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The Neo-liberal Assault on India's Education System[1]

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This chapter analyses the significantly adverse impact the World Bank (together with UN and other international agencies) has had on the Indian education system and policies. The first section puts World Bank programmes in a historical context, followed by an in-depth analysis of the policy-level negative fallout from World Bank interventions in education. Following this primary paper are three testimonies which look at different aspects of the World Bank policies in education. These are the World Bank's impact on Higher Education, impact within the State of West Bengal, and impact on the education of tribals in the State of Maharashtra, mainly through its participation in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

The doors of the Indian economy were formally opened to the neo-liberal agenda with the Government of India's declaration of the New Economic Policy in 1991. However, global market forces, led by the United States and other G-8 countries and represented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-World Bank regime, had started operating in India quietly much earlier. From the mid-1980s onwards, there are definite signs of the presence of their advocates at the highest echelons of the Indian government, including the Prime Minister's office, and their agenda having an impact on the formulation of Indian policies.

The Constitution's Vision of Education: Conflict with the State and Neo-Liberalism[2]

The Constitution of India directs the Indian State to provide 'free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years' (Article

45, Part IV). In Article 46, the State is directed to 'promote with special care the educational and economic interests … of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs)…'.[3]

Article 45 has been interpreted to include (*i*) early childhood care, nutrition, health and pre-primary education (kindergarten, nursery) for children below six years of age and (*ii*) *elementary* (not *primary*) education of eight years (Class I–VIII) for the 6–14 age group children. Although Article 45 is placed in Part IV[4] of the Constitution and, therefore, not enforceable as a Fundamental Right, the sense of urgency attached to its fulfilment 'within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution' is remarkable. This is the only Constitutional provision with a time frame. This ended in 1960. The neglect and disdain with which this critical provision has been treated by the State and the ruling class are part of history. At present, more than half of the 6–14 age group children are denied elementary education and the data on the provision for the children below six years of age are too scanty to deserve reference. The status of these provisions in the case of the SCs and the STs, noted in Article 46 for 'special care', is much worse.

There are at least two significant dimensions flowing out of the Constitution that define the vision of education. First, the Preamble to the Constitution provides the overall framework within which Article 45 has to be envisaged. This means that education must be directed to build citizenship for a democratic, socialist, secular, egalitarian and just society. Second, education is to be in consonance with Articles 14, 15 and 16 of Part III which guarantee equality before the law and equality of opportunity as Fundamental Rights and prohibit the state from discriminating 'against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them'. While the state has to date failed to promote these two dimensions of the Constitutional vision, the World Bank policies in India, too, have to be judged within the same framework.

A historic judgment by the Supreme Court of India in 1993 radically transformed the status of Article 45. In its Unnikrishnan Judgment (1993), the Supreme Court ruled that Article 45 in Part IV has to be read in 'harmonious construction' with Article 21 (Right to Life) in Part III of the Constitution, as Right to Life loses its significance without education. Hence, the Supreme Court declared that Article 45 acquired the status of a Fundamental Right. The years that followed have seen how the Indian State allowed the neo-liberal policies to dilute and distort the notion of the Fundamental Right inherent in the Unnikrishnan Judgment. The 86th Constitutional Amendment (2002) is clearly a result of this neo-liberal assault on the Constitution and designed to legitimise the fault lines introduced by the World Bank policies in India's educational system.[5]

The Unnikrishnan Judgment went a step further. It ruled that the Right to Education continues to exist under Article 41 (Part IV) even beyond the age of 14 years but is limited by the State's 'economic capacity and [stage of] development'. Clearly, the Constitution is directing the State to envisage the entire sector of education—from kindergarten to higher and professional education—in a holistic manner. Any policy to limit, distort or fragment this vision, neo-liberal or otherwise, is a violation of the Constitution of India which represents people's aspirations from the freedom struggle against imperialism.

Neo-liberal Policy Trends before Structural Adjustments

In the National Policy on Education-1986 (NPE-1986) and its companion Programme of Action-1986 (POA-1986) itself, we can identify several trends that reflected the World Bank's thinking. These became evident later in the late 1980s or 1990s when the high profile Total Literacy Campaigns (under the National Literacy Mission), UNICEF-assisted Bihar Education Project, World Bank-funded U.P. Basic Education Project, SIDA/DfID-assisted Lok Jumbish (Rajasthan) and finally the World Bank-sponsored District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in eighteen states (about 280 districts) became the face of the 1986 education policy. These trends also served the vested interests of the Indian ruling class, apart from being politically and financially convenient to the central government. Let us briefly list these trends:

- The Education Commission (1964–66), popularly known as the Kothari Commission, conceived education as a critical socio-political process for building citizenship for a democratic, socialistic, egalitarian, just and secular society. With the onset of the neo-liberal framework, the most significant impact has been on these goals which were diluted, distorted or trivialised. The change of the name of the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) in 1985–86 marks the beginning of the State's acceptance of the pro-market agenda in education.
- NPE-1986, along with POA-1986, as also their modified versions of 1992, introduced several retrogressive policy measures (e.g., introduction of non-formal education as a parallel layer and Minimum Levels of Learning). These measures paved the way for the neo-liberal agenda embedded in structural adjustment and Social the Safety Net and were later echoed in the World Bank's interventions in the 1990s as well. Some of these ideas also flowed from the Jomtien Declaration (1990).
- Education was increasingly viewed as literacy and numeracy 'skills' (often reduced to functional literacy), rather than a process of unleashing the human potential and enriching the consciousness. This trivialisation went to the extent that (*i*) the literacy campaigns became synonymous with educational campaigns and (*ii*) the literacy rate became the dominant (often the sole) parameter for measuring or assessing educational progress (it is like turning the parameter into the goal itself). The literacy campaigns diverted political attention away from both school and higher education.
- Advocating a mechanistic view of curriculum fragmented into numerous market-

oriented competencies, the Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) were introduced by the Ministry of HRD[6] in 1990 in the most undemocratic and secretive manner. This was among the earliest instances, later to become a practice, of policy changes being introduced without democratic consultation or debate at legitimate fora like the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) or even NCERT.[7] The MLL concept was steeped in anti-child behaviourist approach, de-linking of the cognitive (related to thinking and knowing functions) from the non-cognitive (related to emotions, values and psycho-motor skills) domains.[8] The advocacy of MLLs by World Bank's DPEP from 1993–94 onwards was endorsed by European Commission, DfID and United Nations (UN)-funded primary education programmes. MLLs continue to define the framework of curricular planning and testing in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) as well. The MLL story tells us why we must not underestimate the neo-liberal agenda of influencing the character of knowledge in school curriculum designed to undermine critical thinking and orient the public mind in favour of consumerism.

- The most visible structural distortion of the school system comprised the introduction of a non-formal (NFE) stream of educational facilities (not school) of inferior quality for more than half of the nation's children below the school system. The 1986 policy also introduced a layer of expensive residential Navodaya Vidyalayas above the school system for a handful of children (about 80 children per district per year). The Navodaya Vidyalayas were justified, among others, on the untenable ground of acting as 'pace-setting schools' for the ordinary government schools in its neighbourhood—an objective that turned out to be entirely misconceived.[9] The policy shift also introduced the under-qualified, untrained and under-paid 'instructor' appointed on short-term contract in the NFE centres. The 'instructor' of the 1986 policy became the 'para-teacher' of World Bank's DPEP in the 1990s, providing the major basis for fragmenting (and finally demolishing) the cadre of school teachers.
- The aforementioned shift towards institutionalising multiple parallel layers within the school system contradicted the 1986 policy resolve to build a National System of Education rooted in the Constitution. This shift, however, made a farce of the policy statement that 'effective measures will be taken in the direction of the Common School System recommended in the 1986 policy' (Section 3.2). During the 1990s, the World Bank and its associated UN and other international funding agencies, as we shall see shortly, made strategic use of this fault line of the 1986 policy to first weaken and then to destroy the credibility of the school system altogether.

