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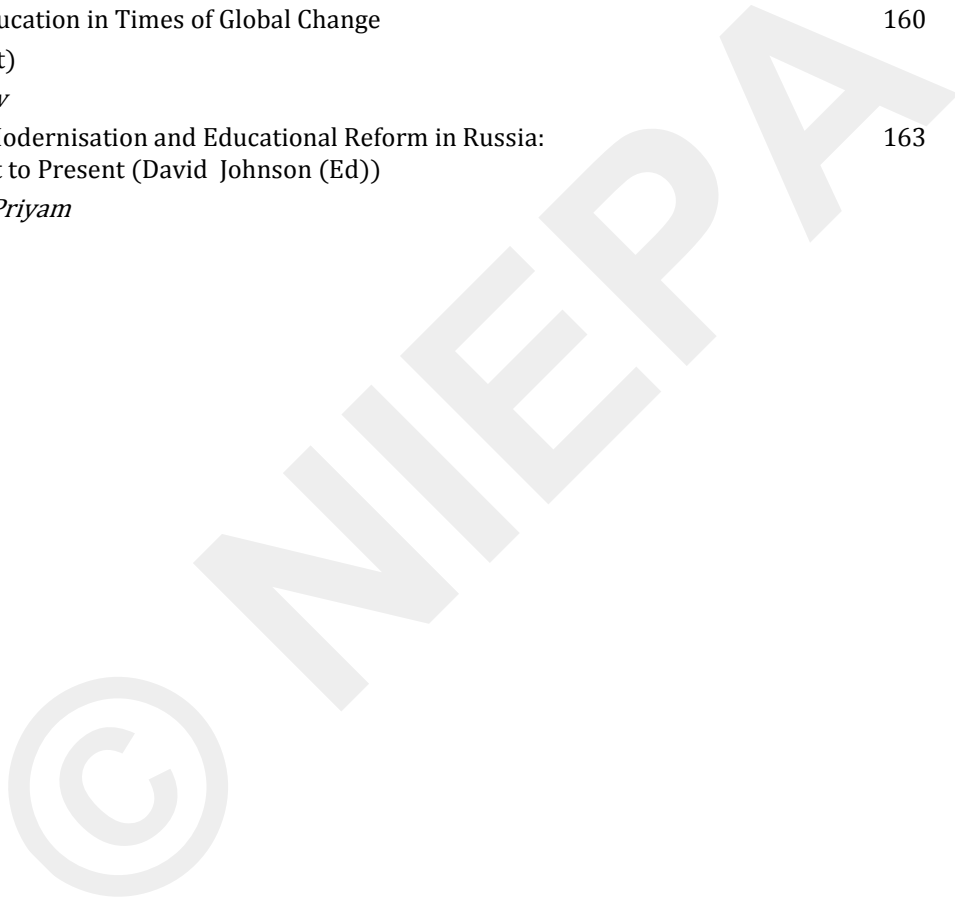
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## Silent Toll: Ragging in Selected Educational Institutions in India

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Mohan Rao\*  
Shobna Sonpar  
Amit Sen  
Shekhar P. Seshadri  
Harsh Agarwal  
Divya Padalia

### Abstract

Ragging has claimed hundreds of innocent lives and has ruined the careers of thousands of students. A total of 717 cases of ragging were reported in the English print media alone across the country from January 2007 to September 2013. However, the media reports tend to focus on extreme cases and do not reveal the true extent of ragging. Moreover, in the absence of empirical data, it is difficult to understand the processes involved in, and the ramifications of ragging. This study examines the prevalence of ragging practices, its impact on students and the underlying psychosocial factors that determine its occurrence. The study covered 10,632 students and 81 teachers from 37 educational institutions spread across 12 states in India. Findings show that almost 40 percent students admitted to having experienced some kind of ragging. Among the students who admitted to being ragged, almost one-third reported one or more kinds of adverse impact of ragging on their academic performance. Furthermore, students who admitted to being ragged reported looks and appearance, region and language as the most important social discrimination factors involved in their ragging. The study that a significant percentage of students hold a positive opinion about ragging and this become more profound as we progress from junior to senior batches, suggesting that ragging is gradually normalized though college years. The paper based on the study highlights marked variations in the prevalence of ragging among colleges, thus pointing to the role of institutional factors in the occurrence of ragging. Variations in responses are also seen based on the kind of course pursued, gender, batch year and place of residence of student, thus indicating that these are critical factors in influencing the phenomenon of ragging.

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## Introduction

RAGGING<sup>1</sup> is a disturbing reality in the higher education system of our country. It has claimed hundreds of innocent lives and has ruined the careers of thousands of students. Despite the Government's ban on ragging since the late 1970s, and two subsequent interventions by the Supreme Court (1999 & 2006)<sup>2</sup> issuing guidelines about eradication of ragging, it is still the case that a significant section of parents, teachers and students continue to support the idea of ragging. Indeed, some believe that ragging is a rite of passage that helps young people to toughen up and prepare for the realities of a harsh world. Disturbingly, people in positions of responsibility to understand and implement anti-ragging policy and guidelines are often ambivalent in their beliefs, and therefore, actions. Although it has been more than three decades since we recognised ragging to be an entrenched problem causing profound damage to our institutions of higher learning, it worryingly continues to make news at regular intervals. It is therefore important to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon, particularly of the psychological and sociological determinants that eventually manifest in ragging.

## Nature and Extent of the Problem

According to the reports by the Coalition to Uproot Ragging from Education (CURE), an NGO working against ragging, and the data compiled by our research team, a total of 717 cases of ragging were reported in the English print media alone across the country from January 2007 to September 2013. A total of 71 deaths due to ragging were reported in that period. There were 199 cases of ragging that led to major and minor injuries to students, including 81 incidents leading to hospitalisation and causing permanent disability. A total of 128 cases reportedly involved sexual abuse of freshers. Furthermore, 129 cases of ragging led to serious group clashes, protests, strikes and violence among students. Drugs and alcohol abuse, and coerced smoking were noted in 35 cases while 25 cases involved the castes, regions of origin or religions of the students as determining factors.

The data above is probably only the tip of the iceberg as it is based on media reports that tend to focus only on extreme instances. It does, however, reveal the perversity in practices associated with ragging, as well as the importance of social factors like caste and region. However, this data does not reveal the true extent of ragging nor the variety of ragging practices that characterises the phenomenon.

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1 The Supreme Court thus defined ragging in the Vishwa Jagriti matter (1999): "Any disorderly conduct whether by words spoken or written or by an act which has the effect of teasing, treating or handling with rudeness any other student, indulging in rowdy or undisciplined activities which causes or is likely to cause annoyance, hardship or psychological harm or to raise fear or apprehension thereof in a fresher or a junior student or asking the students to do any act or perform something which such student will not in the ordinary course and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame or embarrassment so as to adversely affect the physique or psyche of a fresher or a junior student." (Raghavan Committee Report, 2007)

2 Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development (2007), *The Menace of Ragging in Educational Institutions and Measures to Curb It* (Raghavan Committee Report), New Delhi.

## Approach So Far

It was in the late 1970s, in the aftermath of the death of two freshers in a Regional Engineering College, that the Government of India for the first time issued a notification banning ragging in the country. However, despite the national ban, incidents did not come down, prompting several universities to bring in ordinances. At the same time, some state governments issued executive orders or brought modifications in their state education act or initiated legislation against ragging. In 1999, on the directions of the Supreme Court, the University Grants Commission (UGC) formed a four-member committee under Prof K.P.S. Unny, which defined ragging and outlined its “positive” and negative impacts. While enumerating some of the “positive” impacts of ragging, the 1999 Report observed that its negative manifestations had become more prevalent. Later, the Raghavan Committee, constituted by the Supreme Court in 2006, took a more serious view and highlighted the complexities involved in the problem. However, in the absence of empirical data, it is difficult to understand the processes involved and the ramifications of ragging.

## Practices akin to Ragging in Other Countries

Exploring the prevalence of practices like ragging across the world, it is evident that these are not confined to South Asia alone. Research suggests that initiation rituals in higher education are practiced in many parts of the world and are known by different terms – hazing (USA), doop (Belgium), bizutage (France), nollning (Sweden), rabnong (Thailand), novatada (Spain), praxe (Portugal), trote (Brazil), etc. These practices may have their own specificities, but a common feature among them is the abuse of the newcomers in the name of initiation (Bauer, et al., 2015). A survey of more than 11,000 students in 53 colleges and universities in the USA found that more than half the sample reported experiencing hazing through practices that included alcohol consumption, humiliation, isolation, sleep-deprivation, and sexual acts (Allan & Madden, 2008). An internet search revealed several media reports highlighting ragging-like practices in educational institutions from across the world [3][4][5][6][7][8]. An analysis of these media reports and several other reports available on the internet show that though these practices are described in terms of tradition, humour, fun and entertainment, they are often taken too far and degenerate into humiliation and violence. Their purpose is said to help newcomers become a part of the new environment, to build strong bonds and develop a sense of belonging to the institution. Yet the issue of power is very much at the core of these practices, implicit or explicit, as evident in the hierarchy among the seniors and newcomers that sets up a relation of dominance and submission, in the rules and regulations set up to regulate the conduct of newcomers, the penalties for non-compliance.

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3 <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/19/world/europe/student-deaths-spark-debate-over-hazing-at-portugals-universities.html>

4 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-education-hazing-idUSKCN12D0WD>

5 <https://www.thelocal.fr/20140603/prosecutors-want-conviction-for-blood-letters-hazing>

6 <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/07/12/govt-abolishes-student-organized-orientation.html>

7 <https://www.thelocal.es/20130911/sick-pranks-horrify-spains-universities>

8 <http://www.straitstimes.com/world/initiation-or-humiliation-cases-of-hazing-around-the-world>

## **This Study**

The reports of the Raghavan Committee and the Unny Committee as well as the explorations by NGOs working in the area point to issues that have not yet been fully understood and integrated about ragging as a social phenomenon. They raise some fundamental questions such as: (i) What is the actual prevalence and nature of ragging practices? (ii) Why is there implicit support for ragging in the educational and extra-educational environment? (iii) What motivates those who rag? (iv) Does ragging mirror prevailing social dynamics? (v) Are victims of ragging picked upon because of their physical appearance or personality attributes or social location in terms of class, caste, sexuality, region and religion? The answers to these questions may help design interventions that are empirically based and appropriate.

Since there is no study to furnish answers to these questions in our country, it was felt that a research study must be undertaken. The nature of the questions raised suggested that a psychosocial perspective might be the most appropriate. The basic premise of the psychosocial framework is that any behaviour results from a combination of factors, social and psychological, within individuals, within their relation to groups and within the larger socio-cultural context. Such multi-factorial frameworks have been fruitfully applied to the study of domestic violence (Heise, 1998), war-time rape (Henry & Ward, 2004) and militancy (Sonpar, 2007). With regard to ragging, it means that an understanding of the phenomenon must encompass the factors in the larger socio-cultural context that support ragging, such as acceptance of hierarchy in society as well as acceptance of the use of violence to discipline. Since educational institutions are microcosms of the society in which they are embedded, social concerns related to issues of gender and diversity will inevitably be mirrored and intersect with ragging practices. The fact that ragging occurs among the young means that youth-specific developmental issues such as, the need to belong and be accepted within the peer world, and the excitement and anxiety about becoming an adult, including that around sexuality, play an important role in ragging. Finally, factors that have to do with individuals, particularly personal history of bullying or being bullied could determine who is drawn towards engaging in ragging.

Based on the literature on forms of social violence including ragging and similar practices, and knowledge of developmental, youth and social psychology, a tentative psychosocial model was developed to conceptually guide the research undertaken. The study was funded by the UGC.

### **A Psychosocial Model of Ragging**

According to the psychosocial model of ragging, it is postulated that factors operate at two broad levels: distal contextual factors (the socio-cultural factors, individual and developmental factors, and the group and institutional factors) that contribute to a predisposition or potential for ragging, and proximal situational factors that precipitate or facilitate ragging behaviour in a particular instance (factors that weaken normal inhibitions and intensify conformity to group pressure).



## Contextual Factors

### Individual and Developmental Factors

This refers to those factors particular to youth as an age group, and to factors within an individual student that constitute risk factors for indulging in coercive or aggressive behaviour. In terms of psychological development, certain concerns predominate in this age group and ragging is one route whereby these concerns get played out.

1. Ragging is ostensibly a way of integrating newcomers into the student community and college life. It ties in with young people's need to "fit in", to belong and to be accepted within the peer world (Allen & Kern, 2017). The desire for acceptance and fear of rejection causes victims to yield to ragging. Some students who rag may do so in order to retain their position in their own group. Other students who do not rag and dislike what is happening hesitate to intervene for fear of being ostracised.
2. Youth is also a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. This has several implications for ragging. First, the need to behave in a way that shows that childhood has been left behind is prominent. Thus ragging practices that force freshers to break taboos such as against smoking and drinking, and to endure physical pain from beatings and hard exercise, are common. Secondly, they are still emotionally dependent on their families and are therefore vulnerable to stated and implicit expectations that they should try to cope with ragging and not jeopardise academic and career prospects by protesting or complaining. A student's shame at letting the family down usually ensures either acquiescence or silence.
3. Sexuality is a major concern of this age group as well as a marker of adulthood. There are few avenues for youth to check out their fascination, as well as anxieties, about sexual matters and ragging is a practice that gets used to this end.

