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BOOK REVIEWS

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Alternative Perspectives on Higher Education in the Context of Globalization*

Prabhat Patnaik**

In the context of globalization let me first distinguish between two very different perspectives on higher education. These perspectives exist quite independently of globalization, but the context of globalization accentuates the divergence between the implications that follow from these perspectives, and hence underscores the need to distinguish between them.

I

The first perspective sees higher education as a transaction between teachers and students, which occurs at specific locations called colleges and universities, and in the course of which teachers impart and students receive a certain training, which enables them to improve their skills and get better placements in the job market. Two conclusions follow from this conception which is very widely held. First, the success of a university can be measured by the success of the trainees coming out of it in getting good placements in the job market. Second, since placements in the job market can be hierarchically ordered as being better or worse, an ordering that transcends national boundaries, the universities too can be hierarchically ordered across the world as being better or worse. Therefore, when people lament that so few Indian universities figure among the top 200 in the world; underlying this lament is this first conception of higher education, the conception that believes in the possibility of ordering universities as one orders natural numbers. When students demand and institutions open placement cells to facilitate campus recruitment, underlying it again is this first conception of higher education: the institution, by opening such cells, is establishing its *bona fides*.

As against this, there is an alternative conception of higher education. This sees higher education as an activity in which students and teachers are jointly engaged *on behalf of the people of a society*. It is not a bilateral transaction between teachers and students; in fact it is not a transaction at all. Both teachers and students are jointly

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working on behalf of the people. The purpose of higher education according to this conception is, to borrow a term from Antonio Gramsci, to produce "organic intellectuals" of the people.

But what, it may be asked, has the activity of teachers and students got to do with the people? The answer lies in the fact that higher education is essential not just for the development of a country, but for the very survival of the freedom of its people. The realm of higher education is the cradle of ideas; the shrinking or extinction of this realm necessarily makes a society parasitic on others for its ideas, and *such a parasitic society cannot remain free.* In fact our freedom struggle began in earnest when we broke out of our parasitic status in the realm of modern ideas, through the writings of pioneering thinkers like Dadabhai Naoroji and Romesh Chandra Dutt who laid the intellectual groundwork for the political mobilization of the masses. They dared to think independently of the prevailing theoretical constructs of their time in the institutions of higher learning in the metropolitan countries and in their local off-shoots.

Indeed the prevailing theoretical constructs in educational institutions of their time were meant to show colonialism as a benefactor of the Indian people, and to produce intellectuals who would be willing to serve, directly or indirectly, the interests of the colonial regime. Macaulay's policy in other words had been designed to produce "organic intellectuals" for the colonial regime. When Gandhiji gave a call to students to come out of educational institutions, a call that even Rabindranath Tagore was critical of, his object was precisely to break the "colonization of the mind" that institutions of higher learning of the time were designed to produce and did produce. Gandhiji followed up his call by starting some preliminary institutions where an alternative education could be provided, and independent non-parasitic thinking promoted. This tradition of independent thinking that was necessary for the launch of the freedom struggle, is also necessary for defending the gains of that struggle. And since we are now in a position to have our own institutions where the conditions for independent thinking can prevail as a matter of course, we must develop and nurture such institutions.

This second perspective on higher education may appear somewhat bemusing at first sight: are we not supposed to impart skills through higher education? Are we not supposed to make our higher education system cater to the changing needs of the time, as reflected above all through the demand and supply situation in the market? Since high-sounding words like the "freedom of the people" and "organic intellectuals" fall essentially within the domain of the social sciences and the humanities, are we supposed to give a primacy to *these* disciplines over what is accorded to science, technology and management studies? And going beyond such "practical" questions, are there no scientific truths that lie at the core of any discipline, so that the "profession" that professes this discipline has an integrity transcending the nationality of its practitioners?

The second perspective is totally different from these suppositions about it. Indeed the Gramscian notion of "organic intellectuals" does not refer exclusively to literary or "highbrow" activities. It encompasses all: writers, technicians, academics, scientists, professionals, officials of the State, engineers and doctors. The distinction between the

two perspectives outlined above lies not in the fact that one emphasizes one set of disciplines and the other emphasizes another; it lies in the fact that one looks upon the higher education system *exclusively* as a means of imparting skills, while the other sees all activities of skill-imparting as being informed by a concern for, and an awareness of, the social ambience within which the skill-imparting is taking place. This does not mean a lacing of skill-imparting with occasional homilies on society and the people; nor does it mean thrusting down the throats of the students some particular theoretical or ideological outlook on society. It means a break from exclusive pre-occupation with marketability; it means a rounded education going beyond the narrowness of technical disciplines; it means inculcating in students a sense of the society to which they belong; and it means focusing within particular disciplines on research themes that have relevance for society instead of being merely copied from abroad.

This last point may be disputed in the case of the natural sciences in particular, whose truths, not being nation-specific or society-specific, have a universality that makes for a unified profession in the case of these disciplines. The same incidentally may be said of social sciences too whose truths are not simply nation- or society-specific. The point here refers however not to the truths but to the problems for research. While some problems, both in social and natural sciences, like why an apple falls to the ground or why an economy faces recessions, may be common to both the first and the third worlds, problems like how to combat a resurgent malaria concern third world societies more than they concern first world societies. These latter problems should find greater reflection in research in our country than in the advanced countries, from which it follows that science curricula too can not be identical across countries, a view strongly held by no less a person than J.D. Bernal.

II

Since this second conception, which underlies our birth as a modern nation, is not much discussed, let me spend a bit more time on it. Implicit in it is a whole series of rejections. First, there is a rejection of the view that different institutions of higher learning belonging to different societies can be ordered as being "better" or "worse" along one particular axis. If these institutions are to be "organic" to their specific societies, then, since the interests of these societies are quite obviously not congruent, each set of institutions must be different from the others in order to fulfil its legitimate role. Comments, which one commonly hears, such as "Jadavpur University or Jawaharlal Nehru University should imitate Harvard", "our institutions should enrich themselves by borrowing ideas and faculty from advanced country institutions", "we have to judge ourselves by how well we are recognized by top institutions in the world", have no place within this second perspective. Such comments are based on a perception of higher education as a homogeneous commodity of which some institutions are better producers than others, and not as a means of producing "organic intellectuals" for a particular

society[1]. I referred above to Dadabhai Naoroji and R C. Dutt whose contribution to the struggle for the freedom of our society was enormous. But scarcely any one in Harvard or Cambridge doing economics would have heard of them (though those doing "India Studies" might have). Modelling our institutions after Harvard or Cambridge, which would entail copying their curricula and syllabi, would therefore necessarily mean sacrificing, to our great cost, the conceptual framework, the perspective and the insights of a thinker like Naoroji.

Secondly, this second perspective rejects the view that the professionalization of subjects like "economics", and "political science" is a desirable process. The "profession" in these disciplines as well as in others, is dominated by the advanced countries; therefore recognition in the "profession" would necessarily mean sacrificing any independent thinking and parroting borrowed concepts. This would not matter if these borrowed concepts were genuinely "scientific" and not imbued with the ideological objective of defending the hegemony of the advanced countries. In the social sciences at least, such is not the case. Not that everyone engaged in social science research in the universities in the advanced countries is a conscious ideological defender of imperialist hegemony, but everyone is entrapped by the need to belong to and to be recognized by the "profession" and therefore undertakes research within strictly circumscribed limits which preclude any critical awareness of the role of the handed-down conceptual apparatus in the ideological defence of imperialist hegemony. Stepping out of these limits invites reactions of unease, astonishment, silence, derision and even hostility, resulting in a loss of academic and financial status[2]. Hence even the best-intentioned dare not step beyond the limits. In societies like ours where the domination of the Western theoretical orthodoxy in social sciences is far from complete, thanks precisely to our rather recent birth as a nation after a prolonged *anti-imperialist struggle*, any emphasis on "professionalization" would mean voluntarily surrendering ourselves to this domination, closing the space which has been made available to us for independent thought.

Thirdly, this conception entails a rejection of the attitude which places a special value on "recognition" in the advanced countries, and hence on awards and distinctions bestowed from there. In the social sciences at any rate, all such awards and distinctions are conditional on conformity, on keeping within the "limits" and abjuring the use of concepts that critique imperialist hegemony. Unfortunately this attitude of prioritizing

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[1] It is a tragic symptom of our times that the Prime Minister of the country, despite himself being an academic who should know better, has announced that henceforth our civil servants will get promotion only on the basis of satisfactorily completing a training programme at Harvard. This is a move reminiscent of the colonial times and completely at variance with the ethos a free India.

[2] The manner in which, in the discipline of economics, ideas emanating from within the metropolis itself, but different from or hostile to the dominant conservative orthodoxy of the metropolis, are suppressed by the "profession", is discussed in a recent article under the title "Hip Heterodoxy" by Christopher Hayes in *The Nation.* The article can be accessed at *http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070611/hayes*

"recognition" in the West is all too pervasive in our country. Almost all of us, when we sit on Selection Committees, prefer a candidate who has published in a western journal over one who has published within the country, even without looking closely at the quality of the two publications. By doing so however we contribute to a stultification of the tradition of independent thinking.

Fourthly, this perspective denies any role other than a purely secondary one, to private institutions in the sphere of education. Privatization of education turns it into a commodity where the buyer's preference must necessarily enter to determine the nature of the commodity produced. There is a basic difference between education that satisfies the preference of the buyer and education that is undertaken in the interests of the people. And if education is to be undertaken in the interests of the people, to defend their interests, *then it must be publicly financed.* If it ceases to be publicly financed, then the education that increasingly gets to be produced is one that is intrinsically incapable of serving the interests of the people. To say this is not to ask for a ban on private institutions of higher education, but to emphasize the need for a predominantly public educational system, into which the private institutions must fit, in clearly specified ways. In contrast to this perspective, the first perspective which sees education as a transaction between teachers and students to augment the latter's employment prospects has an inherent tendency towards privatization. If placement on the job market is the object of higher education, then a publicly-funded education system necessarily entails an indefensible private appropriation of public means, compared to which charging fees appears preferable; but if significant fees are charged, even on the criterion of ability to pay, then it becomes difficult to insulate the course contents and curriculum from the demands of the fee-paying students. And in any case, with such an objective for higher education, there is no argument left against the privatization of higher education.

III

The fact that in India public funding was supposed to sustain the core of the higher education system after independence is clear evidence that it is the second and not the first perspective that underlay our higher education policy, though not always explicitly. The relative magnitude of public funding of higher education did arouse the criticism, even by many progressive and sensitive thinkers, that resources which should have been devoted to elementary and school education were being used instead to sustain higher education which was a "white elephant", that instead of a pyramidal structure with a broad base of elementary education underlying a small apex of higher education, we had opted for a top-heavy structure.

This argument however is fundamentally flawed. There can of course be no two views on the urgent need for eradicating illiteracy and enlarging the spread of elementary education. In fact it is a national shame that even after six decades of Independence nearly one-third of the population in the country remains illiterate, and around two fifths of children of school-going age remain outside the ambit of formal schooling at any given

time. But the mistake consists in believing that an absolute curtailment (or even a curtailment relative to GDP) of expenditure on higher education is necessary for overcoming these failures. The overall shortage of resources that is usually cited in this context as a constraint is a mere alibi: at no stage during the entire post-Independence period has India spent an adequate amount on education, by any reasonable definition of the term "adequate". *In fact the proportion of GDP that the white-supremacist South African State spent on the education of the black majority even during the apartheid period, notwithstanding the massive drain on its exchequer that the maintenance of the highly oppressive police, military, and intelligence apparatus entailed at the time, was higher than what the Indian State has ever done on education as a whole throughout its entire post-Independence history.* The matter in short is one of priorities. Any government that has the political will to eradicate illiteracy and provide universal primary education would always find the resources for doing so without curtailing higher education. And any government that complains of lack of resources and considers it necessary to starve higher education in order to provide for the spread of literacy and primary education, simply lacks *ipso facto* the political will for effecting universal literacy and primary education.

This argument about higher education being a "white elephant" may appear *passé*, now that there is an appreciation of the importance of higher education in the new "knowledge economy". Hasn't the National Knowledge Commission itself suggested that there should be 1500 universities by 2015, and that we should set up 50 National Universities providing "education of the highest standard", of which at least 10 should come up within 3 years? But any joy that the NKC's emphasis on higher education may bring, disappears the moment one realizes that the NKC *sees higher education exclusively within the first perspective*. Its suggestion that the Vice-Chancellors of the Universities should function like Chief Executive Officers, its implicit distrust of campus politics, its proposal that University Courts should be dispensed with and that in lieu of Academic Council meetings we should have Standing Committees taking decisions, all in the name of expeditiousness of decision-making, would effectively convert Universities into highly authoritarian institutions, run rather like factories sans trade union rights. And these authoritarian institutions will not even necessarily be in the government sector. The bulk of them will be run by the private sector or as public-private partnerships, to expedite whose birth the UGC is to be dispensed with and a Regulatory Authority put in place. The NKC's proposals in short clearly envisage a substantial privatization of higher education in the country.

There are three basic problems with this NKC vision. The first, as we have seen, is it negates the role of higher education as defender of the freedom of the people, through the production of "organic intellectuals" of the people. The 1500 universities visualized by the NKC, not all of them new of course, will successfully turn out cheap skilled labour for employment by Indian and foreign corporate groups, but not much expertise for critically comprehending the way the global system functions and impinges on the people. It would in short produce "organic intellectuals" of globalized capital but not

"organic intellectuals" of the people. Only someone who believes that the interests of globalized capital and those of the people are altogether identical can rejoice over this prospect.

The second problem with the NKC vision is that it would create sharp dualities within the education system. Consider its attitude to the whole issue of drawing fresh talent into the academic profession. There can be little doubt that a major reason for the academic profession being drained of fresh talent is the abysmal incomes of the academics compared to other professions, which in turn is an outcome of the fact that income relativities have become totally irrational under the neo-liberal regime.

India now has one of the most unequal salary structures in the world. The salaries of executives in the private sector are now so astronomical, and so utterly lacking in justification for being so astronomical, that hardly any person of talent feels drawn any more to the sphere of higher education, which pays a pittance in comparison. The Prime Minister lamented the other day that the salaries of corporate executives in India had crossed all limits, but the fact that they have done so is a direct result of the neo-liberal reforms which have removed the ceiling on corporate salaries that had existed until then. Neo-liberal India has not only thrown incomes policy to the winds, but also judges individuals according to their relative incomes. This has now become the biggest problem before the higher education sector, which is threatened with atrophy through being starved of talent. Some totally dedicated and committed people may still come to the academic profession, but they constitute the exception rather than the rule.

The NKC does not address the issue of income relativities at all. Instead what it suggests is "incentives and rewards for performance" which basically means a differential salary structure within and across universities. This still would not draw fresh talent into the profession, since at the start of an academic career very few new entrants can show "performance" (unless the idea is to get fresh Ph.D.s from Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge at astronomical salaries, far exceeding those paid to home-grown Professors, on the grounds that Ph.D.s from those universities, unlike from our local ones, ipso facto constitute "performance"). On the other hand it would introduce a new "caste-system" on the campuses and destroy whatever democratic atmosphere remains within them. Since such a democratic atmosphere is a pre-requisite for free academic exchange, any destruction of it will be counter-productive, and hence act as a further deterrent to the entry of fresh talent.

Thirdly, and most importantly, such "dualism" (if I may use it as a short-hand expression) will be singularly unsuccessful in achieving the "excellence" that the NKC wants. There will be a whole lot of universities, faculty members and students who will be considered second rate and lacking in "performance". They will be low in morale, lacking in self-confidence, full of cynicism, and drained of whatever enthusiasm they originally had, and whatever creativity they were originally capable of. On the other hand there will be a limited number of universities, faculty members and students, supposedly the "excellent" ones, who, precisely because they would be considered "excellent" only as clones of Harvard or Oxford or Cambridge, would forever be hankering to get to those

hallowed precincts of supreme "excellence". They too would be frustrated and low in morale, but for an altogether different reason, namely their unfulfilled desire to move from the imitation to the original, i.e. from their current locations to the places whose clones they are supposed to be. This would be the surest recipe for the destruction of quality in our higher education system.

Quality does not come from aping others. Some of our finest institutions, which indeed have acquired global attention, have done so because of their systematic refusal to ape others, their systematic academic "arrogance" vis-a-vis similar metropolitan institutions, and their strong connections with the Indian reality. This is as true of Professor Mahalanobis' Indian Statistical Institute whose major, original, and pioneering work related to the study of the impact of the Bengal famine of 1943 on the people of that state, as of the more recently created Jawaharlal Nehru University which has kept its feet firmly on the Indian social reality. And yet aping is what all the current signals emanating from the government are pointing to.

I may of course be confronted with the counter-examples of IITs and IIMs, which, despite apparently having very little connection with the Indian reality, have nonetheless acquired "world class" status. While I do not wish to talk about them per se I certainly feel that an entire higher education system modeled on them will be undesirable, apart from the fact that any large-scale cloning of such institutions will yield sharply diminishing returns even in terms of their current criteria of "success".

IV

I have so far discussed only one of the ways that the objective of producing "organic intellectuals" of the people can be undermined by the context of globalization, via the overwhelming need for, and the apparently tempting prospects of, producing what can almost exclusively be called the skilled foot soldiers for global capitalism. There is another perennial threat that exists under globalization, and that is from the communal-fascist outfits, who thrive in the soil prepared by the unemployment and deprivation unleashed by globalization. The sway of communal and obscurantist forces over the sphere of education has been loosened for the time being, but there is little room for complacency here. I shall however be brief in discussing them.

These forces, at any rate segments of them, often claim to be fighting "Western" influence on our education system. Paradoxically, however, they end up strengthening the very "Western influence" which they claim to be fighting. Their attempt at the introduction of courses in State-funded universities to turn out Purohits and astrologers, on the explicit argument that there is a market demand for them, is as much a "commoditization" of education as the demand for capitation fees and the substitution of basic disciplines by more "marketable" subjects. Likewise their attempt to change text books to make them conform to the prejudices of a handful of bigots on the grounds that nothing offensive to the "religious sentiments" of the "majority community" should be carried in such books is antithetical to the spirit of scientific inquiry without which there

can be no "intellectuals", let alone "organic intellectuals" of the people. The retreat to prejudice, the promotion of obscurantism, the substitution of extraneous criteria for scientific investigation in evaluating the worth of academic propositions: all of these entail a devaluation of the content of higher education which actually disarms the country intellectually against the onslaught of imperialist ideology. If at a political level communalism and fundamentalism divide the people and contribute to a weakening of the nation vis-a-vis imperialism, then at an intellectual level too they make a parallel contribution by obliterating the intellectual capacity to see through its machinations. The opposition to the ideology of imperialism, one must remember, was provided by an inclusive Indian nationalism that was secular, democratic and self-confessed socialist. Communalism, whether of the Hindu or the Muslim variety, never had an anti-imperialist thrust. Should it come as any surprise then that the emergence of communal politics and ideology also paves the way for the re-assertion of the hegemony of imperialist ideology?

V

All that I have said so far should not be construed to mean that our higher education system is not in a crisis, that it is not lacking in quality, or that we should not strive for excellence. What I mean is that the notion of quality and the means of achieving it should be our own, that the concept of "excellence" should be defined by us, and that the means of overcoming the crisis of higher education must include increased not reduced involvement by the State, social regulation of the so-called "self-financing sector", better emoluments and conditions of work for teachers, accompanied by greater inducement for research, and other similar steps based on a painstaking analysis of the crisis. Simply implanting some "prestigious" institutions on a crisis-hit situation amounts to a quick-fix that does not address or overcome the crisis.

There is, however, a deeper issue here. One may disagree with the NKC recommendations but they are addressing a certain reality, namely the increase in demand by global capital for skilled personnel from countries like India. This opens up large opportunities for the Indian middle class youth and hence creates in them a constituency that advocates reforms in the higher education sector which would enable them to tap these opportunities. If these reforms are not consciously undertaken then the "pull of the market" will ensure that they will be surreptitiously affected, through private self-financing institutions. And what is more, is resisting the pull of the market even desirable? Such resistance after all will only restrict employment opportunities for Indian youth. In other words, is not the second perspective on higher education both impractical and undesirable, in the sense of being inimical to the employment prospects of many? It may have been the perspective underlying our freedom struggle, but that alone cannot justify our sticking to it.

This question can be answered at two different levels. As long as we are constituted as a nation, the task of nation-building, the task of being sensitive to the interests of the people, the task of ameliorating their condition and protecting their freedom, retains

paramount importance. The higher education system therefore must be looked at through the second perspective. To change it under pressure from the Indian and foreign corporates and the middle class constituency that stands to benefit from such change is to allow a small segment of the population to hijack the agenda for higher education. The nation can permit such hijacking only at its own peril.

But then are we talking about a conflict of interest in the realm of higher education between the middle class youth hoping to cash in on the increased global demand for cheap skilled labour, and the vast number of ordinary people whose freedom and protection (threatened especially in the era of globalization) should be the objective of higher education? The fact that there is such a conflict in reality cannot be denied. The stark contrast between the burgeoning salaries and visible prosperity of a section of the middle class youth on the one hand and the spate of farmers' suicides on the other, both a fall-out of globalization, testifies to this conflict of interest. And our two perspectives on higher education epitomize the difference in outlook between these two social segments. Even so, I do not believe that the middle class youth coming out of an education system which has as its objective the production of "organic intellectuals" of the people, will for that reason cease to be employable by global capital. Global capital after all is keen to employ Indian skilled labour not out of charity but out of hard economic calculations. As long as these calculations justify such employment, it will persist even without our having to turn our entire higher education system topsy-turvy in a bid to impress global capital with our "excellence".

In other words, there is no need for the tail to wag the dog. There is no need for us *specifically* to change our higher education system for producing skilled foot soldiers for global capital. There is no need for us to internalize the insecurity of our middle class youth and change the conception of our higher education system away from producing "organic intellectuals of the people" to producing "organic intellectuals of global capital". There is no need for us to abandon the project of painstakingly putting the higher education system back on track by finding solutions to the myriad problems that go into the making of its crisis, in favour of instituting quick-fix reforms that will only exacerbate the dualism of the system. The second perspective on higher education which is the legacy of our freedom struggle not only remains as relevant today as ever before, indeed more relevant today than ever before; but it cannot even be construed by any means as jeopardizing the short-term interests of the middle class youth in the context of the job opportunities opening up under globalization.