World Bank-UN Framework of Education: Examining Its Premises

In March 1990, India signed the 'World Declaration on Education For All' and 'Framework For Action To Meet Basic Learning Needs' adopted at the 'World

Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs', held at Jomtien, Thailand, under the joint sponsorship of three UN agencies (UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF) and the World Bank. The twin documents together known as the Jomtien Declaration have since become the chief strategic instrument of the neo-liberal forces in school education. It laid the foundation for the World Bank intervention by advocating international aid for primary (not elementary) education in the developing countries, making it 'unnecessary' for them to mobilise resources by re-prioritising national economies. The call for external financing of primary education was part of the IMF-World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and Social Safety Net. The Social Safety Net Adjustment Credit, however, turned out to be a minimal compensation against the substantial withdrawal of state funding under SAP (see Table 26.2). A detailed critique of the Jomtien Declaration is separately available.[10]

The pre-condition of SAP meant, among other things, that the Indian government was obliged to steadily reduce its expenditure on the social sector, particularly health and education. This was a rather enigmatic pre-condition in a country where the vast majority of the people did not have access to quality health or education. In education, it made even less sense as it was imposed by those who were apparently advocating the much-proclaimed 'Education For All' (EFA) programme along with the move towards the so-called 'knowledge economy'. One cannot, therefore, avoid asking the question: What was the hidden agenda?

The central thesis of the Jomtien Declaration in the Indian context was five-fold:

> *First*, the State must abdicate its Constitutional obligation towards education of the masses in general and school-based elementary education (Classes I–VIII) in particular, become dependent on external aid even for primary education (Classes I–V) and work in partnership[11] with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), religious bodies and corporate houses;[12]
>
> *Second*, the people neither have a human right as enshrined in the UN Charter nor a Fundamental Right to receiving free pre-primary and elementary education (from kindergarten to Class VIII) of equitable quality as implied either by the Constitution under Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan Judgment (1993) or even the much diluted 86th Constitutional Amendment (2002);[13]
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> *Third*, education is not aimed at building a conscious citizenship for a democratic, socialistic, egalitarian and secular society; instead, it is synonymous with literacy-numeracy and life skills required for social manipulation, mind control and regimentation for advancing the market economy;
>
> *Fourth*, the school system may comprise parallel layers of inferior quality education for various sections of society, thereby becoming a multi-layered school system; this conception will directly amount to denial of quality education to the underprivileged masses lacking capacity to pay;[14] and
>
> *Fifth*, education is a commodity that can be traded in the global market and offered for World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations.

The Jomtien Declaration dominated policy formulation and educational planning in several developing countries throughout the 1990s. A decade later, the Dakar Framework (2000) further elaborated and reinforced the basic premises of the Jomtien Declaration. The Indian government kowtowed to continue the neo-liberal agenda. As the DPEP was about to end within the next three to four years, this implied that the Indian government was ready to carry forward the DPEP package, along with its lacunae and failures, into the then emerging SSA, thereby ensuring that the neo-liberal framework will continue to determine the future policies.

Table 26.1 gives a comparative presentation of India's Constitution and the Jomtien Declaration with regard to the goals, concept and scope of education under the two frameworks.

Table 26.1 Comparative Presentation of India's Constitution and the Jomtien Declaration with Regard to Education as a Right

Constitution of India (1950)	*World Bank-UN Jomtien Declaration (1990)*
Elementary Education of 8 years guaranteed.	*Basic Education* limited to *Primary Education* of 5 or less years.
Children up to 14 years of age have a *Fundamental Right* to education, including those below six years of age; the Right continues to exist under Article 41 *even beyond the age of 14 years* but is limited by the State's 'economic capacity…' (Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan Judgment, 1993). All sectors of education—kindergarten to higher/professional—*envisioned holistically*.	Only a *symbolic reference* to Fundamental Right in the Preamble and that, too, limited to *6–11 year age group* children; early childhood care and pre-primary education included in the scope of Basic Education, though not as a universal entitlement—a *myopic and fragmented* vision.
Guarantee of *free* education.	No reference to *free* education.
Education aimed at building *citizenship for a democratic, socialist, egalitarian, just and secular society*.	The definition of Education as 'basic learning needs' allows its reduction to *literacy–numeracy*, *life skills* and *behaviourism*.
The State is obliged to ensure *reprioritisation* of *internal* resources in order to provide for education.	State's obligation substituted by *external* assistance and *partnership* with NGOs, religious bodies and the corporate capital.
Equality in and through education in all its dimensions.	Equality normally limited to '*opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning*'.
Guarantee of education of *equitable* quality—a Common School System based on Neighbourhood Schools implied.	No such guarantee—allowing space for a multi-layered school system of inferior parallel layers.

At the September 2000 Millennium Summit, the IMF-World Bank, along with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the UN agencies, devised a set of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In line with the Jomtien-Dakar Framework, one of the eight goals directly relating to education reiterates the agenda of 'achiev[ing] universal primary education'. The comparison between the Constitution and the Jomtien Declaration presented in Table 25.1 equally applies to the MDGs, if not even more. Yet, the Indian government has circumscribed educational planning and financial allocations within the highly diluted norms set by the MDGs, as indicated in the following:

> …it is imperative to give good quality elementary education to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. Policies and programmes in this direction are also necessary for honouring the *country's commitment to the 'Millennium Development Goals' and 'Education For All'* … for increasing public expenditure on education to 6 per cent of GDP and for universalizing elementary education at the national level (emphasis added).[15]

What is worse is the stance of the internationally funded and high-profile NGOs who are eager to substitute the EFA-MDG framework in place of the conceptually far more powerful founding document of the Indian Republic.

Structural Adjustment: The Hidden Agenda of Privatisation

What the country needed in 1991, when the New Economic Policy was announced, was a firm resolve to first rapidly fill up the cumulative gap resulting from continued underinvestment since the Kothari Commission (1966) and then maintain the investment level of 6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). To be sure, this was just about beginning to take place, as is evident by the steady rise in educational expenditure as percentage of GDP soon after the 1986 policy, as a result of the public pressure (see Figure 26.1). Yet, what the World Bank persuaded the Indian State to do in the 1990s was precisely the opposite. The agenda of systemic transformation in education, as implied by the 1986 policy, was given up after 1991 and replaced by a set of un-researched, untested and arbitrary schemes or projects assisted and sponsored by the World Bank, UN agencies and a host of other international agencies. The undeclared but operative strategy in such schemes and projects was to let the vast government education system (from schools to universities) starve of funds and, consequently, deteriorate in quality. As the school quality would decline, resulting in low learning levels, the parents, even the poor among them, would begin to withdraw their children from the system. A sense of exclusion from the socio-economic and political space would prevail.

When the children are either 'pushed out' of the schools or decide to 'walk-out' in protest against the poor quality and irrelevance of education (no child ever drops out, the official or World Bank claims notwithstanding), two possibilities would emerge.

First, low fee-charging unaided private schools (recognised or unrecognised) would mushroom to meet the new demand. Second, the government would have an alibi for closing down its own schools. The consequent low enrolment in government schools would be claimed as the ground for declaring them 'unviable'. The school campuses could then be converted into commercial ventures such as the fee-charging elite private schools or the shopping malls, especially in urban areas, as is the emerging phenomenon all over the country. Yet, closure of government schools would be unabashedly termed 'rationalisation' of the school system in the official reports.[16]

Let us summarise the hidden agenda of privatisation. The World Bank-UN strategy essentially comprised three sub-strategies:

- convert the school system into a multi-layered system with several inferior-quality parallel layers;
- dilute norms and standards in the government schools pertaining to infrastructure and other such essentials of quality education (see Table 26.3); and
- close government schools under the pretext of 'rationalisation'.