It has been often noted that those who rag severely have histories of having been similarly ragged (Jaishankar, 2009). The study of personal and social violence has repeatedly shown that one outcome of being subjected as a helpless and passive victim to humiliating abuse is of becoming abusive oneself given the chance. A history of being victimised or bullied at school, at home or in the neighbourhood has a similar bearing. Some students who indulge in severe ragging could have "individual pathology" arising from such prior experiences.

### Socio-Cultural Factors

The importance of this domain lies in that it provides some of the ideological "justifications" for ragging. Since these factors lie in the broader socio-cultural realm, they are pervasive in society and impact on all elements --- students, parents, teachers and management of educational institutions as well as institutions that make educational policy. From a psychosocial perspective, it is to be noted that external or social reality is internalised by individuals and becomes a part of their psychological structure.

1. The hierarchical distribution of power and the use of coercive power to maintain authority are commonplace in our social institutions (Coleman, 2013). The pervasive acceptance of society as hierarchically structured so that behaviours of

domination and deference are intrinsic is clearly reflected in many ragging practices (such as calling the senior “sir” or not meeting the senior’s eye as a mark of deference).

The entitlement of seniors to such authority over juniors is seldom interrogated.

2. There is also wide social acceptance of violence when used to discipline or teach someone lower in the social hierarchy his or her place. Corporal punishment by parents and teachers, the use of violent means to punish “offending” groups in cases of caste and religious violence, to reform those who offend the “moral police” are commonplace. Indeed, violent action is valorised if the justifications are “moral” enough. It is not surprising, then, for physical violence to be a part of ragging, especially when it is “to teach a lesson” to the junior or for the junior’s “own good”.
3. An implicit underlying factor is the idea of the real world. The “real world” is seen as very different from the protected world of children in families and is usually described in terms of harshness, competitiveness and clever networking to reach goals. Ragging is justified as a preparation for such a world. Research has shown that many students who are ragged ascribe beneficial outcomes in terms of gaining confidence and making friends (Chaubey, 1998).

### **Institutional and Group Factors**

An individual’s experience of society and culture is typically mediated by the social groups to which she or he belongs and the social institutions with which she or he engages. In the case of ragging, the educational institution itself will obviously be a major factor. In addition, masculine gender and social attributes of class, caste, religion, region, sexuality and language may also be factors to take into account.

1. The educational institution is a mini-community with its own culture, norms and social hierarchy. Social psychological research has shown that violence and abuse in institutions is partly the creation of the system that gives tacit acceptance to abusive practices by turning a blind eye, minimising the harm done or justifying the behaviour in some way. Institutions differ in that some have a history of serious ragging that is sustained and defended as a hallowed tradition. Because it is seen as a tradition, it enjoys the tacit support of the authorities. The faculty and other authorities in an educational institution may also believe that ragging is actually healthy, if within limits. The management’s own beliefs about ragging thus determine the steps it takes or does not take to prevent ragging. Secondly, institutions are concerned about maintaining their reputation and this factor can become an obstacle in acknowledging that ragging occurs and in adopting anti-ragging measures.
2. Gender-related factors, particularly masculinity concerns, are significant in ragging practices (Chaubey, *ibid*). Many ragging practices have to do with repudiating femininity and asserting male selfhood as not-female (proving one is not a “sissy” by enduring pain, beatings, etc.), and maleness as an adult-man rather than boy-child (“sexual” ragging, mouthing abuses). Indeed, ragging is far more prevalent among young men though young women also engage in ragging.

3. Ragging can become a vehicle of “Othering” groups that are in the minority or are traditionally stigmatised<sup>[9]</sup><sup>[10]</sup><sup>[11]</sup>. This can happen by excluding members of such groups from ragging rituals on the one hand, and on the other hand, by targeting them for ragging in ways that highlight their minority or stigmatised status.

## Situational Factors

The situational factors are those operative in the actual situation that increase the likelihood of ragging occurring. In large part these situational factors “trigger” ragging acts by removing the normal constraints against engaging in aggressive or offensive behaviour.

1. One set of factors weakens controls by neutralising the fear of being caught. Thus ragging most often happens at times and in locations where surveillance is likely to be absent or minimal.
2. Another set of factors lowers internal inhibitions. The use of alcohol is well-known as one such disinhibitor.
3. Internal inhibitions arising from an individual’s moral scruples are also weakened by intensified group pressures in the actual situation. The heightened emotional excitement and the de-individuation that accompanies the group immersion the moment cause the internal moral radar to be overridden. Individual responsibility gives way to diffusion of responsibility in the group, and groupthink justifying ragging prevails. These factors contribute to a state of “moral disengagement” allowing ragging to escalate sometimes to the point of injury and death.

## Methodology

The study was an exploratory one using mixed methods. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected.

## College Sampling

We examined a comprehensive disaggregated database of around eight hundred ragging cases reported in the media between the years 1998 and 2011. This helped to identify courses, regions, demographic groups and colleges where ragging seemed to be more prevalent, apart from helping in the preparation of the Survey Schedule. The complaints made on the anti-ragging helpline and the logs of the complaints available on the Aman Movement<sup>12</sup> website (<http://www.amanmovement.org>) were also examined.

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9 <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/133346/caste-based-ragging-bihar.html>

10 Report of the committee to enquire into the allegation of differential treatment of SC/ST students in AIIMS <http://www.nlhmb.in/Reports%20AIIMS.pdf>

11 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/Ragging-on-caste-lines-in-Andhra/articleshow/22599522.cms>

12 The Aman Movement was started by Prof. Raj Kachroo in 2009 following the death of his son, Aman Kachroo, as a consequence of ragging in a medical college in Himachal Pradesh. See [www.amanmovement.org](http://www.amanmovement.org)

Our sampling was purposive and a list of colleges to be covered for data collection was compiled based on factors such as region, state, urban/peri-urban location, year of establishment, public funded or privately managed, courses taught, diversity of students, etc. A total of 37 colleges, including three colleges known for their best practices in successfully curbing ragging, were visited for data collection. The colleges were spread across 12 states in different parts of the country.

**State-wise Distribution of Colleges**

|         |   |               |   |             |   |             |   |
|---------|---|---------------|---|-------------|---|-------------|---|
| Haryana | 2 | Uttar Pradesh | 6 | Telangana   | 3 | Rajasthan   | 2 |
| Punjab  | 2 | Karnataka     | 2 | Tamil Nadu  | 3 | West Bengal | 4 |
| Delhi   | 3 | Kerala        | 2 | Maharashtra | 6 | Orissa      | 2 |

**Course-wise Distribution of Colleges**

|                               |    |                    |   |
|-------------------------------|----|--------------------|---|
| Medical Colleges              | 9  | Polytechnic        | 1 |
| Engineering Colleges          | 11 | Hotel Management   | 1 |
| Universities/ Degree Colleges | 9  | Veterinary College | 1 |
| Law                           | 2  | Nursing College    | 1 |
| Ayurveda College              | 1  | MCA                | 1 |

We aimed for maximum diversity and balanced representation of different variables, namely gender, region, type of course, and type of management, so that the data are indicative of the different dimensions of the problem. Data collection was carried out between 2013 and 2014. The study was funded entirely by the UGC. Since the sampling is purposive, it may not be entirely representative. Hence, the findings may only be generalised with caution and with attention to contextual factors.

**Data Sources & Data Analysis**

Quantitative and qualitative data presented here are obtained from the survey and individual interviews with students and teachers.

**Survey**

A total of 10,632 students with different demographic profiles from the 37 colleges chosen for the study participated in the survey. In addition to the question asked in our research survey, demographic information pertaining to the students was also obtained. The survey respondents comprised 54 per cent males and 43 per cent females; 53 per cent general category, 28 per cent Other Backward Castes (OBC), 11 per cent Scheduled Castes (SC), and 3.4 per cent Scheduled Tribes (ST) students; 50 per cent hostellers and 42 per cent day scholars; 50 per cent first-year students, 30 per cent second-year students, and 17 per cent third-year students. We note that the proportion of SCs and STs in the survey is far below their representation in the population (all India, SCs comprise 16.6 per cent of

the population and STs comprise 8.6 per cent of the population as per the 2011 Census), and this possibly reflects their under-representation in higher education in the country.

Information given in the schedules was appropriately coded for analysis. Simple percentages were calculated to analyse the survey results. We also disaggregated data on the basis of gender, place of residence, and type of course (medical, engineering, other) to determine the relationship of ragging with different demographic variables. The percentage calculated for any variable is based on the total value of that variable and not on the total sample. For example, 65 per cent of females for any result means 65 per cent of female students out of the total number of female students who participated in the study.

### Students' & Teachers' Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 187 students and 81 teachers. The average duration of each interview was 20 minutes. An indicative list of items for students' and teachers' interviews were used to guide the interviews. These interviews were subject to thematic analysis so as to extract relevant issues for analysis.

## Results

### Prevalence of Ragging

Ragging continues to be widely prevalent with almost 40 per cent of the students in our survey saying they experienced mild to severe ragging (Table 1). It must be noted that students had to judge themselves what they considered to be ragging and whether it was mild or severe. The most notable finding was that institutions varied greatly in the prevalence of ragging. This indicates that institutional factors such as the psychosocial ecosystem, faculty tacitly approving of ragging, institution's stand against ragging, or traditions of ragging upheld by successive batches of students and ignored by the college authorities, play an important role in determining ragging prevalence.

TABLE 1

#### Prevalence & Severity of Ragging Faced by Students

| Sl. No. | Were you ragged by your seniors in college? |                    |
|---------|---|--------------------|
|         | Options                                     | Overall Percentage |
| a       | No  | 57.3%              |
| b       | Mildly ragged                               | 35.1%              |
| c       | Severely ragged                             | 4.1%               |
| d       | Did not answer                              | 3.6%               |

Variations in responses were also seen on analysing the data on the basis of the kind of course, gender and place of residence for students, suggesting that these are critical factors in influencing not only the prevalence and severity of ragging, but also the kind of ragging practices.

### Gender and Prevalence of Ragging

Both mild and severe ragging was found to be more prevalent among male students (44.4 per cent) compared to female students (32.4 per cent) (Table 2). Ragging serves as a ritual of coming of age, and signals to both the ragger and the victim a rite in the shaping of masculinities. Thus, ragging among young men becomes a test of physical endurance and a way to prove their manhood and students who cannot bear ragging are considered “weak” or “effeminate”. For the same reason, male students with physical characteristics not considered masculine enough are ridiculed and targeted more during ragging. For example, in a government engineering college in Karnataka, students believed that men are tougher and ragging is good for toughening them.

TABLE 2

#### Prevalence of Ragging Faced by Students on the Basis of Gender and Place of Residence

| <i>Sl. No.</i> | <i>Options</i> | <i>Were you ragged by your seniors in college?</i> |               |                  |                    |
|----------------|----------------|--|---------------|------------------|--------------------|
|                |                | <i>Male</i>  | <i>Female</i> | <i>Hosteller</i> | <i>Day-scholar</i> |
| a.             | No             | 51.9%  | 64.6%         | 50.8%            | 63.9%              |
| b.             | Mildly         | 38.8%  | 30.1%         | 41.1%            | 29.2%              |
| c.             | Severely       | 5.4%   | 2.2%          | 4.6%             | 3.2%               |
| d.             | Did not answer | 3.7%   | 2.9%          | 3.2%             | 3.5                |

### Place of Residence and Prevalence of Ragging

Ragging is seen to be more prevalent among hostellers (45.9 per cent) compared to day-scholars (32.5 per cent) (Table 2). The high prevalence of ragging in hostels is mainly on account of the fact that the hostel space provides a sense of secrecy and opportunity for seniors to rag freshers. Moreover, seniors in the hostel view themselves as “guardians” of the place and newcomers have to undergo ragging to gain acceptance in the hostel community. Factors such as hierarchy, groupism, lack of surveillance and other inhibitory controls, which influence the occurrence of ragging in general, become more profound in the hostel ecosystem thus exacerbating the prevalence and severity of ragging.

### Type of Course and Prevalence of Ragging

Among colleges offering professional courses (medical, engineering and other courses), the data shows that medical (48.3 per cent) and engineering courses (44.5 per cent) have a higher prevalence of ragging than other courses (28.8 per cent) (Table 3). Entry into professional colleges is secured through competitive exams or some other rigorous procedure; ragging here may serve to neutralise the potential challenge to the power accorded to seniority by juniors who have an “inflated” sense of their worth. Also, as a rite of passage into institutions considered “elite”, successfully undergoing ragging marks a fresher as belonging to an “exclusive” club and reinforces the “exclusivity” of that institution.

TABLE 3

**Course-Wise Prevalence and Severity of Ragging**

| <i>Sl. No.</i> | <i>Were you ragged by your seniors in college?</i> |                |                    |               |
|----------------|--|----------------|--------------------|---------------|
|                | <i>Options</i>                                     | <i>Medical</i> | <i>Engineering</i> | <i>Others</i> |
| a.             | No   | 47.8%          | 52.8%              | 67.0%         |
| b.             | Mildly   | 44.5%          | 39.9%              | 25.2%         |
| c.             | Severely   | 3.8%           | 4.6%               | 3.6%          |
| d.             | Did not answer                                     | 3.6%           | 3.0%               | 3.9%          |

**Types of Ragging Practices**

Examining the kind of ragging practices, it is noted that they differ in prevalence. Our study found that giving introduction to seniors (53.3 per cent), subserviently wishing seniors (32.5 per cent), singing and dancing (24.2 per cent) and following a dress code (23.5 per cent) are some of the most common forms of ragging practices. However, students also admitted to having faced physical ragging (4.2 per cent), doing assignments for seniors (13.3 per cent), being forced to smoke and drink (3 per cent) and using bad language (10.8 per cent) as a part of the ragging ritual (Table 4).

