society and had by default kept large sections of population outside of its mainstream areas. In a paper published in 1991, Sudipto Kaviraj remarks that the post-independent Indian state has been a failure, starting from Nehru’s period, in creating “a popular common sense about the political world, taking the new conceptual vocabulary of rights, institutions and impersonal power into the vernacular everyday discourses or rural or small town Indian society” (Kaviraj, 1991: 90). However, as Neyaziet al point in their work, in the contemporary Indian context the “diverse social groups are not subject to the fixed hierarchical structure and categorisation that were substantialised by colonialism” (2014: 5). There is an exercise of agency on the part of several groups which otherwise remained in or outside the margins through the democratic means. This is true with regard to the vernaculars as a waning site of existence, where resistances are forged to challenge and counter its growing outsideness.

The question of being outside, then, may not seem quite relevant in defining subaltern in the contemporary context. Although, admittedly, this may also seem contestable, there are several categories, groups or sections of people which work within the system under the consistent threat of going outside, getting disappeared from society or becoming completely irrelevant. These are not categories that merely attempt to get a “piece of pie,” as Spivak had once articulated to save ‘subaltern’ from signifying anything that is “oppressed” (Spivak, quoted in De Kock, 1992: 45). Rather, these are people who may or may not be part of the mainstream society but articulate subaltern agency and share and empathise with subaltern consciousness. Spivak comes down heavily on the way ‘subaltern’ as a concept is generalised. It is “not a classy word for oppressed..... [for] working class is also oppressed.” According to her, the working class is the most dangerous for they negotiate with power in more or less equal terms with the intention of getting a share in it (quoted in De Kock, 1992: 45-46). In other words, they have access to --- or are in a better position to struggle to gain access to --- the same systems of logic and accessories that control the power relations in a society.

This paper invites one and all to revisit this terrain. While the question of power remains stark and central to conceptualising the subaltern as a domain of outsideness, not

all that operate from within the system need to be seen as partaking in the race for power. In a period of wide level knowledge dissemination, technological empowerment, outreach governance and universal surveillance, the outside is increasingly becoming a difficult paradigm to fully comprehend. Although admittedly not impossible, it remains a fact that the neo-liberal states operate with a fear of having a domain that is outside of its reach. The discourses of development, coupled with technologies of governance, invariably work towards subsuming the marginalised and the oppressed in the erstwhile regimes. The language of inclusiveness deployed in the “neo-liberal statecraft” (Collins and Slembrouck, 2015: 17) nevertheless reproduces the age-old structural inequalities in more subtle forms. The inclusive paradigm effectively mitigates, if not sometimes quelling altogether, the possibilities of resistance. Given this is the case, subaltern may not any longer be able to retain its conceptual promise in analysing the contemporary where the outside may no longer be a tangible fact. In other words, the physical insidedness doesn’t guarantee a cultural insidedness. Thus, as I shall attempt to show below, subaltern consciousness may also operate from within – from subjectivities that share the fears of becoming extinct and understand the significance of resistance even when they are existentially inside. The point is to consider seriously a situation where, as Gramsci originally proposed in his prison notes on the subaltern, there is a possible soaking up of the intellectual elements in the mass thought processes. Let us discuss the subaltern consciousness and ‘outside’ and then return to this point.

When Subaltern, a Gramscian concept, was introduced in the post-colonial scholarships, it was widely presumed that “subaltern consciousness” could help to understand history from a new vantage. For instance, in his classical treatise, Ranajit Guha differentiates the subaltern from the elite and the middle class for its agency is grounded in “subaltern consciousness” which contrasts the elite epistemologies (Guha, 1982: 1-8). Thus it is signified as outside of the power structures. Subaltern scholars for long struggled to project the difference between the subaltern and the mundane imaginations of class and oppression. I do not wish to enter here into the subtlety of these conceptualisations which have already been overly discussed. Rather, the idea is to initiate a discussion to re-engage with the concept of subaltern in newer terms so as to meaningfully discuss about the new age subalterns and categories. It might then be pertinent to compromise the condition of being ‘outside’ but shall definitely benefit from including several inside groups those which are on the verge of being pushed out.

This also remains sufficiently in tune with the different modulations that the concept as such has passed through in this meantime. This is just as subaltern – the group of people the term signifies – themselves have learned the “counter language,” as Hooks suggested, which is an “irrevocably changed” version from its original forms (Bell Hooks (1989), quoted in Al-Wazedi, 2008: 2). The counter language is precisely through which resistance happens. In other words, resistance is made possible only through an erasure of the ‘original’ and by embracing some form and content of the other. Resistance, and not outsidership, then becomes one predominant paradigm that earmarks the subaltern’s praxis. More than their physical and institutional insidedness, it is their conscious outsidership that merits analytical consideration. This political consciousness of being outside, as I shall argue in the coming pages, defies the hegemonies that operate within their immediate locations where they are actually situated. Such positioning is more of an intellectual and conscious exercise

that arises from, as we have mentioned above, the age-old non-agential roles and the long-brooding dissatisfaction.

One can also discuss or adopt from the classical frame provided by Gramsci in the context of his thoughts about the subaltern politics and its relationship with language. Green and Ives (2009: 4), in a discussion about Gramsci's take on this issue, state the following: "Where various strains of Marxism have seen it [subaltern and the political questions it immediately incite] as an analytic or 'scientific discovery' that needs to be brought from the outside (whether by Marxist experts or party leaders) to enlighten the exploited, Gramsci emphasised the need of intellectual activity to be immersed in the lives and experience of the masses." This paper then identifies a meaningful connection between subaltern consciousness, post-colonial social existence and the vernacular question in the Indian context. This vernacular consciousness shares its growing outsideness from the current corporate economies and statist ideologies where language predominantly determines the hierarchies. In the pages that follow, I shall look into how this vernacular consciousness then is attempting to overcome this outsideness by actively engaging in the domain of knowledge production and by projecting on an alternative possibility.