World Bank's DPEP: The Assault

Although claiming to be located in the 1986 policy, the DPEP was in fact embedded in the Jomtien Declaration. Beginning in 1993–94 with forty-two districts in seven states in Phase I, the DPEP had steadily spread its coverage to almost half of India's districts in eighteen states (about 280 districts) by the time its third and the last phase was initiated in 2002–3.[17]

During this short period, the DPEP was able to inflict major damage to the school system. The following is a list of the outstanding damages that can be identified:

- *Reduced* the holistic goals of education to literacy-numeracy and questionable life skills;
- *Diluted* the commitment of the Constitution as well as the 1986 policy for early childhood care, pre-primary education and eight years of elementary education (kindergarten to Class VIII) to five (or less) years of primary education (Classes I–IV in several states or I–V in others), with a major adverse impact on the policy norms of locating an elementary school in proximity to a habitation;[18]
- *Dissociated* curricular and pedagogic planning of the lower primary education from that of the upper primary, secondary and senior secondary education, thereby leading to fragmentation of school education;
- *De-linked*, both conceptually and operationally, the issue of access to education from quality of education, thus distorting educational planning;
- *Introduced* parallel layers (parallel to the mainstream formal schools) of relatively inferior quality such as the Alternative School, Education Guarantee Centres

and a variety of non-formal 'facilities'; this resulted in a multi-layered primary education system wherein each layer was meant for a separate social segment;

- *Systematically replaced* the regular teacher with an under-qualified, untrained and underpaid person appointed on short-term contract—called a para-teacher; this led to fragmentation of the teacher cadre, lowering of status, demoralisation and weakening of teachers' democratic movements (now being substituted by Information and Communication Technology-based NGO-managed teachers' networks);
- *Violated* the 1986 policy Operation Blackboard norms of 'at least three teachers and three classrooms per primary school' (along with a veranda and separate toilets for girls and boys) by introducing the dubious notion of multi-grade teaching wherein one teacher is trained to perform the 'miracle' of teaching five classes simultaneously in one classroom;
- *Diluted* the infrastructural, teacher-related, curricular and other norms and standards, approved under the 1986 policy, pertaining to quality of education (see Table 26.3);
- *Institutionalised* discrimination against the SCs, STs, most OBCs (Other Backward Classes) and Muslims, particularly the girls among them, since the introduction of parallel layers, para-teachers and multi-grade teaching adversely affected these sections of society;
- *Promoted* a money-oriented culture, quite alien and also undesirable to the education system, by lavishly paying hefty honoraria and consultation fees to all and sundry, including the questionable Joint Review Missions (JRMs); this has caused irrevocable damage since all such academic contributions were invariably made during the pre-DPEP phase either on official duty or on an entirely voluntary basis (with reimbursement of only travel and contingent expenses); it would be quite difficult, if not impossible, to reverse this malpractice, now that the external assistance is being petered out;
- *Rendered* the departments of education in state governments superfluous by *setting up* parallel NGO-type structures for channelling finance and governance of DPEP (and later SSA) and *diverting* political and administrative attention away from not only the publicly mandated departments but also State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and other state-level institutions of educational research, curricular planning and textbook development, teacher training and innovation; this has caused much confusion in governance, planning, budgeting, assigning personnel and public accountability;
- *Shifted* the government's Constitutional obligation for planning and governance of educational programmes and projects to the local bodies without adequate preparation at the ground level and without guaranteeing flow of adequate funds.
- *Undermined* the in-built systems of accountability, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes and projects. A farce of high-profile and expensive JRMs,

with participation of foreign experts,[19] was built up during DPEP whose cost was also charged to the loan account, payable by India, but whose methodology and reports have never been subjected to public scrutiny.[20] Several Indian experts have reported that their reports were 'doctored' by the 'debriefing' authorities in the state capitals, ignoring their protests.[21] At the end of the project duration, both the World Bank and the governments (Centre and/or state) would quietly move on to the next project (in this case, SSA) without ever publicly assessing how far the original targets have been achieved, and in case of failure, without objectively analysing the causes.

The aforementioned story of DPEP is hard to believe. An independent academic assessment of DPEP by a collective of university-based academics led them to make the following observation:

> Behind the smokescreen then is a vivid story of the rollback by the state, of contracting commitments for formal education, of the dismantling of the existing structures of formal education, proliferation of 'teach anyhow' strategies, a thrust on publicity management, and a neo-conservative reliance on community.[22]

This story did not end with DPEP but continues to date, by being internalised in Government of India's flagship SSA programme. The common link between DPEP and SSA is of course the World Bank and its allies such as DfID, European Commission and others which together contribute 35–40 per cent of the SSA plan.

From DPEP to SSA: Covering Up the Collapse

Although no official comprehensive review document has been made public, it would be reasonable to expect some evidence of a trend of improvement in the status of primary education in India as a whole in the official data as a consequence of the implementation of DPEP (1993–2002). This is because DPEP covered almost half of India's districts and was designed to achieve universal primary education, eliminate social and gender disparities, and lead to an overall improvement in learning outcomes. A scrutiny of several educational indicators[23] (Source: Government of India's Selected Educational Statistics for various years) allows us to make the following observation.

Almost no difference in the overall trends of change in such educational indicators at the primary (Classes I–V) versus upper primary (Classes VI–VIII) stages is perceptible during the period from 1990 to 2002 (which includes the pre-DPEP years as the baseline), even though DPEP was not implemented at the upper primary stage. This implies that the implementation of DPEP in half of India's districts has not improved the status of primary education to such an extent that its impact would be visible in the all-India data.

As the project duration of DPEP's two out of three phases was coming to an end in 2001–2, just before the Tenth Plan, the central government designed the much-hyped SSA on the basis of DPEP, despite lack of evidence of the latter's success. All the major misconceptions and fault lines of DPEP were re-packaged under the new SSA label. The same tendency continues to be dominant to date. With the SSA about to end in 2010, the Planning Commission has decided to extend SSA to the entire elementary stage in the Eleventh Plan, of course without a public review. Yet, the government's recognition of the imminent collapse of SSA is evident in the rewriting and dilution of SSA's objectives and targets in the Eleventh Plan so that the gap between these and the ground reality would not attract public notice. However, the World Bank and other international agencies, by continuing their financial assistance, goad the Indian government to camouflage the SSA collapse, rather than draw critical lessons for reforming the future policy design.

Impact of World Bank's Policies on the Education System

The following retrogressive policy changes relating to the entire education system (including secondary and higher and technical/professional education) under the influence of the World Bank-UN intervention may be listed.

GENERAL AND CONCEPTUAL IMPACT

1 The goal of education excludes building a democratic, egalitarian, just, secular and enlightened society. Instead, education has become an instrument for only improving productivity, promoting consumerism and establishing market control over knowledge and the public mind such that every human being becomes a 'useful' resource for global capital.[24]
2 Knowledge is not a heritage of humankind meant for optimising human welfare but a saleable commodity for profit, subjugation and hegemony in the hands of the capitalist class.
3 Educational development is not guided by the framework of either Universal Human Rights or Fundamental Rights under the Indian Constitution but by the global market framework.
4 Democratic structures of policy formulation and decision-making are either being by-passed or dismantled altogether.[25]
5 The state is steadily abdicating its Constitutional obligation towards education and letting the market become the unregulated 'service provider' of education from pre-primary to higher and technical/ professional levels.
6 Schools, colleges and universities are becoming 'service providers' and students their 'consumers'. In this 'Provider-Consumer' relationship, every student must eventually pay 'user charges' which implies payment of the full cost of the 'educational service'.
7 In contradiction of the Constitution, education of equitable quality is no more

the objective of educational planning. Instead, the quality of education shall be determined by the paying capacity of the student.

8 A common space for children from culturally diverse and economically disparate backgrounds to socialise and grow together is considered neither desirable nor feasible. This shift violates the logical foundation of publicly funded free and quality education system that has been the basis of capitalist development of the advanced countries.

9 Using the questionable rate of return theory, primary (or elementary) education is juxtaposed against higher education while allocating public funds. This undervalues as well as negates the critical role of higher education in creation and transaction of knowledge, thereby making developing countries dependent on the advanced countries for their 'knowledge economies'.

10 In higher education, only those disciplines will be supported through public funding which, at present, do not have any market value. The disciplines which have a market value shall receive no public support whatsoever as the market is expected to promote such disciplines. This implies that profit will determine the character of knowledge.

11 The Jomtien Declaration's insistence on developing only 'observable and measurable targets' has been used to trivialise the goals of education and distort the curriculum, pedagogy and testing in violation of the spirit of the Constitution. This behaviourist prescription reflected in the MLLs is what has adversely impacted upon DPEP and SSA.

12 In the name of social participation, the Jomtien Declaration has provided for the State to 'devolve' responsibility to NGOs, private companies and even religious bodies.[26] Keeping in mind the fund-driven nature of NGOs, profit motivation of corporate houses and rising religious fundamentalism, this stance of the Jomtien Declaration has dangerous implications.