TABLE 4

**Types of Ragging Faced by Students**

| <i>Sl. No.</i> | <i>What kind of ragging did you face?</i>              |                           |
|----------------|--|---------------------------|
|                | <i>Options</i>   | <i>Overall Percentage</i> |
| a              | None   | 33.4%                     |
| b              | Giving introduction to seniors                         | 53.3%                     |
| c              | Wishing seniors and addressing them as Sir/Ma'am       | 32.5%                     |
| d              | Following a dress code                                 | 23.5%                     |
| e              | Singing and dancing                                    | 24.2%                     |
| f              | Approaching opposite sex on some pretext e.g. proposal | 8.8%                      |
| g              | Drinking and smoking                                   | 3.0%                      |
| h              | Doing assignments for seniors                          | 13.3%                     |
| i              | Spending/giving money to seniors                       | 3.1%                      |
| j              | Physical ragging (beating, physical punishments, etc.) | 4.2%                      |
| k              | Using bad language/words                               | 10.8%                     |
| l              | Sexual ragging   | 1.4%                      |
| m              | Other  | 0.9%                      |
| n              | Did not answer   | 6%                        |

It is likely that these different forms of ragging that also vary in severity have different motives or causal factors behind them. Ragging practices such as giving introduction to seniors, addressing seniors as Sir/Ma'am and singing and dancing that are considered milder in form are primarily associated with introducing the newcomer into the system and its norms and finding acceptance and belonging by the local community. Other practices like being made to approach the opposite sex, using abusive words and drinking and smoking suggest other motives such as breaking taboos, being "grown up", being "manly" which have developmental relevance to this age group. Physical beating/exercises as a ragging practice may serve to test physical endurance and thus "manliness", but is also used to punish, intimidate, and humiliate freshers into submission and to reinforce the seniors' power.

### Impact of Ragging on Academic Functioning

An analysis of the overall data shows (Table 5) that among the students who admitted to having been ragged, 31.2 per cent reported one or more kinds of adverse impact of ragging in their academic pursuit. Loss of focus/ concentration (25.5 per cent) followed by missed classes (17.8 per cent) acquired the highest number of responses. Other responses included statements like "couldn't complete assignment on time" (14.7 per cent) and "decrease in grades/performance" (12.3 per cent). A student in an interview said that he fell extremely ill due to the stress caused by ragging. The severe ragging caused migraine, which could not be cured even by medication.

TABLE 5  
Effect of Ragging on Academic Performance

| Sl. No. | Did ragging affect your studies in any of the following ways? |  |
|---------|---|--|
|         | Options   | Percentage of students who got impacted* |
| a)      | Loss of focus/concentration                                   | 25.5%                                    |
| b)      | Missed classes  | 17.8%                                    |
| c)      | Couldn't complete assignments on time                         | 14.7%                                    |
| d)      | Decrease in Grades/performance                                | 12.3%                                    |
| e)      | Others  | 5.5%                                     |

\*Calculations based on students who admitted to being mildly or severely ragged

### Emotional Experience of Ragging for Students

Our study shows (Table 6) that among the students who admitted to having been ragged, 32.6 per cent enjoyed the experience of ragging. This may be related to having experienced mild forms of ragging that many students find enjoyable. On the other hand, 45.1 per cent students admitted to feeling bad initially, but later felt alright about the experience. This shows that there is a process of normalisation so that the initial distress is transformed gradually into acceptance and even a positive attitude.

Further, students also reported various negative emotional experiences of ragging, including feeling angry (19.1 per cent), feeling helpless (12.1 per cent), ashamed and



humiliated (8.6 per cent) and feeling anxious (7.9 per cent). More than 10 per cent said that they had significant negative experience that continues to evoke distress. A student from a college in Maharashtra said: “seniors start it as an introduction but they don’t realise when they cross the line and start humiliating the person. Although later ragging might seem like an ice-breaker, during that initial week, the victim slips into depression.” It should be noted that the negative emotions arising from being ragged --- shame, humiliation, anger and helplessness --- are highly deleterious to an individual’s mental well-being and are the very emotions implicated in continuing cycles of violence.

TABLE 6  
Experience of Ragging for Students

| Sl. No. | How was the experience of ragging for you?         |                         |
|---------|--|-------------------------|
|         | Options  | Percentage of Students* |
| a)      | I enjoyed it                                       | 32.6%                   |
| b)      | I felt bad initially but later felt it was alright | 45.1%                   |
| c)      | It made me feel ashamed and humiliated             | 8.6%                    |
| d)      | It made me feel very angry                         | 19.1%                   |
| e)      | It made me feel helpless                           | 12.1%                   |
| f)      | It made me feel anxious                            | 7.9%                    |
| g)      | It still upsets me when I remember it              | 11.2%                   |

\*Calculations based on students who admitted to being mildly or severely ragged

### Reasons and Circumstances Associated with Ragging

As described earlier in the psychosocial model of ragging, the phenomenon of ragging is determined by multiple factors at the level of the group, the individual, the institution and also the larger socio-cultural context. Students within an institution are not operating solely on the basis of their individual personality but are subject to influences from the groups to which they belong, the institutional culture as well as broad socio-cultural beliefs and norms. Following are some of the main findings that throw light on the motives and circumstances associated with ragging.

### Students’ Beliefs about Ragging – Opinion on Ragging and College Life and Overall Effect of Ragging

To understand the reasons behind students’ support for ragging, a set of questions in our survey dealt with the students’ beliefs about ragging. The result showed (Table 7) that a large number of students said “yes” to the statements that ragging “helps in building confidence and developing personality” (33.8 per cent), “makes students mentally tough” (34.8 per cent) and “prepares students to deal with the harshness of the outside world” (35.7 per cent). In an interview a student said: “... one should also step out of to be

exposed to things that happen in the “bazaar,” one needs to be “hard” to face it. To a certain extent ragging helps in toughening a person, it teaches you how to deal with bad people.” Findings show that students are socialised into thinking that the world outside the institution is a tough place, a dog eat dog world, nature red in tooth and claw. Ragging is thus justified as a “toughening up” exercise that will help them succeed in this harsh world.

TABLE 7

**Students’ Beliefs about Ragging and College Life**

| <i>Sl. No.</i> | <i>Do you agree with these statements about ragging and college life?</i>                  |                               |
|----------------|--|-------------------------------|
|                | <i>Options</i>   | <i>Percentage of Students</i> |
| a)             | Ragging adds fun to college life   | 27.6%                         |
| b)             | Ragging helps making friendships in college  | 39.7%                         |
| c)             | Ragging helps students develop close attachment to one another and to their college/hostel | 35.2%                         |
| d)             | Those who participate in ragging become popular students                                   | 9%                            |
| e)             | Ragging helps keep fresher’s disciplined   | 24.7%                         |
| f)             | Ragging makes fresher’s respect seniors  | 28.9%                         |
| g)             | Ragging enables juniors to take the help of seniors when necessary                         | 34.5%                         |
| h)             | Ragging makes it harder to settle into college life  | 23.9%                         |
| i)             | Ragging makes it difficult to make friends   | 10.0%                         |
| j)             | Ragging makes fresher’s fear seniors   | 30.3%                         |
| k)             | Ragging affects studies negatively   | 30.6%                         |

Furthermore, our data showed that another significant opinion held by students in support of ragging was that it helps foster bonds between students, as 39.7 per cent said that “ragging helps making friendship in college” and 35.2 per cent said “it helps students develop close attachment to one another and to their college/hostel”. It can be said that bond formed during ragging could be because freshers undergoing some stress may seek emotional attachment and a need to come together and find security and comfort in one another.

Ragging also serves as a social exchange between students as 34.5 per cent said that it “enables juniors to take the help of the seniors when necessary.” Another motivation for ragging behaviour is an individual’s pursuit of high status and a dominant position in the peer group as can be seen from responses such as “ragging makes freshers respect seniors” that was answered by 28.9 per cent and “those who participate in ragging become popular students” which was answered in “yes” by nine per cent of the sample. Such is the dominance of the positive beliefs of ragging among students that in our interaction with students at a government degree college in Delhi, many expressed their disappointment that

they were not ragged. They were, in fact, looking forward to being ragged so that they could experience it as well.

However, the data was not without responses that also pointed at the harm that ragging can cause to emotional well-being and academic performance. Almost one-third of students in our survey believed that ragging affects studies negatively (30.6 per cent), makes freshers fear seniors (30.3 per cent), harms self-confidence (30.7 per cent) and has long lasting emotional effect (35.5 per cent). One student said: "Ragging must be prohibited in all colleges. It is mental torture and harms self-confidence. For some seniors, it is a joke, but some time it becomes dangerous." These findings therefore reflect the ambivalence that typically surrounds discussion on beliefs about ragging.

On disaggregating the survey data, we see that positive opinion about ragging becomes more profound as we progress from junior to senior batches, suggesting that ragging is gradually normalised through college years as a part of campus life.

### Reasons for Compliance with Ragging

The survey result shows (Table 8) that dependence on seniors and getting help from them are important reasons for freshers complying with ragging. Among students who admitted to being ragged, a significant percentage (61.6 per cent) of them said that they get help from seniors who rag them. Some students even expressed their displeasure with the anti-ragging measure taken by the college authorities as it hinders senior-fresher interaction and therefore, junior students feel that seniors do not help them. Course-wise analysis show that 70.3 per cent students from medical colleges admitted to getting help from seniors who rag them. This could be largely due to the academic pressure that students are typically subjected to in the medical course. Students in a medical college explained that their syllabus is so vast that it is impossible for the teachers to cover everything in the classroom. In such a situation, it becomes imperative for them to take the help of the seniors who guide them with selective studying.

TABLE 8

#### Data on Juniors Getting Help from Seniors Who Rag Them

| <i>S. No.</i> | <i>Do you get help from the seniors who ragged you?</i> |                                       |
|---------------|---|---------------------------------------|
|               | <i>Options</i>  | <i>Percentage of Junior Students*</i> |
| a             | Yes   | 61.6%                                 |
| b             | No  | 33.6%                                 |
| c             | Did not answer  | 4.6%                                  |

\*Percentages based on those students who admitted to being ragged

In terms of the kind of help received from seniors, almost equal percentages of respondents said "yes" to getting help with notes, assignments, old question papers (42.1 per cent) and getting guidance during exams (41.5 per cent) (Table 9). Sadly, the higher education system in the country is structured in such a way that notes from senior

students and old question papers are of critical importance for the students to pass examinations and score good marks. This not only adversely impacts the standard of education and encourages students to rote learning, but also makes them dependent on seniors and thus vulnerable to ragging and other means of exploitation.

TABLE 9

**Data on the Kind of Help Juniors Get from Seniors Who Rag Them\***

| <i>Sl. No.</i> | <i>What kind of help do you get from seniors who ragged you?</i> |                                      |
|----------------|--|--------------------------------------|
|                | <i>Options</i>   | <i>Percentage of Junior Students</i> |
| a              | They help me with notes, assignments, old question papers        | 42.1%                                |
| b              | They guide me during exams                                       | 41.5%                                |
| c              | They protect me from other seniors/students                      | 27.3%                                |
| d              | Other reasons  | 5.4%                                 |

\*Percentages based on those students who admitted to being ragged.

Further, 27.3 per cent students said that they get help in the form of “protection from other seniors or students”. This could be because of the groupism that exists in colleges, especially professional colleges and colleges that attract students from different parts of the country. These groups on campuses are based primarily on different regions or the states that students come from, but are sometimes also based on caste, religion, economic background, etc. The on-campus inter-group rivalry based on social and cultural differences and prejudices leave the fresher with no choice but to seek protection from the “veterans” of the group she/he belongs to. However, in order to be accepted in the group, freshers have to undergo ragging by the seniors of the group.

Additionally, from analysis of 187 interviews with students, we notice that apart from forging relationship with seniors to receive support from them, various other reasons for freshers complying with ragging emerged, including fear of ostracisation (25 interviews), acceptance by the group (16 interviews), getting right to rag (12 interviews) and enjoying being ragged (10 interviews).

**Power and dominance**

In the survey, almost 40 per cent senior students (students from second year and above) said it was “important” or “very important” for them that their juniors respect them (Table 10).

TABLE 10

**Importance of Juniors' Respecting and Obeying Seniors**

| <i>How important is it for you that your juniors respect and obey you? *</i> |                      |                               |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Sl. No.</i>   | <i>Options</i>       | <i>Percentage of Students</i> |
| a  | Not at all important | 13%                           |
| b  | Not so important     | 32%                           |
| c  | Important            | 31%                           |
| d  | Very important       | 8%                            |
| e  | Did not answer       | 16%                           |

\*All calculation in the table are based on responses from senior students

Our qualitative data gave insight into the role of ragging in perpetuating hierarchy between seniors and juniors. One student in an interview said that there is no ragging in his college because of which juniors do not respect seniors. Another student believed: "Ragging should be done with the freshers so that they know how to respect their seniors but this should be done in limits." However, the belief about respecting seniors was not just limited to seniors but was echoed by teachers as well. A teacher in an interview said that introduction is essential otherwise juniors do not learn to respect seniors. In quite a few colleges, we observed a hierarchical relationship among teachers as well. In one medical college the research team observed charts in classrooms prescribing behaviour for juniors – how they should obey their seniors and respect them.

