

Deconstructing The Neo-Liberal Assault Over Indian Education

Prof. Anil Sadgopal
Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum
and Library

Introduction

Globalisation is not exactly a recent phenomenon. In terms of its ruthless pursuit of global markets and control over natural resources and means of livelihood, globalisation has much in common with colonialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Even its methodology and strategies of influencing the State policies through systematic co-optation of the Indian corporate houses and the educated elite, concomitant with increasing lobbying pressure and economic traps on the ruling class, are reminders of the early colonial experience of gaining access through traders, upper caste elite and the royal courts. The IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and a whole spectrum of multi-lateral and multi-national arrangements represent the new structures formed for tightening the stranglehold of the global capital on world economy and extending the market agenda into every sphere of human activity and concern, including education. The NGOs (with notable exceptions, of course), the so-called civil society organizations of the globalised era, have by and large become willing agents for camouflaging the ugly face of globalization and presenting it in a 'humanised' language. Globalisation can, therefore, be viewed as a more evolved, powerful and subtle form of colonialism.

Both the colonialism and globalisation have come to be viewed as a response of the then industrialising and now the affluent west to its own internal economic crisis and need for expansion of markets. In recent decades, globalisation has acquired the added dimension of the need for access to new markets for the weapon industry and information and communication technology and control over additional sources of oil, forest and water. This is now clearly evident in the increasing militarism of the western powers led by the superpower USA and non-fulfilment of their international commitments to the developing countries on climate, agriculture, bio-diversity and sustainable development.

Appropriation And Distortion Of Knowledge

It should surprise no one, therefore, that globalisation has both used and adjusted with the colonial paradigm of appropriating and distorting people's knowledge. As this knowledge has been the basis of human development and welfare since the dawn of human civilization, the purpose of the market forces is clearly to direct people's mindsets and creative activities to achieve its cynical objectives. Let us recall here the Macauleyan emphasis in early nineteenth century on controlling and re-orienting higher education in colonial India at the very outset and imposition of English as the medium of *instruction* (not education!). The colonial powers knew well (as do the forces of the global capital) that it is the higher education sector that generates knowledge for development and change. It is with this understanding that the Ambani-Birla Report, submitted to the Prime Minister's Council on Trade & Industry in April 2000, recommended that the entire higher education sector must be allowed to be privatized (Government of India, 2000). The report further recommended that all those disciplines (this includes all sciences and social sciences and even disciplines of humanities such as linguistics) that have a market value must *not* be supported by the State funds. The report proposed that such marketable forms of knowledge can instead be supported by the market forces. Only disciplines such as oriental languages, archeology, paleontology, religion and philosophy that do not have a market value today, may continue to receive State funding. This implies that the nature of knowledge in sciences and social sciences will henceforth be determined by the market forces which in turn are controlled by the global capital.

Since the knowledge that informs education and its pedagogy from pre-primary level upwards is also generated in the higher education sector, Ambani-Birla Report implies that education at all levels

henceforth will be determined by the market forces. In this sense, the Ambani-Birla Report fulfills the agenda put forth in the 'World Declaration on Education For All and Framework For Action To Meet Basic Learning Needs' issued by the Jomtien Conference under the sponsorship of the World Bank and UN agencies (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990), though it seemed to be advocating the cause of elementary education by recommending enhanced State support for this sector. Significantly, Tomasevski (2001) noted the following regarding the Jomtien Declaration:

"The language of the final document adopted by the Jomtien Conference merged human needs and market forces, moved education from governmental to social responsibility, made no reference to the international legal requirement that primary education be free-of-charge, introduced the term 'basic education' which confused conceptual and statistical categories. The

language elaborated at Jomtien was different from the language of international human rights law."

{K. Tomasevski (2001), Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, to United Nations, Commission on Human Rights, [Note: The Dakar Framework of Action adopted by the Dakar Conference of the World Education Forum in April 2000 maintained the basic paradigm of the Jomtien Declaration.]}

Education is no more viewed as a tool of social development but as an investment for developing human resource and global market (ref. Ambani-Birla Report's Foreword, Government of India, 2000). The dominant features of education in the age of globalisation may be listed as follows (Sadgopal, 2002, 2005):

- i) trivialisation of the goals of education;
- ii) fragmentation of knowledge;

Commodification and Co-option of Language

It was a forenoon of the year 2005 when the meeting of the committee constituted by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) on 'Universalisation of Secondary Education' was in progress. The Member-Secretary placed a document received from the Ministry of HRD for being considered by the committee. The covering letter stated that the document represented the proceedings of a meeting the Ministry had with the ASSOCHAM on the subject of the role of private 'education providers' in the field of secondary education. The letter further suggested that the committee may like to consider the document which talked of the need to change the CBSE rules governing affiliation of private schools such that the corporate houses registered under the companies act may also be eligible for starting schools and getting them affiliated with CBSE. The document wondered: **Now that education has become a commodity, what is wrong in making profit out of it!** Ten years ago, such a statement would have been inconceivable even as a casual remark in the corridors of the Ministry.