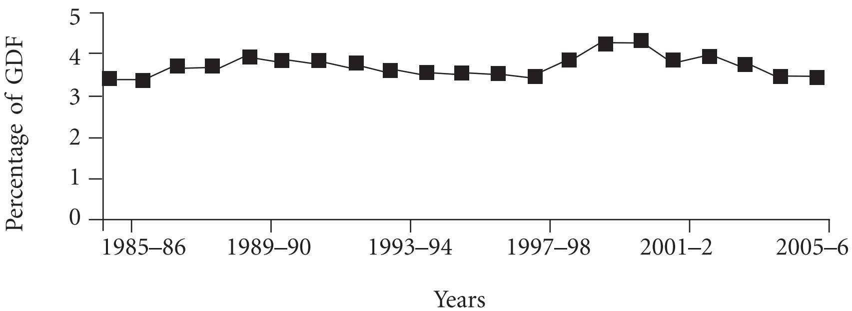
SPECIFIC IMPACT ON SCHOOL EDUCATION

1. A multi-layered school system is being built-up through a series of arbitrary and short-lived schemes and projects instead of building a publicly funded Common School System functioning through Neighbourhood Schools.[27]
2. The public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP has been declining steadily since 1990, except for a two-year period from 1999 to 2001 (Figure 26.1). The level of expenditure as a percentage of GDP in 2005–6 was as low as it was before the 1986 policy. This decline took place despite the levying of 2 per cent educational cess[28] by the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government and almost one-third of the funds for SSA coming from international agencies, including the World Bank. Clearly, the SAP prevailed over both the 1986 policy and UPA's National Common Minimum Programme which had resolved to raise educational expenditure to at least 6 per cent of GDP.
3. Declining public expenditure implies a gradual deterioration of infrastructure, a poor pupil-teacher ratio, lack of textbooks and teaching aids, and also a fall

in the standards of teacher training institutions. This will predictably result in low learning levels which the World Bank and internationally funded NGOs (see PRATHAM's ASER Report, Mumbai, January 2006) have promptly documented, as if they were waiting for the evidence of poorly functioning government schools to appear.[29] This deterioration in the quality of government schools provides the essential groundwork for privatisation and commercialisation of school education.

4. In order to promote privatisation, the government resists public pressure for legislative action to set minimum norms and standards or for instituting credible

Figure 26.1 Educational Expenditure as percentage of GDP



Source: Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education for Various Years, Ministry of HRD, Govt of India.

systemic reforms in the government schools. This must be the logic behind the central government's considerable delay in passing the law for implementing the Fundamental Right to Education as required under the Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan Judgment (1993) or even the diluted Article 21A of the 86th Constitutional Amendment (2002). The norms and standards proposed in the Schedule of the Draft Right to Education Bill, 2008 (approved by the central cabinet in October 2008), are a major compromise with the quality of education—not an unsurprising consequence of World Bank's neo-liberal assault.[30]

5. The existing school regulation laws are being gradually diluted or withdrawn all together, as also implied in the Draft Right to Education Bill, 2008.
6. In the case of urban government schools, located on land carrying high market value, a policy of public-private partnership is ready in order to transfer their assets to private capital, even without waiting for the pretext of deterioration of their quality and consequent fall in enrolment.
7. Primary education of five years or less is the desired end objective for the children of the masses and this should replace elementary education of eight years, guaranteed under the Constitution.
8. Only those children who are either high 'performers' or 'achievers' in competencies

needed by the market or those whose families can afford the cost of education shall be allowed to proceed beyond primary education. For the rest, access will be confined to vocational skills so that they can serve the needs of a hierarchically controlled market-driven economy. The Eleventh Plan proposal of setting up 6,000 model schools is precisely in fulfilment of this purpose, so that the high 'performers' or 'achievers' from among the poor could be identified by screening and then honed for the global market.[31]

9. Parallel layers of education of varying quality shall be the only educational facilities provided to more than half of India's children. SSA, patterned after World Bank's DPEP, is designed to achieve this purpose.
10. Public-funded teacher training institutions are being allowed to deteriorate and be replaced by private institutions. Well-trained teachers shall be available only for private schools. Regular-trained teachers in government schools shall be replaced by 'para-teachers'. This, too, is the guiding theme of SSA. The financial estimates for implementing the Draft Right to Education Bill, 2008, are also based on this logic.[32]
11. Programmes like Bridge Courses and 'Back-to-School Camps', as provided for in SSA, shall be encouraged for the present as sops for the masses, even though they hardly provide access to functioning schools.
12. In the name of 'English-medium' schools, the majority of the children will be deprived of the power to articulate their thoughts in either their mother tongue or English, thereby resulting in lack of subject knowledge, critical thinking, creativity and, therefore, also general democratic consciousness. Given the inferior quality education, the only option for them will be to acquire some marketable vocational skills and join the exploited skilled workforce in the global market.
13. Those who manage to cross the barrier of senior secondary education will be able to access higher and technical/professional education in private institutions only with bank loans. In order to be able to return the loan following completion of education, they, too, will be compelled to mechanically contribute to corporate growth without ever being able to reflect upon the contribution they would be making to enhance the capacity of neo-liberal capital to further exploit global resources. The market objective of having an intellectually vibrant, creative and technologically competent elite segment of society but entirely subservient, regimented and ideologically co-opted could not have been better achieved.
14. Parallel institutional structures for financing and managing education are being created outside the government such that the state's role may be made superfluous.[33]
15. Using the rhetoric of decentralisation and 'community' participation, the legitimate functions of the government are being hurriedly 'devolved' to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and other local bodies without ensuring that (a) the government's obligation for adequate financing of education is fulfilled; (b) the local bodies have the necessary vision, administrative acumen or the legal powers to meet even the minimum challenges; and, more importantly, (c) the caste-ridden, patriarchal and

> generally retrogressive character of these bodies will not be counter-productive. While resisting legislation to guarantee the Fundamental Right to education of equitable quality and to institute a Common School System, the State shall have no hesitation whatsoever to legislate to transfer its Constitutional obligations to the local bodies for which World Bank shall make available both direct and indirect funding. The real agenda behind all this is to dilute the role of the State and to enable the local bodies to directly negotiate and sign MoUs with World Bank. An identical process has already begun in several states by paving the way for privatisation of natural resources like land, forest and water. The next is the turn of about 1.2 million government schools when the local bodies in urban/rural areas shall be persuaded by the World Bank to transfer their assets for privatisation (the Draft Right to Education Bill, 2008, fully provides for this).

Miniscule Investments and Disproportionate Influence

In spite of the high-profile character of the externally assisted projects such as DPEP, the finance provided by them is miniscule, if not just outright ridiculous. From 1999–2000 to 2001–2, for example, when external assistance to DPEP was at its peak, the external assistance ranged between 0.039 per cent and 0.053 per cent of GDP respectively. For all externally assisted educational projects put together, it was only marginally higher (see Table 26.2). Even as percentage of the total expenditure incurred on education by the Centre and the states together, the external assistance ranged between 0.9 and 1.5 per cent. Yet, we have seen in the preceding sections how the World Bank and other international agencies managed to dilute and distort both the Constitutional vision of education and the 1986 policy passed by Parliament.[34] What further evidence is required for the steady attrition of India's sovereignty that has been taking place since 1991?

The aforementioned disproportionate influence exercised by the World Bank and its allied agencies required a two-fold strategy. First, the quality of school education was made to deteriorate by diluting the norms relating to various critical parameters. Table 26.3 presents the comparison of the norms, as per the 1986 policy, recommended by the Governement of India's Expert Group (1999) and the SSA (2000) norms (one-third of SSA funds come from World Bank and allied agencies). It shows how SAP conditionalities were dictating terms for educational planning and allocations.