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Malaysian National Higher Education Loan Fund (NHEF)
Distribution of Loan and Default Borrowers*

Shuki Osman**

Abstract

In its effort to provide greater access for higher education learning, Malaysian government through its agency NHEF is subsidizing students with study loans, as part of its human capital investment for future economic and social development. In an effort to understand better the distribution of the study loan and high incidence of failure to repay it, a detailed analysis was conducted using database provided by the NHEF. The database contained records of 99,887 student borrowers from both the public and the private higher educational institutions in Malaysia. From a detailed analysis of the database, we were able to determine the characteristics of those who obtained the loan and those with tendency to default on payment. These characteristics show some associations between students' characteristics and their willingness to get the loans and their default behavior.

Introduction

For developing countries, education is a key factor in promoting their economic growth. As such, investing in human capital is a national strategy for Malaysia. It intends to increase students' accessibility to higher education to meet the demand for highly skilled workforce by industries. As the investments will bring returns to the society at large and

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* Paper presented at a workshop on 'Funding for Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis of Australia, India, Thailand & New Zealand and Way Forward for Malaysia', on 29-30 May, 2007, at Kuala Lumpur, and is forthcoming in a workshop-based book, to be edited by Morshidi Sirat and to be published by Universiti Sains Malaysia. The author wishes to thank Halim Ahmad, Abdul Ghani Kanesan, Abdul Jalil Ali, Mohd Zohir Ahmad and Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz for their contributions in the research project from which this paper was extracted.

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to the individuals in various ways[1], Malaysia considers higher education as a public good that should be subsidized and financed, both in public and private institutions of higher learning. In this article, the author describes Malaysian government's effort in funding higher education through the establishment of the Malaysian National Higher Education Fund as a major loan provider to students in both types of institutions. It analyzes the distribution of the loans by profiling the student borrowers, and discusses the common issue of default among student borrowers and their characteristics. To look into the borrowers' profile, cross tabulation was carried out to describe associations between loan default and students' characteristics.

Democratizing Higher Education through Study Loans

Malaysia is heading towards becoming a developed country by the year 2020. Such an aim requires continuous and major investments in education. During the Eighth Malaysia Plan period (2001-2005) alone, its public expenditure allocation for education and training amounted to MYR 40.2 billion,[2] which is no less than one-fourth of the total development expenditure for the nation (Morshidi, 2005). For developing countries, investing in human capital is a national strategy. Previous experience has shown that investments in human capital through education in East Asian countries have contributed positively to various aspects of development, not only in terms of economic growth, but also in improving income distribution, agricultural productivity, health and nutrition of the people.[3] As explained in human capital theory, investments in education, especially at tertiary level, lead to the accumulation of human capital which contributes to economic growth in terms of individual's productivity, which in turn results in increase in total production and overall economic growth. The individual human capital also contributes to other factors and areas of production.

In order to meet the challenge of globalization and knowledge-based economy, Malaysia is in need of increasing number of well-informed, skilled and innovative workers in all sectors of economy[4], which requires financial support from various resources. Quantity and quality of human capital becomes a major thrust in the country's development, as outlined in the Eighth and Ninth Malaysia Plans. Human capital development is the focus at all levels of education, i.e. preschools, primary schools, secondary schools and matriculation colleges. However, it is at the tertiary level that development of human capital is critical to the nation's economic development. This is due to, as explained by Barr (2004), changes in technology that have created continuous demand for skilled workers. However, skills become outdated very quickly. Therefore,

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[1] See David Bloom, Canning, and Chan (2005) explanation on the conceptual links from higher education to economic growth', and Tilak (2003) on relationship between higher education and economic development.

[2] Eighth Malaysia Plan.

[3] See Tilak (2002) on benefits from human capital investments in East Asian countries.

[4] The Ninth Malaysia Plan, p 3.

workers need retraining and retooling on skills that become more diverse and sophisticated. To meet the demand for sufficient skilled labour workforce and highly skilled human resources, higher education is essential to a country, and thus requires adequate funding.

Hence, Malaysian government is committed to increase access to higher education to its young generations. In order to meet its human capital development targets, more public and private higher education institutions have been set up to increase the overall capacities and to create opportunities for more students to acquire higher education. Today, there are 19 public universities in the country. Within five years (2000 – 2005), the country has opened up 6 new public universities, 6 public college universities, 6 private universities and 11 private college universities, in addition to nine polytechniques, 34 community colleges and 2 foreign university branches. At the same time, all existing public universities were asked to increase their intake, and private Higher Education institutions were allowed to flourish. In 2005, there were 559 private higher education institutions, including 10 universities and 11 college universities, plus 5 foreign branch campuses, and more than 500 colleges.[5] Results show that the capacity in terms of graduates produced between 2000 and 2005 had almost doubled from 130,000 to 253,000, with 58 percent of the graduates produced by the private institutions.[6] This signifies the Malaysian government's deliberate attempt at the democratization, liberalization and massification of higher education (Morshidi, 2005). In fact, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) plans to increase the number of places in higher education to at least 1.05 million by 2010 (Hassan, 2002, cited in Morshidi 2005).

It is widely accepted that access to higher education in Malaysia greatly depends not only on the government financial contribution, but also on the economic status of the students (Hassan, 2002). Presently, students generally prefer fully funded public higher education (HE) institutions to private HE institutions, in view of the tuition fees charged by the two types of institutions. Tuition fees charged by public HE institutions are only 20 percent (or lower) of the total cost of running a program of study. Competition among students for places at 'cheaper' public HE institutions allows only a limited number of excellent and good students to have access to higher education, while the remaining but eligible students are denied admission due to place limitation. At this stage, private HE institutions complement by giving places to those eligible students. Their offers, however, come at a comparatively higher cost, which may deter students who cannot afford to pay. Besides, there are also those bright students who cannot meet the expenses due to their low socio-economic backgrounds. To deny places for these groups of student is immoral, as argued by Barr (2004). There should be funds allocated to help students who desire to get further education. Therefore, the setting up of the National Higher Education Fund (NHEF) by the Malaysian government in 1997 aims specifically at democratizing higher education in Malaysia through financial assistance in the form of

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[5] Ministry of Higher Education. http://www.mohe.gov.my/statistik_v3/stat3.php

[6] The Ninth Malaysia Plan, p. 256.

study loans to students enrolled in institutions of higher education, both public and private.

The National Higher Education Fund

National Higher Education Fund (NHEF) is a government body, set up on 1 November 1997 to manage funds allocated for the purpose of higher education in higher institutions in the country. Its main role is to create and provide study loans to prospective students, and to manage, control and collect loan repayments from student borrowers. With the initial fund made available by the government, it was expected that repayments collected from borrowers would enable NHEF to be self-sufficient as a financial institution backed by its own income. Study loans are eligible to students of both public and private higher education institutions, mainly those studying at diploma and first-degree levels.[7] Loans given to students cover tuition fees and cost of living expenses during their study. The amount given is based on parental income, level of study, type of program and institution attended. Based on tuition fees charged, public HE institution students are eligible for an amount between MYR 1,000.00 to MYR 6,500.00 per year, while private HE institutions students can receive between MYR 3,700.00 to MYR 30,000.00 per year. Duration of repayments allowed is between 10 to 15 years for public institution students and 15 to 20 years for private institution students. All students have to start repaying their loan as early as six months after finishing their study.[8]

Issues of Loan Default

Providing financial support to enhance higher education opportunities brings other kinds of problems alongside to the government. One concerns the incidence of failure to repay the loan by the students. Since its inception in 1997, the National Higher Education Loan Fund has given out RM11.75 billion study loan, which has benefited 945,000 students of higher education institutions (Utusan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 2007). Thus with the establishment of the NHEF, the question of access and affordability should in theory becomes a non-issue (Morshidi, 2005). However, the main issue is about the low rate of payment by the students (Morshidi, 2006).[9] It was estimated that less that 50 percent of the students made their repayments after graduation, which works at a more than 50 percent rate of default among NHEF student borrowers. This is considered high compared to less than 15% default among student borrowers in the United States.

The effects of high default rates among Malaysian students will jeopardize the initial plan of NHEF to be a self-sufficient funding body in future. It will also affect the sustainability of the funding body in the long run. Presently, in order to sustain, more public money is injected into the funds every year. Various steps have been taken by

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[7] Recently, study loans are also being offered to those studying at post-graduate levels (Masters and Ph.D.).

[8] For detailed information on NHEF, please visit its website - http:// www.ptptn.gov.my

[9] As of 2006, on 44 percent of the total amount of loan have been recollected (Utusan Malaysia, 2007).

NHEF to encourage repayments; some are considered drastic moves as they emulate those practiced in the banking industry. It is reported that the steps taken have been fruitful to recover the loans, at least in the short run (Utusan Malaysia, 2007).[10]

However, study loan default is not a setback only in Malaysia, but is a common issue in other countries, including the developed countries like the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. These countries have passed through a relatively long history on managing study loan by various government and non-government agencies. Besides, student loan default has itself become an area of study among researchers at universities, and at some related agencies default studies have been institutionalized and generating annual reports every year.

In 2006, NHEF provided a database to the National Institute of Research in Higher Education (NAHERI). The database presented contains records of 123,694 student borrowers who received loans between the year 1997 and 2000. After data cleaning, only 99,887 cases were analyzed. There were seven variables related to the borrowers in the database: gender, race, and family income, type of degree pursued, academic major, and type of higher institution attended. Another variable, i.e., age of borrowers (in 2006) was determined by the NAHERI research team based on the students' identification card number. In analyzing the data, profiles of the borrowers, and of the default and non-default groups, were identified.

Distribution of NHEF Study Loan - Profiles of the Borrowers

Normally, loans are given to those who are in need of financial help. It is interesting to look into the profiles of the borrowers' that benefited from the NHEF loan. Table 1 shows that, first, the majority (90 %) of the students who received study loans from NHEF were first degree students studying at local public institutions of higher learning supported by the government. Based on tuition fees charged, the finding reflects that the majority of the borrowers are those who need less financial help as compared to those in private HE institutions. Tuition fees at public institutions are much lower than charged by the private institutions. As a comparison, for a diploma program a public institution charges less than MYR 500.00 per semester, whereas at a private university, the fee charged is about MYR 5,000.00 per semester, which is 10 times higher.

Since the data did not provide the amount of loan borrowed by the students, comparisons between the amounts borrowed by students of the two institutional types were not made. Nevertheless, it can be argued that a larger proportion of the loan for each student goes for food and accommodations in case of majority of the students, rather than for paying tuitions. The 90 percent borrowers studying at public higher education institutions also reflects low percentage of students studying at private higher education institutions, and a higher preference for public institutions. Even so, the enrolment in

[10] It was reported that 60 percent of 40,000 student borrowers came to register their repayments after being informed that their names will be registered with a credit reference agency (*Utusan Malaysia*, 23 February 2007).

private institutions is increasing every year. In 2005, about 40 percent of the total student population attended private institutions (Morshidi, 2005). In addition, since the majority of student borrowers were seeking their first degree, the funds provided met the targeted group of students set by the NHEF. To the government, these are the potential students that will enter the workforce in industry, and contribute to the country's economy.

Second, more that 60 percent of the students are from families with monthly income of more than MYR 5,000.00, including 1838 students from families earning more than MYR 50,000.00 per month. This distribution can be related to the higher rate of attendance in higher education among the high-income groups of the country's society, compared to the low-income groups. This profile also shows that majority of the borrowers are those whose parents can afford to pay the loan after graduation. This is in line with the theory of ability to pay (Flint, 1997; Barr, 2004). Though the loans are targeted more to students with less income, however it turns out that students with greater income are getting the loans. Families with low income will not apply for the loan for their belief in inability in repayment. But parents with high income will take the loan for their confidence in ability to pay after graduation. Families with monthly income of more than MYR 10,000.00 can afford to send the students for higher education without taking the loan, but they choose to borrow even a relatively small amount. It is argued that due to relatively low service rate of 3 percent charged by NHEF, these parents might keep their savings for higher interest returns and take the NHEF loans at a cheaper rate.

TABLE 1
NHEF's Student Borrowers Profiles

	No.	*%*
Gender		
Male	41189	41.24
Female	58688	58.76
Race		
Bumiputra (Indigenous)	71249	66.54
Chinese	23076	23.11
Indian	4870	4.88
Others	672	0.39
Missing data	10	
Family Income		
Less than RM 1,000	18263	18.30
RM 1,001 - RM 3,000	12811	12.80
RM 3,001 - RM 5,000	2007	2.00
RM 5,001 - RM 10,000	37918	38.00
RM 10,001 – RM 50,000	27006	27.00
More than RM 50,000	1838	1.80
Missing data	34	

Contd...

	No.	*%*
Degree Pursued		
Matriculation	2	0.00
Diploma	17276	17.30
Integrated	943	0.90
First Degree	81618	81.70
Post-Graduate Diploma	37	0.00
Missing data	1	
Academic Major		
Pure Arts	6647	6.70
Applied Arts	44019	44.38
Pure Science	8580	8.65
Applied Science	37972	38.28
Others	1973	1.99
Missing data	686	
Type of Institution		
Public University	88526	88.99
Public College University	1884	1.89
Private University	6849	6.88
Private College University	96	0.10
Private College	2124	2.14
Missing data	398	
Age as in 2006		
Less than 25 years	22763	22.84
26 - 30 years	60626	60.83
31 - 35 years	4388	4.40
36 - 40 years	8837	8.87
41 - 45 years	2127	2.13
46 - 50 years	926	0.93
Missing data	210	
Total	99877	-

Thirdly, among the borrowers, there are more females compared to male students. This is comparable to the national 65:35 ratio of female to male students at public universities. There is a separate issue of gender gap among university students mentioned elsewhere, and a certain university was mentioned as having a ratio of 80:20 female to male students (Morshidi, 2005). Fourthly, there are more students in applied science and arts majors compared to the pure majors. This is also in line with the number of places awarded to applied students in the public higher education institutions, which is more that the number of places for pure arts and sciences. Besides, private institutions are offering more technical and professional courses to the students, but less on pure arts and science programs.

When comparisons are made along race and ethnic lines, more than half of the borrowers are Bumiputra citizens, 23 percent Chinese and 5 percent Indians. The Bumiputras are made up of the Malays, the Sabah, and the Sarawak Bumiputras. This can be due to the country's population that is made up of more Bumiputras. That more Bumiputras applied for and were given the loans is related partly to their bigger population in the public institutions, and their need for the loans.

Distribution of loans by public and private universities, i.e., by general and professional education courses is uneven: 60% of students are enrolled in public universities providing mostly courses in Applied Arts and Science. Of these, 54% have secured loans, though majority of them does not seem to be in need of loan fund. On the other hand, of the 40% students enrolled in private universities, only 10% have secured loans. Students in private universities offering professional courses may be least likely to default, looking to their relatively bright job prospects.

To sum up, the profiles show that most of the students who borrow from NHEF are studying at public higher education institutions, pursuing their first degree, in applied Arts and Science, and currently aged below 30 years old. More than half of them are Bumiputras, females, with family earning more than MYR 5,000.00 a month. Since NHEF is less restrictive in providing the loans to the students, such a distribution of the fund need not to be argued for equality. All students, irrespective of their backgrounds, are expected to pay back their loan after graduation. Yet, as in any type of loan (house, car, etc.), there is always a certain percentage of students who default on their loan.

Default Students' Characteristics

As of year 2000, among 99,877 student borrowers, there were 52% students who did not pay their loan. Default rate is as high as 50%. This proportion is likely to be in the range of 35 to 40 % if we take out the defaulters pursuing their first degree after diplomas and integrated courses. Can we think of tolerable default rate not affecting adversely the sustainability of the NHEF in future? Why are study loans given at a very low rate of interest? Is there no possibility of raising it comparable to rates on bank deposits?

This default rate can be considered alarming compared to the rate in the United States, where only 11 percent did not repay their loan. The basic reason for not being able to repay the loan lies in the ability to secure the jobs that provide salaries that can make students to repay the loan regularly. However, the ability to get a job after graduation is related to other factors. Some are personal like gender, age, family background, but some are institutional, like the type of degree pursued and institution attended. The following profiles of students who defaulted their loans help explain defaults among the NHEF student borrowers.

TABLE 2
Default and Borrowers' Gender

Gender	*Default*				*Total*
	No		Yes		
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	
Male	18008	43.72	23181	56.28	41189
Female	30340	51.70	28348	48.30	58688

As shown in Table 2, among male borrowers there are more students who default than those who repay their loan. However, among female borrowers, a higher percentage of students repay their loans. In terms of rate of default, male borrowers have a higher default rate compared to female borrowers. Previous studies elsewhere have shown that male students have more or equal tendency to default compared to female students (McMillion, 2004).

TABLE 3
Default and Borrowers' Family's Monthly Income

Family Income (RM)	*Default*				*Total*
	No		Yes		
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	
1,000 and less	6456	35.35	11807	64.65	18263
1,001 – 3,000	5398	42.14	7413	57.86	12811
3,001 – 5,000	626	31.19	1381	68.81	2007
5,001 – 10,000	19444	51.28	18474	48.72	37918
10,001 – 50,000	15372	56.92	11634	43.08	27006
More than 50,000	1035	56.31	803	43.69	1838

Table 3 shows that for the first three categories of income of RM 5,000 or less, there are more student borrowers who default than those who repay their loan. But for borrowers in categories with family income higher than RM 5,000 per month, there are higher percentages of those who repay compared to those who default. The pattern shows that student borrowers who come from families with lower monthly income (RM5,000 or less) have higher default rates, compared to those from families with higher monthly income. Similar results by Volkwein et al, 1998 showed that students of higher income families were less likely to default than those of lower income.

After disregard the two matriculation students, Table 4 shows students of Diploma and Integrated categories has a greater percentage of borrowers who default compared to those who repay their loan. First Degree and Post-Graduate Diploma students, however, have more borrowers who repay compared to those who default.

TABLE 4
Default and Borrowers' Type of Degree Pursued

Degree Pursued	*Default*				*Total*
	No		Yes		
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	
Matriculation	1	50.00	1	50.00	2
Diploma	5659	32.76	11617	67.24	17276
Integrated	233	24.71	710	75.29	943
First Degree	42422	51.98	39196	48.02	81618
Post-Graduate Diploma	32	86.49	5	13.51	37

However, small sample size for the integrated and post-graduate diploma categories make comparison based on this characteristic less justified. Therefore, this characteristic will not be included in the proposed prediction model.

TABLE 5
Default and Borrowers' Academic Major

Academic Major	*Default*				*Total*
	No		Yes		
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	
Pure Arts	4318	64.96	2329	35.04	6647
Applied Arts	19921	45.26	24098	54.74	44019
Pure Science	5835	68.01	2745	31.99	8580
Applied Science	16446	43.31	21526	56.69	37972
Others	1776	90.02	197	9.98	1973

Table 5 shows that students offering academic major in categories of Pure Arts and Pure Science have greater percentage of borrowers who repay their loan than the percentage of those who default. While those in categories of Applied Arts and Applied Science have more borrowers who default than those who repay their loan. In terms of default rate, Applied Arts students have higher default rate that the Pure Arts students. This may be due to difficulties to get employed for certain jobs in Applied Arts and Science. Research has found that even there are no strong relationships between academic specialization and default rate, there are certain specializations that have higher default rates (Steiner & Teszler, 2003; Volkwein & Szelest, 1995).

Table 6
Default and Borrowers' Type of Institution Attended

Type of Institution	*Default*				*Total*
	No		Yes		
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	
Public University	43851	49.53	44675	50.47	88526
Public College University	936	49.68	948	50.32	1884
Private University	2605	38.03	4244	61.97	6849
Private College University	58	60.42	38	39.58	96
Private College	766	36.06	1358	63.94	2124

In Table 6, since there were only 96 students in the private college universities, data on them are not analyzed in the study. Private university and private college student categories have higher percentage of students who did not repay their study loans. These categories have higher default rates compared to public university and public college universities categories. However, Volkwein et al (1995) shows that there is no evidence to associate type of institution with students default rate.

Table 7
Default and Borrowers' Age in 2006

Age in 2006	*Default*				*Total*
	No		Yes		
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	
Less than 25 years	6614	29.06	16149	70.94	22763
26 - 30 years	28271	46.63	32355	53.37	60626
31 - 35 years	2878	65.59	1510	34.41	4388
36 - 40 years	8029	90.86	808	9.14	8837
41 - 45 years	1749	82.23	378	17.77	2127
46 - 50 years	765	82.61	161	17.39	926

In Table 7, the younger student groups of age less than 30 years have a higher percentage of (58 %) who default compared to percentage of non-default. Those in the category of less than 25 years have almost 71 percent students who default. Further analysis shows that most students in these categories are the first degree, integrated and diploma students. Some of those in integrated and diploma programs are believed to have continued their study at first degree levels.

To summarize, the profiles of the default students show that more than half of them are males with family income of MYR 5,000.00 or less, studying in Applied majors, in private universities, and are currently of ages less than 30 years. There seemed to be certain associations between default behavior and gender, family income, academic major and age of the borrowers. But to predict the default behavior, a logistic regression procedure is carried out.

Conclusion

The issue of provision of loan basically is an issue of pricing and financing of higher education all over the world. It is to be looked from a new perspective in view of the emerging global knowledge economy. In this paper, the attempt has been to describe the Malaysian government's commitment to provide greater access for higher education as part of its human capital strategy to achieve the Vision 2020 goals and to face the challenge of globalization and promote knowledge-based economy in the future. One of the efforts to increase accessibility was to provide study loans through its National Higher Education Fund body. As usually in other countries, NHEF also encounters students inability to pay back the loan after graduation. As per the profile of Malaysian higher education student borrowers funded by the National Higher Education Fund, more than 50% of them default in repaying their loans. The characteristics show that study loans that were given to certain majority groups of students are not faced with the default problem. However, certain precautions can be taken to avoid students becoming defaulters. These include limiting borrowing amount to those likely to default. But more proactive steps like promoting academic success while still studying and extending help to get employed for the borrowers can be suggested.

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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक योजना एवं प्रशासन विश्वविद्यालय
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

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REGISTRAR

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Scaling up Innovation in EFA
The Importance of Culture and Context*

David Stephens**

Abstract

Faced with the enormous need for school-based improvement in the drive to implement quality Education for All (EFA), it is clear that we can no longer afford the luxury of keeping reform initiatives small. This article identifies three major issues involved in 'going to scale': first that sufficient attention is paid to issues of culture and context, second that 'key elements' of success are identified in the process of transition and 'trade-off', and third that synergies and linkages are built into projects with a view to expanding at a later stage. Drawing upon a number of education reform programmes worldwide, and with particular attention paid to the District Primary Education Project in Karnataka, India, the article concludes by suggesting that understanding a school's culture is an essential pre-requisite for any internal or external change.