**Social Discrimination Factors in Ragging**

Factors like region, language, sexuality, caste etc. were noticed frequently in our analysis of media reports and existing literature on ragging and were therefore included for study. In our survey (Table 11), students who admitted to being ragged reported looks and appearance (20.7 per cent) followed by region (15.6 per cent) and language (12.2 per cent) as the most important social discrimination factors involved in their ragging. Additionally, students also admitted gender (8.5 per cent), rural/urban background (7.1 per cent) and caste (6.2 per cent) as other discriminatory factors influencing ragging. This is evidence for the fact that while ragging may serve as an inclusion rite, it may as well act as an exclusion--discriminatory practice.

TABLE 11

**Discrimination Factors Involved in Ragging**

| <i>Sl. No.</i> | <i>Did ragging involve any of the following factors?</i> |                                |
|----------------|--|--------------------------------|
|                | <i>Options</i>   | <i>Percentage of Students*</i> |
| a              | Caste  | 6.2%                           |
| b              | Region   | 15.6%                          |
| c              | Religion   | 5%                             |
| d              | Language   | 12.2%                          |
| e              | Gender   | 8.5%                           |
| f              | Looks/physical appearance                                | 20.7%                          |
| g              | Economic background                                      | 4.9%                           |
| h              | Rural/Urban background                                   | 7.1%                           |
| i              | Public school background                                 | 4.2%                           |
| j              | Any other (please specify)                               | 3.6%                           |
| k              | None of these  | 46.7%                          |

\*All calculations are based on students who admitted to being mildly or severely ragged

Another interesting finding emerged from the zone-wise analysis of data. It was found that ragging based on regional discrimination was highest in the West (17.8 per cent), followed by the South at 16.1 per cent. Ragging based on language, however, was most prominent in colleges in the East (19.8 per cent). Caste-based ragging was more prevalent in North with 8.7 per cent students accepting they were ragged based on their caste. The fact that caste features more frequently in the North than in the South (2.9 per cent) is perhaps related to the fact that student populations are more diverse in the South, with its longer history of affirmative action. These differences may also be reflective of the larger regional or state-wise socio-cultural biases/prejudices that influence the dynamics within the microcosms of educational institutions.

Furthermore, discrimination based on the ability or inability to speak in the English language is quite common across college campuses and often becomes a basis for class-based discrimination and a factor in ragging as well. A student in an interview said that people hailing from small towns are not well versed with English and this plays an important role in their ragging. One of the students mentioned that often people with disabilities are also picked on.

**Institutional Factors in Ragging**

The most remarkable finding of this study was the marked variation in the prevalence of ragging among colleges that point towards the significance of institutional factors in determining the occurrence of ragging. However, institutions' response to ragging complaints and attitude of faculty are among the most important institutional factors influencing ragging.

### Ragging Complaints

When we asked the students whether they complained when they were ragged, a large percentage (84.3 per cent) of students who had admitted to being ragged said they did not complain (Table 12). On further probing the issue of complaint, we found that 23 per cent of the students who were ragged said that they wanted to complain but did not do so.

TABLE 12

#### Students' Response on Complaining against Ragging

| <i>Sl. No.</i> | <i>Did you complain when you were ragged?</i> |                                |
|----------------|---|--------------------------------|
|                | <i>Options</i>                                | <i>Percentage of Students*</i> |
| a.             | Yes   | 8.6%                           |
| b.             | No  | 84.3%                          |
| c.             | Did not answer                                | 7.1%                           |

\*Percentages based on number of students who admitted to being mildly or severely ragged.

The great majority of students who wanted to complain against ragging did not do so because they doubted that the institution would take action (41.3 per cent), feared doing so would adversely affect their career (38.5 per cent), get them socially boycotted (23.3 per cent) or were afraid of being beaten up by the seniors (23.2 per cent) (Table 13). In an interview, a complainant on the helpline said that he was pressurised to withdraw his complaint not only by the seniors but also by the local members of the community. He further said that as a result of his complaint, he got isolated in the college for about three to four months.

TABLE 13

#### Reasons for not Complaining against Ragging

| <i>Sl. No.</i> | <i>Why did you not complain?</i>   |                                |
|----------------|--|--------------------------------|
|                | <i>Options</i>   | <i>Percentage of Students*</i> |
| a.             | I would be made fun of   | 12.3%                          |
| b.             | I would be boycotted by other students                                   | 23.3%                          |
| c.             | Seniors would beat me  | 23.2%                          |
| d.             | I did not want to harm my career   | 38.5%                          |
| e.             | I was not sure whether authorities would take action against the seniors | 41.3%                          |
| f.             | I did not know who to approach and how to make a complaint               | 21.8%                          |
| g.             | Other  | 6.9%                           |

\*Percentages based on number of students who admitted to being ragged and wanted to complain but did not do so.

Apart from fear of repercussion on complaining about ragging, the low percentage of ragging complaints especially in colleges where the prevalence is high could be also because ragging in these colleges is largely perceived as a normal phenomenon and an “accepted college tradition” which every student must go through.

### **Attitude of Faculty and College Administration towards Ragging**

While a focus on students is necessary to prevent ragging, it is equally important to consider the role of administrators, faculty, alumni, etc. The attitude of staff and faculty towards ragging tends to be ambivalent and many privately support the practice. This has obvious implications for the successful implementation of anti-ragging measures.

In our interviews with the faculty (overall 81 interviews) we noticed that several faculty members (23 interviews) tried to draw distinction between acceptable and non-acceptable or “good” and “ugly” ragging and suggested that ragging within limits is fine. A teacher in an interview said: “Mild ragging under some supervision is fine. It should be termed as part-time introduction.” On the other hand, in 18 interviews teachers did not consider ragging as a problem and in fact a teacher said that too much attention is being given to the issue of ragging, while 29 teachers believed ragging has beneficial outcomes. One teacher in support of ragging said: “I enjoyed my ragging. They asked me to speak in English only. It was beneficial for me.” In only 20 interviews did teachers resolutely state that ragging was wrong and should be stopped.

The cavalier attitude of the faculty members and administrators could be attributed to the fact that many of them have themselves undergone ragging during their college days and that they had normalised the practice and thus did not see anything wrong in it.

### **Discussion**

Our study clearly debunks the myth that ragging has ceased to exist or occurs rarely. In our survey, a large percentage (almost 40 per cent) of students admitted to having faced ragging. However, on further analysing the data college-wise, we find significant variations in responses. In some colleges, especially engineering and medical colleges, more than 60 per cent of students admitted to having faced ragging whereas in others almost 90 per cent of the students said they did not face any ragging. Thus the major finding that emerged from this study was that the psychosocial ecosystem of an institution, including the attitude of the college authorities and staff towards ragging, among other factors, determines the prevalence of ragging in that institution.

Our study also shows that where the institution takes the responsibility of organising welcome and orientation programs, it fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging, reassuring new students of their social acceptance into the institution. The role of ragging as a rite of inclusion to foster belonging to the new institution and to forge new bonds must be replaced by other mechanisms that meet the same purpose, are systematic, public, and involve the whole institutional community and not just the students.

During the field visits it was observed that institutions which promoted healthy interaction between teachers and students and a sense of community on campus, the prevalence of ragging were less. Therefore, it must be highlighted that surveillance systems that largely mean CCTV cameras are ineffectual as they are impersonal policing and induce a



sense of complacency in administrators. “Surveillance” needs to comprise of a human system of guardianship—of wardens, mentors, including senior students to be in regular contact with newcomers and to include them in activities such as games/ sports and extra-curricular, in colleges and in hostels.

It must also be noted that institutional cultures and pedagogies influence the ways in which students think and respond, not only in the immediate present but also in the distant future. Educational institutions must provide a platform where students learn the values of democratic, mutually respectful relationships, non-violent conflict resolution, autonomous and critical thinking, compassion and caring, respect for differences, fairness and so on. Further, life skills education needs to be continued into college addressing issues that perplex youth—such as sexuality and intimate relationships, contending with academic and peer pressure. However, life skills programs at this stage need to move from individual and personal to the public and social spheres addressing issues such as bystander response to situations of violence and social injustice.

Our findings also show that ragging is a complex problem and a phenomenon that extends to the larger social fabric. The study revealed that social discrimination factors such as looks or appearance, region, language, rural/urban background, caste, sexuality, etc. are important factors involved in ragging. It is therefore important for all educators in our country to appreciate and celebrate the huge diversities of India, in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, sexuality etc. One platform to flag off this idea of diversity is, for example, for students to organise food festivals celebrating cuisines from different states and communities of India.

Sexual minorities face a great deal of discrimination, including sexual violence and ragging. This calls for synergistic interventions by various college committees (anti-ragging, sexual harassment committees, etc.). Another group that is frequently discriminated against is people with disabilities. Institutions need to be disability-sensitive in a proactive manner such as providing for toilets and other infrastructure that is disabled-friendly.

Students from rural backgrounds moving into larger city universities and colleges may need assistance to address experiences of discrimination as well as ideas about “appropriate” behaviour for men and women because this creates confusion and alienation among students. Hostels are spaces where these issues need to be addressed. One way of doing so is to allot hostel seats through lottery so that they reflect diversity; students from different batches of the colleges, from varied geographic and socio-economic backgrounds interact and learn from each other, fostering a sense of respect and a spirit of celebrating difference and not merely tolerance.

Lastly, in order to address diversity-related concerns, assessments and monitoring of the social climate of institutions through regular surveys of students and staff, especially when there are significant changes in the student community such as increase in student intake/method of admission/social composition of student population, etc. would help enhance diversity interventions.

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## Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in India: A Sociological Analysis

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### Abstract

This paper seeks to analyse the status of students with disabilities in the domain of higher education in India. This is an important yet ignored area in the educational research. Through the use of secondary data, it ardently affirms that the concerns of students with disabilities have not been addressed adequately in terms of either numbers or needs. In the educational institutions governed by the 'cultural arbitraries' of the mainstream able-friendly persons, students with disabilities suffered and still continue to suffer the 'symbolic violence' in the institutions of higher education. When the reality of students with disabilities in higher educational institutions is juxtaposed to the idea of University, the researcher argues, the practice is in contravention to the idea and spirit of higher education.

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## Introduction

Social model of disability, while analysing the status of students with disabilities in the institutions of higher education, takes into account the systemic barriers, attitudinal constraints, exclusionary process (deliberate or inadvertent). It asserts that individuals can have certain physical, sensory or psychological variations, at times leading to limitations in performing certain tasks, but it doesn't constitute disability in itself. A differently abled person turns into a disabled person only when society fails to accommodate or take into cognisance the individual differences. There are three main types of barriers --- institutional, environmental and attitudinal. Institutional barriers reflect apathy at the level of policies, law, and practices that perpetuate discrimination against individuals with disability. Environmental barriers reflect on disability emerging out of inaccessibility of environment to certain people due to certain man-made barriers. Attitudinal barriers are reflected in form of discrimination. It denotes low expectation of people with disabilities. This paper, taking into account the social model of disability, attempts to provide a sociological analysis of students with disabilities in the institutions of higher education in India.

This paper is structured into four sections, first, it tries to unravel the journey of the term (from Physically Handicapped to Divyang) used to denote the persons with disabilities. It is an important heuristic tool which reveals the evolution of mindset and attitudes of society while dealing with the people with disability. The second section, based on the available secondary data, attempts to provide a status analysis of students with disabilities in the institutions of higher education. Treading further, in the third section, the paper attempts to provide a causal analysis of the grim representation and performance of students with disabilities. In the last section, it provides some suggestions about how to meaningfully accommodate the students with disabilities in higher education by being sensitive to their existential and experiential reality.

### **From Physically Handicapped to Divyang: The Journey of the Concept and the Attitudes towards Persons with Disability**

It is pertinent to understand that disability is another form of difference in society, coexisting with other forms of differences in regard to culture, ethnicity, gender, race etc. Nations worldwide in general and India in particular have boasted of unity in diversity as an asset. But as scholars like Oomen (2002) would argue, diversity in itself is not an asset; it has to be combined with the practice of equality and then only the society will be truly plural. But in case of disability, we have failed to treasure it as yet another form of diversity, which, when treated on equal terms with other forms of diversity, strengthens the foundations of pluralism and democracy.

It is pertinent to reflect on the trajectory of the term connoting persons with disability in India --- it latently reveals the evolution of mindset of society while dealing with the people with disability. For long people with disability were addressed as Physically Handicapped (PH). If we go by the science of nomenclature, it is to be believed that the term by which we denote someone has got a lot of psychological impact. Looked from that vantage point,

the word 'handicapped'<sup>1</sup> has a negative connotation and is derogatory in nature. Unfortunately, higher educational intuitions, considered to be the site of learning and sagacity, continued to use this insensitive term for long.