The second strategy emerges out of the 'knowledge agenda' of the global market. For this purpose, the World Bank has carefully funded research, project evaluation and appraisal, consultancy, publications and international exchange of academia in order to co-opt intellectuals in its neo-liberal project, prevent generation of counter-knowledge and thereby subtly modulate the political economy of knowledge. The market control over generation, character, content and distribution of knowledge is certainly the most powerful method of manipulation and regimentation of the public mind, policies and critique, thereby maintaining the hegemony of global capital over

Table 26.2(a) External Assistance to DPEP as a Proportion of GDP and Total Expenditure on Education

Years	*National GDP (Rs in lakh crore)*	*Total Expenditure on Education (Rs in crore)*	*External Assistance (Rs in crore)*	*External Assistance as a percentage of GDP Expenditure on Education*	*External Assistance as a percentage of Total*
1999–2000	17.62	74,816	682.8	0.039	0.91
2000–1	19.18	82,486	858.3	0.045	1.04
2001–2	20.82	79,866	1,100.0	0.053	1.38

Table 26.2(b) Assistance to All Externally Aided Education Projects of the Ministry of HRD as a Proportion of GDP and Total Expenditure on Education

Years	*National GDP (Rs in lakh crore)*	*Total Expenditure on Education (Rs in crore)*	*External Assistance (Rs in crore)*	*External Assistance as a percentage of GDP Expenditure on Education*	*External Assistance as a percentage of Total*
1999–2000	17.62	74,816	729.1	0.041	0.97
2000–1	19.18	82,486	947.6	0.049	1.15
2001–2	20.82	79,866	1,210.0	0.058	1.52

Sources:

(1) Economic Survey 2002–3 to 2004–5, Ministry of Finance, Govt of India.

(2) Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education, 1999–2000 to 2001–2 and the next two years, Ministry of HRD, Govt of India, Analytical Table No. 1.

(3) J. B. G. Tilak, *A Study on Financing of Education in India with a Focus on Elementary Education* (New Delhi: South Asia EFA Forum, NIEPA, May 2003), Table 31.

Note: *'All Externally Aided Projects' of the Ministry of HRD include DPEP, Shiksha Karmi (Rajasthan), Mahila Samakhya (Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Karnataka), Lok Jumbish (Rajasthan) and GoI-UN Programme (Selected Blocks) as well as others.

the world's natural and human resources. People's movements need to decipher this epistemic challenge of the global market forces and imperialist globalisation in order to not only resist it but also to build a political programme of emancipative knowledge dedicated to human welfare and peace.

Concluding Remarks

As pointed out earlier, the UN agencies have uncritically towed the World Bank policies, thereby acting as its human face. Generally speaking, all major internationally

Table 26.3 A Comparative Presentation of the Norms of the Government of India's Expert Group (1999) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000)

No.	*Norms*	*Expert Group*	*SSA*
1.	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	1:30	1:40
2.	Average Monthly Salary of Teachers	Primary – Rs 5,000 Upper Primary – Rs 6,000	
3.	Enrolment in Private Schools	NIL	15 percent
4.	Parallel Layers of Inferior Quality Schools for Alternative Schools and EGS Centres	NIL	A major role
5.	No. of Additional Teachers Required	35.6 lakh	11.5 lakh
6.	Total No. of Classrooms Required	43 lakh	11 lakh
7.	Free Uniforms, Scholarships, DIETs	Provision made	Not provided
8.	Integrated Education Development: Cost per Disabled Child	Rs 3,000	Rs 1,200
9.	a) Grant per School	Primary – Rs 3,000 Upper Primary – Rs 5,000	
10.	b) Grant per Teacher	Primary – Rs 500 Upper Primary – Rs 700	
11.	(a) + (b): Financial Implication	Rs 670 crore	Rs 395 crore
12.	c) Teaching-Learning Equipment:	Rs 1,029 crore	Rs 402 crore

Source: J. B. G. Tilak, *A Study on Financing of Education in India with a Focus on Elementary Education*, New Delhi: South Asia EFA Forum, NIEPA, May 2003, Appendices A.1 and A.2.

funded primary education programmes in India have pursued a common framework embedded in the Jomtien Declaration (1990), further fortified by the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) and UN's MDGs (2001). Invariably, all of the internationally funded projects/programmes have implied attrition of the Constitutional vision of education. Yet, the Indian State and the ruling class had no problem in accepting, adjusting and eventually colluding with this neo-liberal agenda. The following observation on the Jomtien Declaration is noteworthy:

> 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.[35]

Even this stern observation failed to shake up the conscience of either the World Bank or the UN agencies or, for that matter, of the Indian State. There is no evidence that the Indian State even noticed this chilling assessment of the neo-liberal paradigm that has dominated its policy-making on education for the past seventeen years. This then sets the contours of the struggle which the Indian masses have to engage with, in order to move towards '*Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye*' (Education is what liberates).

Impact of the World Bank on Higher Education,

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I would like to highlight the impacts on policy for higher education, the influence that has been exerted by World Bank reports on this policy and the kinds of changes that have come as a result. The crisis in higher education is endemic. Higher education in India needs to be greatly expanded. Currently only 10 per cent of the relevant age group is engaged in higher studies.

There is a great need to provide access to higher studies to a wider section of India's population, which would imply support through public funding and regulation. Yet, public funding is being withdrawn from this sector and there is pressure on the government to facilitate the entry of private players, both local and foreign. In 1990–91, public expenditure, as a percentage of gross national product (GNP) and budgetary expenditure (BE) on higher and technical education respectively, was 0.46 per cent and 0.15 per cent of GNP and 1.58 per cent and 0.51 per cent of BE. By 2002–3, this was down to 0.40 per cent and 0.13 per cent of GNP and 1.31 per cent and 0.42 per cent of BE. This represented a cumulative decline in budgetary expenditure from 2.09 per cent to 1.72 per cent, which by 2004–5 was further reduced to 1.60 per cent. In higher education alone, the decline as a percentage of GNP is down to 0.34 per cent (2004–5) from 0.46 per cent (1990–1).[36]

The first major document that was to indicate an ideational change in education, a change that had already begun in higher education, was the 1994 document called Higher Education, The Lessons of Experience.[37] This argued that primary education should be the priority for developing countries and pitted primary education against higher education. The definition of higher education as a private goal or a quasi-private goal also puts pressure against relying on public funding for higher education. This further sets in motion the logic of looking for markets reforms and market alternatives for higher education. World Bank policies make no secret of their view that the best way to fund higher education is to put the whole burden or the cost on students.

This fragmentation and new definition of higher education actually undermines the idea of a system of universal education, which was one of the founding principles of the freedom struggle and which had subsequently been established through three decades of public education policy. This issue of dividing primary education from higher education is so obviously short-sighted that it is astounding that it could even have gained predominance. It is not possible to universalise primary education unless you are able to produce from a sound system of higher education the number of trained teachers that are required for a universal programme of quality primary education for all children.

Second, what is the point of providing elementary education if there is no real possibility of moving up to secondary or higher education? There has to be a continuum if it is to have any meaning at all. I suspect that in reality the introduction of the bifurcation of higher education is based on the concept of literacy in place of education for the poor.

This system of putting the onus of paying for higher education on the student or on the consumer (as it was later termed) has in effect created a system to deny quality higher education except to the very rich sections of society. The weaker sections, in the face of great financial stress and often indebtedness, are able to access only the poorest quality education. In fact, National Sample Survey (NSS) data has shown that in the period 1983–99, whereas private expenditure on higher education rose by 10.8 times, for the poor it rose even faster at 12.4 per cent. Public expenditure per student at the same time was 30 per cent less in the 2000s than it was in 1990–91. State expenditure on scholarships in higher education actually declined in 2004–5 to 0.24 per cent from the 1991 figure of 0.62 per cent.

The result naturally was that by the turn of the century, higher education was in deep crisis. It is at this time, interestingly enough, that the World Bank came out with another document. In the year 2000, the World Bank shifted its focus and 'concluded that without more and better higher education, developing countries will find it increasingly difficult to benefit from the global knowledge-based economy'.[38] The World Bank no longer targets higher education as a luxury, but it sees it as 'essential to survival in the developing countries'.[39] It then urges governments to take immediate action to expand and improve higher education because in all sectors of the economy, the demand for specialised skills is on the rise. The impact of this report is immediately felt in India.