Introduction

It is the purpose of this article to argue that in raising the quality of Education for All, culture does indeed *matter*. What also matters is *context,* that partner of culture, particularly when giving priority in educational development to issues of relevance and decentralisation. To illustrate these ideas, some reference will be made to the multi-donor supported District Primary Education Project (DPEP) in Karnataka, India (Clarke, 2003) which paid particular attention to issues of culture and context in the reform of teaching and learning.

In 2001, the leading journal *Comparative Education* devoted a special issue to the importance of context in educational development. In the introduction, the editor of the issue, Michael Crossley, reminded us of the importance of context – and to make his point referred to the major five-nation comparative study of primary education that had just been completed (2000) by Robin Alexander which developed a framework that 'linked key elements in the act of teaching...with the processes of curriculum transformation from state to classroom' (2000, p. 507). Alexander also argued for the best balance to be struck between 'universals in teaching and learning' and significant

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contextual factors that shape the way those pedagogic elements are interpreted and implemented at local level. Context is significant, it is argued, at all levels and in many forms, reflecting the tensions between the global and the local that are increasingly seen to lie at the heart of disciplined comparative and international research in education.

In a context of decentralisation and scaling-up we need to ask ourselves some important questions: What are we scaling-up *from* and where is it going *to*? Are we clear about the 'key elements' we desire to retain when moving from one context to another? Are there any trade-offs in the process of scaling-up? And lastly what synergies and linkages do we need to build into our work to promote a dynamic transition from one level and context to another?

And let us also remember that size matters. As Schumacher (1973, p. 49) said 'What I wish to emphasize is the duality of the human requirement when it comes to the question of size: there is no single answer. For his different purposes man needs many different structures, both small ones and large ones, some exclusive and some comprehensive...today we suffer from an almost universal idolatry of gigantism. It is, therefore, necessary to insist on the virtues of smallness – where this applies'.

Let us now look at the relationships between EFA, quality, context and culture – and given the major aim of this article which is to promote greater attention to issues of context and culture in efforts to 'scale up' quality initiatives in EFA, let us start with an examination of context and culture, and then move on to look at issues of quality.

Context Matters

Perhaps it is a good idea to stand back for a moment and consider what we mean by context. A glance at a thesaurus will throw up words such as *background, setting* or *situation.* We can also think of abstract uses of the word: historical or development *contexts* come to mind. And equally we could enter into a discussion about whether the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) or any significantly large development agency has a *context* from which its network or agency is to be found and in which it works? They certainly have an organisational *context* often involving a headquarters within the North and operational centre in the South. I would suggest too that the AKDN, for example, is embedded in a religious or values context, and given that we are communicating within a common language, we are also aware of the discursive or linguistic context within which interpretations and meanings live and possible perish.

Whatever it is – and this is not the context to spend too long splitting hairs – I think we can agree that context increasingly matters in carrying out research and in the scaling up of development initiatives.

As argued elsewhere (Stephens, 2007), setting or context is not something to be pushed to the background but is integral to the holistic character of any qualitative research or development activity, providing the researcher and development worker with a fabric from which meaning and interpretation can occur. Leadership, for example, is often only understood when understood, interpreted and practiced in situ or in context.

Context matters also in that we are currently in an intellectual climate that is increasingly registering unease with global generalisations and meta-theoretical discourses in the social sciences (Crossley, 2001).

A significant milestone in the development of qualitative programme evaluation was the argument between Lee Cronbach and Donald Campbell over the relative importance in evaluation studies of external validity and contextual meaningfulness (championed by Cronbach) versus internal validity and causal claims (championed by Campbell). When we start to consider issues of scale and move from the very local to the more global it is worth pausing for a moment to consider the relative merits of this relationship between external/internal and validity and meaningfulness.

Likewise, Crossley (2001) and Stephens (2007) have argued that unsuccessful efforts to transfer fashionable western theory, policy and practice in education through the work of international development agencies and consultancies lends support to the importance of context sensitivity in efforts to improve learning and teaching (Crossley, 2001). But this seems to have become problematic – we seem to have a problem with context.

The 'Problem' of Context

Given that context is one of the central concepts in social anthropology and qualitative research, it is surprising to find how little attention has been given to the topic over the history of the disciplines[1]

Let's begin with an example. In 1994 I left one working context of a university department on the south coast of England and moved to a very different working and cultural environment – that of the south coast of Ghana where I was to take up the post of education adviser with the UK Department for International Development (DFID). I also had the opportunity to put together a research team to look at reasons why girls were dropping out of primary schools.

Though I was familiar with the literature on this well researched topic, my previous experience of West Africa convinced me of the importance of framing the research in terms which privileged culture and context. It soon became abundantly clear to all of us in the team that context, or rather contexts – home, school, the economy – were central in not only the shaping of our research answers but also in the determining of our research questions. For example, the question of 'dropping out' predisposes one to consider where the girl was dropping out from and similarly where she was dropping into? Context or setting that traditionally might be cast as background became foreground, a decision that had implications for our choice of research methods (in this case a preference for life history) and analytical framework (The data are around the three 'domains' of school, home and economy).

Why the problem of context? Isn't context a relatively simple notion that can be accorded more or less significance depending on the topic of the research? Dilley, in inserting the word 'problem' into his title makes the point that context is not 'stable, clear

[1] An exception is Dilley, R. (ed.) (1998).

and sufficient' but 'problematic, indeed the result of prior interpretation' (Dilley, 1998). Context for this writer is intrinsically connected to matters of meaning and on-going interpretation. It is about making connections, and by implication, disconnections: contexts being 'sets of connections construed as relevant to someone, to something or to a particular problem', this process, 'yielding an explanation, a sense, an interpretation for the object so connected' (Dilley, 1998)

Paraphrasing the great philosopher Wittgenstein, Dilley suggests we focus less on what context 'means' and more on how it is 'used'. Context can indeed be used – as I did in Ghana – to help frame the research, or in our case development-problem. It can also be used in theory as well as in practice, connecting (or disconnecting) us to ideas and concepts across a range of academic and professional disciplines.

Perhaps it is helpful to see context as more of a process or set of relations than a thing in itself. When writing up the Ghana research, for example, I was keen to draw out the lessons for the various stakeholders and readers of the research, and my attention focused on the 'target contexts' of the girls and their families, the school and community, and the so-called development professionals whose professional policy context was far removed from the subjects of our research.

If anything, it is no exaggeration to say that our research topic was as much about making connections between a series of contexts as it was about providing answers to a research question.

Before we look at the practical implications, let us think a little more about the relationship between what has been called the 'art of interpretation' – hermeneutics[2] – and the concept of context, as this relationship 'connects' two important concepts of context and interpretation.

The relationship of the part to the whole – or the 'hermeneutic circle' – is central to an understanding of the relationship of context and interpretation. Or rather what matters is that the process of interpretation occurs in context: research or development project findings that are going to be applied to another larger context in the scaling up exercise. Interpretation and context are key players in the dramatic story unfolding during the research or scaling-up project.

If context or setting matters, then there are a number of implications we need to consider in decisions we need to take about the scaling-up methodology, methods, access and the use of imagination.

First, in terms of methodology, it is clear that a qualitative methodology will have at its centre a concern for context as a shaper of all aspects of the development exercise, be it the determination of the guiding questions or topic area to the relevance of the project outcomes.

The methods or techniques available at our disposal in taking a context-sensitive approach to scaling up will lean us towards methods and instruments that seek to make

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[2] The term hermeneutics derives from the Greek god Hermes, whose job it was to interpret and communicate the ideas of the gods to mankind.

sense of words and behaviour *in situ*. Methods can be selected on two grounds: the way or method used to collect data e.g. by interview or observation and the type of evidence sought e.g. life history interview, participant observation. Working as a researcher or development worker in international settings increases the need for us to develop a sensitivity and reflexivity during the process of developing the project.

Access and imagination can, perhaps curiously, be put together. It is quite common for textbooks on research methods, for example, to talk about 'access to the field' as if it relates to a distinct phase in the research proposal, i.e. here is where I stop thinking about the ideas, theories or ways of collecting data and 'go out' into the field and 'do' the research. But I am not so sure it is as cut and dried as that. From my experience as a northerner conducting research in mostly southern contexts, I tend to see the question of access in terms that are both practical. For example, will I need a vehicle to go to the village in the east of the country?, and imaginative e.g. what experience of context(s) am I drawing on when thinking about the setting where the evidence is to be collected? I would argue too that imagination is important in any activity involving decentralisation and scaling up.

Imagination is also the important 'glue' that binds or makes the connections between the various data 'texts' or evidence-bases – be they verbal, visual, experiential or even numerical – and the theories and ideas that go to make up the architecture of the research analysis. For Hulme, it is imagination not reason that shows us the connection of one object with another:

'... when the mind, therefore, passes from the idea or impression of one object to take the idea or belief of another, it is not determined by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in the imagination' (Hulme, 1981).

Context is, therefore both 'out there' – environment, setting, milieu – and 'in here' – in terms of the interior landscape we each take into the field and made up of experience, training and, at a deeper level, the way in which our own language represents our social reality.

Culture Matters

Let's begin with a brief examination of what we mean by the term 'culture' and then go on to discuss ways we might use the concept in our efforts to scale up small scale innovation.

The Concept of Culture

In his examination of the methodology of cultural studies, Pertti Alasuutari (1995) expresses the view that, 'qualitative analysis always deals with the concept of culture and with explaining meaningful action.'

To him culture must be taken seriously and not be reduced to a mere effect or reflection of, for instance, economy (Alasuutari, 1995). If culture is to be taken seriously, then it is a little curious to find culture also being referred to as 'the forgotten dimension'

(Verhelst 1987) and the 'neglected concept' (Smith and Bond, 1993, Thomas, 1994). One of the reasons may be the association 'culture' has with anthropology and, more specifically, with ethnography. If 'culture' *belongs* to these areas of intellectual enquiry – and it is certainly central to them – then, the argument goes, it has little to do with other so called more mainstream social sciences or research traditions.

It is not as if the study of culture is in anyway 'new', rather it seems that in the development of the concept itself, and particularly its application to the fields of education and development, much of its utility has been lost. Robert Klitgaard, (1994) in his paper – Taking Culture into Account: from 'Let's' to 'How' puts it well, 'If culture should be taken into account and people have studied culture scientifically for a century or more, why don't we have well developed theories, practical guidelines, and close professional links between those who study culture and those who make and manage development policy?' (Klitgaard, 1994, p. 89).

The relationship between culture and the development worker may well suffer from the same problem: culture is overly complex as a concept, it isn't particularly usable or useful, and is viewed as the prerogative of the anthropologist and ethnographer rather than the mainstream researcher or development professional.

But if we seriously want to carry out research or carry a development project forward – particularly of a qualitative kind in a range of contexts and settings – then, I would suggest the concept of culture must be fore-grounded in both what we study or promote and also in the way we design, execute, write up and disseminate our results. The whole nature of our work I argue *is* cultural.

Much of what has been written about the term 'culture' (and there has been an awful lot) seems to agree that there are two dimensions to the concept: First, that culture exists on both an individual and social level, being concerned with what particular individuals think, learn and do and also with what a society considers important or meaningful. Second, that culture as a concept has come to relate to both the desirable, e.g. ideas of *kultur* and 'civilisation' in the 1840's and the descriptive, current 'value-free' use of the term much in favour with sociologists and anthropologists.

If culture is about individuals and societies and the way such people and groupings are described and evaluated, it is concerned surely also with ideas and beliefs held by those individuals, personally and collectively.

In 1990 the Dutch Centre for the Study of Education in Developing Countries (CESO) produced a "Position Paper on Culture, Education and Productive Life in Developing Countries", in which they argued that the concept of culture is more than Ralph Linton's 1964 "Configuration of Learned Behaviour", arguing that it is fundamentally *ideational*, culture not being "behaviour and customs" but the ideas which are used to shape behaviour and customs" (CESO, 1990).

Culture, then is knowledge: a system of shared ideas, concepts, rules and meaning that underlie and are expressed in the ways the people live (Keesing, 1981).

Thierry Verhelst (1987) writing from a grassroots NGO development perspective, extends this *ideational* view by suggesting that culture as a concept must not only be

descriptive but useful. For him it is centrally concerned with problem solving and the "original solutions" human beings generate to deal with "problems the environment sets them". Verhelst, like the CESO authors, take culture to be very much a concept embodying change, empowerment and the process of decision-making.

Culture is also, of course, intertwined with language be it the day to day modes of communication of busy academics in a large European city or the equally busy playground chatter of rural children in southern India.

Brian Bullivant makes a brave attempt to present a comprehensive definition of culture embracing all the aspects discussed so far:

> "Culture is a patterned system of knowledge and conception embodied in symbolic and non-symbolic communication modes which a society has evolved from the past, and progressively modified augments to give meaning to and cope with the present and anticipated future problems of its existence" (Bullivant, 1981, 3)

Culture is, therefore, concerned with two things:

a) The knowledge and ideas that give meaning to the beliefs and actions of individuals and societies.
b) The ideational tool which can be used to describe and evaluate those actions.

Culture, then is both about what people *think and do* and how we describe and *evaluate* those beliefs and actions.

Culture in a Scaling-Up Process

Perhaps a major difficulty in considering culture's place in the research and development process is a chicken and egg one, namely that with few examples of ways in which culture might be used to frame educational development activity, most researchers – particularly those pressed for time and perhaps trained in more traditional ways of carrying out research – fall back on the tried and tested approaches. What is needed, therefore are models of good practice: examples of types of research and development methods that offer interesting and appropriate ways to research social issues from a cultural perspective.

Utilising the four Wh's it seems that we can identify the following key variables:

- *What*, in terms of cultural factors need to be identified in the content and methodology of the project?
- *Where*, in terms of locus of control, will the project and publication related to the project be carried out?
- *Why*, in terms of personal or professional reasons, is the work being done?
- *Who*, in terms of personnel, will be involved in the project, and to what extent will research be both empowering and reflexive for researcher and researched?

In the area of *what* is to be used in the framing of research, we can usefully turn to one model of good practice, i.e., the work of Catherine Marshall and colleagues (1989) in

the U.S. who have in their exploration of the ways cultural values are transformed into concrete education policies in six American state capitals, have developed a model of a *Cultural Paradigm of Understanding the Public Policy System* that might well be of use in the design of research projects in other national settings (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
A Model of a Cultural Paradigm as a Way of Understanding the Public Policy System

Cultural Variables Affecting Policy	*The Subculture of the State Capital*	*Policy: The Cultural Values Choices*
Historical 'facts':	Policy-makers' shared understandings about:	Policy attention
Constitutions		Values priorities
Existing statutes and codes	1. What is desirable in their political culture	Policy choices
Political practices	2. Policy alternatives available to them	New codes and regulations
Institutions	3. Policy priorities (individual and generalized)	Budgets
Political culture	4. Power and influence of different groups	
	5. Assumptive worlds	
	6. Values (individual and generalized)	

(Derived from the study of state education policy-making, Marshall, C. et al, 1989)

This cultural paradigm, with its emphasis on patterns, values, and rules of behaviour and an understanding of the role of power and influence, takes us further than the idealised rhetoric of UN-type declarations that simply call for "greater importance" to be attached to cultural matters.

The advantage of this type of paradigm lies in its utility. As the authors point out, it can influence the kinds of questions asked, the 'fit' of theory and evidence, and the relevance and validity of facts and methodologies "our cultural paradigm guides us to ask questions about the meanings of institutions, rituals of behaviour, and values" (Marshall, et al, 1989).

A strength of this type of model appears to lie in its generic and specific characteristics, generic in the identification of global categories and relationships which allow for comparison across cases, e.g. the relationship of historical 'facts' to policy; and specific in the nature of these categories which allows for very localised use in, for example, the selection of important and unique historical 'facts' pertinent to the particular research being undertaken.

A few years ago, Anders Breidlid (Oslo University College Norway) and Stephens began a piece of funded research in South Africa with the aim of investigating the relationship between schooling and cultural values in so called black and coloured urban and rural areas in the Western and Eastern Cape. Though substantively concerned with the relationship of cultural values and educational experiences, in the initial design stages of the research, we took a general cultural view of what we intended to research. Here are some of the questions we posed to ourselves and our research partners in the field:

Q: *What can theory about culture tell us that is useful to our framing of the research problem? As such theories are predominantly Western will they 'fit' the cultural context in which we will be working?* (Picking up on Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital', for example, we considered it useful to explore both the utility and 'fit' of this concept to our research field).

Q: *What are the research traditions we are drawing on at this design and framing stage?* (Interestingly my colleague, a scholar of African literature, immediately started to draw inspiration from novels written about the places we would work, whereas I, as an historian, found myself wondering about the chronology of events that had influenced the communities and townships chosen for the research).

Q: *To what extent will language and discourse shape and determine the focus and interpretation of that focus?* (It was clear to us from the beginning that even a term as relatively well known as 'schooling' had very different connotations in a context such as Langa, a black township of Cape Town – here associated with ideas of social mobility, Christianity, and even the 'white' values of an aspiring middle class).

In many ways, therefore, it is not that a particular topic is more 'cultural' than another, rather it is the adopting of a cultural approach to the design of a research or development project that is significant. In posing the question, for example, 'how can we improve teacher education, say in India?' A cultural orientation to this question posits a number of pre-requisite enquiries e.g. first, how does this particular culture or cultures understand what it means to 'teach' or be trained to do so? Such a line of enquiry might well subtly but significantly change the direction of the eventual project or programme.

In terms of *where* the work is best carried out it is worth remembering that, "all cultural data ... must be considered as belonging to somebody", that in dealing in the realm of values and meanings, one must go "over to the other side, to take up, return, and then contextualize the other points of view insofar as possible, even to risk assimilation with those studied" (Rose, 1990). In a cultural nutshell this means doing it *there* rather than *here* and in a way that makes proper use of the term – discussed in our previous section - cultural context.

A proper use of context therefore needs to be all - pervasive to allow cultural factors to both describe and give meaning to the research environment. Let's look at one example of how cultural context was fore-grounded in a research project.

Pareek (1990) in discussing his research within Indonesian culture, identifies ten dimensions of that culture which he argues, are not just 'contextual' but shape the very research environment within which he worked (Table 2).

TABLE 2
Ten Dimensions of Culture Shaping the Indonesian Research Environment

1. Fatalism vs. scientism.
2. Tolerance for ambiguity.
3. Contextualism. In a high-context culture, the meanings of events, phenomena, and behaviour are interpreted in terms of the contexts in which they occur. In a low-context culture, all events are judged by one standard and there is an attempt to evolve universal rules and explanations.
4. Temporality, the tendency to live in the present vs. concern for past and future.
5. Collectivism vs. individualism.
6. Particularism vs. universalism. Strong group identities, based on ethnicity, religion, caste, region, etc., characterize particularist cultures.
7. Other directedness vs. inner directedness. This dimension is often framed in terms of shame cultures vs. guilt cultures. In the former, honour and reputation are critical, while in the latter, inner worth and a concept of sin are said to guide behaviour.
8. Androgyny. Hofstede (1980) uses masculinity vs. femininity dimension. I see the poles of this dimension as sexism (in which social roles are determined by men, and they impose their values of competitiveness and toughness as highly desirable) vs. androgyny (which recognizes both competitive values and humanistic values).
9. Power difference tolerance (studied by Hofstede, 1980, as power distance).
10. Use of power. Using McClelland's (1975) idea that external or internal power can be used to strengthen oneself, or to make an impact on and strengthen others, four cultural power orientations were proposed: expressive, conserving, assertive, and expanding.

Source: Pareek, U. (1990).

For this researcher, these or factors like these provide both background and foreground in the design of the research project

The fourth "wh" *who,* raises the question of ownership and voice: what role do local stakeholders play or could play in taking innovation forward, and are these roles defined within decision-making and/or implementation spheres?

In giving recognition to the value cultural factors can offer the researcher and development worker it is worth taking stock for a moment of the possible problems

involved in such an endeavour. There seem to be five potential hurdles that require attention:

First there is the philosophical problem of cultural objectification and relativization (van Hieuwenhuijze, 1987). Faced with an alien culture, researchers from another easily fall prey to the tendency to objectify the new, perceiving the confronted culture from 'some mental distance' (van Nieuwenhuijze, 1987) and in so doing create a situation where 'two cultures in encounter, both operating as frames of reference in their own right, inevitably vie for predominance as the provider of the criteria for the validity of the imponderables involved in their interaction' (van Hieuwenhuijze, 1987). Relativization is a possible solution, though in research terms, weakens the case for the production of analyses that is transferable to other settings or is in some way 'universal'.

Second, there is the problem of culture, as a concept's close association with anthropology. The past association of this discipline with reaction and imperialism (Cohen, 1974) and the tendency for middle class field workers to study only marginalized or low status groups has resulted in many so-called Third World States viewing with suspicion the wishes of those eager to probe into the cultural recesses of the nation.

Associated with this is a third problem of the possible misuses of culture in the research/development process. Cultural data can often feed stereotypes, endorse a static and uniform view of "culture", and even promote segregation (Klitgaard, 1994). In South Africa in the 1950s, many (white) South African researchers argued forcefully for education to be tailored to local cultures. This meant taking seriously the language differences, levels of ability and cultural traits, they said. The resulting Bantu Education Act fortified apartheid and instead of tailoring education to student needs, it tried to tailor children to a racist society's needs. The normative dimension of cultural analysis is, therefore, both valuable and worrying when applied to sensitive development issues.

A fourth problem concerns the very real danger of paying lip service to terms such as 'participatory research' or 'beneficiary assessment'. As Edwards (1989) points out in his excellent paper, 'The irrelevance of development studies', the term 'participatory', politically correct and currently in vogue with agencies such as the World Bank, is often actually viewed as a "mechanism for cost recovery in projects initiated from the outside; of reducing the costs of building and infrastructural programmes planned by governments; and of improving the accuracy of research carried out by and for external agencies. As he says, the crucial point is to see who sets the agenda and who controls the research process. 'Participation' otherwise tends to be used as a technique to improve the efficiency of research or programming, rather than as a means of facilitating people's own development efforts. Used in this way, it becomes merely another form of exploitation, serving the purposes of outsiders who have their own agenda but who know they cannot gain a complete picture of the problems that interest them through conventional methods alone.

A final problem concerns the paucity of research evidence illustrating the advantages and disadvantages of taking on board cultural issues in the research process. The symposium on *'International Perspectives on Culture and* Schooling' at London

University's Institute of Education (1993) went some way bringing together researchers who recognised the importance of culture in the field of international educational development and in some cases have developed methodologies that reflect the cultural traditions within which they work.