Before the year 2005 ended, a 30-page document entitled, 'Preliminary Recommendations for Higher Education' was submitted by the Education Promotion Society for India (EPSI) to the Ministry. Some excerpts and comments:

"Review of National Education Policy, 1986 which is not in tune and has diluted relevance in conjunction with the current economic and knowledge development scenario in the country also in perspective of global developments such as WTO agreement."

Comment: Does it matter at all that the 1986 policy has also failed to provide education of equitable quality to all children, as required by the Constitution? Or may be the Constitution is also not in tune with the WTO agreement!

"Need for Higher level of involvement of the industry since, they are the direct beneficiary for formulation of relevance and employable curricula."

Comment: It would not occur to the private "education providers" that millions of housewives, farmers, artisans, minor forest produce gatherers, fishermen, construction workers, miners, cooks, painters, leather curers and shoe makers, *dais* and *vaids*, auto garage mechanics, die makers, plumbers, electricians, gadget repairers, well diggers, diamond cutters and such other producers of national wealth are also "direct beneficiaries" and should have a say in "formulation of relevance and employable curricula".

"Fixation of fees to be left to supply and demand. The fees can be raised to the level of realistic cost of education. The **equitable fee** will enable the institution to be both independent, self-reliant and grow with their own resources."

Comment: The users of English language could have probably never imagined the use of the term "equitable" in such a context. The sociological meaning of "equitable" will henceforth be determined by the balance of supply and demand!

Let no one be surprised if the Ministry endorses the EPSI proposals since EPSI has the support of three major national chambers of commerce and industry viz. CII, ASSOCHAM and PHDCCI.

- iii) alienation of knowledge from its social ethos and material base;
- iv) determination of the character of knowledge by global market forces;
- v) institutionalisation of economic, technological and socio-cultural hegemony of the international instruments in the formulation of curriculum;
- vi) introduction of parallel and hierarchical educational streams for different social segments;
- vii) marginalisation of poor children and youth as well as the backward regions through competitive screening and a discriminatory system of institutional assessment and accreditation at both national and global levels in the pursuit of the questionable notion of 'merit'; and
- viii) attrition of the State-supported and democratic structures for educational planning, finance allocation and management

Admittedly, however, many of the features enumerated above were also evident either in rudimentary or relatively more pronounced forms in the pre-globalisation phase as well. What globalisation has done is the heightening and sharpening of these tendencies.

Critical Thinking Vs. Behaviourism

Globalisation does not need thinking people. Thinking people can be dangerous. They ask too many uncomfortable questions. They also tend to explore new and divergent paths. Worse are those people who have been educated to do criti-

cal thinking!

The neo-liberal forces are determined to suppress all forms and structures of education of the masses that lead to critical thinking, generation of new knowledge and humane values and sensitivities, primarily because it promotes social welfare and equity. Such education must be restricted to a selected few who could be utilized as human resource for advancing the vested interests of global capital. Why else do you think the Government of Madhya Pradesh ordered the closure of the 30-year old Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP) in July 2002? Why indeed did the Government stop more than one lakh children from learning science through experiment-based, inquiry-oriented and environment-related pedagogy in 1,000 schools of 14 districts? No other schools in India - not even the expensive and exclusive metropolitan public schools - were practicing this pedagogy. It must also be noted that Madhya Pradesh had until recently the largest component of the World Bank's District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in India. Obviously, World Bank's notion of knowledge for the developing countries was inconsistent with the ways in which HSTP (and also Eklavya's Social Science Programme) viewed knowledge. The Government had no choice but to close the programme, lest the World Bank comes in conflict with HSTP when, and if at all, it moves to the upper primary levels where the HSTP's pedagogy was being practiced.