In the same year, a report was commissioned by the Prime Minister's council on trade and industry, what in academia is known as the infamous Ambani-Birla report.[40] With the companion Model Act for Universities 2003, prepared by the University Grants Commission (UGC), it was intended to restructure higher education on the model of market-oriented enterprises promoting corporate values. It argued that higher education should be left to the private sector, including an investment of Rs 11,000 crore to double the number of institutions by 2015. It wanted the 'user pays' principle in operation, with loans and grants for the needy. The attempt was shelved because of strong opposition from academics and teachers' unions, and it is important to recognise that their opposition was well founded. However, in spite of this, the Ambani-Birla report has had its impact in India. Both the number of private educational institutions and enrolment in these institutions have shown a sharp increase since 2000–1. Unaided private institutions constituted 42.6 per cent of total post-secondary institutions with an enrolment share of 32.89 per cent. By 2005–6, this had shot up to 63.21 per cent and 51.53 per cent respectively.[41]

The next stage in prescriptions for reform of the higher education sector, the identification of new structures for regulation and cooperation between the disparate 'players' in the private sector and public/government was heralded with the launch of a World Bank study entitled *India and the Knowledge Economy: Leveraging Strengths and Opportunities*.[42] It was readied for implementation via a workshop that was held shortly afterwards in New Delhi and attended by crucial stakeholders in this sector. Michael Carter, then World Bank Country Director for India, states that the report is 'an important Bank input into the domestic consultation and reforms process which will move India further into the global knowledge economy'.[43] The report specifies in its goals that: 'To create a sustained cadre of "knowledge workers", India needs to make its education more demand driven by "relaxing bureaucratic hurdles" to allow the private sector to meet the burgeoning demand for higher education; putting in place accreditation systems for private providers; and increasing industry-university partnerships in research and application, including use of learning technologies for providing distance education across the board and for lifelong training and up gradation of skills.'[44]

It does not advise the Indian government to fulfil its commitment to invest 1.5 per cent of the promised total 6 per cent of GDP in education. Instead, the Government of India is directed to alter its relatively closed economy and to increasingly tap into the rapidly growing stock of global knowledge, through foreign direct investment and technology licensing.

India, we are told, has the strengths of skilled workers with knowledge of English and an impressive diaspora in the global economy. India's opportunities, we are told, lie in providing profitable niches in the information technology (IT) sector and in becoming a global provider in software application and testing services. So our unique selling point, we are told, is that we can provide a pool of skilled manpower, which must be increased to maintain what is our supposed competitive edge: the ability to provide low-wage workers in all these sectors. It has been estimated that to employ an Indian computer engineer is to pay less than one-fifth of what it would require to employ someone with the same qualifications in a developed country. The report calls for a national knowledge champion to advance this agenda and identifies of all places the Prime Minister's office as the most appropriate champion to coordinate and orchestrate the necessary knowledge-related actions across various domains. Interestingly, it lauds the National Knowledge Commission initiative,[45] saying that this is a very good forum for making timely recommendations for implementation to the Prime Minister's office. This is interesting because the National Knowledge Commission must be the first commission in the history of Indian academics, going back to 1882, which is not expected to provide a final report based on its deliberations and which is only intended to provide communications every so often to the Prime Minister's office for recommendations to be implemented.

The question to ask of higher education today is whether integration of higher education with the global knowledge economy, by opening up an education market for domestic and foreign capital, contributes to establishing a knowledge society. It certainly would protect the low-wage advantages that attract multinational corporations to India.

In conclusion, I would like to answer this question and say that to recognise and encourage excellence, wherever it exists, is a challenge to any attempt at creating an inclusive knowledge society. This demands a system of education with facilitating linkages between its different components. Higher education institutions in developing countries have a special role to play in strengthening civil society and in promoting national development. The impact of World Bank strategies has directed the reform process of higher education away from its national problems, conditions and environment. If subjected to the World Bank and WTO perspectives and strictures, higher education institutions would not only be unable to perform this function, but the very idea that higher education serves a broad social good would be undermined.

The Impact of World Bank Educational Programmes in the State of West Bengal

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I would like to say something about the education system across West Bengal. When we divide West Bengal on the basis of literacy, we can divide it into two parts: there are nine districts above the literacy rate of 69 per cent and ten districts below 69 per cent. The reason I mention this is because in these ten districts, the DPEP was started in 1995. But even after 14 years of the launching of the DPEP, there is no change in the situation. Until today those ten districts have the same literacy rate as before.

When the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched, the stated target was to ensure that all children went to school. But in a survey of 2007, it was noted that 13 lakh students are out of schools. This is as per the child census. However, when we recalculated this figure in 2006 according to the annual report of the School Education

Department of 2001, the number of out-of-school children in the age group 5–9 years was approximately 125.92 lakh. But the SSA stated that in 2006, for children of the 5–9 year age group, it was 78 lakh. There is such a gross discrepancy in the figures provided by one department and the data of a wing of the same department. Further, the government claimed that 78 lakh are enrolled currently with 70 lakh in government schools and 8 lakh in private schools in 2007. What became of the balance 47.92 lakh children is anybody's guess.

Since the inception of SSA, there has been a steady reduction in public expenditure on education. I am quoting the 2000–1 annual report,[46] 'Expenditure on education as a proportion of state domestic product increased from about 3 per cent in early 1980s to 4.8 per cent in early 1990s and was around 3.5 per cent in the late 1990s.' Further, the expenditure on elementary education has been severely cut down. To quote from a government document,[47] 'Expenditure on elementary education was around 36 per cent in 1980–81, and between 1980–81 and 1987–88, it fell to around 33 per cent.'[48]

Due to changes in government policy, the number of government primary schools in West Bengal in 2000–1 was 52,385; and by 2007 they have been reduced to 49,863 schools. This means that 2,522 primary schools have been shut down. Now in lieu of this, the Shishu Shiksha Kendra was launched in 1997–98.[49] For this, around 17,000 para-teachers had to be recruited; that number has not been met.

In 2000–1, it was declared that there was a serious crisis of teachers in West Bengal. In 2004–5, the pupil-teacher ratio was 53:1, which was on par with Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. The government claims it to be 39:1, but then again there are a lot of discrepancies.

Another major problem is the shortage of schools in the so-called backward areas. The Panchayat and Rural Development Department says that only 22.9 per cent villages have access to schools within a radius of 1–5 km. Operationally, too, there are problems since the advent of SSA. Today, elected bodies like district primary council are so powerless and money-less that they cannot do anything. Everything depends on SSA.

There is also a great difference between the number and quality of schools provided for the marginalised and for the more powerful sections of society. For example, there is a tribal-populated block named Behlpahadi in West Bengal where 23 per cent of the schools are single-teacher schools and the total figure for schools provided for in this district is just 6 per cent. Similarly in Gopilokalpur, another tribal-populated block, 16 per cent of the schools are single teacher schools. Single-teacher schools in reality mean no education.

Similarly, in some Muslim-dominated areas, there is no teacher and no classes are held. Yet, in another area which is populated by the upper middle class, the schools are run efficiently. It is also important to remember that in West Bengal the poor (comprised of SCs, STs and Muslims) constitute 54 per cent of the population.

This situation is heavily impacted by the growing trend of privatisation. In Bengal, any child who cannot afford private tuition is not even able to write her/his name. Only those whose parents can who afford private schools get any form of schooling. Last year we released our report on the Status of Primary education in West Bengal. It has also been noted that in some schools under the District Primary School Council,[50] children were asked to pay extra for books outside the syllabus, given by the government and to pay for a developmental fund, at the rate of Rs 100–130 per month. Needless to say, these practices are completely illegal.

Failure of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in Maharashtra

PRATIBHA SHINDE

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When our country got independence, the tribals dreamt of bringing up their children happily in this country and contributing towards its development. After independence all of us know the status of tribals in this country. They have had to suffer the most displacement post independence. If 100 people have to be displaced for any mega project, 62 per cent of them will be tribals.

Apart from the denial of the right to livelihood and land, even on the education front, especially after the implementation of SSA, the condition of tribals in Maharashtra has worsened considerably. I will present a testimony of Nandurbar district in Maharashta. In Nandurbar, there is a sub-district called Akalkua where there are 89 per cent tribals. In this sub-district there are 221 schools. In ten schools there are no permanent teachers, 181 schools have only two teachers and forty have three teachers. 478 teachers are currently employed. The government has appointed 155 teachers but there is still a shortage of 120 teachers. The teachers appointed through the Employment Guarantee Scheme[51] are employed on a temporary basis with a salary of Rs 3,000 per month (US$ 73.34). In such a system, how can we ever provide quality education to these children or materialise the dreams of the great social thinkers and activists like Mahatma Fule and Savitri Bai Fule?