Subaltern Agency and Vernacular Groups: The Case of Adivasis and Institutions

In the context of attempts being undertaken sporadically to reinvent a vernacular consciousness in different parts of the pan-Indian geography, I consider the various actors who work in this connection as subscribing that consciousness --- people who consciously adopt positions to resist the hegemony of corporate and statist ideologies, and who try to reinsert their mother tongue back into the domains of everyday existence. This everyday could be identified both at the level of instrumentality and in terms of cultural element. The groups I am referring to are not necessarily existent in organised forms, nor do they manage to mount or even register an explicit resistance against forces that clearly invade the vernacular spaces. While ambiguity is one characteristic feature of the movements under reference here, they are also, sometimes, part of the same institutional networks that are the effective instruments of state hegemony. The social actors under reference here are scattered across categories of identity such as peasants, tribes, teachers, students, independent blog writers, activists, writers, politicians, parents, administrators, housewives and so on. The groups they belong to are heterogeneous representing a wider range of population - basically vernacular groups - consisting of Adivasis and non-Adivasis, language minorities, regional specific groups, ethnic groups and so on.

The social actors, as I have specified above, may invoke clear confusions, for these are the very same groups through whom the power structures often operate, especially the categories like teachers, administrators, politicians, etc. In any mainstream society they constitute the middle class layer from where they perpetuate the dominant ideologies that suit in reproducing the hegemonic models. However, this paper desists from portraying them as generic categories, and rather focuses on elements of exception. These actors are projected here more as exercising an agential capacity from their restricted locations rather than as mere representatives of those identity categories per se. They could be seen as occupying a level from where they are able to consciously dissociate with the mundane

middle class ideological existence. In this wider sense, any individual can be a potential participant of this programme, irrespective of their number and/or size of their resources. Such existence is more abstract and intellectual than simply material.

Their discontent with the system is, however, obvious. From their rather restricted locations, they critically negotiate with the state apparatuses, directly and indirectly, and politicise the vernacular presence. The list mentioned above is in no way exhaustive and not all of them are available in all vernacular groups. Even when they are found, their proportions may change considerably. This is so because not all societies have teachers, administrators or even blog writers who will forge a resistance or who can critically mediate the presence of their vernacular in the public sphere; this is true particularly with groups who are economically downtrodden and/or geographically outside or in the margins, for example, the tribes. Even after so many years of independence, the tribes, at least most of them, are unable to potentially express their agency as they haven't yet mastered the "counter language." In the democratic setup of our society, their main role is that of beneficiaries of the state welfare policies and measurements. In the big leap towards a corporate economy, as opposed to the erstwhile welfare economy, endorsed by the neo-liberal policies, the plight of Adivasis has become grimmer.

This reflects more in education where the medium for teaching and learning still continues to be dominated by the hegemonic language. Most, if not all, Adivasi students find their vernacular completely missing from the curriculum that they have to follow in the schools. The educational systems and policies that the state has followed in this respect are by far still embedded in the "old colonial and Brahminical model" (Sunandan, 2016: 37). Sunandan notes that the reform initiatives in the field of education has failed in "challenging the continuing domination of patriarchal and casteist forces" (ibid). Several scholars have already pointed to the issue of the current educational systems which do not leave much room for groups with different cultural orientations. The elitist base of the current educational system helps in reaffirming the dominant ideologies and the metropolitan lifestyles. To a very great extent, it has failed to address the needs and demands of a diverse demographic and socio-cultural combination. Methodologically also, it hasn't yet been successful in drawing from a heterogeneous pool of resources. Nabakumar Duary, in a study about tribal education in West Bengal, reveals how the current syllabuses followed in educational institutions do not suit its targeted population (Duary, 2010: 116). He also observes that the "science oriented education lacks culture based curriculum" and thus a shift from a "science based" curriculum to a culture based one is mandatory in order to adapt schooling in tribal areas (ibid).

The unique cultural, historical and social contexts of the tribal experience are completely absent in the curriculum and the syllabus. In this context, language becomes very important --- to the extent it may well be considered as the primary vehicle of the whole cultural deposit, including memories and knowledge about the surroundings and about the whole universe embedded in the local experience. Absence of the vernacular from the curriculum thus signifies a total omission of that knowledge system from the syllabus which can (and already has in several cases) lead to a potential endangerment of those languages and cultures. An online document issued by Central Institute for Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore states the following:

India..... is a melting pot of several language families, ethnic groups and a mosaic of cultural patterns..... Therefore one would expect variety rather than uniformity in education, both as flowering and expression of the cultural diversity and as strategies to meet the diverse needs and aspiration of different cultural groups. But the existing uniform structure and content of education caters to neither and is by and large irrelevant to most sectors of the society..... The rich are almost always identified as elites and the elites hold the passport to rank, status and wealth in most societies. Their behaviour is not only the model, their language is invariably the standard to be emulated by others.

[ciil.net, retrieved on July 10, 2017, emphasis added]

The post-colonial policies with regard to language and education have not been anywhere helpful in decolonising the knowledge systems. The quote above, although emerging from a 'mainstream' institutional space, nevertheless reflects the accumulating sense of frustration on this continuing hegemony. These are the lines that express dissent than consensus or approval. Such volatile, nevertheless institutional, spaces are emerging sites of resistance, if one redefines resistance to translate its meaning to institutional mechanisms consciously adopting high positions with respect to the marginalised communities. These are spaces where the subaltern's experiences get shape and form in the language of its big other and where it demonstrates a strange dynamism of going back and forth between experience and knowledge. Addressing such institutional mechanisms as elitist emerge from certain unilinear assumptions about institutions as power centres and insulated from social uncertainties. However, as discussed in the beginning, agency can no longer be understood as operating at fixed levels or with definite and clear intentions; we identify individuals and institutions exercising agency beyond their immediate parameters. Thus, even as corporate and statist ideologies are increasingly sinking into the universe of our common sense, as a parallel phenomenon, we also identify agency as becoming not uncommon as well.