Terezinha Nunes' (1993) work on 'Cultural Diversity in Learning Mathematics', a perspective from Brazil (which examined the 'gap' between school mathematics and street mathematics), and Bob and Jennie Teasdale's (1993) fascinating study contrasting perceptions of knowledge and learning strategies among Australia's aboriginal communities, are two such examples. In the United States, where cultural issues appear to be taken more seriously, a study by Trueba, et al (1990) of cultural conflict and adaptation among the Hmong children in American society is valuable both for its focus upon the centrality of cultural factors in the education and development of these people and the recognition of the role of what they call 'intervention-research' in the process of helping a minority people gain the rights that are theirs.

It has been suggested by a number of commentators (e.g. Klitgaard, 1994; Verhelst, 1987) that to begin, "activities aimed at development we must first critique our own culture and ideas about development, our own preferences and capabilities, values and assumptions, ends and means" (Klitgaard, 1994). Such reflexivity, Klitgaard suggests will enable the researcher to act as a cultural conduit, "coming from one culture but trained to penetrate another, can serve as interlocutor - telling them, telling us, what each other really care about, is good at, can contribute" (Klitgaard, 1994).

This people-centred view of development with its research corollary in giving voice to those so often marginalized, particularly in larger development projects, has implications for research methods and the sort of prerequisite training that is necessary for any research to be culturally sensitive and participatory.

Let us look briefly at one project in India that took the concept of culture – and context – seriously.

The District Primary Education Project (DPEP) established in India in the early 1990s has directed attention specifically at girls and children from the Scheduled Castes or Dalits. This is the first large-scale effort since the introduction of Gandhi's notion of Basic Education in the mid-1900s to transform teaching and learning in classrooms in India. A particular success of the project has been changes in teacher behaviour towards greater *inclusivity* and impartiality towards female and Scheduled Caste children. The Loreto Day School in Calcutta is another example of 'best practice' at school level where an effective balance is maintained between equity and quality. These projects also exemplify ways in which quality can be improved through more culturally *relevant* classroom activities, a detailed engagement with teaching-learning processes, and a focus upon the teacher making more *efficient* use of his or her preparation and teaching time.

The study analyses the impact of four cultural constructs, which frame teaching and learning in India: holism as a shared worldview that encourages openness to regulation; the hierarchical structure as a regulative social framework; knowledge as discovered and attested collectively; and the 'sense of duty' that defines the role of the teacher (and

student). The conclusion of the study is that while there are observable changes in the classroom in the use of instructional aids and activities during instruction, the essential characteristics of traditional practice, namely rote and repetition has not changed.

This brings us onto the task of relating ideas of context and culture to issues of quality.

Quality Matters

Defining the concept of quality is a little like trying to define 'motherhood' – it is clearly a 'good thing' but elusive and likely to be dependent on the perspective of the person attempting the definition. For many parents, for example, it may well relate to the learning outcomes, particularly end of cycle examination results of their respective child; for the school manager or inspector quality may well embrace improved general standards of reading, or handwriting, or mathematics; for the classroom teacher a definition of quality linking closely to improved conditions of service.

What is clear, however, is that there is a broad consensus in the international community on two points. First, challenges to quality have gone hand-in-hand with the rapid expansion of primary school systems in many parts of the world. Second, girls and boys in the same classroom do not typically receive the same education. Throughout the world, boys consistently receive more (and more challenging) instruction from teachers. Curricula typically feature strong role models for boys but few or weak models for girls. In mixed-sex classrooms, girls often suffer harassment.

The reason for this state of affairs is complex, though it is generally agreed that whereas classrooms are important venues for change, very often what occurs there mirrors and reinforces external social values.

Quality is, therefore, directly related to what occurs in two educational contexts: firstly, in the more focused environment of the classroom; secondly, in the wider context of the school system and social context in which the classroom is embedded. Both environments have a reciprocal relationship with each other.

In 1990, I and a colleague attempted a definition of the quality of Basic Education which focused largely on the former, more focused context of the classroom. Quality, for me, meant:

- *Relevance* to context, to needs (both 'needs now' and 'needs later') and to humanity;
- *Efficiency* in setting standards, in meeting standards set and in improving standards; and
- As *something special*...which goes beyond normal expectations of a school.

Reviewing the concept 17 years on I would argue that, for us, a working definition of quality is still fundamentally concerned with these three pillars but that a fourth be added – quality as *inclusion.* A *relevant*, *efficient* and *'special'* education must, in other words, be available to *all* children irrespective of gender, ability or wealth. Combining 'more-

with-better' and not 'more-with-worse' is perhaps the single most critical challenge facing us all.

School and classroom are also the focus of two other complementary definitions of quality which, though, like us, acknowledge the importance of the external world on the classroom, stress the importance of key classroom variables, e.g. the relationship between the teacher and the student, time on task, the quality of the classroom milieu, and effective school management (Heneveld, 1994).

As we strive to improve the delivery of education, particularly in the context of decentralisation, these characteristics of a quality learning environment will change over time, and as such will pose challenges in the development of indicators of quality and the monitoring of school improvement.

Here is a working definition of quality education provided by my Norwegian colleague Tove Nagel (2003):

> *'Quality education is a learning situation which vibrates with positive energy and where the learner and the learned both are eagerly absorbed in understanding and communicating through a knowledge construction process. The emphasis lies with the learner'.*

When we shift our focus away from the classroom and out towards the school system and the broadly social context of schooling it is equally clear that quality is also concerned with a vision of the kind of society we want. Such visions implicitly address the question, 'What is education for?' Here the bigger issues of society such as democracy, freedom, equality and human rights or conversely, exploitation, oppression, and inequality are embraced along with good classroom results and the personal and social development of the child.

The Save the Children Alliance, which – a little like the AKDN – is an umbrella organisation, – bringing together all the various constituencies of the Save the Children movement world-wide. It defines quality as education characterised by 'relevance; participation; flexibility; appropriacy; and inclusiveness' with 'inclusion' as the central 'cementing' goal for raising quality in education (Williams, 2003). 'Kissack and Meyer (1996), researching in South Africa (1996), share these aspirations extending the notion of quality as empowering or transforming, introducing the concept of 'empowering agency'.

These broader, holistic definitions of quality are echoed by UNICEF in their call for rights-based, child-friendly' schools in which 'five dimensions of quality', i.e. learners, content, processes, environments, and outcomes are pursued (Pigozzi, 2001).

It must be stressed, however, that whatever vision or definition of 'quality' we subscribe to, as educators we would argue that it is the minute-to-minute processes of education in the classroom context that are the most critical element (O'Gara, 1999). In other words we believe that by working to make classrooms and schools 'better' in terms of relevant, efficient, creative and inclusive learning environments, we are in turn, contributing to broader social efforts to improve the quality of life.

To some extent, this interest in quality as improved classroom teaching-learning processes is mirrored in the shift from a general focus upon school *effectiveness* to a more institutional focus upon school *improvement*.

What is required, therefore, is a holistic model which stresses the reciprocal relationship of the classroom and society, balancing concerns for equity in society with quality in the classroom, rather than making them mutually exclusive (Meier, 1995).

Two major frameworks for studying quality and school effectiveness have evolved since the 1960s: the *policy mechanics* approach which puts the emphasis upon universal determinants of effective schools, and the *classroom culturalists*, who stress definitions of quality and effectiveness in relation to particular national and institutional cultures (Fuller & Clarke, 1994). These two approaches – which are not mutually exclusive – also differentiate the level at which *quality, effectiveness* or *improvement* is described and evaluated: the first viewing the national educational system as the unit of analysis, the latter tending to focus at the level of the school and individual classroom where, it is argued, the twin aspects of culture and context are more strongly felt.

The first approach, which is characterised by a more technical-mechanical definition of effectiveness, identifies specific factors or indicators:

> *'The 'technical efficiency' orientation focuses on the provision of basic school inputs (especially teachers, educational materials and learning time), their effect on academic achievement and the consequent priorities for investment. This orientation is characterised by positivist assumptions and by attempts to measure production functions through large-scale surveys' (Urwick & Junaidu, 1991).*

Such surveys by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), the Educational Testing Service's International Assessment of Educational Progress (IAEP), and the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) contain information that is useful for the development of a set of internationally comparative indicators, especially with respect to outcomes, inputs, and process indicators such as time and opportunity (Creemers & Reynolds, 1996). Quality here is seen less in terms of place or context and more in terms of comparable disaggregated variables.

The problem with this approach is that it tends to focus almost exclusively upon cognitive outcomes of schooling with a neglect of the affective and social outcomes of the schooling process, and secondly to ignore possible variation in factors associated with learning within different cultural contexts within countries, preferring instead to use 'whole sample' analyses which aggregate and look at relationships across schools.

A notable example of this kind of analysis is provided by Fuller & Heyneman (1989) who attempted to identify effective and ineffective factors that influence school achievement, reducing an initial list of 27 factors to a more manageable (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
Effective and Ineffective Factors that Influence School Achievement

Parameters	*% of Studies Showing Positive Effects*
Effective Parameters	
Length of Instructional Programme	86
Pupil Feeding Programmes	83
School Library Activity	83
Years of Teacher Training	71
Textbooks and Instructional Materials	67
Ineffective Parameters	
Pupil Grade Repetition	20
Reduced Class Size	24
Teachers Salaries	36
Science Laboratories	36

Source: Fuller & Heynemann (1989): 'Third World School Quality: Current Collapse, Future Potential'. *Educational Researcher,* Vol. 18:2, pp 12-19.

If quality is concerned with qualities such as relevance and efficiency, then, we would argue, such qualities are only meaningful when interpreted in a particular context. 'Years of teacher training' and 'reduced class size' may well provide us with general ideas about desirable inputs to an education system but can mean very different things when interpreted in context.

Recent multi-site research on teacher education in five national settings[3] shows clearly that it is not the quantity of teacher education that matters but its quality and the relationship between pre- and in-service teacher training that has a positive impact upon learning outcomes.

Similarly, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that although class size has a limited effect on the learning outcomes of the majority of pupils, it does have an effect on levels of literacy and numeracy of the pupils with particular learning needs. The primary and secondary pupil-teacher ratios in Norway, for example, of 12:1 and 10:1 respectively, have contributed significantly to their high positions in international comparisons of performance in reading and mathematics.

Quality and School Effectiveness

Other studies of educational effectiveness models (Scheerens, 1992) have attempted to provide a more sophisticated approach and have integrated the factors at school and

[3] See a range of publications by the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER) based at the University of Sussex Centre for International Education. The discussion papers are downloadable from the following web address: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/usie/muster/list.html

classroom levels into multi-level models that provide a theoretical basis and might enhance the explanatory power of research into educational effectiveness. Here a distinction is often made between 'general' and 'differential' effectiveness. The first concept refers to the achievements of all pupils in a school, the second to the achievements of specific groups of pupils, such as girls or boys (Van der Werf, 2000). Though it is useful to have some general idea of what parameters are worth considering in efforts to raise quality, there is a strong case to be made for multi-level models to be much more rooted in the recognisable realities of classroom life. It is here where most, though not all, learning takes place.

The *classroom culturalist* approach, with its stress upon the classroom or learning environment as the unit of analysis, attempts to understand quality in terms of the 'black box' educational process areas at the school and, importantly, classroom level. Here quality and effectiveness are viewed holistically with indicators 'joined up' and analysed qualitatively and *in situ*. Quality here is viewed through the lens of the local and particular learning environment and nuanced in terms of culture and context. Examples of this approach, discussed later in this paper, include the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) in India and the work of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC).

The relationship between school effectiveness and school improvement approaches to issues of quality, to some extent mirrors the shift in focus from a technical-efficiency approach to a more culturalist perspective in which the focus is placed on the school and individual classroom.

School Effectiveness to School Improvement

Of significance since the early 1990s is the emerging school improvement movement which attempts to understand quality through reviewing the processes of teaching and learning in the school context. Developing the school effectiveness approach, which reviews the key elements of 'good' schools and 'best' practices, the school improvement approach aims to understand particular classroom processes within the school which lead to improved student outcomes (Motala, 2001).

The term 'school improvement' then, is used as shorthand for an international body of research and an associated approach to school development, concerned with raising the quality of education in all schools (SIN, 1994).

School improvement in England & Wales and elsewhere[4] has recently started to draw on the school effectiveness research base. School effectiveness research provides a 'vision of a more desirable place for schools to be but little insight as to how to make the journey to that place' (Lezote, 1989).

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[4] In this evaluation, five categories of factors that contribute to quality are listed as: material inputs, teacher quality, school management and structure, implementation strategies, and factors specific to the education of girls.

A current feature of the 'School Improvement' approach is to focus on the relationships between children and teachers, classroom decision-making by teachers and children, and the development of critical thinking skills. Here *relevance* and *efficiency* as qualities, for example, are translated into the following questions: 'What *relevant* knowledge do we bring to this learning task?' 'Is this the most *efficient* way of going about solving this problem?' 'What *relevance* does this activity have for us now ... and in the future?'

The OECD-sponsored International School Improvement Project defined school improvement as, *'A systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively' (van Velzen, 1985).*

Quality can, therefore, be viewed as both an understanding of what is *effective* and a variety of approaches or strategies to achieve *improvement* in the quality of education provided.

If we accept the view that it is at the level of the school and classroom where we are to determine the quality of education, then we are faced with two further problems: first, how can we assess the relative quality of one school over an another, given that all schools differ in terms of context, pupil intake, etc. and secondly, how can we gain some sort of measure of how well a school or particular classroom has improved over time?

One strategy for addressing the comparative strengths and weaknesses of schools is to examine and quantify the differences which seem to exist between successful and unsuccessful school environments. Such assessments, commonplace in the United Kingdom, might well focus on a range of commonly agreed indicators of quality, e.g. the relationship of educational resources to learning outcomes, time on task in the classroom, the relative involvement of girls and boys in different class activities, the quantity and quality of in-service training provided for a school's staff. Turning these desirable aspects of the school environment into guides for the monitoring and sustainability of quality is something we will return to later when discussing best indicators of quality.

In terms of gaining an understanding of how a school has improved over time, the concept of *value addition* has been developed since the 1990s to provide ways to investigate the relationship between measures of school performance and the conditions that appear to enhance or hinder school effectiveness in different types of school context.

A major challenge in the development of value added measures has been the problem of developing models which allow the statistical analysis to separate out the effect of the school experience on individual pupil outcomes (what pupils achieve) and the extent to which pupil intake characteristics (those things the pupils arrive at school with, e.g. the level of attainment they have already reached when they enter school) affect pupil outcomes (Goldstein, 1995).

On a more practical level, such an approach to assessing change *within* a school's life will require accurate baseline information about pupil's prior attainment in order to calculate the value added component.

A modest way forward in operationalising such an approach to assessing change over time would be for schools to pilot schemes in which baseline data on selected new entrants to the school is built up over the child's career in the school. Such data might include an initial diagnostic test to measure literacy and numeracy, internal class-based assignment scores, and teacher assessment of the changing strengths and weaknesses of the selected pupils.

In Norway, where the author of this paper worked recently, government has established a National Quality Assessment System which monitors quality of the next generation of primary school children through national tests in Norwegian, English and Science, at three stages of a pupil's life within the first school. Such a move has resulted from an analysis of PISA data which indicates that in spite of high levels of educational expenditure, Norway lags behind in terms of pupil learning outcomes, compared to countries such as South Korea, Finland and the United Kingdom, whose expenditure is less per child, (Bergesen, 2003).

Quality then is a matter of identifying:

a) The systemic factors or variables that generally seem to make one school more or less *effective* than another, e.g. relevant resources, levels of reading, writing, and numeracy;
b) The manner in which these factors or variables are played out in relation to each other in a particular learning environment with a view to *improving* that environment; and
c) The *value-added* dimension which represents changes in quality between and within schools over a particular period of time.[5]

Quality and School Culture

Finally a word needs to be said about quality in relation to societal and school culture. It is clear that any discussion of quality must take seriously the contextual and cultural landscape within which improvement is to be implemented and interpreted.

Agreed or contested notions of quality reflect not only what a society wants in terms of an educated citizenry but, at a deeper level perhaps, shared visions of what it means to be human.

Understanding a school's culture is equally an essential prerequisite for any internal or external qualitative change. It can be argued that real improvement in quality cannot come from anywhere other than from within schools themselves, and 'within' is a complex web of values and beliefs, norms, social and power relationships and emotions.

Quality and changing schools is not just about changing curricula, teaching and learning strategies, assessment, structures and roles and responsibilities. Quality does not

[5] Usually this is from pupil entry to the school until public examinations at secondary level or over particular years in primary schools. See SIN *Research Matters No. 7* 'Value Added Approaches: Fairer Ways of Comparing Schools'. University of London, Institute of Education, Summer 1997, London.

happen just by producing plans as a result of external pressure. Nor does it happen just by setting targets and extolling pupils or teachers to do better. It requires an understanding of and respect for the different meanings and interpretations people bring to initiatives to improve quality and work to develop shared meanings underpinned by cultural norms and contextual realities that will promote sustainable improvement.

The four pillars of quality: viz. *relevance*, *efficiency*, '*something special*' and *inclusivity* have different meanings and weightages when understood in a particular context, in relation to each other, and when directed to improving a particular educational problem.

Conclusion

This article is based upon a conference held recently in New Delhi in which educationists met to discuss and evaluate programmes designed to improve the quality of Basic Education. In the guidelines sent to me in preparation for this conference, it stated that '*the concept of scale while assuring quality now needs to be brought centre-stage. Given the enormous need for school-based improvement, we can no longer afford the luxury of keeping reform initiatives small.*' The guidelines go on to remind us of World Bank advice in 2004 that '*Getting to scale is not short, smooth linear process – it is long, messy, arduous and unpredictable*'.

It is also deeply cultural and contextual.

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Global Interventions in Educational Reform

DPEP and the New Curriculum: The Case of Wayanad District in Kerala*

Ratheesh Kumar**
D. Parthasarathy**

Introduction

In the period of global financial integration, the reformulation of the world's political economy is leading to new kinds of interventions, resulting in restructuring of various spheres of life including education, governance, and law. Popular discussions on the impact of globalization on various aspects of society are meaningless in the absence of careful definition and examination of its impact on society, economy and culture. In this context this paper attempts to provide a description of educational reforms and changes due to the introduction of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in a Kerala district. Besides, it attempts to raise certain critical questions about the global packages flowing in the education sector of the third-world. These packages are part of 'good governance' and development models and approaches propounded by entities, such as the World Bank, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), and other international agencies and constitute a process of commodification, branding, and sale of development programmes to societies 'affected' by crisis of underdevelopment and governance.

The paper is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the impact of globalization at large on education in order to give an appropriate context to the present study of DPEP in Kerala, which is analyzed in the subsequent section.

The involvement of international agencies in the educational sector of the 'third-world' has been reinforced in the 1990s. New interventions in education can be attributed to the effects of liberalization and globalization policies, and the array of market oriented principles mediated for opening up the third-world markets and integrating them to the world economy. Globalization is not just about economic integration but also about bringing in all sectors of society under one ideological umbrella which will further

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enhance the historical process of global integration (Kumar et al, 2001). The process of erasing geographical boundaries is questioned for its imperialist connotations, as Calhoun describes it as a strategic attempt to throw all social agents to an economic game for which they are not equally prepared and equipped both culturally and economically. He adds that the unification eventually profits only the dominant forces who own the greater amount of the means of production, and who set the standards of the world's markets through the imposition of absolute rules of free exchange, and free circulation of capital. (Calhoun, 2002). Bourdieu in his recent article, notes that "the integration of the world financial field tends to weaken all regional and national powers and the formal cosmopolitanism in which it arms itself, in discrediting all other models of development, especially national, there and then condemned as nationalist, leaves citizens impotent in the face of transnational powers of economy and finance" (Bourdieu, 2002). Do these complex economic equations pervasively impinge on other domains like education, healthcare and the like? An investigation in this regard essentially requires an all-encompassing understanding of the interconnectedness of various factors involved in the production and distribution of global packages, policies and designs. In this context, the impact of globalization on education needs to be addressed to better understand the linkages between economic and cultural factors operating in the realm of education.

Education and Global Interventions

The term globalization has been used within the broader educational perspective to articulate a wide range of diverse and complex phenomena – political, economical and cultural. The convergence of the wealthy nations on the agenda of 'educating the poor' along with the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was the strategic vantage point from where the flow of financial resources in the form of aid and loans into the educational scenario of Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia took its expanded shape (Kumar et al, 2001). The proliferation of the 'hyperglobal' approaches is based on the premise that "we are entering a truly global age involving the triumph of global capitalism and the advent of distinctively new forms of global culture, governance and civil society" (Tikly, 2001: 151). SAP was formulated on the assumption that what had worked for rich countries would work for poor countries as well. The same economic theory was applied to rich and poor, and to all poor countries with little variation. This move has been viewed as a methodological error, one of ignoring historical processes and interconnections while looking at state policy inclinations or changes (Kumar et al, 2001). Bourdieu argues that the politics of structural adjustment tries to assure the process of integration through the subordination of dominated economies. That is, by reducing the role of the alternative mechanisms as "artificial" and "arbitrary", SAP favours the profit of the so-called free market through a group of converging measures which he calls the way of '*unite to better dominate*' (Bourdieu, 2002).

The advocates of the skeptical approach reiterate that the logic of global capitalism has resulted in polarizing the 'developed' and 'developing' countries to a great extent. Taking a different stand from this model, the transformationalist approach attempts to

offer resistance within the domain, suggesting that globalization is a historically contingent process, replete with contradictions, while acknowledging the experience of unprecedented levels of global interconnectedness (Giddens, 1999; Castells, 1996). To comprehend these perspectives, Held et al suggest that although globalization is resulting in greater integration in some areas of the economy, politics and culture, it is also resulting in greater stratification and fragmentation. (Held et al, 1999; Tikly, 2001). Tikly argues that the transformationalist approach has not succeeded enough to extrapolate the educational implications of increasing stratification along the lines of race, culture, class and gender. The failure to address issues of position and location in the context of the increasing urge towards universal designs, results in a monotonous engagement in defining the concept of development. This in effect universalizes notions of tribe, gender, class and so on, leading to inappropriate packages and forms of interventions.

Education in India: Colonial Period and After

The imposition of western contents in the domain of Indian education is not a new phenomenon. Organised ways of instilling western epistemological traits can be traced back to the famous Minutes of Lord Macaulay or even before that. According to this document, the education system had to produce a class in India, a group of people who would act as interpreters between the British and Indians, i.e, "a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Bailey, 1991: 138). Macaulay's proposal received both administrative and financial support in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language" (ibid). According to Bailey, in Macaulay's thinking Indian languages would be enriched by English, so that they could become vehicles for European scientific, historical and literary expression (ibid). English thus gradually became the language of government, education, advancement, "a symbol of imperial rule and of self-improvement" (McCrum et al, 1988: 325).