Under the SSA, 8,659 students are getting education through the Vasti school yogna programme.[52] We got a great response in that; 2,664 students got enrolled in that school. You can compare the number of students in the district schools and our Mahatma Fule School. The strength of the district school is 15,400 but the same in the Mahatma Fule school is more than 11,000. You see there 221 schools under the district administration, where as the number of vasti schools 335 in this akakula tehsheel. Out of them, 133 are under the Mahatma Fule Scheme, 32 under the Rajiv Ghandhi scheme and 107 schools under special scheme. We chose forty schools to study.

We chose thirty-three schools to survey and the conditions of these schools are simply pathetic. Akalkua is a 100 per cent tribal-dominated district. In this district we chose thirty villages. Our study was very revealing. We found that after the initiation of SSA, ten village schools were suddenly closed down. Four schools with a population of 150–215 students had only a single teacher. In twelve other schools, there were two teachers to a student population of 300–400. We saw only four schools with three teachers. Worse still many schools had no building of their own to operate from. In twenty-three villages, there were only three schools, all devoid of any classrooms. In only four out of the remaining twenty schools had classrooms, ten have single classrooms and six have three rooms. Libraries and separate toilets for girls are a distant dream.

In the earlier paragraph I mentioned the 607 schools. Of these, all do not have rooms of their own. They operate under trees or in a room provided by the sarpanch (head of local governance). Yet, the number of students in these make-shift schools is increasing and when we enquired why, we found out that the government is silently closing down its common schools.

In these 607 common schools, we admit students from the age group of 6–14 years, train them for one year and then send them back to their classes, according to their age. There are no regulatory checks. For example, in a village in Akalkua there is a resident by the name of Gorijabari Batte Singh. He has completed his Bachelor of Education degree and is now teaching in another district. However, his name is still on the rolls in the local school. In most of the SSA-run non-formal schools, the dropout rate is high and in almost all areas, the scheme has been reduced to providing nutritious food to students but no education.

Even in a city like Mumbai, the government-run schools are being closed in a systematic and well-planned manner. In Mumbai, 70,000 students are enrolled. However, 66 of the 1,200 schools run by the Mumbai municipality have already been shut down. The pretext given is that there are no students in these institutions.

The schools are being given out to NGOs or being used for commercial purposes. Some have even been converted into high-priced private schools run by private trusts. All this has occurred with the support of the World Bank. We have a colleague named Munna Bai. She comes from a tribal community. She feels that in the name of education the Bank intends to make slaves out of us. Their intention is that we should be sufficiently literate to read the number plates of the cars, signboards of shops and labels on commodities. This kind of literacy is needed to create consumers and provide cheap labour for the multinationals but cannot contribute to nation building or true development of thought and mind.

That is the reason why we must resist these programmes and schemes. As Prof. Kothari[53] says, at least 6 per cent of the GDP must be spent on education. All levels of education should be made free and universal. Even if we can guarantee this 6 per cent budgetary allocation on education, then education can be made free for all, and if this could be made 10 per cent of GDP, as Prof. Kothari said in 1966, then we can eradicate this problem of illiteracy from all sections of society. Let us hope that we will bring that dream to reality someday.

Notes

1. For its critique on the neo-liberal impact on higher education, this chapter has depended on Madhu Prasad's paper entitled, 'World Bank Prescriptions and Structural Changes in Higher Education in India', presented at the Independent People's Tribunal on the World Bank, New Delhi, September 2007.
2. For elaboration of the Constitution's vision of education (including Right to Education) and its conflict with the Indian State, ruling class and the neo-liberal policy framework, see the author's paper entitled, 'Right to Education, State and the Neo-Liberal Assault', presented at Independent People's Tribunal on the World Bank in India, New Delhi, September 2007.
3. Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are groupings of people recognised by the Constitution of India as being historically oppressed and therefore entitled, under the Constitution, to special protection, development and compensation. As per the 2001 Census, they together comprised 24.4 per cent of the population.
4. Part IV of the Constitution comprises the 'Directive Principles of State Policy' that are not 'enforceable by any court' but are 'fundamental in the governance of the country' and the state is duty-bound to 'apply these principles in making laws'. In contrast, Part III comprises 'Fundamental Rights' that are enforceable in the courts. However, the Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan Judgment (1993) has ruled that whereas Part IV provides the goals of the Constitution, Part III provides the means to achieve these goals.
5. For detailed analysis, Anil Sadgopal's papers, 'Political Economy of the Ninety-third Amendment Bill', *Mainstream*, 22 December 2001, pp. 43–50; 'C for Commerce', *Tehelka*, 14 June 2008, pp. 44–45, http://www.tehelka.com/story_main39.asp?filename=cr140608cforcommerce.asp, accessed 18 November 2008.
6. This exercise was pushed by a retired director (an NRI) of the UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg, Germany.
7. Although the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) was made to publish the Ministry's report on MLLs, it did not advocate this idea until the National Curriculum Framework was rewritten in 2000 under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. By this time, the neo-liberal agenda had started dominating the thinking of India Inc.
8. Ministry of Human Resource and Development, *DPEP Guidelines*, New Delhi: Publication Division, 1995, Ch. III, p. 21; Rohit Dhankar, '*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 and 'Lessons to Learn', *Seminar*, No. 436, December 1995.
9. See Report of the NPE-1986 Review Committee (i.e., Acharya Ramamurti Committee), Ministry of Human resource and Development, Govt of India, Ch. IV, Section E, 1990, p. 100.

10. Anil Sadgopal, 'A Post-Jomtien Reflection on the Education Policy: Dilution, Distortion and Diversion', in *The Crisis of Elementary Education in India*, ed. Ravi Kumar, New Delhi: Sage, 2006).
11. The agenda of privatisation and commercialisation of education inherent in this innocuous looking notion of 'partnership' has after the passage of seventeen years appeared in India's Eleventh Five Year Plan in the form of 'public-private partnership' wherein the Indian state will transfer public funds and other critical resources (e.g. land), apart from legitimacy and credibility, to private capital for the commoditisation of education. A suggestion has even been made to set up '10 IIT-IIM level national institutes of teacher education' in PPP mode (Krishna Kumar, 'Partners in Education?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 19 January 2008, p. 11). See this author's detailed interview in Hindi entitled, 'Sarvajanik-Niji "Saajhedaari" Ya Loot', *Shiksha-Vimarsh*, Jaipur, Rajasthan, January–April 2008, pp. 68–96.
12. For instance, the Karnataka government has constituted a World Bank-assisted body under Wipro's Azim Premji Foundation chairpersonship to advise on policy matters and also invited the same corporate group in 2007 to set up SIEMAT, a formal institutional structure for policy formulation relating to educational governance and teacher training—a move presently stalled due to public protests.
13. In contrast, USA provides entirely free education from kindergarten to class XII, which includes free textbooks, stationery, teaching aids (including computers), tests, co-curricular activities, games and sports, bus transport and lunch. Several other G-8 countries also provide free education.
14. The 'alternative modes of finance' for primary education suggested by the World Bank-UN collective in its background paper (Annexure 2, p. 146) on the Jomtien Declaration include private schools and user charges see http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000975/097552e.pdf, accessed 18 November 2008.
15. Ministry of Finance, *Economic Survey 2007–8*, Government of India, New Delhi: 2008 Section 10.25, p. 249.
16. In 1999, the District Collector of Indore (Madhya Pradesh) in his report to the state's chief minister used the term 'rationalisation' to justify the closure of thirty government schools in Indore city, which were later turned into commercial ventures or police stations. Neither the collector nor the chief minister expressed any concern about where had the children gone who had either entered low fee-charging private schools in the neighbourhood or given up on education altogether. See Deenbandhu Samajik Sanstha, 'Indore Zila Sarkar's Intervention in School Education: Betraying Our Children in the Name of Decentralisation and Universalisation of Education', *Nai Duniya*, 31 May 1999, p. 4.
17. Ministry of Finance, *Economic Survey 1995–96*, New Delhi: Government of India, 1997, pp. 174–75; Ministry of Finance, *Economic Survey 2002–3*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2004, p. 225.
18. The 1986 policy norm for elementary school (Classes I–VIII) would require this to be established within 3 km of each habitation, while also ensuring that every habitation would have access to a lower primary school within 1 km. More than half a dozen states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Meghalaya and Assam have primary schools ending at Class IV, thereby denying rural children access to Class V within 1 km of their habitation. This critical issue of school mapping was entirely ignored by the DPEP. In

contrast, the report of Bihar's Common School System Commission (2007) examined this issue and worked out its implications in terms of the size of the elementary schools, the primary-middle school ratio and the consequent increased financial allocations in order to ensure Fundamental Right to elementary education. This policy gap in Bihar is despite the implementation of the UN-assisted Bihar Education Project since 1990 and the World Bank-assisted DPEP since 1997. See Government of Bihar, 'Report of the Common School System Commission', submitted to the Chief Minister on 8 June 2007, Patna, Bihar.