In another example, KIRTARDS – the institute from Kerala, exclusively established to function in the realm of rural and tribal research – attempted to make some critical inroads in the context of preserving and protecting the languages of certain Adivasi groups who survive in their area of work. In an interview, the Deputy Director of the institute, Dr K S Pradeep Kumar, mentioned how the institute has managed to bring in place a whole set of arrangements to embark on a project to protect Adivasi languages that may otherwise go into oblivion very soon.² Although assigned with the work of implementing state policies in the context of caste reservation and Adivasi welfare schemes, the institute has actually gone beyond its immediate frame to address certain core concerns of the subjects it regularly deals with. These are concerns that are cultural and existential, and definitely beyond the 'socio-economic' domains of existence as commonly imagined in the state discourses. Kumar stated that the issue with language is much more important than it is usually conceived. The helplessness of the Adivasi situation most often begins from the question of language which still lacks a proper form and is in a disadvantageous position to negotiate with the mainstream cultural systems. Against this context, Kumar said, the institution is currently working with its Adivasi subjects to help them encode their language

² Telephonic interview with Dr Pradeep Kumar, Deputy. Director of KIRTARDS, on August 7 2016.

into scripts without compromising the knowledge embedded in the oral forms of that language.³

These instances, I would argue, represent certain critical moments for they consolidate the discontent with the system, propose measures that are clearly outside the current dominant paradigms and put pressure at various levels of the state machinery for policy changes. Such institutions cannot simply be considered as occupying a passive disposition although they form part of the state networks, are more associated with implementation and execution, and are expected to comply with the interests of the state. In contexts such as the ones mentioned above, they exercise agency and go beyond their immediate means to pressurise a homogenous system to become more heterogeneous. The discontent they represent has a wider base and is scattered across a chain of individual and collective factors that begin with subjective engagements with the subaltern subjects, in this case Adivasis.

The Context of General Vernacular Situation in India

If you are a Kannadiga [one who speaks Kannada as mother tongue] in a gathering of natives, sooner or later the one topic that almost inevitably comes up is the apparent “death of Kannada.

--- Vinayak Hegde, 2012⁴

The question concerning vernaculars in the post-colonial context is a wider one and is by no means restricted to Adivasis alone. This is because language has been one critical instrument of power that the coloniser has left behind and that has a critical presence in the post-colonial present (Ramanathan, 2005; Dua, 2001; Rajagopalan, 1999). In a multilingual frame, the connecting language gains dominance over other operating languages. This is true in the Indian context where, as already discussed above, the regional and national space is mediated through the use of English. An exception is to be found in the Northern and Central parts of India where Hindi has a parallel existence. Nevertheless, the hegemony of English has overtly been determining the situation of other mainstream vernaculars to the extent that even the so called classical languages feel threatened in the current scenario.

The presentation in this section speaks for itself which also represents a situation of speaking against hegemony in a language of hegemony. The counter-hegemony apart, such expressions nevertheless reflect upon a situation where the linguistic scenario in India is fast losing its integrity. By this, the intention is not to state that there was integrity before; rather it would be more true to state that the languages now feeling threatened were the same that once were major challenges for many tribal languages and other linguistic minorities. However, post-liberalisation, the map of language hegemony has changed drastically in favour of corporate English standards, leading to wide yet sporadic movements and campaigns of resistances. This follows from a serious erosion in the popular base of many such classical and mainstream languages. Such statements have a commonplace existence in the regional and local public spheres including the online platforms. Such reflections, what could easily be interested as symbols of linguistic nationalism, have a meaningful existence

³ Ibid. The advances the institution has made in this respect is in detail noted in a volume the institute has published recently; see Shyam (2016).

⁴ Internet source for SIFY News. Retrieved from sify.com on August 8, 2016.

in the subjective locations. These are enterprises motivated towards mounting a resistance to retain the vernacular cultures instead of allowing an unconditional draining of their bases. Sections, most often very small and consisting of a negligible number of people, and individuals in such groups consciously adopt positions and initiate action programmes.

Locations: From Education to Occupation

This is a very subtle situation as the movement towards English has been capturing these locations at a frantic pace. Two very instrumental locations where this hegemony gets consolidated are education and occupation. On several occasions these two locations display uncomfortable dispositions when it comes to the questions of culture which feels highly threatened due to changes in them. The continuum from colonial to post-colonial carried the language policy more or less unconditionally, resulting in an excessive dependency on English. Fluency in that language determines one's competence in several areas. It is undeniably true that one of the major criteria for selection for all important occupations in India is fluency in English. In administrative bureaucracy, defence, management systems, for admission in higher studies; this remains true except in circumstances where the local language is the base for occupation. In private and management contexts, the scenario becomes worse. This is despite the fact that the total percentage of population with knowledge in English is still less than 15 per cent and those who can speak it with some fluency may come near a few lakhs.⁵ However, the gripping Anglomania is ever increasing in the educational-cultural contexts, especially finding its boom in the post-liberalisation policies adopted by the Indian state since the beginning of the 1990s. For an average middle class parent, knowledge in English and a good command on that language are mandatory outcomes of their children's education. The cultural capital of English has far exceeded the normative limits of any language in any culture in the Indian context that it is deeply sedimented in the social and class consciousness.

What logic can sustain this in a geographical territory where, according to the 1991 Census of India, more than 1500 mother tongues exist or existed? I do not intend to attempt an answer to this question which leads to the politics of governance during and after colonialism and the series of discussions and debates, as already captured in several studies in this area. The answer is definitely not complete without entering into the changes caused by the emergence of neo-liberalism which has literally shattered all the limits of cultural hegemony under the rubrics of globalisation. It is also true that English is not solely responsible for the current scenario. Several mainstream vernaculars that now feel threatened including classical languages such as Malayalam, Kannada, etc., were once – and still are in many locations – a threat to many local languages and dialects that operated within those regions. I shall not enter into this space as it is beyond the purview of this paper. Rather, my attempt here is to identify the subaltern spirits underlying the new age language movements.

There has been a higher level of consciousness in a few selected pockets within these societies where a sense of localisation and a return to the vernacular culture is being visualised. Just as in the case of Adivasis and those institutes sharing, addressing and

⁵ <https://mariawirthblog.wordpress.com/2014/07/11/decolonising-indias-education/>

carrying or disseminating the subaltern consciousness, as opposed to simply operating under the standard norms of administration, these pockets too, which I am referring to, have on most occasions another life --- from where they often step into zones of resistance not as a sign of sympathy but rather from own volitions of social justice. They are never outside the mainstream social existence. Here one should exercise extreme caution as subaltern agency is not an easily identifiable element. Also, any exercise of agency may not be qualified as subaltern unless it shows a level of commitment. Before that a brief narration of the situation will help us delve deep into the context under consideration.