In reality, a person can be handicapped in an environment without being disabled and vice versa. As rightly pointed by Mohit et al (2006:9),

A handicap is a difficulty experienced by a person because of the nature of the environment in which she finds herself. For instance, even if an individual has a locomotor disability she will still be mobile as long she can get around in a wheelchair. However, if the building in which she has to work has no ramps or lifts which accommodate wheelchairs, she is handicapped by the environment of the building. On the other hand an able-bodied person who does not know how to swim or row a boat is handicapped when he has to cross a river unless he can find someone to ferry him across. Hence, handicap is neither unique nor a synonym to persons with disabilities, it only refers to an environmental factor that an individual finds difficult to overcome.

For a long period, society perceived and operated with the medical definition of 'disability' which considered it as an individual pathology and fixed the onus on the individual. It is of late that with the articulation of social definition of disability that a distinction has been made between disability and handicap. This distinction aims to emphasise that it is the 'the shortcomings in the environment and in many organised activities in society that handicap a disabled person' (ibid: 11). In yet another evolving, human rights definition of disability, we find much more sensitivity. According to this definition, "disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a society which takes little or no account of people who have impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream activities" (ibid: 12).

As a natural corollary, viewed from this perspective, disability is considered as an outcome of discrimination and disregard to the unique circumstances of people with disabilities. Therefore, in recent past we find much more sensitive term like 'differently abled' and 'Divyang' or possessed with divinity etc. Though late, it at least reflects the growing respect and sensitivity of society towards persons with disability. It also demonstrates how, as Mohit et al. (2006) would argue, we have moved 'away from negative definitions of disability, as indicating abnormality and impairment to a positive definition that first and foremost asserts essential humanness, understood around notions of human rights and community life, of the disabled that they share with all others, and then within this shared framework identifies special features that make disabled people different from others' (ibid: 12).

An analysis of reception of the term Divangan from the perspective of "those possessed by divinity" in light of their existential and experiential reality reveals a different

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1 The term 'handicap' has its etymological origin from the phrase 'cap in hand' referring to the disabled veterans in England during King Henry VII's reign (15th-16th century). Unable to make a living for themselves after the war, they were forced to take to the streets with their "cap in hand," begging for coins. King Henry VII made it legal for disabled people to beg because he didn't think they could hold down jobs. Disabled individuals, therefore, became known as "handicapped". For further reference, see

<http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2013/12/origin-word-handicap/>

picture altogether. In this paper, we would like to highlight some narratives of PWDs when addressed as Divangjan. Sudhansu, a faculty in Jharkhand, is of the view that, "When the Honourable Prime Minister urged the nation to use the term divyang for the persons with disability, he showed his noble intention towards the community. But the question that crosses up is --- has this narrative brought any change in the lives of PWDs. My answer is "No." This term like any other term has been proved as a hog wash and sheer rhetoric. PWDs are ploughing their lonely furrow, be it accessibility, reservations and a respect dignified life. It is high time that the Prime Minister walks his talk and reciprocates the linguistic change with the change in policies and planning for PWDs." Nagesh, an accountant in Chandauli shared his experiential narratives that "though the Honourable Prime Minister has used a dignified term divyang for PWDs but this in itself is not sufficient to solve their day to day problem. We are still treated as inferior and discriminated in the society. Mere change in terminology has hardly bought any difference in his life."

Sashi Bhushan, a teacher in primary school of Chitrakoot, is of the opinion that "As some people use the term differently abled instead of physically handicapped or physically disabled, no doubt the word divyang also sounds nice and soothing to ears. But ideally divyang should be used for person whose body is possessed with divine power and a body which all should crave to have. We should ask a question to one and all --- if divyang is used in this sense will people wish to have such child in their family. So to my mind, divyang word robs PWDs of their real situation."

Similarly, Viveknath, a faculty in Lucknow, asserts that "mere use of a different high sounding term divyang has not made any significant difference to the life of PWDs. A well meaning Government should implement the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, (2016) in letter and spirit." Rajendra, one of the authors of this research and a PWD, is of the opinion that the word divyang denotes divinity and if PWDs are actually possessed with divinity then why they are not accorded due respect. They are still discriminated and scorned." In a similar vein, the experiential narratives of other PWDs are shared in essence and reveal that the change of terminology is necessary but not the sufficient criterion for empowerment of PWDs. It needs to be matched with concerted efforts to ameliorate the plight of PWDs.

In this paper we would work with the term "Persons with Disabilities" (PWD)<sup>2</sup> because of two reasons --- firstly, we believe that being one of the pioneering countries in signing and ratifying United Nations Convention on Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), India is legally bound to use a uniform term 'Persons with Disabilities' and synchronise its laws in tune with the UNCRPD, any attempt to play with the words would be against the ethos of the convention. Secondly, though the use of high sounding words like 'Divyang' has a soothing sound, it hides the grim reality of the life of persons with disabilities and attempts to address a complex and multi-layered problem with mere symbolism and theatre of phonetics. Therefore, we would proceed with the neutral and universally accepted term 'Persons with Disabilities' (PWD). Having operationalised the term persons with disability, which entails

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2 The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 [27th December, 2016] states that a "person with disability" means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others. For further reference, see <http://www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/RPWD%20ACT%202016.pdf>

students with disability in this paper, it is pertinent to have an overview of the condition and representation of students with disabilities in the institutions of higher education in India.

### **Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in India: A Status Analysis**

Higher education in India is one of largest education systems in the world. There are 723 universities and 3,664 colleges where 17.5 million boys and 14.8 million girls are enrolled. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of higher education in India is 23 percent, which breaks into 23.9 percent for males and 22.0 percent for females. Comparison between social categories shows that GER for scheduled castes is 17.1 percent and it is 11.3 percent for scheduled tribes. But as far as enrolment of students with disabilities in higher education in India is concerned, the dismally low figures speak for itself. Only 51,954 students with disabilities are enrolled, which include 31,374 males and 20,580 females only, which is hardly 0.001 percent of the total population of person with disabilities in India (AISHE 2013-14 Report). According to Census report (2011) there are 2.68 crore persons with disabilities in India. Strikingly, total population of person with disabilities in India is more than the population of many countries of world such as Austria, Australia, Switzerland, Sweden, Cuba, Qatar, and Kuwait etc. (World Atlas, 2016). The following statistics are sufficient to make clear that the Indian higher education system has failed to enrol student with disabilities in higher education.

At one stage the Government of India has come up with the Person with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995, which was amended in 2016. This act provided a clear mandate to secure equal opportunity to students with disabilities for getting quality education. It directed clearly that all Government institutions and other institutions which are receiving grant/aid from the Government will reserve 3 percent seats for students with disabilities.

In spite of having the provision for reservation, this 3 percent quota is not being filled up in higher education institutions in our country. As per the report of all-India survey on higher education (AISHE, 2013-14), overall 32.3 million students are enrolled in higher education out of which only 51,954 students with disabilities are enrolled. This figure is very much low with respect to their share in higher education. Besides, in this reference, there is similar kind of findings of National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP, 2004) which conducted a survey on 322 universities in India with the aim to find out status of main stream educations of student with disabilities in which 119 institutions responded. Of the total, 24 Universities (20 percent) clearly reported that they do not follow 3 percent reservation Policy for student with disabilities as mandated by PWD Act (1995).

TABLE 1  
Statewise of Enrolment of Students with Disabilities in India

| State                       | Students With Disabilities |               |               |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
|                             | Male                       | Female        | Total         |
| Andaman and Nicobar Islands | 14                         | 6             | 20            |
| Andhra Pradesh              | 837                        | 750           | 1,587         |
| Arunachal Pradesh           | 30                         | 5             | 35            |
| Assam                       | 405                        | 177           | 582           |
| Bihar                       | 1,747                      | 632           | 2,379         |
| Chandigarh                  | 157                        | 99            | 256           |
| Chhattisgarh                | 219                        | 113           | 332           |
| Dadra and Nagar Haveli      | 4                          | 3             | 7             |
| Daman and Diu               | 0                          | 1             | 1             |
| Delhi                       | 2,088                      | 982           | 3,070         |
| Goa                         | 15                         | 19            | 34            |
| Gujarat                     | 1,061                      | 553           | 1,614         |
| Haryana                     | 520                        | 198           | 718           |
| Himachal Pradesh            | 225                        | 153           | 378           |
| Jammu and Kashmir           | 412                        | 378           | 790           |
| Jharkhand                   | 310                        | 150           | 460           |
| Karnataka                   | 2,002                      | 1,067         | 3,069         |
| Kerala                      | 1,230                      | 763           | 1,993         |
| Lakshadweep                 | 0                          | 0             | 0             |
| Madhya Pradesh              | 1,151                      | 725           | 1,876         |
| Maharashtra                 | 2,395                      | 1,887         | 4,282         |
| Manipur                     | 96                         | 54            | 150           |
| Meghalaya                   | 37                         | 24            | 61            |
| Mizoram                     | 7                          | 5             | 12            |
| Nagaland                    | 6                          | 1             | 7             |
| Odisha                      | 802                        | 514           | 1,316         |
| Puducherry                  | 73                         | 44            | 117           |
| Punjab                      | 486                        | 619           | 1,105         |
| Rajasthan                   | 1,076                      | 1,660         | 2,736         |
| Sikkim                      | 1                          | 0             | 1             |
| Tamil Nadu                  | 3,542                      | 2,623         | 6,165         |
| Telangana                   | 1,838                      | 1,100         | 2,938         |
| Tripura                     | 93                         | 29            | 122           |
| Uttar Pradesh               | 5,793                      | 4,090         | 9,883         |
| Uttarakhand                 | 369                        | 154           | 523           |
| West Bengal                 | 2,333                      | 1,002         | 3,335         |
| <b>All India</b>            | <b>31,374</b>              | <b>20,580</b> | <b>51,954</b> |

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE, 2013-14)



TABLE 2

**Status of Enrolment of Students with Disabilities in Various Types of Universities in India**

| <i>Types of University</i>            | <i>Students With Disabilities</i> |               |              |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
|                                       | <i>Male</i>                       | <i>Female</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| Central University                    | 1,616                             | 670           | 2,286        |
| Central Open University               | 1                                 | 0             | 1            |
| Institute of National Importance      | 1,538                             | 181           | 1,719        |
| State Public University               | 2,189                             | 937           | 3,126        |
| State Open University                 | 1                                 | 0             | 1            |
| State Private University              | 1,226                             | 270           | 1,496        |
| State Private Open University         | 0                                 | 0             | 0            |
| Institute under State Legislative act | 0                                 | 1             | 1            |
| Deemed University-Government          | 188                               | 27            | 215          |
| Deemed University Government Aided    | 54                                | 35            | 89           |
| Deemed University Private             | 166                               | 95            | 261          |
| Others                                | 20                                | 14            | 34           |
| All India                             | 6,999                             | 2,230         | 9,229        |

*Source:* All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE, 2013-14)

Even then, 38 Universities (31 percent) had not a single disabled student; these included the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Ravindra Bharti University, University of Rajasthan and Guru Nanak Dev University, etc. If we glance at the statistics in Table 1, it is very discouraging that state-wise enrolment distribution of students with disabilities in higher education is very low in some states such as Mizoram (12), Nagaland (7), Goa (34), Arunachal Pradesh (35), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (7), Manipur (150), Meghalaya (61), Tripura (122), Uttarakhand (523). Daman and Diu, and Sikkim one (1) each. Lakshadweep does not have any student with disabilities whereas there are 9,883 students enrolled in higher education in Uttar Pradesh which is highest in number in country. The status of enrolment of students with disabilities in various types of universities in India clearly indicates that enrolment status in Central Open Universities, State Open Universities, State Private Open Universities and institutes under state legislative acts is dismally low (See Table 2). Similarly, the state of enrolment is very low in Deemed Universities, such as Deemed University Government, Deemed University Government Aided and Deemed University Private. The enrolment of students with disability mentioned in the bracket in case of central university (2,286), institutes of national importance (1,719), state public

universities (3,126), and state private universities (1,496) is also not very satisfactory. Having outlined an overview of the status of students with disabilities in the institutions of higher education in India, it is pertinent to proceed for a causal analysis.

### **Low Enrolment of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education: A Causal Analysis**

Statistics show that hardly 0.001 percent of persons with disability are able to enrol in the higher education. There are multifarious barriers<sup>3</sup> which transform conditions of disability into impairment. We will enumerate some of the challenges experienced by the students with disabilities which discourage them and turns them away from higher education. Firstly, studies have attributed reason for low enrolment and dropout of students from marginalised communities in general and students with disabilities to pedagogic action, symbolic violence and the imposition of cultural arbitrariness. Therefore, an important aspect of analysing the experience of students with disabilities in the higher educational institutions is to look through the pedagogy. 'Banking education' (Freire 1972) with its defining feature of monologue and 'chalk and talk' do not help in their learning. It essentially reproduces the culture of silence. In such a situation 'knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing' (ibid: 56). Such a conception of education characterised by monologue ignores the individual uniqueness and requirements of students with disabilities, forcing them to fit into the dominant narratives of 'good' students.