Let us also examine another critical aspect of globalisation related to educational psychology. This has roots in the ideology of behaviourism which was promoted in the United States and Europe in 1930's when the west was undergoing one of its worst economic crisis. This ideology viewed human beings as entities which could be regulated, controlled and directed. It found expression in the Jomtien Declaration (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990)

Globalisation promotes what it calls knowledge and emotions on fingertips, rather than in head and heart. Thinking (and feeling too!) would be done by the internet through fingertips on computer keyboards, while the head and heart can be tucked away. This is symbolic of the new Orwellian 'knowledge society' where the society receives 'knowledge' passively, rather than generating or transforming it through critical interaction with social reality and the material base.

which insisted that all targets of basic education must be 'observable and measurable'. It is also reflected in NCERT's previous 'National Curriculum Framework for School Education' which resurrected long-discarded and irrational parameters such as Intelligent Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Spiritual Quotient (SQ) for measuring, regulating and screening human behaviour (NCERT, 2000). Indeed, the basic tenets of computer-based *programmed* learning, modular instruction packages, pre-determined market-promoted satellite communication, fragmentation of knowledge into competencies and tasks (e.g. NCERT's Minimum Levels of Learning, 1991) and trivialisation of human development issues (e.g. the new curricular topics such as fertility control, AIDS 'consciousness', anti-pollution drives, disaster management, anti-terrorist campaign etc.) flow out of this very ideology of behaviourism that dominates globalisation's knowledge agenda. Any attempt by the people to resist this ideology will require re-construction of knowledge that informs the dominant framework of educational psychology and also begin to place both the child and her learning in diverse socio-cultural and developmental contexts.

Structural Adjustment And Abdication By The State

The impact of global market forces, multi-national capital, satellite communication and digital technologies have become the determining coordinates of knowledge inherent in all curricula - from pre-school to Universities. This impact is concomitant with the process of privatisation and commercialisation operating at all levels of education, thereby converting education into a marketable commodity. This has led to relegation of the State-supported education to the poor sections of society, institutionalisation of parallel and hierarchical streams of education for different social segments, providing space to the corporate houses for determining curriculum and the phenomenon of increasing abdication by the State of its Constitutional obligation towards *education of equitable quality* of all children (see Sadgopal 2004, for detailed analysis). All of these trends are also supported by the Jomtien Conference (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990)

which was fully accepted by the Government of India.

Evidence of State's tendency to abdicate its Constitutional obligation towards provision of education of equitable quality for all children was already visible in the National Policy on Education-1986 as well as in its modified version of 1992 in accepting the low-quality low-budget non-formal education as a parallel stream for the poor, especially the child labour and girl children (Government of India, 1986 & 1992, Section 5.12; Sadgopal, 2000 & 2003). However, the market agenda and the IMF-World Bank regime of Structural Adjustment Programme, as reflected in the Jomtien Declaration, had a significant impact on the State's policies, resulting in further attrition of its commitment during the 1990s to fulfill its Constitutional obligation in the following concrete ways:

- Education made synonymous with literacy;
- Dilution of elementary education of eight years to primary education of five or less years;
- Diverting attention from the central issue of transforming the *mainstream* school system with respect to issues such as the lack of social relevance of education, inequality inbuilt into the multi-track education policy, inflexibility and non-contextuality of curriculum, teaching-learning process and evaluation parameters founded on erroneous pedagogic principles, ill-planned professional content of teacher education etc.;
- Imposing Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs) as a tool for organizing learning material and evaluation despite the fact that the concept of MLLs is rooted in only a limited and incomplete view of education and is aimed at conditioning the child's mind with social biases and market ideology (see Dhankar, 2002 for a detailed commentary);

- Ignoring the policy commitment to the Common School System (Sadgopal, 2002, p. 123; 2003);

- Institutionalisation of low-quality low-budget parallel streams of education for the deprived sections of society viz. Alternative Schools, Education Guarantee Scheme etc.;

- Reducing the issue of women empowerment and gender discrimination to the so-called gender parity measured in terms of enrollment ratios (Government of India, 2001; UNESCO, 2002, pp. 68-79; Sadgopal, 2004);

- Marginalising the issue of social and cultural discrimination of *dalits*, tribals and the minorities both within and outside the school and its impact on their capacity to participate in and complete elementary education; reducing the entire issue to their enrollment ratios (Government of India, 1993, 1995 & 2001);