Ironically this hegemonic practice was sustained through the struggle against colonialism in which the English educated middle class had the upper hand in outlining the proposals for education as well as other issues[1]. Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy emphasized the need for English education and the western categories of knowledge for enlightening and empowering the natives, especially for eradicating social evils such as child marriage, sati etc. This approach is also reflected in Dalit critiques of the impact of British colonialism, wherein Macaulay's influence is seen in more progressive terms.

The content of knowledge, imparted in Indian schools and colleges has thus acquired validity and status under a special kind of cultural and economic stress, that is, of colonial rule (Kumar, 1991). By making this statement, Krishnakumar essentially argues that

[1] We are using the term "hegemonic practice" to distinguish from certain positions which simply devalue or decry the importance of English education in social reform, merely because of its foreign origin.

political freedom masks marks of colonial rule and the question of what is worth teaching remains clouded by the colonial memories of Indian society.

"The role of designing, selecting and shaping the school curriculum was performed by the enlightened outsider in the colonial India and the knowledge possessed by the natives was treated as matters emerging from ignorance. Later the role of the enlightened outsider was instilled in the mind of the educated Indians who did not challenge the form, content and text of knowledge that colonial rulers had designed as the appropriate curricula"(Kumar, 1991: 21).

In the post-independence period, the new circumstances of freedom from colonial rule did not lead to demands or policy changes for educational reform. Colonial as well as post-colonial rule gave no room for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and cultural forms in the curriculum of ordinary schools as they were considered as deficient (ibid).

The possibilities of creating linkages between school and mass culture were limited due to the dominance of English language as medium of instruction in the school curriculum. Krishna Kumar makes a point here that this walled knowledge was created in order to constitute a civil society on the basis of eighteenth century English political ideas, the bourgeoisie idea of individuality, equality, security and the like. English language had become a tool to uphold the colonial power and privilege in the perception of the educated Indians. Skills, crafts and arts that the illiterate masses possessed were no more treated as worthy knowledge. These forms of culture became symbols of ignorance and irrelevant to education (ibid). The purpose of underscoring Kumar's argument is not to negate the utility and validity of western contents, but to raise the question on the hegemony and dominance that is inherent in the forms and practice of that knowledge category when it comes to different cultural contexts.

From the 1960s onwards, a trend had emerged wherein, especially with its English educated elite, India was attractively placed to receive American attention in the spheres of higher education, administration and the media. The dominance enjoyed by the American media with the popularity of magazines provided yet another layer of support to the construction of an ethos favouring American involvement in India's civic life. In addition, involvement of American scholars, policy makers and think tanks in formulating development programmes in India, provided further impetus for a turn towards the US.

The following decades witnessed the flow of international interventions in the field of education in the form of loans and aids for projects and programmes. Different institutions and agencies began to engage with the funding enterprise in the education sector of the third-world countries much before the policies of economic liberalization. For instance, the Indian Institutes of Technology were set up with the help of UNESCO and selected western governments.

With the introduction of economic liberalization and globalization in the 1990s, things took a further shift. By abolishing the protection of the domestic market and controls imposed on foreign investments, the logic of universalism led to ambivalent equations in international relations, economic ties and trade relations in particular. These

developments have had their reflections and reverberations in the field of education in the form of opening up of the education sector to foreign players and introduction of global packages to educate the poor countries. Also, the private sector started playing an increasing role in education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This kind of an approach indicates that the structure of education replicates the socio-economic structure when the deciding factors for the pattern of education and its distribution depend upon the existing modes of material ownership.

The Jomtien declaration of 'Education for All' has become a significant component in the global development paradigm. By becoming a signatory of this declaration[2], India threw open the doors for the Bretton Wood institutions, allowing them to direct and regulate its educational policy frameworks. As a result, a large number of international agencies like the World Bank, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Department for International Development (DFID), and others began to enter India's primary education sector with grants and loans. In the mid 1990s, a new mechanism was introduced to pull together all international funds under one central kit and then redistribute to the states and districts under the District Primary Education Programme. The involvement of external agencies in the sphere of education was received with suspicion from the critics of globalization. Kumar et al argue that the 1991 world economic crisis provided leverage to the World Bank to insist that developing countries must borrow for primary education and health. The disguised entry of large-scale commitments was made due to macro-economic compulsions (Kumar et al, 2001). Predictably this passage of unification has been supplemented by the retreat of formal state commitments for primary education.

These developments eventually led to the launching of a national education programme - the DPEP in selected districts of the country. The formulation of DPEP was based on the objective of converging the experience of various externally financed programmes implemented in the previous two decades. Without contradicting the universal variables put forwarded by the Jomtein declaration, DPEP also came up with focus on expressing inequalities and deprivation in local and global terms. This agenda is implicated in the discovery of certain target groups along the lines of caste, tribe, and gender.

Thus DPEP constructed target groups, such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and girl children but without a socio-scientific understanding of these categories. The administrative understanding of the concepts of caste, tribe and gender is similar to the nineteenth century colonial anthropologist's notions. Contestations of this methodological problem remained untouched in the design of the educational packages

[2] The Jomtien Conference (1990) was all about launching a financial network to intervene in the educational sector of the third-world countries. The agenda was to provide financial assistance in the form of grants and loans to restructure the educational system according to the terms and references of the international funding bodies. See Krishna Kumar, Sadhana Saxena and Manisha Priyam,2001.

with universal variables (Kumar et al, 2001). This approach persists even though critical questions deeply grounded in the anthropological understanding of the 'other' have since led to the abandonment of colonial perspectives in anthropology. The typical administrative perception or the commodification of the 'other' as exotic continues to expand surreptitiously with the global delivery of packages. Constructing target groups on the basis of such understanding is not very different from the previous colonial anthropological approach. Certain communities are identified as 'backward' and they then have to be 'cured' or made to achieve progress according to certain universal standards and techniques set by the developed countries of the first-world.

To understand this phenomenon from a micro level, the present article provides a case study of DPEP in Wayanad, a district with the highest tribal population compared to the other districts of Kerala. In attempting to unpack the various dimensions of the programme and its particular features within the socio-cultural and economic characteristics of the district, the study tries to identify certain contradictions in the theoretical and implementational aspects of the whole business of global packages and target groups in education.

Wayanad has a fairly prosperous economy owing to its tea estates, coffee plantations and forest land, but the majority of its tribal population suffers from land alienation, sexual harassment of women, low levels of literacy and many other social and economic problems. The comparative educational backwardness of the area is especially prominent given the general educational profile of Kerala as a whole (see Table 1). It is hence, a typically 'backward' area ripe for global/national intervention. However the reasons and social context for this backwardness are not understood by agencies of intervention during the design and implementation process.

TABLE 1
Literacy Rate in the Districts of Kerala

District	*Male Literacy*	*Female Literacy*	*Total*
Kasaragod	90.36	79.12	84.57
Kannur	96.13	89.40	92.59
Wayanad	89.77	80.72	85.25
Kozhikode	96.11	88.62	92.24
Malappuram	93.25	86.26	89.61
Palakkad	89.52	79.56	84.35
Trissur	95.11	89.71	92.27
Ernakulam	95.81	90.66	93.20
Idukki	92.33	85.02	88.69
Kottayam	97.34	94.35	95.82
Alappuzha	96.27	90.52	93.43
Pathanamthitta	96.41	93.43	94.84
Kollam	94.43	88.18	91.18
Thiruvanathapuram	92.64	86.14	89.28

Source: Census of India 2001.

In the light of the above facts, this paper attempts to evaluate the working of DPEP and the new school curriculum through a few case studies of the school community, including students, teachers, parents, educational activists and officials.

Education in Wayanad District: An Overview

There are 128 Lower Primary schools, 77 Upper Primary schools and 62 High schools in Wayanad district, spread over three block panchayats and one municipality. Among 267 schools of the district, 138 are under government management and the rest are under private management. Recently, a Central School started functioning in Kalpetta municipality but Navodaya[3] schools are yet to start in the district. In the total pupil strength of 1,37,787 in the district (15.7% of total population), 22,909 belong to the scheduled tribes and 7,671 to the scheduled castes.

In the technical education sector, a government polytechnic is functioning in the district. Apart from this, one commercial institute also functions in Wayanad offering a diploma course and is being managed by a village panchayat. A tailoring and garment-making centre is also functioning in the district. There is one government industrial training institute (ITI) in Kalpetta, one private industrial training institute in Menanthavady and one industrial training centre (ITC) in Sulatanbathery. There is also a co-operative training institute for tribals in Karani.

The picture of Wayanad is very grim with respect to several indicators of education when compared to the rest of Kerala. Literacy rate is relatively low in Wayanad than in other districts (Census of India, 1991). The rate of dropout among school going children is higher in Wayanad district vis-a-vis the state average (Krishnan, 1998). A sample survey in the above study indicates high dropout rate, especially among tribal students at the primary level. There are 37 dropouts from a few selected schools and among these 37 dropouts, 32 students belong to scheduled tribes. The details of dropouts are shown in Table 2.

Wayanad is one of the few districts, which have meager infrastructural facilities in the education sector. Forty schools are still functioning in thatched sheds whereas 98 schools have *pucca* buildings. This shows that around 50% schools have relatively poor infrastructural conditions.

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[3] The National Policy on Education, 1986, envisaged establishment of a Navodaya Vidyalayas (Schools) in each District of the country. The first two schools were started in 1985-86 on experimental basis. The number of schools has now grown to 482, spread over 34 states and union territories. These schools have over 1.41 lakhs students on rolls. Navodaya Vidyalayas are fully residential and co-educational schools covering classes VI to XII. Education in the Vidyalayas is free for all enrolled students, including lodging, boarding, textbooks, uniforms etc.

TABLE 2
Dropout Rate of Students in Classes 1-4 by Social Category, 2000-01

Class	*No. of Selected Classes*		*Boys*			*Girls*			*Total*
	Classes With Dropouts	*Classes Without Dropouts*	*General*	*SC*	*ST*	*General*	*SC*	*ST*	
I	8	2	Nil	Nil	7	1	Nil	5	13
II	7	2	1	Nil	6	Nil	Nil	4	11
III	7	4	Nil	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	5	8
IV	8	5	Nil	Nil	3	Nil	Nil	2	5
Total Dropouts									37

Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2000-2001.

No discussion of education in Wayanad district is complete without a reference to education of tribal people as the district constitutes over a third of the tribal population of Kerala (36%). Education of the tribal people assumes much significance in the light of constitutional reference in Article 46 of the Indian Constitution, which calls for the educational upliftment of tribal people, and reinforced by the Education Commission of India (1964-66). Against this backdrop, one has to look into the education among tribal people through the analysis of changing trends over the years. A study conducted by Krishnan for 'Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development' (KRPLLD)[4] sheds light on the degree of awareness of the tribal people on various educational schemes and projects. According to this study the tribes of Wayanad are comparatively knowledgeable of various educational schemes and projects, such as Lumpsum-grant, hostel facilities, kindergarten, and various financial assistances. However, their awareness about various functional aspects of these schemes is substantially low. The other observation in the study is that the tribes are literally kept in the dark as to vocational educational facilities, mobile employment exchange, pre-examination training facilities and outer state educational possibilities etc. The other distressing trend is that the tribes are yet to benefit from around 50% of educational schemes and projects (Krishnan, 1999). These facts vary considerably among various tribal communities since there also prevails the hierarchical social order like in the caste system. Among the tribes of Wayanad, Kurichiar and Kurumar possess reasonable awareness in education whereas Paniyar, Adiyar, and Kattunaykan lag far behind in this respect. The study cited backwardness in educational awareness between Kattunaykan and Paniyar in comparison to the average awareness of the other tribes. Tribal education in Wayanad faces two

[4] As a part of Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development, C. Krishnan (1999) makes an inquiry into the educational development schemes and programmes in Wayanad district, Kerala.

problems – burgeoning dropouts and low enrolment of pupils at primary level. These problems are also related to the awareness of education among the tribes, of which Kattunayakan and Adiyar fall behind in the order. A lack of understanding of local hierarchies and their linkages to the economic system has meant that uniformity in policy making results in unequal distribution of educational resources, further perpetuating inequalities.

While studying the dropout rate, 72% of pupils are ejected as dropouts at primary level itself. The responses of tribes in the survey as to the reasons for dropout are varied in nature. The reasons attributed to dropout are many, and include financial constraints, disinterest towards education, social factors, baby-sitting for younger siblings and others (ibid.). Moreover, all these factors seem to be related to tribal people's continuous struggle for livelihood – for land, shelter and food. Statistics show that in Kerala, more than 40000 tribal families are deprived of their land rights as well as access to forest and other natural resources. In recent times, the number of starvation deaths among the tribal people of Kerala has been increasing. A number of starvation deaths have been reported from Adivasi areas of Wayanad district itself. This issue is not a phenomenon without reason, even though the state attributes it to alcoholism, unknown epidemics and unhygienic living conditions. In the midst of these troubles and turmoils, the sustainability and accomplishment of any educational programme cannot be stable and certain, and a positive response towards education cannot be expected from the people. While the DPEP attempts to take note of the economic and educational backwardness of the tribals, at the policy level it fails to take note of the complexity of their problems, and simply assumes that alleviating educational backwardness through school is a sufficient condition for development.

DPEP and the Curriculum Reform

The low level literacy rate of Wayanad as compared to other districts, swelling dropout rates and inadequate awareness about educational programmes and schemes, and developmental backwardness, impelled the administrators and educationists to reflect on the need for certain innovations in the system (Krishnan, 1998)[5]. The District Primary Education Programme was started in Wayanad on 1 January 1995 along with other two districts of Kerala, i.e., Malappuram and Kasargod. These two districts also possess certain parallels with Wayanad in socio-cultural characteristics, which serve as the 'rationale' for introducing the programme.

DPEP was introduced as part of the structural adjustment programme in the mid 1990s, covering 42 districts in seven states: Assam, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in the first phase. It now covers 240 districts in 16 states (Aggarwal, 2000). In Kerala, the DPEP has since been merged with the Sarva

[5] Wayanad district is one of the districts with a lowest literacy rate compared to the other districts of Kerala. See http://www.kerala.gov.in/statistical/vitalstatistics/1.18.pdf.
Also See http://www.kerala.gov.in /statistical/vitalstatistics/weducation.htm

Siksha Abhiyan and is being implemented in all districts, after funding by the World Bank came to an end[6]. Normatively, DPEP is for the benefits of those states which

- have a lower level of female literacy than the national average,
- face pressure in primary school admissions due to the implementation of National Literacy Mission (NLM) and higher rate of detention,
- do not have sufficient infrastructural facilities and limited accessibility to schools, and
- have low career achievement level and poor quality of education. (GOI, 1995).

As far as the first three factors are concerned, Kerala has achieved sufficient growth and does not, therefore, qualify for DPEP. But in the case of Wayanad, this is not true since high rate of dropouts among tribal children and poor infrastructural conditions of schools remain features of the district, making it necessary for the programme to be implemented.

DPEP was planned as a seven-year-long programme, financed by external agencies including the World Bank, UNICEF and others. The envisaged goals of DPEP have several positive aspects on its surface structure, which are formulated to impart desirable changes in the prevailing system with attractive methods of pedagogic practice different from conventional models. However, the requirement for a large amount of resources for implementation (both financial and human power) triggered a major setback to the programme. The sustainability of such vast resources cannot be assured in the long term.

The bedrock of DPEP for its upward propulsion includes a broad platform comprised of common people, parents, teachers, teachers unions, educational activists and non-governmental organizations (NGO). The total implementation process is embedded in decentralization and participation of panchayats and village educational committees. At the school level, the participation of headmaster, teachers, and parent-teacher association are assured for the smooth functioning. DPEP calls for the participation of people's representatives, non-governmental organizations, and educational activists at panchayat level. At the top of its administrative structure, there is a council functioning at district level to ensure people's participation at various levels, which makes the project impractical and inappropriate for local contexts, given the coordination problems.

The people's councils are entrusted with the task of implementing the project, and they take up awareness campaigns. The district advisory council, block council, village education council, school's PTA, and mother groupings have already been constituted to that direction. DPEP is being executed through the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Block Resource Centre (BRC) at block level, Cluster Resource Centre

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[6] The funding guidelines of the World Bank specifies the period of funding as 7 years. After that, the state government has to meet the liabilities, which seem to be ambitious and not feasible to maintain the amount of expenditure in primary education that World Bank had provided for DPEP (See Kumar, 2003).

(CRC) at cluster level, and School Councils at school level. This implementation mechanism is also followed in Wayanad district. The district collector is in-charge of overall supervision of DPEP and is assisted by a district coordinator and additional district coordinators. There are three block resource centres functioning in Wayanad at Pinangode, Betheri and Mananthavadi. 70% of the funds allocated for implementation are earmarked for the betterment of quality education at primary level, 6% for management and the rest for infrastructural facilities (24%), out of the maximum limit of Rs.40 crores (as per World Bank guidelines). This large amount is beyond the state government's financial allocation for education after the termination of the foreign funding. This puts a question mark on the whole business of an ambitious programme like DPEP.

DPEP introduced a new curriculum at the level of primary education in order to overcome the prevailing drawbacks of the conventional method of teaching and learning. The shift was a radical one, altering the entire structure of the existing system. The changes in the curriculum provided the ground for a series of debates and conflicts among the academic community and the general public.

This new curriculum brought out an integrated method of learning in contrast to the previous one, which had differentiated and separate subjects. The textbook is no longer the only tool in the classroom and memory power not the only indicator of learning. Pedagogy is designed on the premise that a child is not an empty pot and a teacher is supposed to be a 'facilitator' rather than an "instructor", that is, the teacher is supposed to carry out continuous refinement of existing knowledge (Kumar, 2003).

Spiral learning is another technique in the curriculum in which a child starts learning from an idea, through sentences, then words and finally alphabets. Thereafter from the learned alphabet, the child tries to make other words, sentences and different ideas. This is contrary to the previously practiced pedagogy where a student proceeded strictly from letters, through words to sentences. Apart from the cyclical nature of this pedagogic practice, spiral learning also implies that characters and concepts that are introduced in one lesson, reappear in subsequent lessons. This is to enable the child to attain a more intimate attachment with them and also that these lessons get reiterated in different ways (ibid).

Integrated method refers to a method of learning without differentiating the content into various disciplinary subjects. Thus the child acquires language, arithmetic, and knowledge of environmental and other sciences from a single lesson. This is against the linear method of learning that existed prior to this programme. Teaching methods have been innovated so that these accord with the child's nature. The revised curriculum has also given room for imaginative thinking and natural learning experiences (Krishna Kumar, 1999). However, the curriculum reform with a sudden shift in the fundamental principles did not work according to its theoretical foundations, especially in the non-DPEP districts[7] of the state. Due to the absence of sufficient resources, non-DPEP

[7] Though DPEP was operational only in six districts of Kerala, the revised curriculum (introduced by DPEP) is applicable all over the state. In the non-DPEP districts, the responsibility of

districts failed to impart the revised curriculum despite its positive and imaginative contents. Even in the DPEP districts, the theoretical properties of the revised curriculum remain on paper. The coordination and involvement of different activities in teaching and learning are often found at the margins of everyday practice in schooling.

DPEP Curriculum: Innovations and Alternatives

The DPEP in Wayanad district has special features that take into consideration its demographic specificities and cultural characteristics. Since there is a sizeable tribal population in the Wayanad district, special educational aid is to be provided to the tribes to acclimatize with language as most of them speak tribal dialects. DPEP in Wayanad district is contemplating to recruit teachers from tribal community to tide over this problem. In fact, handling the problem of dialect is a complicated task. It is very particular in the case of Wayanad district due to the large size of tribal population. Tribal students find difficulty in understanding many of the standardized versions of language. Since most of the teachers are not from tribal background and many of them are not from Wayanad district itself, they often fail to negotiate with the language variations and particular cultural symbols. This is not to make claims from extreme sides, e.g. 'tribal people should be imparted knowledge only through their own language', or 'academic space should not leave room for accommodating local dialect and cultural traits'. But beyond the question of representation, there is an urgency of addressing this issue through certain pedagogic innovations and negotiations. In order to ease financial constraints, DPEP has introduced free textbooks and slates to students in the first standard. This facility is continued up to fourth standard, but restricted to girls and students belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

One of the special features of DPEP is that it has introduced "reading corner[8]" in the classroom for the purpose of enhancing general reading habit of pupils. With the objective of improving literary skills of students, students' journal has been introduced to the restructured classroom. Through this innovation, DPEP has done away with copybook writing and comprehension, which was being practiced for a long time. While these may sound innovative, yet the reading corner does not function properly in most of these schools after initial efforts.

DPEP has entrusted the management of a class to a single teacher who is expected to control the class from morning to evening. It is observed that if one teacher were to be absent for a few days, the entire functioning of the class would be in peril. There are no alternative arrangements to address this impediment. A peculiar feature of DPEP is that a teacher is instructed not only to take care of all the periods of a class but also is promoted

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implementing the curriculum is entrusted with the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET).

[8] Reading corner is a concept introduced in DPEP in order to enhance the extra reading of children during the free hours. Children's magazines and other extra reading materials are provided in the corner of a classroom for this purpose.

to next standard and follows the same students up to fourth standard. A large number of teachers vehemently oppose this plan as it puts tremendous workload on them. This feeling among teachers lies in the fact that following this reform, they have to prepare and rehearse study materials annually.

This practice has a serious disadvantage from the pupils' perspective also. Every teacher has certain peculiar qualities of teaching as well as limitations. Instead of equally distributing these characteristics of pedagogy among all the students, the single teacher practice in DPEP makes the classroom monotonous and single dimensional. If the teacher is less committed and not interested in handling the new curriculum, students have no option to listen other teachers.

Continuous evaluation system has been introduced in the place of conventional exams, which were time bound. The newly introduced evaluation system is a continuous process of text reading, writing and other skills of the pupils by classifying them into small groups that may usually take one or two days as the situation warrants. The new model takes exception to the ranking system of the previous model, and awards grades so as to bring down the hierarchy in achievements. At the same time, the grading system has certain drawbacks because of big class interval for grading. Because of this, grades do not always reflect the relative performance of students. The students at either extremes of the same grade are regarded as equal performers. This diverts attention from insisting on the improvement of the pupil. In this context, students in the lower extreme of grades really need special attention from teachers for academic improvement, which is conspicuously absent in the grading system. Most of the parents are not in favour of grading system since competitive examinations are not following this method.