In most of the situation cultural arbitrariness of the so called 'mainstream able friendly society' is imposed on the students with disabilities, forcing them to cope with these curriculum and pedagogy. Bourdieu argues that educational institutions represent 'culture' of a section of society, by virtue of which students from these sections of society have advantage of entering into the educational institutions with a cultural capital. One may ponder- if the educational institutions represent and reproduce culture of a particular section of society, is it so because that culture has inherent superiority over the others, Bourdieu answer is an emphatic 'no'. He conceives the cultural as arbitrary. Elaborating it, Bourdieu further argues: "Cultural capital (the transubstantiation of economic capital) must be further understood in terms of the arbitrary character of the cultural field. Contrary to appearances, its structure is given by meanings and values that are relational rather than intrinsic" (Moore 2004: 455)

Imagine a situation in which a so called 'able being' is made to attend a class taught in Braille language. Despite his best efforts, he would hardly be able to grasp what is being discussed. On the top of it, teacher can insist that the so called 'physically able' student in the group of visually challenged students answer using Braille script. In such a situation all visually challenged students around the so called 'physically able' student clamour to answer except him. These trials and tribulations may continue for days, months and years but, alas,

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3 The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 [27th December, 2016] states that "barrier" means any factor including communicational, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional, political, social, attitudinal or structural factors which hampers the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society. For further reference, see <http://www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/RPWD%20ACT%202016.pdf>

he would finally give in and drop out. He would be no more able to cope up with the symbolic violence of the system. Similar is the fate of students with disabilities in the educational institutions representing the cultural arbitrariness of a section of society. Students with disabilities struggle to cope with the curriculum and pedagogy designed to suit the so called mainstream.

Viewed from Bourdieu's perspective, "All pedagogic action is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 5). Further, proposition 1.2.1 of 'Foundations of a Theory of Symbolic Violence' states the following: "The selection of meanings which objectively defines a group's or a class's culture as a symbolic system is arbitrary in so far as the structure and functions of the culture cannot be deduced from any universal principle, whether physical, biological or spiritual, not being linked by any sort of internal relation to 'the nature of things' or any 'human nature'" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 8). This imposition of cultural arbitrary is further exposed, when we look at the dominant language followed in the educational institutions.

The researchers argue that from schools to colleges, all around there is a competitive zeal to promote foreign language keeping in view the challenges of the neo-liberal era. But unfortunately even a fraction of the same fervour is not reflected in promoting sign language. Is this apathy towards sign language because it has no direct 'use-value' in the market? Yes, agreed that learning a foreign language is important, but so is the 'sign language' which cuts across all region and nations and needs to be equally promoted and learned. The Rights of Persons With Disabilities Act 2016 put the onus on the government that all educational institutions funded or recognised by them provide inclusive education to the children with disabilities and towards that end shall, as the act states as per section 16 (v), "ensure that the education to persons who are blind or deaf or both is imparted in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication." Further, in section 17 (f) "to promote the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes including means and formats of communication, Braille and sign language to supplement the use of one's own speech to fulfil the daily communication needs of persons with speech, communication or language disabilities and enables them to participate and contribute to their community and society."

In order to make education meaningful, dialogic and empowering, specialised and refined pedagogy is very much essential. Teachers need to know Braille, sign, and lip languages to teach students with different kinds of disabilities. Do our faculties in higher education institutions possess even primary knowledge of all these languages? Sign language is not merely an instrumental language of gaining edge in the international market; it is a language of understanding the voice of the voiceless. It is a means of reaching out and communicating to people with disabilities.

Further, do our faculties use specialised teaching aids in their teaching as per teaching requirement of particular kinds of disability? Teachers' training hardly enables them to make learning meaningful, inspirational, effective, and interesting. Even teachers do not grant recorded material of their lecturers. Therefore, involvement of specialised pedagogy (audio-visual aids, projectors, slides, graphs, films, tape, videotapes, etc) in teaching play a significant role as it promotes informational learning, thinking and reasoning, activity, retention, recall and creates interest of students in general and students with disabilities in particular.

Secondly, an important factor for low enrolment of students with disabilities is related to transport and associated challenges. Majority of the population in our country lives in countryside or villages. Generally, higher education institutes are situated either at the district or block headquarters. In such a scenario, transportation system, specially buses and trains, play a great role. But unfortunately, buses and trains are not disability friendly in our country. It is very difficult for the disabled to get in and get off from these modes of travel. Just an imagination of the daily challenges faced by the visually and orthopedically challenged persons can make our hair stand on its end. Earlier, when disability was viewed from medical perspective, the emphasis was on addressing the impairment and rehabilitating the individual so they may 'fit in' the society. Now there is recognition that disability is not a deviation and, therefore, all systems and structures of the society must be improved upon so as to allow equal access and full participation. So it is not surprising that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, under section 16 (viii), has made it obligatory on the part of the educational institutions to "provide transportation facilities to the children with disabilities and also the attendant of the children with disabilities having high support needs." Unfortunately, most of the institutions of higher education are yet to get involved in making physical infrastructure of the campuses disabled-friendly; leave aside the concern of providing disabled friendly transport facility. Further, while commuting with public transport, visually and orthopedically challenged students have to afford for an escort, which is an extra burden on their families. This problem of transport and escort further accentuates in nuclear families where father is the only bread earner for the family. Naturally, in case of the lower middle class or working class, it is neither possible for father to leave his job and accompany the child to educational institutions nor is it possible to arrange a escort on payment basis. In such a scenario, students have either to wade through the risk and challenges of commuting on their own or drop out of educational institutions. This is one of the important reasons for low GER of students with disabilities in higher education in India.

One of the contradictory factors adding to the woe of parents of students with disabilities is that they have to spend money not only on education but also for rehabilitation, therapy, guidance and counselling, and health. They have to purchase various aids and equipments as per the nature of disability. This extra burden starts from being disabled and continues until their proper settlement. On the other hand, despite huge expenditure borne by father for rehabilitation, therapy, guidance and counselling, and health of the disabled child, there is no tax rebate. Now a very justified question arises: Is it reasonable to extract income tax from the parents of PWDs or PWDs themselves? Why is the rule of social backwardness not being applied in case of the PWDs as it is applied in case of tribals? Why this discrimination? However, the Government of India has provided some relaxation to the persons with disabilities in income tax, but it is like offering a few drops of water in the scorching heat of summer.

Thirdly, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, under section 16 (iv), has made it obligatory on the part of the educational institutions to "provide necessary support individualised or otherwise in environments that maximise academic and social development consistent with the goal of full inclusion." One of pivotal supports is the financial support in the form of scholarships. However, if we look at the status of the scholarship for students with disabilities in the higher educational institutions, the condition is dismal. In 2012, the UGC started the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for students with

disabilities to pursue MPhil/PhD programmes. It was declared that the scheme would cater to the financial requirements of students with disabilities for pursuing a research degree in research institutions and universities. However, it covers only 200 fellowships. The financial assistance includes Rs 16,000 (fellowship) and Rs 2,000 (for reader and escort assistance per month). The total annual expenditure for these fellowships will be Rs 4.32 crore approximately for all students with disabilities pursuing higher education in India. India has seven hundred twenty three (723) universities (AISHE, 2013-14), leave aside colleges and other higher educational institutions. Suppose, one student with disability enrolls in every university under the MPhil/PhD programme, only two hundred students will be able to get the fellowship while five hundred twenty three students will be deprived. Even, the lowest formula of fellowship distribution, i.e. One University One Scholarship, will not be fulfilled. One is naturally inclined to ask: Is this pittance of amount sufficient to cater to the needs of students with disabilities? Is our country so poor that these fellowships could not be extended to all 3 percent students with disabilities who are enrolled in higher education?

Further, if we look at allowances which have been granted in the name of reader and escort for the physically and visually challenged students, it amounts to one thousand for a reader and one thousand for an escort. One must ask honestly: Is the amount of one thousand rupees sufficient for an escort and reader in this age of inflation? In this era when even unskilled MGNREGA labour is paid at least Rs. 167 per day in states like Bihar, Jharkhand and MP and as high as Rs. 259 in states like Haryana, it is pertinent to ask: Will anyone be ready to serve as a reader at the rate of one thousand for one month excluding close relatives and family members? Besides, it is limited to only 200 students with disabilities all over the country? What about those who are not covered under this fellowship? Can we not grant escort and reader allowances at actual rate to all students with disabilities who are enrolled in higher education?

Fourthly, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, under section 16 (ii), has made it obligatory on the part of the educational institutions to "make building, campus and various facilities accessible" (2016: 8). In this context when we evaluate the structure of the library which is one of the 'public buildings'<sup>4</sup> in an educational institution, quite frequently accessed by the students with disability. But unfortunately libraries in many of the higher educational institutions are not barrier free, which leads to inaccessibility. However, if motivated students reach there, they cannot search their books and other materials due to insufficient gap between racks as their wheel chair cannot enter between racks. One needs to look at libraries and ponder over certain issues like: How will a student with disabilities access library sitting on a wheel chair? As for visually impaired students, they have to face difficulty in searching material due to absence of the interactive computer device/special

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4 The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 [27th December, 2016] states that "public building" means a Government or private building, used or accessed by the public at large, including a building used for educational or vocational purposes, workplace, commercial activities, public utilities, religious, cultural, leisure or recreational activities, medical or health services, law enforcement agencies, reformatories or judicial foras, railway stations or platforms, roadways bus stands or terminus, airports or waterways. For further reference, see <http://www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/RPWD%20ACT%202016.pdf>

computer software. For example, Jawaharlal Nehru University has a disabled-friendly catalogue system. In absence of such a system the dependency on library attendant increases. It makes sense that intelligence and hard work do not matter; most important is the approach which is beyond the boundary of student with disability with reference to library accessibility. They are being deprived of these oceans of knowledge in the absence of disability-friendly libraries. Unfortunately, in the gigantic effort of digitalisation of libraries, not much attention is being paid to this aspect.

Fifthly, another important debilitating factor for students with disabilities in the higher educational institutions is the lack of disabled-friendly classroom. Students with disabilities are not comfortable with simple desks and chairs which are used for other children in the class. They require specially designed furniture for pain free sitting. For instance, visually impaired students require chair with table together so that they may use brail slate and stylus whenever teacher speaks in classroom, while orthopaedic students who are using calliper are unable to fold the leg, like normal students do, because the gap between the desk and the chair is minimal. Some orthopaedic students suddenly have to fold or put straight the legs after a small time interval due to lack of proper blood circulation, specially in the winter season, but this exercise demands sufficient place and gap between desks and chairs. In such a condition of physical distress, these students experience tension and anxiety and divert their mind from interactive participation in classroom. As per the report of National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP, 2014) only 15 percent universities provide appropriate desks and chairs, 9 percent provide wheelchairs, and only 15 percent universities have the availability of tricycles.

### **Accommodating Student with Disabilities in Higher Education: Some Suggestions**

In order to address the aforesaid challenges facing the students with disability in the higher education, institutions of higher education may take the following measures which are indicative and not exhaustive. Firstly, in the case of visually impaired students, role of a writer during the terminal and internal examinations is very crucial. Performance of the visually impaired students is totally dependent on the writing performance of their writers. A writer's adverse attitude during examinations may hamper their carrier. Therefore, every institution must arrange good writers and pay them adequate remunerations so that writers may write the examinations with dedication and commitment.

Secondly, sensitivity towards persons with disability can be generated by encouraging the students of different university departments to opt papers related to disability issues or inclusive education under the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) so that they may understand various issues and problems facing the students with disabilities in the domain of education and other aspects of life. It will create an empathetic understanding and realisation among them regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education.

Thirdly, faculties of higher education have hardly any scope to grasp the various learning problems and special pedagogy in order to teach the students with disabilities and solve their learning problems of. Therefore, the UGC needs to make it compulsory for all faculty members of higher education that they attend a Short Term Training Programme (STTP) related to various learning issues and other problems facing the students with disabilities. This training should involve a conceptual understanding about various types of

disabilities, identification of problems and issues, learning difficulties, and remedial teaching strategies and adjustment training. This should be included among the bases for assessment on Academic Performance Indicators (APIs), and linked with the promotion of faculty members under Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) or direct recruitment for all teaching posts.

Fourthly, as per the UGC guidelines, every faculty has to attend orientation and refresher courses in order to know the latest innovations and updates in the field of higher education or in a particular subject. Academic staff colleges or faculty development centres may be roped in to promote such orientation and refresher courses. Therefore, learning issues as well as social and adjustment problems should be addressed in orientation programmes. It will be a welcome step if a refresher course is organised in the field of disability studies. This issue should be an essential part of interdisciplinary refresher courses in every academic staff college.

Fifthly, under the scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNTT),<sup>5</sup> there is a proposal for setting up a school of education, centres of excellence for curriculum and pedagogy, and teaching learning centres in most of the central universities. One teaching learning centre is envisaged to be set up to address the issues and learning problems facing the students with disabilities. These centres may be developed as the centres of excellence in designing disabled friendly pedagogy and curricula. It will empower the faculties to change the teaching techniques in accordance with the needs of students with disabilities and design newer ways of inspirational and enjoyable pedagogy. This will go a long way in motivating and retaining students with disabilities in the institutions of higher education.

Sixthly, students with disabilities can be attracted and retained in higher education if education is made employment oriented. The UGC is encouraging the institutions of higher education to include professionals from industry [University-Industry-Interface in the Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUGS) and Board of Post-Graduate Studies (BPGS)]. The purpose of University-Industry Interface is to know the demands of industry so that suitable modifications and additions may be made in the curricula in order to make it industry friendly. This will enable students to meet various requirements of industry and make students skilled enough to secure a job. This academic platform may be utilised to find out suitable job opportunities for students with disabilities. Accordingly, the curricula may be changed and enriched. It is very unfortunate that even after getting a degree, students with disabilities are not able to secure a job; this adds to their anxiety, frustration, mental pressure or disorder. Therefore, University-Industry-Interface (under BUGS and BPGS) must be utilised to train and make these students skilled, keeping in view the emerging demands of the market.