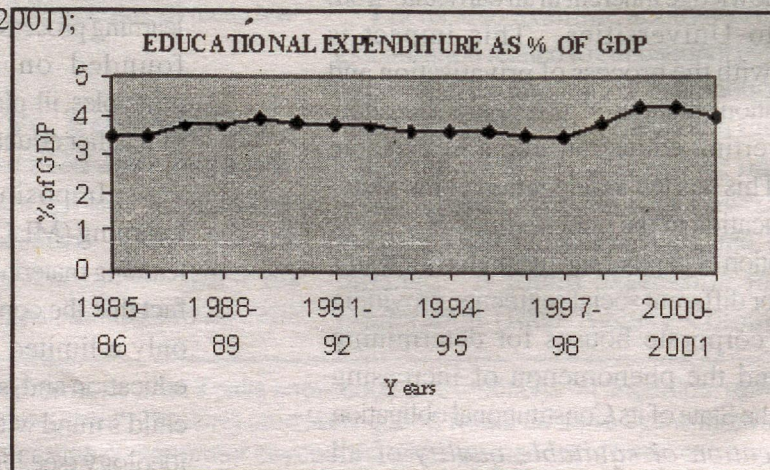
- Isolating education from its socio-economic context by ignoring issues such as child labour, wage structure, common property resources (e.g. fodder, fuel and water), patriarchy, caste structure, cultural alienation and discrimination, communalization of polity, feudal orientation of a significant proportion of Panchayati Raj institutions etc. (Government of India, 1993, 1995 & 2001);

- Reducing the aim of girl child's education to the narrow view wherein women are envisaged as merely 'useful products', ready receptors or transmitters of demographic and nutritional messages or proficient wage earners or producers, thereby violating girls child's right to education as a human (see World Bank, 1997, pp. 1 & 39; Sadgopal, 2003);

- Violating the Operation Blackboard's norms prescribed by the National Policy with respect to the number of teachers and classrooms per primary school and then legitimizing multi-grade teaching for the poor;

- Overlooking the cumulative gap in resource allocation to education building up for the past three decades due to non-investment of the recommended level of 6% of GDP in education (Sadgopal, 2004); and

- Refusing to re-prioritise the national economy for the purpose of allocating adequate resources for education of the poor and thereby re-distributing social justice; using this reluctance as a rationale for seeking external aid for primary education, promoting privatization and commercialization of education at all levels and substituting national concerns with the



Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2001-02
 [Rectified on the basis of 'Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education' (various years),
 Ministry of HRD]
 (Author: Anil Sadgopal)

conditionalities of international aid giving agencies (Sadgopal, 2004; People's Campaign for Common School System, 2005).

[These dilutions of Constitutional obligations, policy commitments and educational goals during the post-Jomtien phase of the Nineties were first articulated in a non-Government consultative report on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Government of India, 1994 and again in Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha's Lokshala document, 1995.]

Dependence On External Aid And Privatisation

Although various governments, irrespective of their political hues, have failed since independence to allocate adequate funds for elementary education, this tendency now stands reinforced by the IMF-World Bank regime of Structural Adjustment which requires that government spending in the social sector, particularly concerning education and health, is reduced. It may be noted that external aid flowed in India's primary education sector for the first time in a systematic manner as part of an understanding reached at the Jomtien Conference in the Nineties under the World Bank-sponsored District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). DPEP started 1994-95 and, by the year 2000, had spread to 275 odd districts in 18 States – almost half of the country. Ironically, despite this inflow, the nation's capacity to mobilize resources for elementary education steadily declined during the Nineties (Sadgopal, 2004). The adverse impact of external aid on nation's political will to fulfill Constitutional obligation towards education is yet to become an issue of political debate.

During the same period, the World Bank-sponsored projects and schemes (e.g. DPEP) promoted a range of parallel educational facilities for the poor, such as alternative schools, education guarantee centers and learning centers. The promise of the 1986 policy to provide three teachers to every primary school was replaced by multi-grade teaching and that, too, by an under-qualified, untrained and under-paid "para-teacher" appointed on short term contract. The consequent deterioration of quality of education in the government system was followed by the expected withdrawal of even the poor children from these schools and a concomitant phenomenal

rise in the number of low fee-charging poor quality private schools in the rural areas and urban slums. All these policy distortions, resulting from Structural Adjustment regime, are now packaged 'neatly' under the banner of the much hyped Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). In January 2004, the NDA Government signed yet another agreement with the World Bank for a loan of Rs. 4710 crore for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for 2004-2007 i.e. Rs. 1,570 crore per year. At the current level of GDP, this loan amounts to merely 0.06% of GDP i.e. merely 6 paise out of every Rs. 100 India will earn in 2004-2005 (the level of total external assistance in this sector since 1993-94 has invariably been much lower than this level)! For this pittance, we entered into conditionalities that will never be made public, as has been the case with externally aided projects since 1993-94.