Beyond simply teaching English in schools, the question rather pertains to a complete shift to English which usually occurs at the expense of local languages. The mantra of career, occupation, material benefits, competence in market, better future and so on has completely superseded the basic purposes of education. The market driven logic brings education directly in a relationship with both the economic and social status of the individuals. While this link across times remains intact, the post-independent interventions in the area of education have further speeded the process. The constitutional provisions as well as changing government policies have remained absolutely helpless in this regard (Benedict, 2009). According to Benedict (2009:9-10), this has resulted in a situation where the linguistic minorities and other local vernaculars are given absolutely no protection. On the contrary, the government policies have only helped in rooting out several mother tongues. This happens because lack of any provision to privilege those who receive education in their mother tongue automatically places such sections under threat with large number of people shifting to English.

The basic pattern adopted by most of the former colonies, including India, was to provide basic education in the mother tongue and to shift to English for higher studies and advanced preparations. However, things started changing massively with the changing government policies, increased scale of human migration to other parts of the globe for jobs, and for other reasons, including the emergence of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) as a new prominent force in the job sector of underdeveloped economies even surpassing the government sectors, etc. From being an additional factor that can increase the life opportunities, English has become an absolute necessity. Although this is a long time process with globalisation, there has been a sudden eruption of this phenomenon and an explosion in the number of people shifting to English for reasons of convenience and scope. Households where the shift from mother tongue to English is more or less complete, are very common in cities and urban centres.

Though in a very objectionable way, the situation is neatly summed up in McWhorter (2009) who identifies this as a necessary and as a "good" process. He estimates that 90 per cent of the total languages used in this century will disappear from the earth by the next century. According to him, however, this is part of a process that will confer economic and health benefits to the affected speakers.

As people speaking indigenous languages migrate to cities, inevitably they learn globally dominant languages like English and use them in their interactions with one another. The immigrants' children may use their parents' indigenous languages at home. But they never know those languages as part of their public life, and will therefore be more comfortable with the official language of the world they grow up in. For the most part, they will speak this language to their own children. These children

will not know the indigenous languages of their grandparents, and thus pretty soon they will not be spoken. This is language death.

--- McWhorter (2009)⁶

It is against this background that the consciousness I were referring to is shaped and moves into action. This was true in the tribal situation where the institutions work in a network involving people at different levels, with all of them sharing similar concerns and working with the same motive. This remains more or less the same in other vernacular situations also, except for differences in scale and proportions. It is also true that in the non-Adivasi situations, more than in state institutions, it is independent organisations, activists and individuals at different layers and categories who contribute most. This is because civil society elements are stronger and resourceful in such situations which it is not the case with the Adivasi contexts. This remains the same when it comes to individual modes of resistance where subjects, conscious about their political environment, seriously engage with those surroundings and exercise agency to resist language and cultural hegemonies. These independent organisations, like Malayalam AikyaVedi in Kerala as well as KuvempuBhashaBharati and Kannada AbhivridhiPradhikara, both in Karnataka, are spaces where we identify some live engagements to change the situation. Of the ones mentioned above, Kannada AbhivridhiPradhikara is a state initiated organisation but is nevertheless operating with the explicit intention of saving the vernacular culture against the assaults excess of English. An elaborate review of the functions and operations of such organisations is beyond the purview of this paper. The ones mentioned above are a few instances from South India. Such organisations function across regions within the subcontinent, throughout its geography, at different scales. They form part of a larger network and draw from one another's experiences.

This is also true with regard to the multiple social actors as I have mentioned in the beginning of this section --- teachers, parents, activists, blog writers, etc. They are actively involved in this chain, share the discontent and publicise it, and intervene in multiple forms. Thus teachers who spend enormous extra hours to teach the local language in schools, even while local language is out of the syllabus, are potentially reflecting upon her/his subaltern experience. This, even while she is a part of the institution and a consumer of all its material, and non-material benefits. She cannot be termed as a blind consumer of the dominant ideology where the difference lies. The same is true with regard to a parent who dares to spend her children to vernacular schools even though she understands the fact that she is risking their future competence in the job market.

Conclusion: A Space to be Trudged with Caution

In a changing world, the modes of resistance are also changing. Regions and populations living in it are increasingly brought under technological and statist networks. In this situation, resistance invariably occurs from both inside and outside. This is not to argue for an unconditional exercising of agency on the part of these elements. Even while they are inside the system, just as the categories and institutions we discussed, they are not unconditional carriers of statist ideologies. Instead of imagining the subaltern as temporally

⁶ Internet copy. Page number not available.

and spatially outside and irretrievable, we would benefit if we return to the classical thoughts of Gramsci where he anticipated an immersing of intellectual activity in the popular consciousness. Admittedly, such a situation still seems very far and the gaps still exist very much. The corporate and middle class ideologies increasingly merge in several spaces where a total annihilation of the “differences” seems like not an impossibility. Nevertheless this should not lead us, as social scientists, to total pessimism. Beneath the sweeping currents of hegemony, there are movements appearing at random scales. On most occasions they lack a proper shape and form; they are also not very organised; they have individual and collective manifestations. However, they do exist, although they are uncommonly common.

The intention is not to assign agency to all the language movements. But these movements and their elements, whether or not they are having a coherent form, address the situation in very sensitive and delicate ways. This also follows the fact that the intellectual prerequisite and the level of awareness are available in an open space which also addresses translation in both ways as another possible area of intervention. In a much ‘globalised world,’ knowledge construction and competence in a market economy are both mediated exclusively through certain definite mediums.

In the Indian context, this space is exclusively captured by English --- a privilege that is justified unremittingly through the modern logic of development, progress, the pragmatics of “a connecting language,” cultural frameworks of national integration, and so on. One of the glaring fields where this is visible is education where the questions of curriculum and medium are still left unresolved. The ambiguity, however, works more like certainty, allowing greater room for English to flourish from the early phases of subject formation.