Seventhly, there is the need to establish a sensitive and robust grievance redressal cell for addressing the problems of students with disabilities. Many a time it is found that students make attitudinal comments about someone's disabilities. It hurts them badly and

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<sup>5</sup> Scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNTT) under Department of Higher Education Ministry of Human Resource Development Government of India, May 2015. Retrieved on 08.04.17 from [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/document reports/PMMMNTT\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document reports/PMMMNTT_Guidelines.pdf)

creates an emotional imbalance, which often leads to dropout from higher education. True, internal student complaint committees or grievance cells or student welfare units do exist in several higher education institutions. But students with disabilities hardly find representation in these committees. If only such a body has representatives of or faculties with disabilities, it will be easy to understand the issues for speedy justice.

Eighthly, the Equal Opportunity Cells (EOCs) must organise a special induction programme for students with disabilities --- with the prime agenda to make them aware about the rules and regulations of the concerned institutions, means and forums of grievance redressal, scholarship (within and outside the concerned institutions), and an awareness regarding legal provisions such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 which grants various rights and assistance to persons with disability. Further, the EOCs may spread awareness regarding the procurement of study materials and recorded materials if available in the concerned institutions, financial assistance for attending conferences and seminars within and outside the country, and other issues which may contribute to the educational betterment and improvement in the quality of life of the students with disability in society --- with the same amount of dignity and equality as is available to other members of the society or community. Equal opportunity cells needs to provide adjustment training and cognitive knowledge to all students with disabilities about the location of institutes, departments, central and departmental libraries, offices, banks, post office, mess, hostel, computer, labs and other resources available within the institute. It will foster independence and confidence in the students with disability in the long run.

Ninthly, in case of such students with disabilities who are unable to come to attend a higher education institution on their own (without escorts), pick and drop allowances must be given at the current transportation rate. This rate of transportation should be reviewed and revised every six months or so.

Tenthly, research is very important to retain, promote and innovate newer technologies which are disabled friendly. For instance, Louis Braille designed the Braille language for visually impaired students. Therefore, faculties should be encouraged to take up fundamental researches under minor and major projects sponsored by the University Grant Commission and other funding agencies such as the ICSSR at national level in the field of disability. For instance, in the field of teaching learning, they should think how to develop equipments and teaching aids to teach science, mathematics and statistics specially to the visually and hearing impaired students. How can we make calculation easy for these subjects? How can we spread awareness about the sign and lip languages so that other people may also cooperate with the hearing impaired students? Innovations in the field of disability should be awarded and advertised on a wider scale so that others can also benefit from them.

Eleventh, All India Surveys on Higher Education (AISHE) should also survey disabilities (visual/orthopaedic/hearing impairment, etc.) --- just as they survey the social categories (SC/ST/women etc.) so that one may know which kind of students with disabilities are lagging behind and have low enrolment rates and high dropouts in higher education. This is all the more necessary because, as a whole, surveys do not present a complete picture of students of different kinds. The availability of such information will help in taking remedial measures/steps during the future policy planning in order to cater to the educational requirements of different kinds of disabled and equal participation may be ensured for different kinds of students with disabilities.



Twelfth, informative documentaries and movies pertaining to the challenges facing and the worldview of students with disabilities must be promoted. The effective use of mass media can play a crucial role in this regard. For example, the film *Taare Zameen Par* created a lot of awareness and sensitivity at the national level regarding students with disabilities, specially with reference to dyslexia. Such kinds of educational films should be developed by Rehabilitation Council of India at the national level whereas at the university level, mass communication departments and teaching learning centres under the schools of education can jointly develop short films to create awareness about various educational, social and psychological problems facing different kinds of students with disabilities. It will not only cultivate a deep sense of cohesion among peers but also create a feeling of cooperation amongst the students. All these initiatives will go a long way in creating awareness and fostering sensitivity towards issues related to disability and make the people at large aware about their own responsibility towards their fellow beings. In such an atmosphere, students with disabilities may get cooperation from all wings of educational institutions like classrooms, administration, bank, post office, mess etc. This approach will help in enrolling and retaining the students with disabilities in higher education.

Thirteenth, the library of a higher educational institution should be located at the ground floor and there should be sufficient gap between the racks so that orthopaedic student can search their books and other materials while sitting in their wheel chairs. Library digitalisation must be done while keeping in view the needs of students with disabilities. Initiatives such as talking textbooks, computers with speaking software, reading machines, talking calculators, Braille books and barrier free access will go a long way in making the libraries disabled friendly.

Fourteenth, our country has eleven universities exclusively for women, such as Banasthali Vidyapeeth. The Government of India should establish some central higher education institutions or universities of a similar kind, where all kinds of students with disabilities may get an opportunity to receive higher education under one roof. These central institutions and universities should be equipped with all kinds of disability friendly facilities. Besides this, the UGC needs to make a concerted effort for setting up centres or departments for disability studies in all universities in India in order to promote education and research pertaining to disability issues.

Fifteenth, in case of visually challenged students, printed material in Braille language is very important. Therefore, there should be some modernised national Braille presses dedicated only for printing and disseminating material in the Braille language for all courses in which visually impaired students have been admitted. A Braille press may also be established in the capital city of every state to cater to the region's needs in the field of disability. Recorded materials in soft copy, DVD/CD, etc., should be available in the university departments, colleges and centres for every degree/course wherein visually impaired students are enrolled.

Sixteenth, every institution must have equipments for assistance to students with disabilities such wheel chairs, walkers, elbow crutches, folding canes, Braille kits for visually impaired students, hearing machines/aids for the hearing impaired students, and MSIEDs kit, etc. All these equipments may be used as per the needs of students.

Eighteenth, the number of scholarships must be increased sufficiently to cater to the needs of every student with disability aspiring for or pursuing higher education.

Generally, studies have proved that students with disabilities have low self-concept and self-esteem while positive self-concept plays a very important role in the academic field and other areas of life (Bogart 2014, Steranke 2010, Nair and Anuradha 2014). The need of the hour is to motivate and encourage students with disabilities aspiring for or entering the institutions of higher education by sharing success stories and best practices. History is replete with examples --- like Stephen Hawking, the famous physicist who had motor neuron disease but yet significantly contributed to the field of cosmology, general relativity and quantum gravity especially in the context of black holes. John Milton, a person with complete visual impairment, wrote the famous epic Paradise Lost. Stevie Wonder, a completely blind person, became a famous musician and singer. John Hockenberry, who suffered from spinal cord injury, became a famous journalist and author. Albert Einstein suffered from learning disability but gave us the Theory of Relativity. Isaac Newton suffered from 'Attention Deficit Disorder' but discovered the law of gravitation and Thomas Alva Edison, despite being a disabled, invented the electric bulb and developed the telegraph system and Carbone microphone. Tanni Grey-Thompson, despite being physically challenged, won 16 medals in Para-Olympics. These are among the success stories which faculties of higher education should look up to and motivate the students with disabilities to work hard and craft their destiny.

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## Governance of Universities in Maharashtra: Over-centralisation Curbing University Autonomy<sup>#</sup>

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A. Mathew\*

### Abstract

The trajectory of higher education policy in Maharashtra is witness to a very large number of educational philanthropies that heralded a decisive beginning from the early 20th century, often tinged with an intense zeal for social reform, regional equity and inclusion, which were eventually devoured by the commercialisation wave from the 1980s onwards. The bureaucratic and government control on university management and functions has systematically eroded its autonomy. This was done by packing to majority the university policy, executive and academic bodies with government nominees and representatives of private education managements, by bringing all the vital functions of the university under government control, and by resisting any effort of the universities to curb commercialisation of education and enforce their rules and norms of admissions, fee structure, standards and quality of education. Portraying these trends from the time of the Pune University Act 1974, and the amendments and ordinances through the subsequent decades, this article also touches on the Maharashtra Public University Act of 2016 that incorporated provisions to curb the assaults on university autonomy and the menace of commercialisation.

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## Introduction

Governance may be perceived as the way in which administration and management bodies are engaged in the administration of universities and colleges in the delivery of educational programmes as well as the functioning of the administration and management bodies themselves. Governance also includes the way in which different policy and executive bodies, management of the academic and non-academic staff function, and the way the universities, colleges and other institutions are run for a discharge of their aims and functions. Governance also implies the institutions' negotiating style with outside pressures and influences which seek to interfere in their functioning. This article surveys and portrays the external influences and pressures threatening the smooth governance of the universities and colleges in Maharashtra --- across four decades from the time of Pune University Act 1974 to the Maharashtra Public University Act 2016. It also examines the series of committees set up between 2009 and 2012 to examine the issues involved and recommend measures to guard the university governance, while curbing the menace of commercialisation, political-governmental interference, overcentralisation, etc.

## Non-Educational Consideration in Location of Universities and Colleges

The present state of Maharashtra comprises three regions, viz., (i) Marathwada, (ii) Vidarbha, and (iii) the rest of Maharashtra; the latter includes Western Maharashtra, Konkan and Mumbai City. The State of Maharashtra was created on the May 1, 1960 by merging the two Marathi speaking areas of Marathwada (which earlier formed part of the former Hyderabad State) and Vidarbha (which earlier formed part of the former Madhya Pradesh State). In developed regions (especially the Western Maharashtra region), private sector was playing a major role in education and industry. In Marathwada region, however, the condition was different. Private educational institutions, health services, and industrial entrepreneurship were almost non-existent (Kurulkar, 2009: 261).

A correspondent to the *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* commented that educational viability has never been the criterion for locating educational institutions – universities and colleges – in Maharashtra. It was guided by a combination of geographical and socio-political considerations in the interests of powerful politicians. This followed the earlier pattern which was seen in the case of sugar barons and leaders of the cooperative movement; it is they who started colleges in their districts and taluks in the 1950s and 1960s.

The EPW correspondent opined that the success of agitation in Marathwada region for a separate agricultural university was assured as S B Chavan, head of the Agricultural Department, who was keen about it because it was his region. This was just like the agitation three years ago in Vidarbha region for a separate agricultural university which they got. This was in protest against the first agricultural university being located in Rahuri in Ahmadnagar district. Chief Minister Naik foresaw the signs of protest in Konkan, his region, and agreed in principle to create a separate agricultural university in Konkan region (EPW, 1972: 861). Maharashtra is, thus, a case of four agricultural universities having been started in the same state, as early as the 1970s, whereas most other states had only one agricultural university.

Regional considerations for employment were also the reason for having separate universities. This trend of state sector educational institutions being established on regional and socio-political considerations, continued unabated even in the 1980s. Maharashtra's distinction is, however, completely different when it comes to the establishment of educational institutions in the private sector. They are owned by individuals and run as private enterprises.

Writing in 1981, Deshpande noted that since 1971 the intention of the government was to start two universities, one in Vidarbha and another in North Maharashtra, and the papers had already been prepared. But it did not take off due to the opposition of the University Grants Commission (Deshpande, 1981).

When A R Antulay became the Chief Minister in 1980, he announced his intention to start a new university – Konkan University – in his area. A committee was appointed for this purpose and it did submit its report. But it did not refer the matter to the UGC and it did not give a go-ahead in the matter. But, while the Konkan University proposal was under suspended animation, another announcement came for a university in North Maharashtra at Nasik, the district of the Education Minister (EM). There was immediate rumbling from Vidarbha against setting up a new universities in North Maharashtra while overlooking the former region. The CM announced his intention to set up a new university in Jalgaon, another North Maharashtra district town (Deshpande, 1981). It is evident that the pressure exerted by the CM, EM and other political leaders was responsible in the creation of new university till the 1980s.

## Universities as Government Departments

In respect of governance and management of the university and higher education system in Maharashtra, one finds a consistent and increasing trend over the decades of bringing it under the government control. This manifested among other things: (i) in the consistent efforts to amend the Pune University Act of 1974 to erode the autonomy of the university and increase the government control, by packing the policy bodies with government nominees and representatives of unaided private managements while at the same time reducing the representatives of teachers and students; (ii) to protect the interests of private enterprises in higher education which politicians in the government owned in most cases; and (iii) the bureaucracy's resistance to implement the Pay Commission recommendations for revision of pay scales to university and college teachers even four or five years after it had been implemented for other government servants.

A commentator of EPW observed: "The most recent onslaught on the autonomy of Universities is the Maharashtra Universities (Second Amendment) Bill 1977, the state government will rush the bill through the current session of the assembly." The bill sought to amend Sections 42 and 77 of the Maharashtra Universities Act 1974. Section 42 provides, inter alia, that any confirmed employee who is dismissed, removed or reduced in rank shall be entitled to appeal to a Tribunal of Arbitration consisting of one member nominated by the management, one member nominated by the employee concerned, and an umpire appointed by the Executive Council. The decision of the Tribunal shall be final (EPW, 1977: 1205).