The official stance is in clear violation of the CABE guidelines against 'dependency syndrome' and policy dilutions in relation to external aid (GOI, 1993, p. 89). This dependence on external aid in fact implies that *there need not be any change in the priorities of national economy* since additional funds will keep flowing in, as long as the Government of India is willing to adjust its educational policy to the conditionalities of the international funding agencies. These are matters of great concern for those of us who have been consistently questioning the role of external aid in elementary education. This issue has unfortunately not found any recognition in the CMP of the UPA government and is yet become a part of the political discourse at the national level.

As per UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report, the ill-conceived SSA is unlikely to achieve its targets even by 2015. The implication of SSA's collapse would be rapid rise in the number of poor quality private education 'shops'. This is a brief account of how the neo-liberal agenda of commodification of school education is being promoted in India - a country known until the onset of New Economic Policy for its vast and powerful state-sponsored school system.

Closing down of government schools followed by the sale of their prime property assets is now fast spreading as a nation-wide phenomenon, especially in urban areas. This is the outcome of a well-designed deliberate policy of allowing the government school

system to gradually deteriorate until it is replaced by the fee-charging private schools. This is precisely what the global market forces, led by powerful international financial institutions and funding agencies, have been working for.

While the State abdicates its Constitutional obligations, it promotes, at the same time, privatization and commercialization of school education to benefit an upward mobile minority. For this purpose, it extends *direct subsidy* to the so-called private unaided schools for the rich and upper middle class by (a) making available prime land in urban areas at highly reduced costs; (b) exempting their income as well as donations to their Trusts/

Societies under the Income Tax Act; (c) providing, free of cost, professionally trained teachers who received their diplomas/degrees through publicly subsidized teacher education programmes; and (d) giving their institutions and examinations due recognition through Government-supported CBSE or State Boards of Examinations. A report of the Ministry of HRD last year documented data on how the rich private unaided schools mint money, misappropriate funds and avoid paying taxes, causing substantial loss of government revenue. Ironically, the Draft Right to Education Bill, 2005 proposes that such 'unaided schools' be provided government grants under various *alibi*, while continuing to treat them as being in the unaided

Policy of Demolishing the Government School System

The following news item appeared on International Literacy Day, 2004.

"Facing a shortage of students, the Directorate of Education [Delhi] has decided to close down 53 government schools, many of which are in old Delhi. This is in addition to (the) 55 schools already closed We have seen a steady decline in enrollment in government schools."

- Hindustan Times, 8th September 2004

Instead of showing concern and taking steps to improve the functioning of the government school system, the authorities seemed to be celebrating. They declared,

"The closure of the schools helps the Directorate in two ways. Firstly, the teachers can be posted in schools having few teachers. Secondly, there is saving on annual expenditure of maintenance and repairs."

- Hindustan Times, 8th September 2004

During the past couple of years, almost 150 government schools have been closed down in Delhi alone. The government schools in Delhi have almost 70% of the school-going children of the metropolis. *Close all of them and the Directorate will be helped maximally! It will save its entire annual expenditure!!*

This is not the first time that India has witnessed such a phenomenon. In 1999-2000, 30 government schools in the city of Indore were closed down and their campuses, located on prime lands in the heart of the city, were either converted into police stations or handed over to private interests for developing commercial complexes. The District Collector, in his report to the Chief Minister, proudly called it a process of 'rationalisation'! No one cared to know as to where had all the children gone. All of them had joined the rapidly mushrooming low-fee charging school shops in the neighbourhood of the erstwhile government schools.

Reports of deterioration of the quality of education in government schools followed by their closure have come from Hyderabad, Chennai and even smaller towns. The Jharkhand and Punjab Governments have 'proactively' floated tenders for the sale/disposal of *anganwadis* and state school campuses respectively. Such 'rationalisation' now provides the basic rationale for the governments in different states for promoting private fee-charging 'unaided' schools. It does not seem to make any difference to anyone who matters in political power if the consequence of this 'rationalisation' is denial of education to the underprivileged children, particularly the girls.

category. Yet, the Draft Bill has no provision that would require the state government to regulate these institutions.