However, this does not go unchallenged. The multiple platforms where voices of dissent and discontent rise, directly and indirectly, mark the emergence of a “different” linguistic imagination among the public which should not escape serious social science scrutiny. It is precisely these alternative spaces and their inherent dynamics that the subaltern, as an analytical category, should address in the current times. In the introduction, we have remarked about the epistemological break that many post-colonial theorists desperately seek, but which definitely is not happening anywhere in our intellectual and mundane surroundings. The local and vernacular cultures, and the efforts to reinstate them back in the mainstream lives, are probably the sites where we may find an answer. This is because the responsive situation is substantially demarcated by epistemological confrontations. The extent to which current scholarships have effectively responded to this situation is very doubtful, which instead assigns the movements to reinvent as movements to go back in time and/or as efforts to reinstate simply “tradition.”

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Book Reviews

McARTHUR, Jan (2018): *Assessment for Social Justice: Perspectives and Practices within Higher Education*, London: Bloomsbury, pp 219

Assessment is one of the core activities performed by higher education institutions. It is also an important component of students' university/college experiences as it affects and shapes their future course. The book *Assessment for Social Justice: Perspectives and Practices within Higher Education*, written by Jan McArthur, germinates from the idea that, as an important component of pedagogy, assessment should play a fundamental role in fulfilling the aspirations to greater social justice within and through higher education. Drawing from the literature pertaining to assessment for learning while being grounded in critical theory, McArthur builds a powerful case for alternative conceptions of assessment in higher education by embracing the principles of social practice theory.

The book is structured in two parts. In Part one, the author avers that a critical alternative for assessment must engage with fairness as a multi-dimensional concept rooted in social situations and forages for various social justice perspectives on assessment through the works of John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, Nancy Fraser, Theodor Adorno and Axel Honneth. She then attempts to concretise the "assessment for social justice" in the second part of the book by stipulating five core values that should form the basis of assessment practices.

The Three Traditions of Social Justice Theory: The current discourse of assessment seems to be inseparably related to Rawlsian notion of justice as fairness, where a good assessment is foregrounded in the notion of fair procedures — academic credibility, quality standards, validity and reliability. The author, however, argues that the initial assumption of free, equal and independent people in Rawls's theory is not only abstracted from the socio-economic realities, it also risks essentialising the student identity. Additionally, an overemphasis on fair procedures also undermines the socially constructed and constantly changing nature of assessment. McArthur therefore investigates the capabilities approach and critical theory of social justice for they question the assumption — ideal conditions and processes lead to just outcomes — and rather emphasises that apart from processes, social justice should be understood through lived realities of people. Social justice in the capabilities approach is conceptualised on multifaceted aspects of real life — with an emphasis on the hidden forms of power — and is understood as the development of full capabilities of an individual within her social context. The critical theory tradition brings in a communicative and inter-subjective notion for an understanding of justice while providing an emancipatory potential to transform the social realities.

Drawing on Axel Honneth, a third generation critical theorist, the notion of social justice as mutual recognition that people's ability to achieve self-realisation is based on the quality of social recognition relations. While injustice in the society arises from misrecognition(s),

the author observes that such a relational understanding of social justice provides a rigorous theoretical underpinning to the dominant proceduralist theories which emphasise on individual freedom while undermining the dependence on others and, instead, seeks to nurture individuals with a “healthy sense of self — always understood, however, in terms of dual roles of mutuality” (p 57).

Dominant Assessment Practices: What constitutes “practices”? Theodore Schatzki’s social practice theory informs that practices are a bundle of activities regulated by practical understandings, rules, teleo-affective structures and general understandings, which are respectively comprehended as the ability to per-form required actions; the explicit instructions that influence actions; the ends towards which the actions are oriented; and the abstract senses of worth that are inextricably linked to actions. Employing Schatzki’s concepts, the author contends that abstract senses of worth — say, a commitment to student diversity in higher education or a said/unsaid intolerance towards diversity — determine the teleo-affective ends and rules for practices and hence hugely influence their orientation and nature.

The dominant technocratic assessment practices, McArthur insists, are rooted in the principle of being SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely. Such practices favour inculcation in students of certain predetermined, discrete pieces of knowledge and aim at measuring the extent to which students have retained that vacuumed knowledge at a specific point of time. The students who manage to regorge the “learned” knowledge pass the assessment while all others are tagged in the category of failed. When the social construction of failure is strongly negative and it berates anyone who fails, the students are expected to get “good” marks in assessment and teachers are expected to give “right” marks. It not only leads to limited academic ends but also institutionalises the lack of trust in student-faculty relationships. Students distrust faculty members for possible biases in assessment and the faculty members distrust students for the possibility of cheating. Further, any response to stop such malpractices leads to a further addition of procedure(s) to the already proceduralist assessment activities. McArthur supports her argument by citing the examples of exponentially profiteering plagiarism industry, increasingly being adopted in higher education institutes to keep a check on the possible frauds by students and through the issue of students demanding for anonymity in assessment to ensure fairness. However, she also thoroughly explains how such procedures may fail to meet the expectations intended from them.

Situating the student-faculty relationship in the higher education institutions, the author argues that while assessment has high stakes in students’ lives, the academics on the other hand are neither given sufficiently robust apprenticeship and time to develop their ability to assess. Nor do they have such working conditions where assessment could provide for the needed feedback. She holds that it is paradoxical and dishonest on the part of institutions that they charge huge fees from students but pay derisory attention to the development of assessors. Additionally, students are not quite openly informed about the foundational rules and regulations of assessment practices and hence many of them lack the practical understanding(s) of what is expected of them in assessment. Such dual dishonesty, she understands, militates against justice through a misrecognition/devaluation of students’ and teachers’ labour respectively, put in producing a work to be assessed and assessing the work. This thereby reduces their ability to develop a sense of esteem through their

respective works. Injustice is also perpetuated when students are exposed to a very limited set of knowledge, which is devoid of social context, thereby rendering them incapable to sensibly participate in the society.