DPEP has introduced another innovation called Multi-Grade Learning Centre (MGLC), which is a single-teacher institution. It was introduced in Wayanad in 1997. This programme is primarily targeted at the tribal people, specially at those communities, which had a large number of children who had never been to school or had dropped out and therefore did not have a chance to get back into mainstream schooling. In Wayanad district, there are 10 MGLCs with 235 students. In this system students of all age groups (5 to 14 years) sit in the same class. The MGLC treats language variations and cultural aspects of the tribe with utmost care and incorporates them into the curriculum. This innovative scheme creates a close relationship among the children of all age groups and works well with committed teachers and their attitude towards tribals since most of them have non-tribal background.

Parent's attitude to the DPEP is mixed. Most of the parents consulted did not have sufficient awareness of the programme. Some of them treated this curriculum as inferior since there exists a positive attitude towards English medium private schools. The role of the media in the coverage of DPEP and their concerned politics has resulted in a

misinterpretation of the programme. Moreover, anti-DPEP front's large scale propaganda might have forced those parents to take this stand[9].

Another drawback of this curriculum, pointed out by some parents was that it requires increased participation of parents and this seemed impractical for them, because of their preoccupation with their work. Most of the middle class parents found the DPEP curriculum a reason for not sending their children to government schools. Parents of this kind also possess a negative attitude not only to DPEP curriculum but also to all government schooling systems in general. However, this inclination cannot be attributed only to the arrival of the new curriculum and its consequences. There already prevailed this kind of outlook among the middle class. This behavioral pattern can be substantiated or justified from a particular viewpoint. In fact the large percentage of quality output, measured with a linear scale was produced by private management, aided and unaided schools. Obviously the educational objectives as far as the middle and lower middle class parents are concerned will be the achievement of this kind.

From the field visits, negative viewpoints were gathered from some of the mothers of school going children about this programme. Most of the mothers were apprehensive of the newly introduced grading system, as the people's deeply embedded notions don't help them to adjust with the collectivity that the grading system introduces and promulgates. Here lies the pragmatic question, education for what? In a given society, opportunities are determined by certain methods of learning and reproducing, the system will give legitimation to that particular method. Theoretically speaking, the goals of education will be democratic and the philosophy of education will be to learn the ideals of democratization, equal participation and finally to become a rational human being. But the lay persons' discourse always visualizes education as a means of bettering livelihood which can be sustainable through a placement of job in a secured domain. If this pragmatic vision is more or less an outcome of a particular educational code and in the present context the knowledge transmission demands rote learning and the evaluation requires memory and reproduction, the larger society will no longer go for other options of evaluation like the grading method. In India, at present, almost all the competitive examinations, career oriented tests and other employment opportunities are based on a similar pattern of evaluation method, in which only rote learning is taken into account.

The attempt to gather the opinions of teachers on the merits and demerits of DPEP curriculum and scheme produced mixed responses of different perspectives and standpoints. Among the respondents, all teachers opined that cognitive domain of the child is increasing as a merit of DPEP. This includes self-awareness of students, increasing self power to think and other various creative activities and the like. In other responses, 23.3% teachers supported the development of the language. On the same

[9] There was a sharp divide of opinion in the way the new curriculum reform (DPEP) was introduced at the primary level of education in Kerala. A serious group of intellectuals, educationists, political leaders, and cultural leaders voiced their reservations and then went on to form a forceful platform of resistance. This development explicitly created a fissure among the people in relation to its veracity and admissibility (See Kumar, 2003).

measure, 60% of teachers countered the above-mentioned viewpoint by citing lack of vocabulary as an important demerit. Another major trend shown in the survey was that 40% favoured social awareness of the pupil as merit.

In terms of demerits, cited in the survey, 60% of teachers pointed lack of time on account of workload problems. Among the various groups of service experience, teachers with 11-20 years of service, 66.6% singled out the problem of increasing workload and absence of participation. The same group also mentioned the above express evaluation as an implementation problem to be a disadvantage.

Most of the responses of the teachers on the merits and demerits of the curriculum seem to be based on hearsay rather than actual experience. In more concrete terms, these opinions give us an idea in general that the teachers' political, ideological and professional outlook influenced them to a large extent to construct their view points and statements on the curriculum. On the one hand, the teachers who opposed the programme from ideological and political standpoints discarded the programme without taking any of its positive aspects into consideration. On the other hand, those who favoured the radical shift as a political and intellectual gain, seemed to have abandoned the critical questions one might ask. A balanced outlook with critical and analytical approach is limited to a tiny space left by these ideological divisions. This tiny space, a more academic-oriented one is occupied by a less number of teachers who are largely subjected to the external pressures created by the polarized stand points, both political and intellectual.

Conclusion

Certain immediate impacts at the ground level and the theoretical contradictions inherent to the DPEP programme and new curriculum in the educational sector of Wayanad district, help us understand that even though new innovations have been introduced, the rate of dropout of scheduled tribes remains more or less identical as before. The newly introduced curriculum has failed to convince a large number of parents about the innovative methods of learning; they seem to be mostly satisfied with conventional education and its 'standard measures'. However, with the introduction of DPEP, the enthusiasm of students has increased considerably especially in certain parts of rural areas. Albeit this trend was supported by teachers, there were quite a few teachers who were resentful of the new curriculum as it put tremendous workload on their shoulders. The opinions expressed by teachers on the merits and demerits of the programme have been substantially influenced by their age and teaching experience, and political and ideological standpoints.

It can be perceived that though most of the educationists argue for a considerable change in the existing system of schooling, they are reluctant in appreciating child-centered and activity-oriented learning. Moreover, the society at large has not developed the necessary attitudes to incorporate the indigenous talents of children as a standard criterion to understand the child's abilities. In view of society's inertness towards such capabilities, these children get eliminated from the system. These undercurrents in the society throw up several contradictions. Presumably, with its innovative curriculum,

DPEP assumes much significance in theory, but its administrative structures, institutional conflicts and political backlashes weaken its attractiveness in practice (Kumar, 2003). Moreover, its global context and short term funding brings suspicion on the long term impact of the programme. It remains to be seen whether its current democratic structure in theoretical terms, locally implemented and globally governed, holds for a long time. A further disturbing question that comes to mind is the future of DPEP/SSA curriculum and resources, once the government funding fails to match with the funding that were being provided by the World Bank previously and other external agencies. After the expiry of contract period of seven years of funding by external agencies, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has taken over the responsibility to provide funds for the programme. However, the sustainability of the financial support to the programme in the course of political and economic shifts and ideologies is a matter of concern. Will it add to the dependency of the education sector on private and global capital?

In the case of Wayanad, the most significant factor of implementing any kind of educational programme is to acknowledge the cultural specific categories of the region, particularly the tribal dialect, indigenous knowledge system and other cultural symbols. The absence of such an approach seems to be one of the major factors for the ineffectiveness in imparting the new pedagogic device. Another major handicap of DPEP is its lens, the lens of colonial anthropologists, used as a tool to construct tribal people as exotic museum pieces. Borrowing from Krishna Kumar (2001), we intend to posit this colonial construct in the present context. DPEP's emphasis on the improvement of the educational status of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and girl child as one of its prime objectives was questioned from the Dalit[10] and feminist perspectives. As an approach to understand the problems of backwardness and oppression, DPEP's framework is limited by the bureaucratic constructions of oppressed groups. This understanding dissociates from the experience of the oppressed classes. The term Dalit has been used as against the administrative understanding of caste oppression. The administrative understanding of the tribe and caste in the absence of critical questions and its constructions and what makes them different in contrast to the mainstream people of the country, become problematic (Kumar et al, 2001). This is a colonial anthropological construct, the way of viewing the other as something unique, which upholds the power equations of the West, in designing global packages with the formula of universalism in particular. As long as this typical construction of the tribe/mainstream dichotomy activates in academic and policy research, especially in designing educational packages, the situation will remain problematic and challenging.

Problems inherent in the very epistemology of global packages include a focus on identifying and working with marginalized groups for 'advancement'. Motivated by a

[10] Dalit is a political identity as opposed to caste. It expresses Dalits' knowledge of themselves as an oppressed class and signifies their resolve to demand liberation through a revolutionary transformation of a system that oppressed them (See Valmiki, 2003, p. xii).

positivist desire to 'measure' good governance and development by means of 'indicators', there is too narrow a focus on formal rules, procedures, institutions, and mechanisms, accompanied by a lack of emphasis on facilitation and developmental and democratic *processes*. The emphasis is on assessing changes in indicators rather than on processes for positive change. In part the failures and limitations of 'governance for development' reforms, such as DPEP, are rooted in an imperfect understanding of civil society, and the failure to consider the different levels of capabilities of diverse social groups to actively participate and contribute to processes of development and change, despite recognition of target groups and the inclusion of NGOs. The 'global, but adapted to local' approach is characterized by an inability to broaden the scope of institutions necessary for change and reform; even while there is recognition of form and quality of institutions, there is no recognition of a different type of institution that may be indigenous to particular societies and that may be appropriate to them.

Ultimately programmes, such as DPEP, fail to have a large and positive impact, because they are focused too narrowly on the education sector without locating educational and social problems within the larger developmental context.

Academics and researchers need to grapple with the issue of how their critiques can be better targeted so that educational reform and policies do not end up either being subsumed by existing aspects of the social structure, or impose new structures of dominance and hierarchy. McLaren and Giroux (1995), in their preface to 'Social theory and education: *A Critique of theories of social and cultural reproduction*' (Morrow and Torres 1995), underline the absence of the reflections of the new theoretical movements of social sciences in the realm of educational inquiries. This argument expresses concern about the limitations in educational research, especially in conceiving the linkages between education and socio-cultural dynamics. This gap in educational research reflects in the framing and design of policies and programmes that undermine the local political and cultural context in the flow of the universal definitions and understanding of the concepts and issues of gender, social class, race, backwardness, underdevelopment and oppression. This is partly due to the fact that there has been an implicit dominance of either the structural functionalist framework or the developmental psychological perspective in constructing the theoretical issues and framing research problems for empirical investigation in educational research for a long time.

Policy makers have rarely incorporated the socio-cultural context as a significant factor in developing and implementing educational programmes and policies, especially while addressing the issues of the people from the margins. In the Indian circumambience, with the possible exception of gender issues, the socio-cultural and political dimensions behind the construction of *marginalities* are rarely addressed by sociologists. Needless to say that such an approach seems to be imperative in understanding the issues of social class, caste, religion, tribe and gender.

Feminist sociologists have articulated their own yardsticks of social justice and equality in evolving a strong tradition of policy analysis and research to interrogate the implementation of government programmes in relation to gendered patterns of education,

and the gendered premises of the liberal democratic project. Most of these attempts took shape within the post-structural and post-modernist discourses (Dillabough and Arnot, 2001). In India, some of the pioneering works of scholars like Chanana, in critiquing educational systems and change in India from a gender perspective have not been adequately carried forward by the next generation of scholars. In addition, there has not been much cross fertilization between scholars working on educational issues (including gender aspects) and sociologists working on other aspects of Indian society. While, to some extent, caste and tribe are part of mainstream Indian sociology as it is taught and researched, it is interesting to note that the critiques of caste, tribe, and gender that have emerged in recent times, especially from the margins, are yet to become part of mainstream sociology including its sub-disciplines such as the sociology of education. Feminist sociology of education in India illustrates what can be called the decadence of 'gendered' studies of education in the Indian context, especially when analyzing the political and cultural dimensions of programmes like DPEP. Chanana has argued that instead of acquiring an interdisciplinary orientation, both education and gender occupy the margins of sociological research. Naturally this absence reflects in the framing of policies in education. At the policy level, though a new educational policy was formulated in the 1986 with the rhetoric of universal access, education for women's equality, empowerment and social justice has remained at the periphery of contemporary educational priorities (Chanana, 2001).

Such a situation obtains due to an unthinking and 'conventional' approach to comparative education which has lead to what Shukla (1983: 258) has referred to as the concealment of "essentially neocolonial, destructive functions of organized, centralized formal education" and tends to attribute it to the same "developmental and integrative, creative functions that it performed in the western world". He argues for a different approach to comparative education which is more "inclusive and comprehensive", and takes "for its parameters the relationship between classes and ethnic groups, their skills, economic and social statuses in their contemporary state, and historical development" (ibid). Therein lies the challenge for sociologists in general as well as for those labouring within the field of the sociology of education.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Neelam SOOD (2003): Management of School Education in India. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration and A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, pp. xiii+217, ISBN-81 7648-500-4, Hard Cover, Price: Rs. 495.

The book under review is based on a consultation organized by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. The deliberations covered seven themes; Decentralization of school education; Teacher and Teacher Management issues; Supervision and support system; Education of minorities and disadvantaged groups; Role of NGOs in school education; Education and technology; and Financing of school education. In all fourteen selected papers were included, two under each theme. The editor has provided an introductory chapter providing an overview of presentations and a summing up chapter titled 'Lessons Learnt'.

In the Foreword, B. P. Khandelwal, the then Director NIEPA, points out that the management system appears to have remained inflexible and non-accommodative of changes and innovations needed to meet the emerging challenges of the system. This has affected the efficiency as well as quality of the education system. The National Policy on Education (1986) as well as the revised policy adopted in 1992, called for total overhand ling of the school education management setup. Moreover, the commitment to provide 'Education for All' has brought the need for structural and organizational changes in school management to the forefront. In "School Education - An Introduction to Effective Management", Neelam Sood points out that NPE suggested delinking the education management from the political governance. The decentralized management as envisaged in NPE (1986) included setting up of District Board of Education, School Complexes and Villages Education Committees. To reform teacher education, the institution of District Institute of Education and Training was planned to serve the academic needs and provide resource support for elementary and adult education.

The first paper under section 'Decentralization of School Education' by Noel F. McGinn presents three perspectives on decentralization, i.e., expert system; political governance; and market mechanisms. The author points out that in India, there appears to be a will to strengthen democratic institutions and build capacity at the local level to enhance community participation in decision making. It is also felt to reduce central government's share of the cost burden of education. However, there is not enough local capacity yet for decision making, which deters the process of decentralizing management of education in many states. Next paper by P. K. Umashankar points out that for decentralization to succeed, three attributes are necessary : the central unit which should shed its responsibility, must be willing to do so, and also support the programme of decentralization fully without reservation; the units to whom the task is assigned independently should be willing to assume responsibility and must be equipped to

manage the task fully and independently and the functionaries in both the units must be positive in their response to the programme of decentralization; and the consumers where they are involved should welcome the move and respond positively (P-26). Regarding the role of central institutions like NCERT and NIEPA, the author suggests that NCERT must discontinue preparing model curriculum and concentrate on its efforts to support SCERTs and DIETs to prepare the state relevant and district relevant curriculum and syllabus. NCERT needs only lay broad curriculum framework. Similarly, NIEPA needs to design decentralization packages which empower PR bodies fully. For this, pressure must be built from both sides. There are bound to be some problems, but efforts must continue.

In the first paper of section two – Teachers and Teacher Management Issues – S. Bhargavat writes that teacher behaviour determines to a large extent the nature of interaction that takes place in the classroom and in the school. Teachers define their expectations about the performance of their students. Under high expectation conditions, it has a positive effect, but under low expectation conditions it deteriorates the motivation, and achievement, and also suppresses self-concept of the students. This may be taken as a feedback to initiate a strategy to improve classroom effectiveness. Next paper by Indu Khetarpal finds a significant relationship between organizational climate and job satisfaction of teachers and school performance. The author suggests that organizational climate and job satisfaction of teachers can be maximised by a congenial environment that minimizes constraints on learning and encourages the teachers and students to develop. Further, the school can achieve its organizational goal when the principal can become a teacher, and the teacher becomes a leader; then the students will succeed. Moreover, the heads of the non-performing schools need to develop reflective insights into the task and the human factors to solve various problems in education settings.

In the opening paper of section three on 'Supervision and Support System', Sunil Batra points out that the nature of supervision does not yet include in its gamut issues pertaining to the quality of education. However, there is a correlation between school supervision and school improvement. A publication from the International Institute for Educational Planning titled "Current Issues in Supervision" (1997), points out that restructuring of supervision in developed countries has emerged more because of a growing need for greater autonomy of schools, lesser centralization and the growth of socio-political environment. The author pleads that if quality of primary education is desirable, then appropriate and supportive supervision is necessary. Next, Srilekha Majumdar suggests that an attitudinal change is needed both of the inspecting personnel and the school heads and staff. Instead of being on a fault finding mission, the inspector should be more of a friend to the school head and staff, and facilitate school improvement, openness and transparency between him, the head and teachers, so that and the pupils are fostered.

The first paper of the section four, "Education of Minorities and Disadvantaged Groups", Rohit D. Desai et al. presents a case study on dropout girls from primary/ elementary education. The study finds that the girls drop out of the school not because of

the economic conditions of their parents but because of the contemporary dogma such as social beliefs that girls should not he educated much, and after a certain age, boys and girls should not sit and study in the class under the supervision of a male teacher. In this regard NGOs and religious leaders can help motivate the girls and create awareness about the value of education. The problem is more of a social nature. Next, K.H. Baharul Islam writes about the problems and prospects of the education of the Muslims and Madarsa Education in Assam. There are about 30,000 Madaras providing education to Muslim children in the country. The major drawbacks of these institutions are poor institutional management, irrelevant and outdated curriculum design, lack of social and governmental accountability and non-compatibility with other systems of education. Improvement in Madarsa Education system needs proper survey and analysis of social needs and market demand to create harmonious balance between religious and modern educational elements in instructional curriculum of Madarsas. It should be a joint effort of the community and the state government. A random survey among the students has shown that 48 percent give higher weightage to Science and other subjects as compared to the religious education. The classical languages, like Persian and Arabic, have their own value. However, the teachers and administrators are no more antagonistic towards modernization, provided the basic ethos of religious education and classical languages are kept intact in these institutions.

In the opening paper in section five 'Role of NGOs in School Education', R. S. Tyagi tries to assess the impact of 'Village Education Committee' (VEC) in two villages in Ranchi district, in its efforts to create demand for education and participation of the community in planning and management of education programme at the village level. It has been found that despite restructuring and providing training to VECs, a number of problems are yet to the sorted out, e.g. to get the right persons elected as member of VEC. It is found that experienced persons, such as ex-servicemen etc performed better as compared to the younger counterparts. Main difficulties were the lack of financial and administrative powers. Both the VECs were found to be non-functional and required overhauling and strengthening. Next, Sitakanta Sethi, writes about a case study based on a NGOs intervention in school-based management in a tribal district in Orissa. School-based management was initiated by activating the Education Committee (EC), Total Enrollment Drive (TED) and Maximum Attendance Drive (MAD). The study reveals that even the projects with the best of intentions and a good planning can fail due to lack of cooperation and coordination between the District Action Group (DAG) and the Resource NGO. The project failed to take some critical decisions on financial allocation. There was also lack of coordination among ICD functionaries, Health Centres, Panchayat Raj institution, NGOs and project personnel. It resulted in delays and the goals could not be achieved in time. The author suggests that financial dimensions must be accorded a high priority during the planning stage.

The first paper in section six, i.e. "Education and Technology", by Vasudha Kamat concerns the use of systems in improving school. During the first year of school improvement programme, the SSC results improved by 2 percent and in the second year

by 8 percent, totaling 10 percent from the baseline. The author emphasizes that it is the human factor which should be given due attention in the system design and development. Moreover, there should be enough space and flexibility to accommodate new inputs/changes for better results. However, it is easy to increase the level of awareness, but not the attitude of teachers. Next, Amulya Khurana and Bibhudutta Baral write about the connection between learning and memory. They suggest that teacher should help students to make broad connections in memory; use knowledge widely in new situations; use new solutions to problems; relate new learning to old; provide diverse tasks that require the application of new learning in different contexts and media in order to promote generalizations. Children may be taught to monitor and evaluate their own learning process. Teachers should create an atmosphere to encourage students to question, read more and engage in divergent thinking to find solutions.

The last section of the book is on "Financing of School Education". The opening paper by Malathy Duraisamy provides evidence on cost, indicators of school input quality and students outcomes in public, private and private aided primary schools in rural Tamil Nadu. The per student institutional cost is the highest in the private aided schools, and is about 54 percent more than in public schools, and nearly 5 times more than in corresponding private unaided schools. The student-teacher ratio in public and aided schools is 57 and 36 percent more than in unaided schools. It indicates that private schools operate with small classes where teaching can be more effective. The study indicates that father's education, teachers' education, and student-teacher are the characteristics that influence student achievement score. Regarding the influence of school management, it was found that students in private unaided schools outperform those in public and private aided schools. The author notes that public schools needs to improve their operating efficiency and quality. In this context, the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh pointed out that a high quality of public education system was the only generator of equality of opportunity, that improving the public school system requires greater attention to teacher training and attending to unique problems of first generation learners (The Hindu March, 18, 2007). Next, C. Ramamoorthy and S. Madheshwaran report that students in the academic stream at the Plus 2-stage are academically and socially better off than their counterparts in the vocational stream. Only a small proportion of the students who completed higher education (academic and vocational) were able to find jobs. More students with vocational stream were unemployed. In case of academic stream, less students were unemployed. It is observed that vocational stream has not made significant impact on self-employment. Moreover, academic graduates are able to earn double than the income of vocational graduates. A larger proportion of academic stream students go for higher education than their vocational stream counterparts. The authors suggest that government should seriously think of educational policy emphasizing perspective planning of vocational education in true spirit to improve the middle level skills in future.

In sum, the focus of the book is on decentralized management of education, education of minorities and disadvantaged groups, including girls and on improving

public education system. For decentralized management, it may be of interest to examine the American experience in managing education at federal, state, county, and city levels. There is a need to build capacity at the lower level and willingness of authorities at the central and state levels to delegate authority at lower levels and sufficient allocation of finances to meet the requirements of the local body and Panchayat Raj institutions. The image of the public education system needs improvement by way of strengthening teaching and provision of infrastructural facilities. The book will be of interest to students and teachers of education, educational administrators and planners, and general readers who are interested in raising the standards of education.

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Chandra Mohan MALHOTRA, C. David HOLLISHER, and Lawrence McWAHEY (2001): ***Distance Learning – Principles for Effective Design, Delivery and Evaluation,*** Sage Publications, London; New Delhi.

Distance education has been growing at an accelerating pace during the last few decades. An enormous number of distance learning institutions all over the world, both in the form of dual modes and the single modes, particularly the mega (Daniel: 1996) open universities are its most striking manifestations. Today, almost all the countries of the world, most notably the Commonwealth countries, are offering several types of academic, professional and technical programmes of study through various modes of distance learning. Developmental approach to distance education continues to address emerging educational and vocational training needs such as computer training, environmental sciences, special education, medical education, engineering, and agriculture sciences among others. Important improvements came during the last three decades with emphasis on better access, more equity, greater flexibility and higher productivity of educational programmes, development of effective self-instructional study materials, supplemented and strengthened by adequate learning support. Technology explosion as a source, education-massification as a force, and knowledge-globalization as a resource, together brought an inevitable merger of various modes of distance education leading to the emergence of technology-based educational transformation in the shape of an Omni-Tech Educational Approach (Madan, 2002), the latest phase of educational development.