Such subsidized private schools are not expected to fulfill any of their Constitutional obligations for ensuring *free education of equitable quality* for India's future generations. The recent trend of some of these private schools undertaking patronizing measures (often by setting up parallel tracks of their own) for handful of deprived children must not be allowed to confuse the policy discourse. In contrast, the State expresses its desperation regarding lack of resources for fulfilling its Constitutional obligations, unless external aid is increased, *seemingly* unmindful of the ways in which India's education policy and agenda have been already undermined by globalization.

Right To Education And National Economy*

It is now publicly known that the Draft "Right to Education Bill, 2005" prepared by the concerned C.A.B.E. Committee was 'doctored' by its chairperson (Sh. Kapil Sibal, Union Minister of State for Science & Technology) in association with the Ministry's bureaucracy, thereby making a mockery of the democratic process of C.A.B.E. Even this diluted Draft Bill was further diluted before the Govt. of India posted it on its website in August 2005. Yet, the UPA government decided not to present the Bill in the winter session of the Parliament despite the Presidential approval having been given to the enabling 86th Constitutional Amendment *three years ago*. It is learnt that the Draft Bill got stuck in the Prime Minister's office as the government is unwilling to allocate the required public funds for its implementation. This implies that the government is unwilling to **reprioritise the national economy in favour of the masses**, even when it concerns a Fundamental Right. Recent reports indicate that the Planning

Commission wishes to convert the Draft Bill in a legislation that will promote the multi-track education system as is the case with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. This means that even the Right to Education will be given to the nation's children as per IMF-World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme!

One hopes that the Central Government would take direction from the Supreme Court (Unnikrishnan Judgment, 1993) which held that the State's financial capacity cannot be cited as a valid reason to limit the Fundamental Right to education with respect to children *up to 14 years of age*. Limitation of financial capacity can be a consideration *only after the age of 14 years*, though Fundamental Right will continue to exist even after the age of 14 years. And this was before the 86th Constitutional Amendment. After the amendment, there is no room whatsoever for hesitation to mobilise adequate resources. In case the government does not know how to mobilize resources, they may like to read the report of the Tapas Majumdar Committee (January 1999) which inferred that, in the case of a Fundamental Right, the entitlement "cannot be deferred by the State at its convenience The State has to make the necessary reallocation of resources, by superseding other important claims cut(ing) down even on spending that it would otherwise consider as essential, but which was not covered by any of the Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Constitution." Here is a tentative list of claims on resources that need to be "superseded" as per the Constitution: writing off the bank loans of corporate houses as 'non-performing assets' (as per Reserve Bank, loans worth Rs. 45,000 crores were written off recently); holding Commonwealth Games in 2010; waiving off taxes (both direct and indirect) and providing hidden subsidies in order to promote conspicuous consumption; subsidizing private schools and colleges (cheap land, tax

*Based upon the paper presented by the Peoples Campaign for Common School System at the National Convention on Right to Education held in New Delhi on 9th December 2005.

Right to Education and the Private School

The Draft Right to Education Bill, 2005 requires that private unaided schools provide 25% free seats for children belonging to the weaker sections who reside in the school's specified neighbourhood. For fulfilling this social obligation, the private schools shall be reimbursed by the government at the rate at which the state schools spend on a per child basis. Even this limited 'social obligation' of the private schools shall end when the child completes elementary education of eight years. These schools shall be then free to throw the child out of the school since the government will stop reimbursing them.

This provision, at its best, is expected to benefit merely a handful of the under-privileged living in the neighbourhood of supposedly 'high quality' expensive urban private schools. But the issue of 25% free seats has made it possible for the entire discourse on Right to Education to be hijacked. Most of the debate is about whether this provision is feasible or not. Hardly any one is talking about what would happen to the right of the vast majority of the underprivileged who won't be benefited by this provision. This lopsided discussion has diverted public attention from the critical issue of the need to build a Common School System and promote the concept of neighbourhood school both of which would be entirely marginalised as a consequence of the Draft Bill.

There is also a provision for the government to extend financial support to the private unaided school if the latter lacks resources for infrastructural development as per the Schedule given in the Draft Bill. Yet, such a school will continue to be treated as an 'unaided school'! Further, the Draft Bill makes it legitimate for the private school to levy capitation fees and any other charges it deems fit provided the school declares them at the time of admissions!

After the passage of the Bill, the state government shall be free to withdraw their existing Acts for regulation of private schools as the Bill does not have any such requirement. Given the proactive private school lobby, this is precisely what the state governments shall be persuaded to do.