Socially Just Assessment Practices: McArthur claims that assessment for social justice should enable the students to responsibly engage with knowledge through practices that enable them to recognise their own self-worth and the contributions of others in a social context. Thus, an obligation to promote social justice through higher education requires a systematic change in the way students and knowledge itself are approached through assessment practices. She proposes alternative practices by employing Honneth's concept of mutual recognition and its three aspects — love recognition, respect recognition and esteem recognition where, love recognition entails the support and care an individual requires for realising a just life and being confident; respect recognition is related to having and responsibly exercising one's legal rights and acknowledging the same in others; and esteem recognition refers to the ability to make meaningful social contributions and appreciate the contributions of others in the society. Her simple argument in favour of alternative assessment practices is that assessment should serve as an important pedagogical relationship between students and teachers that nurtures the learners as they responsibly advance their knowledge: knowledge which may not always be measurable, but encourages students to appreciate their connectedness with the social world and fellow citizens.

Such practices of assessment, McArthur expounds, demand a move beyond purely rational exchange between students and faculty and require a locational recognition of all the people involved to be honest to any particular individual. This attribute of particularity in assessment, the author argues, can only be developed through practices of trust — trusting others and being trusted by others — which flourish out of sustained relations of support and care. Relationships which by throwing “open the regulations and procedures [of assessment] to informed student scrutiny” (p 132) will empower students to take responsibility of their assessment tasks and learning. However, as learning is an iterative process requiring time and space, she observes, it requires a certain degree of resilience in assessment so that “failures” in learning are forgiven and used as basis for improving future performance through individualised feedback loops. Further, arguing that learning is “about participation and engagement [with knowledge], rather than transfer [of knowledge]” (p 173), the author proffers that, instead of a fixation with predetermined goals, assessment should be responsive to students' engagement with knowledge so as to develop in them responsiveness in order to be active, powerful yet considerate members of the society, committed to change the all-pervasive status quo.

Conclusion: Commitment to social justice requires a radical transformation of the cultural qualities of assessment practices. Thus practices of implementing fair procedures, the author argues, need to be complemented and even questioned with deep philosophical perspectives. Employing Honneth's concept of mutual recognition and its three aspects — love recognition, respect recognition and esteem recognition — the author suggests the use of five concepts: trust, honesty, responsibility, forgiveness and responsiveness. These, she believes, “if embraced, would help shape assessment practices towards greater social justice” (p 74). McArthur thus provides a multi-faceted philosophical lens to examine to what extent are the current assessment policies/practices and the way they shape students are socially just. The book is thus extremely important in the current context of ever-

increasing heterogeneity of the student community because of the on-going massification of education.

As such, the book must be read by everyone who is directly engaged in and affected by assessment practices — particularly in view of the current scenario of higher education institutions, which are increasingly embracing a learning-outcome based approach to education, along with hasty implementation of examination reforms, like the choice-based credit system, which claim for increased students' autonomy while silently pushing forward standardisation and centralisation of higher education. The book is, however, intended mainly for academics and calls upon them to be critically responsive to the claims for social justice in the guise of "reforms" in assessment, for they not only decide the fate of students but (if understood on the basis of Honneth's notion) consequently influence their own possession of abilities. In so doing, she also builds an alternative vocabulary to enable the reader to visualise an alternative to the current practices of assessment. By starting a dialogue, thus, the book moves from the level of mere criticism to optimism about a change

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VARGHESE, N. V. and PANIGARAH, Jinusha(Eds)(2019): *India Higher Education Report 2018: Financing of Higher Education*, New Delhi: Sage Publication, Price: ₹ 1595.00, ISBN: 978-93-532-83-7

To resolve the complex issues facing higher education in India, there is utmost need for research based evidence without which policy analysis and recommendations would not get validated. Through its Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE), the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) has been attempting to fill the gap by generating research based evidence, particularly through its India Higher Education Report (IHER) series published every year. One must congratulate CPRHE researchers for this crucial efforts to make decision making in higher education more research based. The report being reviewed now is the fourth in the series and focuses on financing of higher education in India.

This book has 13 chapters including an introduction by N V Varghese and Jinusha Panigrahi, the editors. The book is divided in to three parts: Part 1: State, Market and Financing; Part II: Responses to Declining Public Funding; Part III: Student Financing in HE and Private HE. Part I comprises chapters on macro level issues pertaining to financing of higher education focusing on changing relationship between State, Market and financing of HE.

Introduction provides brief overview of landscape of financing of higher education, global trends, source of funding, national scenario and new initiatives introduced by government of India. Chapter 2 on state market dynamics in higher education financing provides a theoretical overview of different modes of public funding of higher education and

possible implication for access, equity, efficiency and quality in delivery of education and in conduct of research. In this wide ranging chapter, Soumen Chattopadhyaya has analysed higher education as a public good, funding policy for public higher education institutions, performance based funding, education loan and different modes of public private participation in education. He has also examined some recent policy initiatives in India, such as higher education financing agency, graded autonomy, etc., and their implications for funding. He has pointed out that such a transition from input based funding, with no string attached, to performance based funding may lead to some compromise with the university mission and academic freedom but is expected to improve university's performance.

In Chapter 3 titled "Towards Augmenting Resources: University-Industry Linkages," by M M Ansari has examined in a pragmatic manner the university industry linkages. After a review of the status of HEI-Industry cooperation, he has drawn attention to some major impediments to the same, and projected a way forward. He has suggested that there should be a mechanism for collaboration, sharing of facilities, and incentivising collaborative arrangements. This chapter has a useful appendix of various practical recommendations.

In Chapter 4, Sailabala Devi has explored various dimensions of foreign aid for higher education in India. It provides insightful information about flow of foreign aid to various countries including India. Contrary to expectation, author proves with empirical evidences that middle income countries received higher share of foreign aid compared to low income countries. Chapter recommends many state interventions before and after foreign aid phase. In Chapter 5, Mona Khare has taken up an interesting theme of gender budgeting in higher education. She has pointed out that as a result of concerted and continuous effort by a number of ministries, reflecting gender budgeting, allocation has grown from 9 to 35 per cent in the past ten years, and the number of demands for grants too has risen correspondingly. But the percentage of general to total budget is hovering around 5 per cent only. She has analysed the Union budget and has examined gender disparity in higher education participation and in labour market participation as well as in higher education employment. She has pointed out that prior to the introduction of gender budgeting there was no way of even estimating how much of the government's total expenditure was flowing to women.