19. The basis of selection of foreign experts for the JRMs and their academic credentials have been solely in the domain of the World Bank or their allied international funding agencies. Even more importantly, the value of the contribution made by foreign experts to JRMs is highly questionable in light of their rushed visits, absence of scientific planning, unfamiliarity with the complex local conditions and lack of transparency of their findings or reports.
20. Even the MoU signed between the World Bank and Government of India has never been made public.
21. Personal communication from several Indian experts on their return from the Joint Review Mission visits (Phase I) to Assam, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka as well as reported by them in academic meetings at the Department of Education, University of Delhi and Lokshala Programme of Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha.
22. Krishna Kumar, M. Priyam and S. Saxena, 'Looking Beyond the Smokescreen: DPEP and Primary Education in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 36, no. 7, 2001, pp. 560–68.
23. Similar to those used by UNESCO in its annual EFA Global Monitoring Reports.
24. In this instrumentalist paradigm, in the case of women, education is primarily expected to lower infant and child mortality rates, reduce fertility rates and improve household nutrition and health (see World Bank, *Primary Education in India: Development in Practice Books*, New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited, 1997, pp. 30–31 and 39).
25. The proposal of school vouchers and public-private partnership in education entered the Eleventh Five Year Plan without such recommendation by either the CABE or any of its seven sub-committee reports in July 2005, in spite of the CABE being the highest democratic consultative structure (with representation of all state/Union Territories' education ministers, central educational authorities, academics, writers, artists and social activists) for policy advice in education.
26. In June 2007, the Ministry of Human Resource and Development engaged the Global E-schools & Communities Initiative (GeSCI), a conglomerate of Ireland, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland and Finland, to prepare the draft ICT policy for schools. In turn, GeSCI roped in the Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS), a Delhi-based NGO which works in collaboration with Microsoft and others corporations (Outlook, 24 November 2008).
27. A publicly funded school system, similar to the proposed Common School System, exists in USA and other G-8 countries.
28. The education cess, introduced in 2004–5, is a special cess or surcharge levied at the rate of 2 per cent on all major central taxes, viz., income tax, corporation tax, excise duties, customs duties and service tax. The revenue from this cess is meant for elementary education. While the overall budgetary support is the source of funding for most developmental

sectors, this is not the case with elementary education which receives substantial resources through this earmarked educational cess. From 2007–8 onwards, 1 per cent additional cess is being levied to raise funds for secondary and higher education as well.

29. None of these reports analyse the systemic issues, documented in this chapter, that are responsible for such deterioration of quality, lest the neo-liberal framework is revealed. This is also true for the World Bank-sponsored research on teacher absenteeism and James Tooley's study of Shahadara's low fee-charging private schools in Delhi which tend to present privatisation as a panacea for educational backwardness. See James Tooley and Pauline Dixon, *Private Schools Serving the Poor: A Study from Delhi*, New Delhi: Centre for Civil Society, 2005; Centre for Civil Society 'Government Education: Are we Getting our Money's Worth?', http://www.ccsindia.org/SurveyReport.asp, accessed 11 September 2009; Michael Kremer, Nazmul Chaudhury, F. Halsey Rogers, Karthik Muralidharan and Jeffrey Hammer (2005), 'Teacher Absence in India: A Snapshot', *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Vol. 3, No. 2–3, 2005, pp. 658–67.
30. See Sadgopal, 'C for Commerce'.
31. See Anil Sadgopal, 'The "Trickle Down" Trick', *Tehelka*, 29 September 2007, http://www.tehelka.com/story_main34.asp?filename=Ws290907The_Trickle.asp, accessed 18 November 2008.
32. See Anil Sadgopal, 'Education Bill: Dismantling Rights', *The Financial Express*, 9 November 2008, http://www.financialexpress.com/news/education-bill-dismantling-rights/383177, accessed 18 November 2008.
33. The central government went to the extent of even setting up a private company called Ed.CIL in mid-1990s to manage certain key aspects of the World Bank and other internationally funded programmes in education. Likewise, SSA depends upon a host of ad hoc schemes introduced by corporate houses, NGOs and religious bodies.
34. Since 1991, more than a dozen policies measures and/or schemes of education (including DPEP and SSA) have been instituted in the country which violate either the Constitution or contradict the 1986 policy, or both. Yet, such programmes/projects and their violative elements have not been formally and explicitly debated and approved by the Parliament. It is part of the neo-liberal agenda promoted by the World Bank to weaken, bypass or demolish democratic structures and processes.
35. Late Professor K. Tomasevski, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education to United Nations Commission on Human Rights. See K. Tomasevski, *Right to Education Primers No. 1: Removing Obstacles in the Way of the Right to Education*, Lund, Sweden: Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2001.
36. Government of India, *Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure*, various years.
37. 'It is arguable that higher education should not have the highest priority claim on incremental public resources available for education in many developing countries, especially those that have not achieved adequate access, equity and quality at the primary and secondary levels. This is because of the priority these countries attach to achieving universal literacy; because the social rates of return in investments in primary and secondary education usually exceed the rates of return in higher education.…' (*Word Bank, Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience*, Washington DC: The World Bank, 1994, p. 47, para 3).
38. 'Peril and Promise: Higher Education in Developing Countries', Summary of Findings by the Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 1 March 2000.

39. Ibid.
40. Ambani-Birla Report, *A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education*, New Delhi: Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry, 2000.
41. M. Anandakrishnan, 'Privatisation of Higher Education: Opportunities and Anomalies', paper presented at the national seminar on 'Privatisation and Commercialisation of Higher Education', NUEPA, 2006, p. 49, para 2.
42. Carl Dahlman and Anuja Utz, *India and the Knowledge Economy: Leveraging Strengths and Opportunities*, Washington, D C: World Bank, 2005, http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/145261/India_KE_Overview.pdf, accessed 12 September 2009.
43. The workshop was organised by the World Bank on 28 June 2005 in New Delhi to discuss the World Bank study. See http://go.worldbank.org/UB8IIQERQ0, accessed 9 September, 2009.
44. Dahlman and Utz, *India and the Knowledge Economy*.
45. The National Knowledge Commission, http://knowledgecommission.gov.in, accessed 18 November 2008.
46 Department of School Education, *Annual Report*, 2000–1, Kolkata: Government of West Bengal, 2002.
47. Ibid.
48. Also see Mehrotra et al., *Universalizing Elementary Education in India: Uncaging the Tiger Economy,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 186.
49. Launched by the Government of West Bengal in 1997–98 for universalising of primary education. Conceived as a community-managed project in the absence of government-run schools in the area.
50. Rana et al., *Public Delivery of Primary Education in Kolkata*, New Delhi: Pratichi Trust, 2006.
51. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA, also known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, NREGS) was enacted on 25 August 2005. The NREGA provides a legal guarantee for 100 days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.
52. Government school programme for dropout school children aged 6–14 years, which was intended to provide remedial education for children and bring them back into the mainstream system. However, after some time the government closed down the main schools and only provided funding for these non-formal schools.
53. The Education Commission (1964–66), popularly known as the Kothari Commission, boldly declared, 'the destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms' (Section 1.01). It went on to conceive education as a critical socio-political process for building citizenship for a democratic, socialistic, egalitarian and secular society in India.