Let us further note that the Draft Bill has no provision requiring the State to provide adequate financial resources for either fulfillment of Article 21A of the Constitution or implementation of the proposed legislation. Nothing could please the private 'education providers' more! Finally, the Draft Bill fails to even recognise the rapidly increasing role of FDI, external assistance and international examination/ affiliating bodies (e.g. International Baccalaureate) in school education.

The Draft Bill thus offers the nation a perfect recipe for implementing the market agenda of school education!

exemptions, giving them teachers trained at public costs) and so on.

The CABE Committee Report (June 2005) had provided four scenarios of financial requirements for implementing this Bill. The highest estimate was for the first scenario which was based on a pupil:teacher ratio of 35:1 and an average salary for the teacher of almost Rs. 8,000/-. For this, an additional investment of Rs. 4,36,500 crores would be required over a period of six years from the year 2006-07 to 2011-12. The implications of these requirements in terms of % of GDP are presented below:

Year	Additional Financial Requirement (% of GDP)
2006-07	1.88
2007-08	1.75
2008-09	1.85
2009-10	1.57
2010-11	1.22
2011-12	1.15
Total	1.51

Source: Report of the CABE Committee on Free and Compulsory Education & Other Issues Related to Elementary Education, Volume 2, Table 3.2.

At present, the nation is spending 3.9% of GDP on education, including elementary education. Add the additional requirement for the Bill as indicated above and we would still be well within the scope of 6% of GDP, with a balance of 0.6% of GDP left over for other sectors of education. The balance would obviously not be adequate for meeting the requirements of secondary/ senior secondary and higher education sectors. This high investment requirement in elementary education is a result of under-investment over decades, resulting in a **cumulative gap**. This gap has to be filled up urgently in order to meet the future requirements by maintaining expenditure at 6% of GDP. This is precisely why the 1986 policy resolved that the outlay on education will "uniformly exceed 6 per cent of the national income." A fresh evaluation of the resource requirement for fulfilling the goal of guaranteeing Right to Education to all children have led a recent government committee of experts once again to arrive at similar conclusion (NIEPA, November 2005). Indeed, the requirement of filling up the cumulative gap is endorsed by the Scenario C worked out by the committee as it recommends a gradual rise in allocations such that these would continue to grow even beyond 6% of GDP during the XI Plan period and eventually reach the level of 10.22% of GDP by 2014-15. The committee records that even this scenario "should not be seen as an ambitious one."

Additional cess is definitely not the answer as this has yielded only about Rs. 6,000 crores last year. By levying the cess, the UPA government attempted to divert public attention from the real issues. The tax:GDP ratio can be improved to some extent to yield additional resources, as suggested by the Tapas Majumdar Committee. But the real answer lies somewhere else. How long would we avoid the question of *reprioritising the national economy in favour of the masses*? The ruling elite has refused to accept this solution since Mahatma Phule addressed the Indian Education Commission in 1882 or Gokhale presented his elementary education Bill in the Imperial Assembly in 1911 or Dr. Ambedkar advocated 'free and compulsory education' in the Constituent Assembly. One wonders whether the Central Government will

continue to dither and prefer to mislead the people by claiming lack of resources. One thing is clear. More we delay, the greater will be the cumulative gap and the goal of building a civilised society in India will recede further, well beyond the national horizons.

Conclusion

Indian policy makers have hardly acknowledged that issues such as disparity, socio-economic stratification and caste hierarchies, patriarchy and gender inequity, conflicts of cultural and ethnic identity, unemployment and disemployment, regional imbalances, distortions of development policy, attrition of values inherited from the freedom struggle and cynical attack on democratic institutions have a decisive impact on the structure and processes of education. The rise of communalism and the consequent attempts to impose mono-cultural hegemony during the past couple of decades has seriously begun to threaten the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual character of Indian nationhood. Policy formulation and any realistic planning of education calls for reviewing the role of education in social change and re-designing the entire education system to deal with these issues. Curriculum must also begin to take note of the rapidly emerging linkage between globalisation and religious fundamentalism (see Ahmad, 2002; Sadgopal, 2004). There is no space whatsoever either in the Jomtien Declaration or in the framework of the externally aided programmes for such meaningful policy changes.