Part II of the book focuses on the responses to the declining public funding. In Chapter 6, Jinusha Panigrahi has analysed public funding of higher education, alternative sources of financing the higher education, cost sharing measures, resource mobilisation by the HEIs, distance education, alumni contribution, consultancy etc. She has also examined some cost saving or cost cutting measures and the loans from financial agencies and overdrafts.

In Chapter 7, Sudhir Maitra has examined the self-financing sources in public institutions, the necessity and history of self-financing, and has drawn attention particularly to issues relating to the quality of self-financing courses, teacher recruitment and regulation of the courses. It was pointed out that in many countries, including India, higher education is increasingly facing the problem of a quasi market.

Chapter 8 is a case study of the Punjabi University by Harvinder Kaur. Drawing attention to the changing process of funding, she has provided a brief profile of the Punjabi University, Patiala, including the state grant, funds from central agencies, fee revenue, donations, term loans and overdrafts. She has drawn attention to the pattern of utilisation of resources in the overall fiscal condition of the university. She has pointed out the financial crisis as a major

issue of the state universities in Punjab, which is also the case with the Punjabi University in Patiala. The state grants are shrinking, the contribution of the central government has been negligible, and the university has adopted cost sharing measures and is generating revenues from fields. She has emphasised the need for greater state support in financing.

Part III of the book is devoted to "Student Financing of Higher Education." Scholarship schemes for student financing have been evaluated by M R Narayana (Chapter 9) in a study that provides public expenditure on higher education scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and fellowships for M Phil, PhD and Post-Doctoral studies. The expenditure by the Union Government and the aggregate expenditure on the state and union territories have also been analysed. There is also disaggregation of scholarship expenditure by the state and union territories. The national level scholarship scheme of the Government of India has been separately reviewed as also the schemes launched by the UGC. The chapter covers the state level scholarship schemes and makes a micro level analysis of scholarships for higher education, characteristics of the recipients of scholarship and the role of scholarships in private expenditure or other aspects. Narayana has pointed out that there are marked disparities in public scholarship expenditures across various states and union territories. There are also diversities in the eligibility criteria.

Chapter 10 by Mausami Das and Tridip Ray is on the student mortgage loan vis-a-vis income contingent loan, and compares the same. In a review of the new education loan scheme (IBA Scheme), launched by the Indian Bank Association (IBA) for Comprehensive Education Loan scheme for pursuing higher education, the authors point out that despite its careful designing, the IBA Scheme has not been able to attract students who were expected to opt for the scheme. They point out that the interest rates are quite high, while another important shortcoming is that economic backwardness does not seem to be an important criterion in the grant of a bank loan. It also refers to "Vidya Lakshmi Karyakram" in which a portal provides a single window for students to access information and apply for educational loan offered by various banks. Many other schemes have also been reviewed, but the chapter also points out that the schemes are too new to be evaluated at this point of time. The concept and implementation of Income Contingent Loan (ICL) in various countries such as Australia, South Africa and United Kingdom have been reviewed, and their potential in India and their problems and prospects have been fully analysed. The author points out that there are several advantages in ICL which it makes attractive to the resources trapped in several economies. Although ICL involves a direct contact between the students and the funding agency, the authors have pointed out that in the early stages of implementation, the ICL may require government intervention. The authors feel that such a well designed ICL scheme can overcome the problem of lack of education and lack of skill formation in the Indian youth.

Chapter 11 provides a case study of the highly popular Fee Reimbursement Scheme (FRS) of Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh has introduced a FRS on a large scale in higher education, including the professional and technical education which are dominated by the private sector. The author has pointed out that the FRS appears similar to the voucher system prevalent in many countries. While the voucher system generally covered school education in foreign countries, the FRS covers the higher education in India. Moreover, the student is eligible for FRS only after admission. Although it covers both private and public higher education, it is mainly aimed at providing access to corporate and private education.

The author has covered all aspects of the FRS scheme, as it is being implemented in Andhra Pradesh. This case study provides very valuable insights.

In Chapter 12, M Muzammil has examined the growth and expansion of private higher education in India. He has pointed out as to how the growth of private universities, colleges and their enrolments have helped meet the India's growing needs and demands for higher education. He has also reviewed the modes of participation by private sector, private distant and higher education, quality of higher education (private), responsibilities of private sector and regulations and governance in private education.

Chapter 13 by Sangeeta Angom makes a comprehensive review of the financing of higher education institutions in India and points out that many of the private institutions are in the initial stages of growth. Beyond providing for payments to the staff and day to day maintenance, many of these are not in a position to undertake research work. The author has suggested further research while focussing on fee structure, salaries and income expenditure pattern of private universities.

To sum up, the India Higher Education Report 2018 on financing of higher education provides very rich material and well analysed papers and case studies. It provides global contexts of changing discourse on and practice of financing of higher education and closely examines state of affairs of financing of higher education in India. Rich evidences on resource mobilisations in HEIs in India in the wake of declining state funding, looking from student and institutional perspectives, provide new dimensions to the discussion on financing of HE in India. It is thus a valuable contribution in an area where there is an acute lack of data and research work. This volume will be a useful resource book for academics, administrators and policy makers in HE. We must indeed look forward to further work by the CPRHE of NIEPA in the field of financing of education. One may suggest a few themes for their consideration such as the fee structure, and also macro estimates of higher education needs for the next five to ten years, however approximate and contingent.

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DUBEY, Muchkund and MITRA, Sushmita (Eds): *Visions of Education in India*, New Delhi: Aakar Books, pp 295, Price: ₹ 895.00

Visioning is an integral part of human life. Life without a vision or aspiration is like dead wood. No individual or society can survive without a vision. What is aspiration for an individual becomes an integral part of a vision for the society. Once seeded, it keeps growing or responding to changes in its own context. In a policy context, visioning is the first step of policy making. A vision is an overarching goal within which policies are formulated, programmes are designed, and interventions and other activities are planned. Visioning is not a static activity but a dynamic process. The title of the book --- *Visions of Education in India* --- is justified as it begins with the visions of great thinkers and leaders, followed by critical reviews of India's education policies (1968 and 1986), the programmes of activities

related with the policies, and the current and emerging issues in both school and higher education.