The book provides a functional guidance to the education planners, education-providers, educators and educational managers to offer on-campus educational programmes through the distance education mode, suffused with modern technology inputs such as website supplements with each chapter. While tracing its origin to correspondence courses in late 19th century, Chapter 1 describes distance education as an

instrumental approach between the educators and the distant learners, encompassing thereby a wide range of instructional methods. The paradigm continues to-date with several universities and colleges using various approaches, namely postal services, and modern communication technologies which include among others radio, television, video, satellite and digital system viz. computers, World Wide Web and CD-ROM. Besides the technological innovations contributing to the growth and development of the DES, several socio-economic factors have been highlighted for expansion of the distance learning modes. Indeed, social awareness, access to higher education, assurance for professional development, opportunity for life-long learning and the technological advancements are some of the reasons which have made the DES popular and acceptable for the skeptics and conventional educators.

Chapter 2 revolves around strategies for motivating learners in respect of the educational programmes/courses, targeted clientele for a specific programme, the corresponding instructional design and the suitable mode of delivery. A variety of techniques have been suggested to do so, e.g., assessing the need of the target group for a particular distance education programme through surveys, data analysis, community meetings, and expert opinions among others. What type of learners are expected to offer the specific distance education programme? Are they part-timer? Are they working somewhere and wish to pursue an educational programme/course for betterment of their career? Do they desire a course on improvement of their job-skills or they intend to seek a general awareness programme or they want a specialized certificate or diploma or degree programme? What type of learners they are: viz. those in geographically remote or inconvenient places, or those with special needs or disabilities? Are the expected learners goal-oriented, highly motivated for self-directed learning, are they serious for acquiring knowledge and learning, or are they just venturous enthusiasts for undertaking the risks for new ways of learning? While strategies for instructional design, mode of delivery and learning-support have been devised in the later Chapters 3, 4 and 7 respectively, in this chapter, the purpose is to evolve a mechanism for attracting students for enrolment in distance learning, termed as promoting and marketing distance education programmes and courses.

In Chapter 3, the authors have suggested some useful tools of distance teaching based on their personal experience which, if adopted sincerely, can make distance learning self-directed and self-motivated in the real sense. The tools suggested in the book expect a greater role both from the instructors and the distance learning institutions in respect of the functional skills, time-management, curriculum-planning, course-development, assignment-designing and assessment-procedures. Indeed, utility of these tools is dependent on a few other factors also, such as the size of the learners' group assigned to an instructor, on the content-presentation of the course, the time instructor is able to devote for this purpose, cooperation from the institutional-management and the learners' response. These tools in the shape of a seven-point paradigm have been suggested.

Chapter 5 and 6 are devoted to the modes of delivery of distance education. While Chapter 5 examines merits and demerits of various delivery methods, Chapter 6 looks

into the choice and implementation of these methods. The methods are supposed to bridge the inherent gulf between the educator on one side, and the learner on the other. Two sets of methods have been identified for the delivery of distance education, namely Synchronous and Asynchronous. Both the methods have been described along with their strengths and weaknesses in the tabular formats. Starting from the psychological barriers between the educator and learners, the authors have amply demonstrated the need for these synchronous methods, primarily in terms of the modern information technology such as audio-video and internet conferencing, telephonic conversation, two-way radio, interactive television, and the asynchronous methods using self-learning printed materials, audio-video tapes, CD-ROM discs, portable CD players, fax machines, radio-broadcasts and television-telecasts, among others. While elaborating the advantages of these tools, the authors have equally pointed the drawbacks, particularly in the use of the related high-capacity storage disks in terms of the lack of ready availability of the equipments for mass production to meet the demand of the vast enrolment of the distance learners in the system of distance education. The strengths and weaknesses highlighted in Chapter 5 lead to formulation of the principles and rules to guide the selection of appropriate delivery methods for distance education. Seven basic principles in this context have been advocated. A decision-making tree approach has been presented for selection of an appropriate delivery method based on a step-by-step guide or an algorithm. Whether this approach has been tested or tried in some distance education unit or institution is not clear enough.

Self-directed learning through print-materials is considered to be the heart of distance education supplemented by the follow-up academic support. Support services constitute what may be termed as the backbone of institution's credibility and efficiency. Chapter 7 is primarily focused on support services which broadly include institutional interaction with the learners related to the support services, and which exclude communication on instructional (academic) contents. Developing and delivering the system of student services to the distance learners is the chief purpose of this chapter which has been explored in three phases, namely: Pre-enrolment phase, post-enrolment phase, and the phase after completion of a programme/course with an extensive use of modern technology.

Chapter 8 may be classified into two sections. The first section analyses the inherent problem of distance learning or programme of study or high dropout rate of students. In the second section the authors have suggested ways to overcome it or atleast to minimize it if not completely wipe it out. The authors have identified some factors attributed to this problem. These are : student-characteristics such as their educational background, preparedness for a distance education programme or course of study and their learning styles which require self-directed learning unlike the traditional mode of learning to which they are used to; instructor characteristic related the capacity, capability and commitment to the cause of education in general, and experience with distance learning in particular; and support services lacking in several ways as discussed in this chapter, and the very nature of the paradigm of distance education which cannot successfully

provide appropriate and adequate individual interaction between the educator and the learner which otherwise is central to quality education.

Chapters 9 and 10 of the book are concerned with distance education evaluation confined to the assessment of learning outcomes, and evaluation of educational programmes/courses. Chapter 9 is focused on the procedures for assessing students' performances and output, while Chapter 10 is devoted to measuring the effectiveness of an educational programme/course to ensure quality of course contents and instructional pedagogies. In Chapter 9, a few guiding principles for assessing learning outcomes have been suggested. These guiding principles of assessment seem to be the ideal but the methods of assessment prescribed in this chapter do not seem to be sustainable. While some methods, such as group discussion, student log or journal or student portfolio does not seem to be feasible in the context of distance education setting which expecting deals with large population, whereas the other methods such as term papers which include preparation of short papers by students themselves to give their feed-back and reactions of their own does not seem to be feasible. However, the methods of assignment evaluation, modular testing and the term-end examination are well-tried and have been found to be successful in the system of distance education. In fact, assignment-evaluation and modular testing are used even as learning tools besides being used as modes of assessing the learning outcomes.

Chapter 10 presents Calder's programme evaluation model focused on three parameters of (a) inputs related to the characteristics of the learners and the instructional methods; (b) processes to indicate what the learners actually do to learn during the course or a programme; and (c) the outcome to demonstrate the impacts of what learners did during the course of study. The specific purpose of programme evaluation, as made out in this context, is to gauge programme effectiveness whether formative or summative or illuminative (both formative and summative put together) so as to arrive at a decision about the merit of its continuation or modification. In the context of distance education, the three parameters of programme evaluation, namely the inputs, processes and outcomes have a wider courage.

Accredition in the traditional on-campus mode of education is generally perceived and practiced in two ways: institutional accreditation and specialized accreditation. Accreditation in the system of distance education, however, ought to have three basic roles namely: institutional accreditation, specialized accreditation and paradigmatic accreditation because of its distinct philosophy and approach. Accordingly, accreditation in distance education needs to focus on the three corresponding parameters namely: institutional credibility that the institution is what it claims it is, and does what it claims it does; specialized credibility defined and interpreted within the context of the educational approach of a unit or a programme; and paradigmatic credibility designed and operated to achieve the aims and objectives as laid down in its policy framework. The last and the 11th Chapter of the book envisages institutional accreditation and specialized accreditation with two fundamental purposes namely quality assurance and institutional/ programme improvement. It briefly refers to the national professional bodies as some of

the accrediting bodies relevant to the specific areas of study. Most of the educational institutions in the USA are accredited by one of the country's eight regional accrediting commissions for the purpose of specialized accreditation and institutional accreditation. In the context of accreditation for distance education, the authors have provided five guidelines broadly centred around: curriculum and instruction; evaluation and assessment; library and learning resources; student services; and facilities and finances. These guidelines, which have been extensively elaborated and five corresponding tabular formats have been presented, are more relevant to the two parameters viz. institutional accreditation and specialized accreditation, common to that of the on-campus system.

The book is essentially America specific or one may say it is more relevant to the developed world where education, in any case, whether distance or non-distance, is being entirely technology-based. Some of the models given in the book seem to be vaccus in nature in the absence of a trial or a case study, while others are relevant to the developed world only where students' enrolment is not huge as compared to the developing world which has to deal with large and rapidly growing enrolment due to huge populations; diversity of languages, cultures and educational backgrounds; inadequacy and in-appropriate utilization of modern technology; and incapability of their conventional systems to provide access, equity and flexibility of educational provision to the needy and deprived sections of their societies. Moreover, course-development (development of self-course materials) and academic counselling/support which are considered to be two most essential components of distance education, do not find enough space in this book. What types of pedagogic approach is desirable in these two components? Self-learning pedagogy, induced-learning pedagogy and interactive learning pedagogy are considered to the basic components of distance learning pedagogy. Not much has been emphasized and described on this fundamental component of distance education. Nevertheless, the book is a good attempt on a few other aspects of distance education although it lacks a systemic exposure of the fast emerging system of open and distance education.

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McIntosh, CHRISTOPHER (Editor) & Varoglu, ZEYNEP, (Editorial Coordinator) (2005): ***Lifelong Learning & Distance Higher Education***. *Perspectives on Distance Education* Series, UNESCO & COL, pp.154, ISBN 1-894975021-9.

Presented in 12 chapters the present publication is a rare combination of insight and information for all those who live during present times. Of course everyone knows why an individual has to learn all the time and throughout one's life and the advantages thereof. But the speed with which information is getting outdated these days makes one wonder how long and how far could an individual remain both relevant and well-

informed. The institutions dotting the world for keeping one learned and informed could be identified easily. But what facilities and goals make one motivated must also be equally known.

We all know that technology has revolutionized several areas of our life but the way it has transformed the educational facilities is absolutely unbelievable. This revolution has not only widened access, improved quality and cut costs, but is even more amazing in the fact that such transformation was unthinkable a decade or so back. Developing countries like India also have world-class facilities in distance learning. Considering the immense problems regarding diversity of culture and languages, the technological solutions being offered today to overcome them all look like a child's play.

Needless to say that distance learning has evolved through several stages. Gone are the days when distance education was offered through written lessons sent via post. EDUSAT has brought the learner much closer to his/ her teacher, both through E-learning and virtual classrooms. Full-time channels are available both for higher education and for the school classrooms. Distance education has enabled even an ordinary worker to improve his knowledge and skills without much ado.

The present publication focuses on the area of distance higher education with an emphasis on the life-long learner. It may be borne in mind that there is an increased need for international cooperation and for coordinated policies in areas ranging from quality assurance to funding and an appropriate use of ICTs. The papers presented in the volume are intended to update information in this field, raise issues, address problems and record trends, besides serving as manuals for planners and decision makers.

The chapters in the book are grouped thematically. While the Introduction as expected initiates the discussion on the subject to the reader, Chapters 2 and 3 provide a broad background survey, indicating some of the general trends, issues and challenges in the area of distance education and life-long learning. Chapter 4 deals with funding while subsequent 3 chapters are country reports on Senegal, China and Finland in succession. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 cover major issues, like quality assurance, accreditation, recognition of qualifications for certification and cross-border student mobility.

Chapter 11 focuses on an important theme, namely improving the quality of the provision on the basis of research. Each chapter at the end also gives a checklist of policy implications, in addition to discussing subject in detail.

The UNESCO has come to the conclusion that Distance Education has reached a critical stage wherein the increase in numbers has raised a serious concern about the quality and variety of higher education programmes. In its 2004 report, the UNESCO records, "Higher education has continued to grow at even higher rates than during the pre-World Conference on Higher Education-period. Current estimates indicate that the historic threshold of 100 million students world-wide has been crossed and the prospect of reaching the figure of 125 million students will be attained before 2020. Important increases in student numbers are reported in all regions, in particular Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab countries, and in the Eastern and Central Europe." The same report also records that very few of the developing countries have been able to

make, real progress in catching up with the developed countries with regard to access to and participation in higher education.

While one notices the changes in student profile in higher education, particularly in Distance Education, yet another phenomenon also does not escape one's eyes. With the changes in the job types and breaking down of fixed job patterns, people are anxious both to update their information and skill areas. This class of people is always on its toes to remain relevant. This area has suddenly become attractive to the private players too.

Additionally, the types of clientele now coming forward to join the distance mode faces time constrain, family difficulties and also money constrain. Given the right type of computer technology, they can easily create a flexible learning timetable, attend seminars and tutorials from their desks at home and access much of the study material they need online. ICT has considerably reduced the cost of learning new knowledge or skill. The present book also recounts the existing models in the field, such as functionalist model that focuses on essential skills, critical literary model that focuses on empowerment or consciousness raising model; the social justice model that focus on gender equality or other human right concerns; the reflective-learning model that focuses on the development of meta-level skills whereby the individual can assess different theories, discourses and knowledge paradigms; the compensatory model or the remedial teaching model wherein some deficiency is addressed; and the humanistic model which tends to broaden learners' horizon and enriches their minds. While the functional model gets the maximum following, other models are no less useful or important.

Since learning is all set to make an individual improve and change qualitatively, any mode of learning is welcome and if one also knows that the preferred model is cost effective it is all the more preferable.

The present publication is a mine of information for all those who are looking out for a better and useful model to opt for. Excellent reading material!!

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Robert W. HEFNER and Muhammad QASIM ZAMAN (eds.) (2007): ***Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education.*** Princeton University Press, USA, pp. 277.

Clashes between Islam and Christianity date back to antiquity. Even during the middle ages there existed a constant struggle between Christian Europe and Muslim states, the latter controlling large sections of what later became Spain, Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania. Many of the Muslim possessions in North Africa were colonized as western power grew in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is believed that in the late 19th

century, the inability of the Muslim world to effectively counter the growing hegemony of western culture led to reform movements seeking to restore Islam to its original purity.

Religious groups have been perceived religious fundamentalism as the approach that calls for literal interpretation of basic scriptures or texts and believes that doctrines arising from these must be applied in all forms of socio-economic life. This simplistic view, however, has to be situated in the understanding that traditionally, all forms of authority emanates from the Islamic book. Even in modern times, various schools of thought strictly adhere to the teachings of the Book and related literature, not to mention that it is an integral part of every reverential Muslim.

September 11, 2001 has had far-reaching effects in the perception of a 'modern' Muslim by the West. It is in the context of this recent mayhem and in the context of the issue of the identity of a Muslim and the contours of his/her faith that the book under review gains importance. The volume presents itself as a monumental endeavor in elucidating a much contemporary but controversial theme in the educational field. Weaving complex historico-political arguments within the field of Muslim education, the work has attempted to look into the plurality of issues concerning the process of modernization. The basic theme of the studies included in the book, look into the practices and politics of madrasas and Islamic higher education. Certain key themes have been analyzed pertaining to the nature and functioning of the institutions *'charged'* with imparting Islamic knowledge.

Robert W. Hefner introduces the book by placing the academics of Islam in a modern changing paradigm, stressing the aspect of continuity and a reformative spirit. He sees Islamic education as a distinct social phenomenon which has at all times rendered itself as a generative ground for political and social discourses. This feature has been characteristic of Turkey, Egypt, Iran, India as well as South-East Asia and West Africa, a process underway much before the waves of modernization tried to impress upon these societies. Present times, however, have seen the emergence of public debate with respect to the purpose and organization of institutionalized Islam. Various Muslim authorities have indulged in serious questioning and reflection on the traditionally rooted means of imparting education.

Hefner has traced the historical evolution of the *madrasa* to the Middle Ages (AD 1000-1500) of the Muslim World, which took shape as a result of canonization of the existing religious corpus. Nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the Muslim societies facing new pressures and challenges, as a result of expansion of mass education and movements of religious reforms. Such developments did lead to re-centering of knowledge and standardization of plural traditions. Another consequence which marked this phenomenal change was a rethinking of faith as exclusive and objective of the popular traditions. State sponsored systems of mass education brought far reaching changes in building the political modernity of these states. Some decisive and probing questions referred to the appropriate positioning of Islam into the idea of nationhood, and the ways with which the *Ulama* and their schools of thought could be incorporated into state-sponsored education systems.

The nation states dealt with in this volume have chartered their specific histories. Indigenous reformative movements and Western emulations or colonial experiences have characterized the education processes of these nations, with the exception of the great Islamic Revolution in Iran. The Ottoman Empire which touted itself as the most powerful state in the medieval times, responded to the advancements in Western education by bringing a significant reform through military education. Educational reforms launched in early nineteenth century combined new forms of European administration and pedagogy. Interestingly, the state did not choose to construct its new education on the *madrasa* foundation. The study reveals that no other Muslim-majority country undertook a programme of education as radical as that of Republican Turkey. Egypt also opened schools for military training, engineering and civil administration. It is to be noted that these Western type military reforms were kept at bay from the *Ulama*.

The second type of reforms took place under the influence of Western colonialism. The fracture in *Ulama's* monopoly under the colonial regime provided scope for public debate over the place of Islam in post-colonial community. Morocco, which was colonized by the British, convinced itself that the road to upward mobility lay in the European style education, and peculiarly in this reformative endeavor it faced little religious opposition. In colonial India, the demise of Mughal rule coupled with a period of diverse social movements led the *Ulama* community to associate itself with the revivalist programme to create a new public identity of the 'Indian Muslim'. Another centre of Islamic learning came up in Deoband in 1867, which established itself as the representative of Islamic educational reforms in modern India. However, there existed a great anomaly in its purpose and functioning as it adapted British styles of educational administration but retained the religious content of the curriculum. It nevertheless was a progressive attempt as it went ahead in neutralizing divisions of ethnicity and social standing among the Muslims. As a consequence of political upheavals and the absence of Islamic states, there came about a shift in the status and function of the *Ulama* community. Rather focussing on the restoration of Islamic states they shifted their concern to the societal level to strengthen popular devoutness.

Jonathan P. Berkey, while discussing the medieval antecedents of the modern *madrasa* in the second chapter, says that medieval Muslim world placed a very serious emphasis on *ilm* or knowledge, specifically the knowledge of Qur'an, the word of Prophet Muhammad, and other sciences derived from the study of these. He makes a critical distinction here. As opposed to the medieval Islamic education, the modern discourse centers on the element of social *change*. Even though social change was not the aim of transmission of knowledge in the medieval times, it did accord considerable power to education. The transmitters and seekers of this sacred knowledge both believed in the unquestionable authority of the text by perceiving education as a force for stability. Modernity has provoked changes and brought in significant amount of flux in the religious discourse. These processes have been backed by the presence of the modern state. New state-sponsored schools have been established, but the scene has not eluded the re-appearance of traditional Islamic patterns.

Berkey has thrown light on recent researches that discuss the role of religion and of *Ulama* in determining the course of action for educational reforms in the context of Near East. The picture gets complicated when Berkey defines a state of affairs where modernity is not as starkly pitted against tradition. He cites the example of Egypt where there exists a close connection between religion and state in the sphere of public schools. In such a situation, it is more appropriate to argue that Islamic resurgence is not so much a response to secularism as it is a consequence of a religious discourse for the modern state to justify itself. Religious fundamentalism has often been contrasted with modernization, but it is crucial to study the ways modern approaches are taken advantage of in asserting religious beliefs in a covert manner.

The next chapter deals with *Tradition and Authority in Deobandi Madrasas of South Asia*, authored by Mohd. Qasim Zaman. The role that Deobandi *Ulama* played in the Taliban regime in Afghanistan explains the recentering of debate around the place and function of Islamic education. He has discussed the link between the state, *madrasas* and religio-political activism with specific focus on Pakistan. Involvement in the war against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the housing of Afghan refugees and other war efforts have colored the history of this *"Islamic Republic"*. The key idea being that Islam occupies a very prominent place in the public life of Pakistan and enhancing the role of radicalized *madrasas*. Major governmental reforms in the modern history of the state have also led to the equivalence of the degrees awarded by the *madrasas* and the public universities. As a consequence, it has made possible the advanced study of Islam in public institutions more prone to the influence of *Ulama*.

The above three chapters are central to understanding the historico-political issues of Islamic learning in various other parts of the world. The rest of the chapters in the book are studies on the status of Islamic education in different nation-states, the role of *madrasas* and minorities in India, the discourse on religious knowledge in the case of *al-Azhar* University in Egypt, the study on Morocco, Turkey, Indonesia, Mali and Great Britain. According to Barbara Metcalf, *madrasas* have played a significant role in imparting elementary education in India and have additionally acted as the seats of spiritual guidance. Malika Zehgal has reviewed the commanding position of the *al-Azhar* University in Egypt which has acted as the bastion for various state governments to construct a public Islam in consonance with Egyptian national identity. Religious education has thus become institutionalized under the state control. This process has exhibited dissensions within the structuring of the university as officials have distanced themselves from the state on the one hand, and on the other Azhari interventions have refostered neo-traditionalist canon. Bekim Agai discusses the revolutionary changes that swept in modern Turkey under the regime of Mustafa Kemal who launched the most radical programmes of secularization in the Muslim world. Such policies were later challenged and modified by the state. Agai brings to notice a novel experiment in Islamic education founded in Turkey, the Fethullah Gulen movement. Though in a limited sense, it is a reformative programme which seeks to engage intellectual tradition from outside the arena of conventional Islam. Indonesia's Islamic universities have been symbolic of

civic and democratic education, including both state-supported and private-run. Peter Mandaville remarks that in Britain, there exists a competitive field for Islamic education, in the form of *"faith schools"*, higher education facilities for Islamic studies, informal study circles and Deobandi patterned houses of learning. British Muslims have shown greater signs for upward mobility and social integration, which could be a result of the multicultural ethos.

The concluding chapter by Zaman is an exposition of the views and ideas of Islamic ideologues on their perception of Islamic learning, with reference to the Shi 'i *madrasas* of Iran and the Islamic universities of Saudi Arabia. The chapter has interesting references to a significant rise in the intellectual tradition of modern Islamic thought. Some references have quite unabatedly professed the radical restructuring of Islamic education as imparted by the *madrasas*. They have pointed that individual innovations have seriously been hampered by the strict boundaries provided by the age-old tradition.