We must learn to recognize the attack of the market forces on education as an attack on the nature of knowledge itself and also as a design to control its access, production and distribution amongst nations and social classes. These forces have decided that it is only by regulating, controlling and distorting knowledge that they can dictate their terms to various nations and large sections of global society. In this sense, the assault of globalization on education needs to be viewed as an **epistemological attack** (Sadgopal, 2002, 2004). Only then we will know how to resist and counter it. A counter-globalisation and counter-revivalist but pro-people educational agenda will aim to empower people to analyse, question and de-construct the colonial (and now the globalised) paradigm of knowledge and development. This cannot be achieved without informed and conscious social



intervention through a grassroots-based people's movement backed by progressive sections of society.

References

1. Ahmad, Aijaz (2002), *On Communalism and Globalisation: Offensives of the Far Right*, Three Essays, New Delhi.
2. Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (1995), *Lokshala Programme for Universalisation of Elementary Education: Demonstrating an Alternative Vision*, New Delhi.
3. Dhankar, Rohit (2000), *Seeking Quality Education: In the Arena of Fun and Rhetoric*, in *Seeking Quality Education for All: Experiences from the District Primary Education Programme*, Occasional Papers, The European Commission, June 2002.
4. Government of India (1986), *National Policy on Education*, Ministry of Human Resource Development (Deptt. of Education), New Delhi.
5. Government of India (1990), *Towards an Enlightened and Humane Society - Report of the National Policy on Education-1986 Review Committee* (Acharya Ramamurti Committee), Ministry of Human Resource Development (Deptt. of Education), New Delhi.
6. Government of India (1992), *National Policy on Education-1986 (As modified in 1992)*, Ministry of Human Resource Development (Deptt. of Education), New Delhi.
7. Government of India (1993), *Education For All: The Indian Scene*, Ministry of Human Resource Development (Deptt. of Education), New Delhi.
8. Government of India (1994), *Report of a National Consultation on Rights of the Child*, Indian Council for Child Welfare, UNICEF and Ministry of Human Resource Development (Deptt. of Women & Child Development), New Delhi.
9. Government of India (1995), *DPEP Guidelines*, Ministry of Human Resource Development (Deptt. of Education), New Delhi.
10. Government of India (2000), *A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education* (Mukesh Ambani and Kumaramangalam Birla), Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry, New Delhi, April 2000.
11. Government of India (2001), *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Framework for Implementation*, Ministry of Human Resource Development (Deptt. of Elementary Education and Literacy), New Delhi.
12. Inter-Agency Commission (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank) (1990), *World Declaration on Education For All and Framework For Action To Meet Basic Learning Needs*, World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, Thailand, 5-9 March, 1990, New York.
13. National Council of Educational Research & Training (1991), *Minimum Levels of Learning at Primary Stage*, New Delhi.
14. National Council of Educational Research (2000), *National Curriculum Framework For School Education*, New Delhi, November 2000.
15. NIEPA (2005), *Report of the Committee on National Common Minimum Programme's Commitment of Six Per Cent of GDP to Education*, November, 2005.
16. Sadgopal, Anil (2000), *Shiksha Mein Badlav Ka Sawal*, Granth Shilpi, Delhi, pp. 175-189.
17. Sadgopal, Anil (2002), *Political Economy of Education in the Age of Globalisation*, In 'Children in Globalising India: Challenging Our Conscience' (Ed.: Enakshi Ganguly Thukral), HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi; (2003), Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ), New Delhi.
18. Sadgopal, Anil (2003), *Exclusion and Inequality in Education: The State Policy and Globalisation*, Contemporary India (Journal of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library), 2 (3), July-September 2003, pp. 1-36.
19. Sadgopal, Anil (2004), *Globalisation: Demystifying its Knowledge Agenda for India's Education Policy*, 2004 Durgabai Deshmukh Memorial Lecture, Council for Social Development and India International Centre, New Delhi, 15 July 2004.
20. Sadgopal, Anil (2005), *Globalisation: Deconstructing its Knowledge Agenda*, In 'School, Society, Nation' (Eds.: Rajni Kumar, Anil Sethi & Shalini Sikka), Orient Longman, Hyderabad, pp. 83-110.
21. Tomasevski, K. (2001), *Right to Education Primers No. 1: Removing Obstacles in the Way of the Right to Education*, Lund, Sweden.
22. UNESCO (2002), *Education For All: Is the World on Track?* (EFA Global Monitoring Report), Paris.
23. World Bank (1997), *Primary Education in India*, Allied Publishers Limited, Mumbai.