The book opens with a well thought-out introductory chapter (by the editors, Muchkund Dubey and Susmita Mitra), which introduces its readers to the chapters in chronological order of themes and sub-themes with a perspective. It is organised into six parts, with each part dealing with a specific theme and each theme elaborated in related chapters. The first three chapters in the book (by Susmita Mitra, Sudarshan Iyengar and Annant Kumar Giri respectively) deal with educational ideas and experiments of the great philosophers and leaders like Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Aurobindo Ghose. They present alternative visions of education with implications for reforming the present system of modern formal education. While Tagore's and Aurobindo's emphasis on humanistic and integral education respectively indicates the social goals of education, Gandhi's experiment with education calls for adopting critical pedagogy in making the current education system effective and relevant for the individual and society. Although the three chapters provide a justified opening in view of the book's title, they miss out other thinkers and leaders, such as Ambedkar; otherwise they could lend theoretical support to the theme of 'education and people's movements.'

This opening analysis of the visions of our great thinkers about education is followed by critical review of the key policy documents. Deconstructing significant policy documents is the mainstay of the volume, as under the theme, besides an international policy document, viz. the Delors Commission Report (1996), important national level education policy documents such as the Kothari Commission Report (1964-66), National Education Policy (1968), National Policy on Education and Programme of Action (1986 & 1992), and Report of the Common School System Commission (2007), have also been critically examined.

Muchkund Dubey presents a critical review of a well-known policy document of global importance, called the Report of the Delors Commission constituted by UNESCO. In the chapter, besides highlighting the pedagogic significance of Life Long Learning and the Four Pillars of Learning (i.e. Learning to know; Learning to do; Learning to live together and with others; and Learning to be) and their implication for educational policy and practices. Dubey also points out a fallacy in the Delors Report that prior completion of universal school education is a precondition for effective lifelong learning, that ignores the educational context of developing countries (including India) which are still lagging behind in regard to achieving the goals of universal literacy and universal elementary education.

The book dwells at great length upon the Kothari Commission Report (1964-66) and its path-breaking recommendations. The Kothari Commission Report provided a template for education for national development as it proposed a national system of education, setting up of a uniform structure of 12 (10+2) years of schooling, spending of 6 per cent of GDP on education, and it made a strong plea for establishing a Common School System (CSS). Sadhana Saxena and Poornima M explore and examine the contexts in which the commission functioned and made its recommendations. Surprisingly, the National Education Policy 1968, which was based on the Kothari Commission recommendations, accepted only a few of its recommendations, and did not include its important recommendation of setting up a common school system.

In a separate chapter, Vinay Kanth provides a detailed analysis of all the national policies adopted in the post-independent era, including the National Education Policies of

1968 and 1986 as well as the Programme of Action 1992. While highlighting some of the important recommendations of the National Policy on Education (1986), Kanth also points out that its recommendation of non-formal schooling led to establishment of a parallel but inferior system of education which was intended for children of the disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

This section ends with a reflexive note on the Report of Common School System Commission headed by Muchkund Dubey. According to him, one of the main reasons behind the non-implementation of the Common School System (CSS) was that the very idea of the CSS was never taken seriously by the dominant class who wanted their children to study in well-resourced better quality private schools.

As an extension of the policy discourse attempted in the initial chapters, the book devotes a separate section on the RTE Act and its implementation. Highlighting the delays and constraints in the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, J B G Tilak and Archana Mehendale explain and illustrate the implementation of the RTE as an example of policy crisis --- as even after ten years of its enactment, only ten per cent of schools are RTE compliant. An important limitation of the RTE Act is that it kept the pre-school education beyond its purview --- a point highlighted by Razia Ismail in a separate chapter.

The book also raises a few pertinent issues, such as the increasing inequality in education, and the impact of globalisation and neo-liberal economic policies on education. It goes without saying that unequal provisions of education and unregulated growth of private education have led to an alarming increase in inequality in education. The impact of the heightened inequality have accentuated in recent years under the impact of globalisation and neo-liberal economic policies followed by the government. This can be seen in both school education (Sushmita Mitra and Annie Namala) and in higher education (Prabhat Patnaik and G Hargopal). According to Patnaik, a fundamental change in the sphere of education has been the commodification of education which has hampered the efforts to attain an equality of educational opportunity. To him, if education has to serve our fundamental social goals, it should be socially financed and regulated, and it must not be guided by any profit seeking motive. Hargopal also points out the damage posed by foreign providers of education services.

One of the distinctive contributions of the book is the insight provided by the chapters under the section titled "Role of Peoples' Movement" (Medha Patkar, Kumar Rana and Ambarish Rai). As education is a social process, it has strong linkages with the people's movements. According to Patkar, education has often, for a very long period, been used as a tool by certain sections to dominate over other sections of the society. The agenda of education should therefore not be merely transmissive but transformative, and should touch the socio-economic and political aspects of our life. Patkar's exposition of the relationship between education and social movements is ably supported by other authors (Kumar Rana and Ambarish Rai) by drawing inferences and examples from their engagements and experiments with the Right to Education campaigns in different contexts.

The book ends with a chapter on "Teachers' Movement Perspective" (Ram Pal Singh) highlighting the quality aspect of education. Singh underlines a need to rethink the role of teachers in classroom teaching-learning processes. He has banked upon the insights drawn from the findings of brain research done in recent decades, which indicate a paradigm shift in the concept and nature of learning as an activity. Following this, the role of a teacher

should be to support the students in their construction of knowledge rather than to provide them with a set of information.

On the whole, the book is highly informative and relevant to the current policy discourse. Although it is an edited volume, based on the papers presented in a seminar held in 2013, it is timely from the point of view of its likely impact on the potential readers, as the book has come at a time when yet another New Education Policy is in the process of being formulated. Starting with the vision, the volume has covered significant ideas and policy texts, throwing light on the dynamics of policy making in education in the country. It will be highly useful not only for those responsible for policy making and implementation, but also for the teachers and students of policy studies in education.

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