The contributors to this volume candidly argue that a civilizational search for the meaning and functions of Islam are also applicable to all other societies which are dealing with the issues of ethics and behavior and should not be seen as peculiar to Muslims. These public negotiations are potent challenges to knowledge and ethics anywhere in the world. The volume is backed by thorough research and scholarly arguments. It is an extraordinary contribution to understanding the context of modern Islamic education, an indispensable handbook.

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Renate KOCK (2006): ***Education and Training in a Globalized World Society: Conforming-Resistance-Ego-Boosting***. Peter Lang, Germany; pp. 260; Price not mentioned; ISBN 3-631-54429-4 (Paperback).

The book under review, "Education and Training in a Globalized World Society" is written by Renate Kock, Faculty of Educational Science at the University of Cologne. Kock in his analysis profoundly subscribes to the Post-Modern Constructivistic understanding of education. Constructivism, the Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy writes, "is the theory that knowledge is not something we *acquire* but something that we *produce*; that the objects in an area of inquiry are not there to be discovered, but are invented or constructed". In this (constructive teaching) method, the Author believes in the Post-Modern assumption that "objectively seen there is no one single correct access to reality". This notion will, to some extent, convince the readers to reject school standardization aimed at a homogenization of learning in school.

To be precise, Post-Modern for Kock means "the *deconstruction* of any teleology" includes its own and creates the condition of simultaneous time. With this framework, the

author examines the different paradigms of Pre-Modern, Modern and the Post-Modern pedagogies. Taking India as an example, the models of Tagore and Gandhi, current reform projects in Karnataka and education and training-concepts of a society of people who understand themselves as global, are examined.

Besides, the enquiry of how education and training should measure up the effects of a global social change to their working conditions, and how in particular, a pedagogy of the socially excluded should be correspondingly fulfilled, has also been abridged in an overview of the outlines and analyses presented in the book. In addition, the thesis investigates whether the growing disharmony between existing traditions on the one hand and the increasing acceleration of globalisation on the other hand, regarded as (international) standardisation, with widening inequality and growing social exclusion, are set against models of active learning and conceptions, which assume from the example of an active learner or more an active person or personality.

Even with all these conjectural merits, somehow the book under review gives a negative impression that the author fails to take a tangible scholastic position. For instance, in some cases he takes a determined stand for globalisation and in other cases, he doubts on the same by *concerning* about the rising inequalities in the process. Apart from this, one-sided arguments of the chosen school of thought will give a weak pedagogic position in its very *construction* itself. The analysis, in turn, will be scrupulous only when the writer discusses the limitations along with the merits of his position. In that count also, the present volume lacks substance.

Further, the section on India (Chapter 18) disappoints the readers in the absence of rigorous analysis by not referring most of the existing classic academic literature on India and the complete indifference in using the nouns, where Gandhi's name is predominantly printed as 'Ghandi'! This *scholastic mockery* should have been avoided by giving attention on the minute niceties.

Again, by quoting the NCF-1988, the author deliberately builds his arguments (of course, in favour) of the constructivist school of thought. However, he fails when he draws a parallel to the very same arguments with the NCF-2000, on which most of the academia had raised numerous doubts. While one cannot correlate constructivism with the cultural nationalism as it will be an *academic oxymoron*, the author falls short of a careful intellectual work. At this juncture, in support of his scrutiny, Renate Kock might have referred to the NCF-2005, which stands entirely on the constructivistic school of thoughts. Absence of this also validates his meagre understanding of the issues concerned.

Though some of the final pages seem to be convincing where the author talks about the "De-schooling of school by e-learning" and "Dialogue as a new word for learning." Again he falls short when he talks about "the strengthening of new counter-movements", as it seems to be too simplistic to touch a serious issue where the voices of dissent in the choice of globalisation in world social and economic forums are concerned. On that count, the present work collapses as merely a reductionist in its framework. In the overall assessment, by his elegant style of constructivist version, though Renate Kock is able to

capture the emerging concerns of education and training, he fails to capture the indigenous issues in the march towards a unified system of the global curriculum.

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Shirley Van NULAND and B.P. KHANDELWAL with contributions from K. Biswal, E.A. Dewan and H.R. Bajracharya (2006): ***Ethics in Education: The Role of Teacher Codes - Canada and South Asia.*** International Institute for Educational Planning, Paris; 2006; pp. 1-345.

While presenting this study, Jacques Hallak and Muriel Poisson observe, "Lack of integrity and unethical behavior within the education sector is inconsistent with one of the main purposes of education; that is, to produce 'good citizens', respectful of the law, of human rights and fairness (it is also incompatible with any strategy that considers education as one of the principal means of fighting corruption)" (page 6). None would disagree.

While acquisition of knowledge and skills through modern education has been helping the world in great stride, there are also some unfortunate negative sides to it. What we often witness is that there are many people, comprising a significant percentage of the 'educated' population, who misuse their education to hoodwink illiterates, to develop scant regard for the law, to dishonor elders, seniors, neighborhood and neighbors in the society, and so on. It is also the case that in indulging in corrupt practices the educated lot more often outnumbers the uneducated.

Is there something wrong with the education that people receive in present times? Or, is something wrong with the way the education is imparted, or something wrong with what is being taught, or something wrong with the way the education system is institutionalized? How far teachers and education-administrators are themselves responsible? First, are they professionally adequate, and ethically neat enough? If not, can something be done to rectify the system? Where to look for tangible quantitative inputs, such as pupil/teacher ratios etc.; or intangible qualitative inputs, such as ethical commitments of teachers and staff etc.? This book addresses some of these questions. According to Hallak and Poisson, misbehavior in the education system can be noticed in many forms, such as demands for unauthorized school admission and examination fee, absence of teachers from schools, leakage of examination papers, private tuitions, embezzlement of school funds etc. They rightly say in the preface, "Teachers who indulge in unethical practices are arguably unfit for teaching universal values such as civic education, moral values, honesty and integrity" (pages 17-18).

The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) undertook a number of initiatives to study and document challenges in designing and implementing teacher

codes of conduct. The book under review is one such documentation. It presents in three sections some case studies in this respect from both developing and industrialized countries.

The first section deals with standards for the teaching profession in Ontatrio, Canada. Van Nuland reports in detail on the establishment of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), and development of two sets of standards with a lot of efforts that include references to other institutions, consultations and discussions. The two sets are: *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession (1999)* identifying what teachers should know and do to enhance the dignity of the teaching profession; and *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession (2000)* to inspire positive quality of behavior and become publicly accountable. The latter include principles, such as impartial and consistent respect for all students as individuals, respect for confidential information about the students, integrity, honesty, fairness etc. It is interesting to note that these standards were developed not by the government or its agencies but by a self-regulating body, the OCT itself. Implementation of these standards for all teachers and other staff employed in publicly funded schools became a success story overcoming some initial apprehensions. These standards may, however, be reviewed and reformed further on regular basis in the light of the experience gained. This section though does not contain much information about how things went wrong before establishing the OCT. Readers are only told that due to recession in Canada during the 1980s and 1990s, there was a feeling of 'doing more with less', and "there were criticisms that school systems were ineffective and did not adequately prepare students for their future" (page 31).

In the second section, Khandelwal and Biswal present a comparative study on teacher codes of practice in Bangladesh, Nepal and Uttar Pradesh (India) based on country monographs prepared by Dewan, Bajracharya and themselves. Khandelwal et al express that teacher quality does not depend on academic qualifications but more on the professional commitment and ethical behavior. The authors point out that though codes of conduct exist, several teachers and administrators are not aware of the procedures relating to them. These codes had been designed mostly by political representatives at the national/provincial/regional levels with limited consultation with stakeholders (i.e. teachers, administrators, parents etc.). They also lament that 'several social, economic, political, administrative and institutional constraints related to systematic corruption and transparency issues tend to hinder the effective implementation of the codes" (page 84).

Their report on Bangladesh, Nepal and Uttar Pradesh (UP) deals with an investigation of the design, implementation and impact of teachers' codes of practice on the basis of perceptions of teachers, administrators, policy makers, representatives of teacher unions, parents and community members. They initially provide country-profiles, historical overview of the codes of practice, their methodology and database. Basically, primary data was collected through sample surveys of teachers, administrators and other stakeholders in the education sector and analyzed – sample sizes being 180, 138 and 275 in Bangladesh, Nepal and UP respectively. Nine sources of unethical practices, which could have impacts on the quality of education, were identified. These are: abuses in

human resource management (HRM), abuses in materials procurement (AMP), school inspection (SI), admissions (SA), examinations (SE), mismanagement of funds (MSF), attendance/absenteeism (SAA), mutual relations among the staff (MRS), and private tuition by teachers (PTT). The sample entities were asked to rank each of these nine sources according to their perceptions on the degree of severity in causing unethical behavior among teachers. The results based on their perceptions are: HRM, AMP, MSF and PTT were seriously perceived as sources of unethical behavior in all the three countries. Quite believable! SI, SE and MRS in Bangladesh and India were less seriously perceived as such sources.

I may not be particularly well-informed about UP, but I am under the impression that collection of donations in thousands/lakhs of Rupees even for elementary school admissions is quite common almost all over India; and that is nothing but an unethical feature in the education sector. Only the rich who have both willingness and ability to pay can afford these donations. However, it is somewhat surprising that in this study, school-admission (SA) was not perceived as a serious source of unethical behavior in UP (India). The study says, "Primary, secondary and senior secondary schools were randomly selected in the sample blocks. In the sample schools, all the teachers present on the day of the field survey were interviewed using structured schedules" (page 113). It is not clear whether these schools only belonged to the public sector, and whether the teachers were responding with their perceptions on the environment in public schools only, or on both public (where donations are not collected), and private (where donations are imposed) schools. If the teachers and administrators interviewed were all from public schools and if they all were only responding with respect to the public schools, the survey results cannot be generalized to reflect on the entire education sector. Aren't we concerned with the entire education system, and not just the public education system? Besides, the study only takes into account the 'perceptions' of the stakeholders. Perceptions after all need not be unbiased. Reality and facts may be something else.

Major empirical findings that include comparative differences between the perceptions of teachers, administrators and others, were reported in chapter 3 (not in chapter 2 as stated on page 85) of this section. Numerous other important results were also presented based on the surveys of perceptions. Is it possible to use better data? It is generally quite difficult to obtain reliable data on aspects such as bribes, corruption, morals, ethics etc. The authors admit, "In the absence of any reliable database, the findings are based on perceptions of a cross-section of stakeholders on corrupt practices in the education sector" (page 157). Agreed. But the problem is that the teachers interviewed are also part and parcel of the same system that is being investigated. Therefore, the onus lies on the researchers to prove that stakeholders' perceptions truly represent the reality.

One important conclusion they make is, "If not reformed, the present system of educational governance may continue to reproduce socio-economic inequalities in these countries. Governments can go on designing and implementing various codes of practice in the education sector that may very well prove to be ineffective if efforts are not made

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to persuade teachers and staff to imbibe them. They can institutionalize the codes in the education sector, but it is very difficult to transform the codes into values. Any attempt to reform educational governance should aim at using codes of practice to improve values and professional commitments, rather than using them as administrative instruments" (page 160). I completely agree with them.

Third section presents some examples of codes of conduct from Queensland and Victoria (Australia), Hong Kong (China), Scotland (UK), Bangladesh, Canada, Nepal, and Uttar Pradesh (India). Chapter 6 on UP in this section though deals more with the administrative rules and less with teachers' ethical codes.

This book is quite interesting and important since it concerns with almost everyone in the society. It can be a kind of reference book for planners, administrators, teachers and parents of the students to get to know how and where education can go astray.

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Katarina TOMASEVSKI (2006): ***The State of the Right to Education Worldwide: Free or Fee – 2006 Global Report.*** Copenhagen. pp. xxx+250. *http://www.katarinatomasevski.com*

Katarina Tomasevski has been a champion of children's right to education. Professor of International Law and International Relations at the University of Lund, Sweden and a Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (1998-2004) and the founder of the Right to Education Project, Tomasevski fought for the rights of the children with all the force she could command until the end, which most unfortunately came too early in 2006, when she was only 53. Her important works in this area include very powerful reports, such as *Education Denied: Costs and Remedies* (Zed Books, 2003), *Human Rights Obligations in Education* (Wolf Legal Publishers, 2006), *Globalizing What: Education as a Human Right or as a Traded Service?* (Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies, Winter 2005), and the 2006 Global Report, *The State of the Right to Education Worldwide* (2006). All her reports had a singular mission, "to transform the luck of the few into the right of all" (*Human Rights Obligation in Education*, p. 4). Tomasevski has the policy makers and planners in the governments, non-governmental organisations and international aid community as the main audience. But researchers in the area, and in fact, any one interested in human deprivation, also find her works highly rewarding readings. Rich with select statistics – historical as well as current, illustrations, and valuable experiences from micro and macro levels in several countries, including the author's own personal experiences in several meetings and discussions, Tomasevski's reports written in a simple and lucid style, with pictures and authentic picturesque descriptions, provide a valuable stimulating and

compelling readings on an issue that is hotly discussed both at national and international forums.

The *2006 Global Report*, probably the last of her series of forceful reports, represents in a sense a culmination of all her earlier efforts. As Tomasevski herself notes, the *Right Education Primer* (2001), School Fees a Hindrance to Universalizing Primary Education (background paper for the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003-04* on Education for All) and *Globalizing What* (2005) were the exploratory predecessors that gradually shaped the present Report.

With invaluable experience as a Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Tomasevski presents an authentic account of how United Nations had loudly "proclaimed" and "quietly betrayed" the cause of right to education, how United Nations lacks the collective commitment to expose and oppose human rights violations, and how international resolutions, declarations and recommendations churned out by one part of the international community were denied by another part by forcing governments to levy charges. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education For All (EFA), Fast Track Initiative (FTI), School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI) etc., do not define governmental obligation to make primary education free and compulsory as a human right. Several actors of the international community adopted different tracks, which overlap and conflict with each other. Analysing the Human rights laws (1921 and 1948), and the approaches adopted by OCED/G8, World Bank, EFA/UNESCO, WTO/GATS and MDGs/UN, Tomasevski identifies and lucidly describes six different tracks and how they conflict with each other. Tomasevski unravels how "unwilling, unable and unlike-minded" have been the so-called creators of the global education strategy in the name of Education For All. The economically powerful World Bank, and the UNESCO, a lead international agency in education but going through a deep crisis and several other international United Nations agencies with different kinds of mandates, and non-UN based multilateral and bilateral organisations with their own national and regional interests have been the main actors. The consensus reached in Jomtien, Dakar, and other international forums, according to Tomasevski, was a 'consensus as a recipe for inaction'. The safeguards provided in the United Nations and other declarations are not sufficient to prevent the denial of education to many in developing countries. Even the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights had "lost credibility" and "too little can be done within the UN, where the right to education is one of very many issues on the agenda." [In 2006 the discredited the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights was replaced by United Nations Human Rights Council.] None of these international organisations used human rights laws as a 'reference point'. While international human rights law defines education as a human right, international trade law (GATS) defines it as a service. This reflects the two conflicting legal regimes for education; the former mandates state provision of education, while the later legitimises sale and purchase of education.

In contrast to the United Nations' Declarations and the Conventions of the International Labour Office, the entry of World Bank into the education arena, changed

the parameters of the debate and created ruptures in the global consensus on education. Under the rights to education approach, governments are obliged to make education *available, accessible, acceptable* and *adaptable*. To these four 'a's., Tomasevski adds the fifth 'a' – *affordable*. Focusing on 'accesses' rather than the rights changes the whole approach to basic education. Access spans education purchased on the free market or financed through charity; if there is no access, this can be defined as excess demand or lamented as inequitable but cannot trigger an accusation of human rights violation. "The *right* to education became *access* to education, the *process of learning* was transformed into a *product* measured by endless tests, the *process of teaching* became *service delivery*, and education was reduced to *monetary returns to schooling*." With fuzzy vocabulary, some of the basic tenets of the rights approach to education disappeared. For example, as Tomasevski notes, "the difference between having the right to education and purchasing education was eradicated through the term *access to education*" (p. 99). Language of rights was transposed into that of commercial transactions, using the term rights for shareholders or creditors (or stakeholders). Right to continuing education has no meaning, as it is interpreted in a market framework, to be had in the market at one's own expenses. *Partnership* meant relationship between creditors and debtors, and between governments and non-government organisations. 'In public-private partnership, there is no partnership, but rather a business deal, which ... questions the boundaries between educating and advertising'. With vouchers and other methods, 'free public service' is converted into a 'freely traded service.' International trade in education services has obliterated the boundary between aid and trade; brain drain is now viewed as 'brain-gain'; and so on.

Unfortunately the neo-liberals view education not as a right, but as an instrument of poverty reduction, and free education not as a human right to be ensured, but as a 'handout', and raise questions why should handouts be given and even people may not like to receive free 'handouts.' The neo-liberal policies also led to worrisome trends in many aspects of education, including introduction of fees in basic education, cuts in public expenditure on education and recruitment of teachers. Very few developing countries are encouraged to recruit full-time qualified and trained teachers; many opt for appointing contract teachers who are not fully qualified and not fully paid. In fact, "teachers are the first casualty of fiscal austerity."

Human rights are safeguards against abuse of power by government. Tomasevski notes that governments perform a double role as a protector and also as a violator of human rights. Tomasevski makes a powerful and passionate plea to fulfilling the right to education to all. She views free and compulsory education as the yardstick for assessing how the right to education fares in today's world. Tracing from the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Tomasevski describes the importance of *free* and *compulsory* education to be provided as a right to the people without any discrimination, and not just to improve the human capital, and not just to reduce poverty. Mere human capital approach may conflict with rights approach to education; 'reductionism frustrates

the very foundation for human rights education'. Hence the need to look at education beyond the human capital framework.

Examining laws, policies and practices in 170 countries, Tomasevski laments that many countries have adopted a 'minimal definition' of the right to education as a universal human right and even that is not adhered to by many. Tomasevski is very critical of fees and other charges – 'user charges', as the World Bank refers to, in school education. She presents robust evidence on the impact of student fees: where education is provided free and no charges are levied, enrolments are high, and vice versa. In some of those countries where education used to be charged, but fees are abolished and it is now provided free, enrolments jumped like anything in no time. In contrast, where school fees are introduced, enrolments declined. To highlight the gap between promises and performance, Tomasevski lists how many countries have legislated to provide free education but not provide it. Twenty two out of 23 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa levy charges in public primary schools, a large number of countries do not ensure any legal guarantee of free education. In all the 20 countries in Central Asia free education is legally guaranteed and with single exception all levy different kinds of charges! Similarly 14 countries in Asia and the Pacific have a similar legal guarantee, but only three out of 14 provide it free with no charges levied. Interestingly in seven countries there is no legal guarantee but no charges are levied on the students! Nine out of 17 countries in Middle East and North Africa and seven out of 18 in Latin America and four out of seven in the Caribbean also belong to the category where there is a legal guarantee of free education but charges are levied. In a sizeable number of developing countries there is no guarantee, and charges are levied. In all a good number of countries, particularly developing countries, legal guarantees exist for providing free education, while some of them do provide free education; in many countries charges are levied. Among the countries where legal guarantees do not exist, very few provide free education, and many levy charges. Where there is no policy on free education, there is mixed evidence on provision of free education, but a majority of them do not provide free education. Compulsion cannot be enforced unless it is totally free. In all, in a large number of developing countries, education is "legally free but really for for-fee." If there was time, Tomasevski might have found out yet another group of countries where legal provisions are made in the national constitutions, but no legal action followed to make the constitutional provisions operative, as in India.

In contrast to all this, most of the 34 countries of the wealthy west have a legal guarantee of free education and that is ensured – no charges are levied. She reviews the experience of several individual countries – rich and poor, that performed well and very poorly in ensuring right to education. Interestingly she highlights the case of North and South Korea: while North Korea is the only country that claims that right to education is fully enjoyed by everybody, South Korea has a unique distinction of being recognised as the only country where the private sector is the largest in education, as observed by the OECD. It is not enough for Tomasevski, if every child in a country has basic education, it is important that the State has provided it free to everyone as a human right, not as a

charity, nor sold it as a good at a price, even if everyone in a society could afford the price.

As Tomasevski notes, 'all-encompassing' compulsory education was introduced in many of the today's post-industrializing countries in the 19th century and others in the west followed at the beginning of the 20th century. But this is not considered a requirement for the developing countries. In European countries two-pronged public finances keeps education free – direct public financing of schools and financial support to pupils and their families in the form of family allowances. Industrialised countries do provide more and better education, but differences between them demonstrate the impact of an effective recognition of the right to education (e.g., in the Nordic countries) or its absence (e.g., USA). Anyway, such enabling provisions do not exist in developing countries at all. People in developing countries are compelled to pay for education and this is regarded as 'willingness to pay for education.' As the OECD observed, the proportion of private funding of primary and secondary education tends to be higher in countries with low levels of GDP per capita. The international community and more specifically rich countries never forced or even wanted developing countries to make legal guarantees and/or to ensure free and compulsory education. Even the United Nations, as Tomasevski shows, has been unwilling to confront non-compliance of the member states to its Resolutions. The benchmarks and the goals laid down for the poor do not apply within the OCED and vice versa! Tomasevski argues, "if the Nordic model pertains to be the best practices, the global pledges to universalize primary education are a prototype of a 'worst practice'."

Tomasevski reminds every one that "international human rights law requires progressive realization of the right to education where primary education ought to be made free of charge, and *this should gradually extend to post-primary and, ultimately, university education*". Unfortunately, this is completely forgotten by many, and even those who advance strong arguments in favour of free primary education argue for market-oriented strategies in university education, and as a result we are ending with 'transfigured' universities.

Human rights represent 'the bare minimum to which governments have grudgingly agreed, and which they will comply only if forced to do so.' Specifically with respect to right to education, Tomasevski warns that "globally we have failed to establish a system that guarantees a minimum universal entitlement" of education. In order to put human rights back on world agenda on education, Tomasevski highlights the importance of (a) pinpointing the obligations of the government, (b) exposing the extent and intensity of education exclusion, (c) rupturing global inaction by stressing the need for international action, (d) rescuing education from debt bondage though various methods of debt cancellation, (e) mobilising against colonialism, racism and segregated schooling systems, and (f) showing rights based education as a (if not the only) pathway to progress, including gender equality.

Tomasevski's every report on human rights would make the governments in developing as well as developed countries, international organisations, non-governmental

organisations and the societies at large feel ashamed for adopting strategies that deny millions of people in developing countries basic human rights, including specifically right to free and compulsory education.

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[*] The list is prepared by Dr. S. K. Mallik, with the help of Shri Mukesh Kumar.

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