The second amendment sought to be made to Section 77 of the Act, as EPW viewed it, was in some ways even more significant. The bill stated that "the state government may, for the purpose of securing and maintaining uniform standards.... prescribe a standard Code for

defining the classification, duties, workload, pay, allowances, post retirement benefits, other benefits, conduct and disciplinary matters, and other conditions of service of the officers, teachers and other employees of the University and the teachers and other employees in the affiliated colleges and recognised institutions.....” The bill stated that it will supersede all earlier provisions in the University Act 1974 (EPW, 1977).

The EPW goes on to say: “Without the prior approval of the state government or an officer authorised by it in this behalf, the University shall not (a) create any posts of officers, teachers or other employees; (b) revise the pay, allowances, post-retirement benefits and other benefits of its officers, teachers and other employees; (c) grant any special pay, allowance, or other extra remuneration of any description whatsoever....; (d) divert any earmarked funds for any other purposes, or (e) incur any expenditure on any development work (EPW, 1977). In EPW’s assessment, “It may appear superficial that the bill amends only two Sections of the Maharashtra Universities Act 1974, but in fact its effect will be to nullify the powers and duties of the Senate and the Executive Council of the Universities in the state which have been so carefully elaborated in the Act. Especially the proposed amendment to Section 77 destroys, in half a printed page, the entire autonomy of the Universities and their various bodies” (EPW, 1977). The source of friction, EPW observed, remained the same, namely, the government’s attempt to establish control over the universities. Despite publicly voiced opposition from Bombay University, the Universities Act of 1974 was amended early in 1977. The amendments sought to establish greater state control over the universities through the office of the Chancellor: Vice-Chancellors had been made completely subservient to the Chancellor.

The government later introduced a Bill on July 21, 1984 seeking to replace the 1974 Act by a common law covering all the seven non-agricultural universities in the state. Bombay University’s Executive Council (BUEC), at a special meeting on September 5, unanimously disapproved of the Bill because it found that the Bill had no provision for representation of registered graduates on the Senate while the number of teacher representatives has been sharply reduced. Accordingly, if the Bill were passed, there would have been no registered graduates on the Executive Council while the representation to teachers would have been curtailed (EPW, 1984: 1655). The BUEC disapproved this amendment, and in its report recalled that the Act of 1974 viewed giving wider representation to students and teachers on certain bodies of the university as a means by which the government hoped to improve the governance of the university and the facilities it provides for higher education. The Bill proposed to decrease the strength of the Senate to 90 inclusive of only about seven elected teacher representatives.

Finally, the Executive Council thus summed it up: “all important decision-making powers in the areas of appointments, finance, affiliations, making, amending and repealing statutes, ordinances and regulations would rest in the hands of the Chancellor/state government. The Chancellor would be able to dismiss both members of the Senate and other bodies as well as Vice-Chancellor.” With regard to such concentration of powers, the BUEC’s report argued: “It is the experience of the universities in Maharashtra that government approval, whether for appointments or for financial support or for affiliations takes a very, very long time. If a large proportion of the day-to-day problems of the universities is going to require prior or subsequent sanction/approval of the Chancellor/state government the very purpose of the proposed Bill, viz, better governance of the university, is likely to be defeated” (EPW, 1984).



Writing in the same year, Deshpande summed up the damage that the new University Act 1984 Bill could spell to the university autonomy: In the proposed 1984 Act, Senate and EC size had been reduced from 200 to 90 and from 21 to 15 respectively. Representation to university graduates in the Senate was altogether abolished, and that of students, teachers and principals was to be reduced, in some cases, to one-fifth of the present size; Senate will be a consultative (advisory) and not an executive body; powers to grant recognition and affiliation was to be taken over by the government from the university; seven of the 15 EC members were to be either serving employees of the government or its nominees or the Chancellor. The VC could overrule the decision of the EC or the Chancellor could give such a direction to the VC; and a common law for all the universities in the state could help the government to enforce its rules and compliance, and it would have been easier for a college to shift affiliation from one university to another (Deshpande, 1984: 1733-34).

The continued assault on university autonomy was a persistent trend in Maharashtra, and Deshpande shows how the Maharashtra Universities Bill 1993 was a “backward step” in this regard. “The government bill, instead of taking any steps towards greater autonomy for the universities, abridged it further; by weighing the mode of selecting a vice-chancellor further in favour of the government; and by increasing government nominees on various bodies and at the same time, reducing the representation of teachers and principals on them. It also imposed further restrictions about recruitment of personnel in a university” (Deshpande, 1993: 436).

Deshpande pointed out that the recent entry of a large number of donation-based colleges, whose main aim is to ensure a quick and handsome return on investments, had created an altogether new set of problems for the university. It was not realised by the public that every new college (along with its principal, its management), once granted affiliation, has a voice in the running of the university, often influencing the decisions of its academic bodies. Deshpande went on to show that most of these managements (more than a dozen unaided private engineering colleges) had a close link with the ruling political circles, making the task of checking their ill influence even more difficult. A most urgent task before any university in the country today is to devise methods which will minimise the role of money power in academic matters and of institutions where academic considerations are secondary. The 1993 bill proposed by the Maharashtra government was entirely silent on this issue. Considering that most of the cabinet members (including the two education ministers) themselves were involved in running such degree-shops, this was perhaps not surprising. The total silence of the authorities in the various universities was, however, hard to understand. The three main reasons why universities in India urgently needed restructuring, according to Deshpande, are: (1) to devise effective methods to ensure the separation of educational matters from the government of the day and preserve and strengthen the autonomy of the universities, (2) to carry out extensive administrative restructuring with an adequate number of full-time executives and proper demarcation of duties of the various organs of a university, and (3) to control and tame the private, profit-motivated, colleges which are already playing a dominant and unhealthy role in many spheres of higher education. The bill that was before the assembly in Maharashtra was not designed even to look at any of these problems, let alone remedy them (Deshpande, 1993: 437).

In 1994 the government of Maharashtra decided to enact a uniform law for all universities in the state for their better governance, to promote more equitable

distribution of facilities for higher education in different areas of state, and to provide efficient administration, financial control and observance of law in all matters (Chousalkar, 2000a: 1348). Another main purpose of this act was to allow greater participation of different elements of society in the affairs of universities. The strength of the senate was increased and seven (out of fifteen) seats in the powerful executive council were given to people who did not belong to the teaching profession.

According to Chousalkar, this was not without a reason. After 1982-83, the number of colleges under the universities increased and most of these colleges were non-aided professional colleges. The seven members of the executive council from outside the teaching profession began playing an important role because now they were supported by the powerful private managements. The universities turned a blind eye to their malpractices. They gave admission to more students than permitted by the concerned universities and sought the help of the executive committee members to regularise the excess admissions. There emerged caucuses in the universities that excelled in the act of how rules and regulations of the university could be violated.

Dealing with the increasing control of the government in the university, Amrik Singh wrote in 1993: "During the last quarter century or so in particular, the university system has got so politicized that hardly anyone who is politically unacceptable to the powers that be is appointed as a vice-chancellor" (Singh, 1993). Amrik Singh time and again talked of the politicising of the entire college and university atmosphere. Writing almost at the same time as Amrik Singh, Dastane observed that the mushroom growth of colleges, especially in mofussil areas, is a mute witness to this happening. Along with a directorship of a sugar factory or district central co-operative bank, a milk co-operative or a marketing society or membership of assembly or parliament, the chairmanship of an education society running a few colleges from the taluka or district has become a singular indicator of power and prestige. That is how power at the grass-roots level is generated, nursed and mobilised. How many colleges of this type should be allowed to come up? Why cannot the need for a new college be assessed objectively before it is accorded affiliation, Dastane (1993: 1195-96) asked.

The fact was that the universities got politicised; in fact a nexus between politicians and college owners, with their coinciding interests, emerged, defeating every move of the university at curbing the commercialisation. The government could not have allowed this state of affairs to continue. So it decided to enact a new uniform act for all the universities of Maharashtra. After much deliberation the Maharashtra Universities Act 1994 was passed (Chousalkar, 2000a: 1348).

Did the 1994 Act reduce outside pressure in the functioning of the university? Did all the universities uniformly implement the Act to curb the commercialisation of higher education? This could never be the case in Maharashtra. In October 1999 the Democratic Front government consisting of the two Congress parties came to power. There were at least three ministers in the cabinet who felt that their interests were threatened in the universities. Also, it was primarily the Congress government that sought to encourage private managements of colleges. The supporters of private managements demanded a greater say in the university affairs and more representation on the senate and the management council. They wanted to curb the power of the vice-chancellor and an amendment providing for the removal of the vice-chancellor (Chousalkar, 2000a: 1348).

The government of Maharashtra decided to amend the Maharashtra Universities Act 1994 in order to accommodate the demands of private educational institutes controlled by politicians in Maharashtra, and to discipline vice-chancellors who followed the law and did not allow these managements to plunder the students. The minister of higher education, Dilip Valase Patil, gave the promise of amending the act in the legislative assembly of the state (Chousalkar, 2000b: 3477). The draft bill was opposed by various student organisations, teachers' unions, educationists and academicians. But, ignoring their protests, the government decided to issue an ordinance to amend the act. The ordinance was issued on May 12, 2000, providing greater representation to managements and tightening the government's grip over the universities.

An important aspect of the ordinance was that it sought to increase the government's control over the universities. In the 1994 Act, Section 8 gave wide-ranging powers to the state government including that of conducting a full audit of a university. It could issue directives to the university for proper exercise of powers and duties that the university has to perform. It is the duty of a university to comply with such directives. Section 5 refers to 59 duties of the university. It asks the university to "comply with and carry out directives issued by state government from time to time with reference to above powers, functions and responsibilities (Chousalkar, 2000b : 3477). Hence in the ordinance, the government added a new proviso: "Provided that in case the university fails to comply with the directives, the state shall call upon the university to give reasons in writing why directives were not complied with. If the state government is not satisfied with the explanation, it may refer the matter to the Chancellor for taking necessary action under the powers of the chancellor" (Chousalkar, 2000b: 3477-78).

One of the main purposes of the amendment was to increase the strength of representatives of private managements and principals in the senate and management council. Hence the strength of representatives of managements was increased from five to eight and that of principals from 15 to 18. This was an attempt to change the balance of power in the management council, so that the pro-establishment, pro-government lobby in the university could enjoy a permanent majority in the powerful council (Chousalkar, 2000b: 3478).

Like Deshpande, Chousalkar also noticed that the state government in Maharashtra, upto mid-1990s, was dominated by Congress politicians, who control educational institutions. Therefore, due to their pressure, the government under Manohar Joshi as the Chief Minister amended the Maharashtra Universities Act, increased tuition fee of engineering colleges two and half times, and reserved 15 per cent seats for non-resident Indians in the engineering colleges so that they could garner a large amount of money. Those vice-chancellors, who insist that the colleges should pay salaries to their staff, maintain educational standards, provide basic facilities to students and follow the rules and regulations made by the government were subjected to vile attacks and threat of removal. In the case of D N Dhanagare, vice-chancellor of Shivaji University, the politicians and education minister tried their best to remove the vice-chancellor, but they could not do so because of the chancellor. But with the help of these new amendments they could attack the vice-chancellors and browbeat them, thus eroding autonomy of university (Chousalkar, 2000b: 3479).

There is curiously no literature on the ordinances further undermining the university autonomy between, say, 2003-2008. Maharashtra may be a singularly strange case of

the education ministers and other political leaders in the government bringing ordinance after ordinance to protect their commercial ventures in the field of education by increasing their overwhelming presence in the university policy-making and executive bodies. This was the case since the mid-1970s, after the Pune University Act 1974, through the 1980s, by introducing amendments through ordinances. Despite the Supreme Court verdict about curbing commercialisation of higher education, and imposing strict regulations about admissions and fee structures, as enforced by a Regulatory Authority, headed by a High Court retired judge, such violations in Maharashtra continued.

Looking at the government's move in 2009 to set up three committees to reform the universities and higher education system, Kumar felt this was both interesting and intriguing: "It is interesting because Maharashtra with its long tradition of political elites setting up educational institutions for "public good," has decided to get its house in order by looking at reforming the public universities." "It is quite intriguing," Kumar felt, "because the same political class that governs a large number of educational institutions in the state (in fact, they believe that healthy public universities are a threat to their institutions) are now looking at reforming these universities" (Kumar, 2010:19-20).

Kumar refers to another provision saying that universities have to comply with the state government's directives on any of the powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to it. And "the over-control and over-centralisation have been outrageous as seen in action taken on non-compliance by universities." Seeing the trend, Kumar observed, "the state government and the office of the chancellor have alarming powers to interfere with the functioning of the universities. At times a close connivance between the two resulted in over-centralisation and over-concentration of powers. This led to delegitimisation of the institutional head, with even judiciary expressing concerns over this" (Kumar, 2010).

Kumar noticed that the 1994 Maharashtra University Act "specifies that a government representative is necessary in the selection committee for recruiting faculty member," and wondered: "When there is a chancellor's nominee in the selection committee, why do we need a government representative?" He felt that a closer look at the functioning of the various authorities of the university such as the Senate, Management Council, Academic Council, Boards of Studies, etc., reveals that some of them are composed of people who represent "the larger public interest," This has become a breeding ground for individuals seeking upward political mobility and has benefited both "small time political fixers" and upcoming "education barons." Kumar discerns that realising the need to review the governance structures of the universities, the state government initiated a reform, in 2009, in the process of appointments of vice chancellors. He believes that while these reforms brought about a few desired changes, there was still ample scope for abuse in the reform process. For instance, the provision in the new legislative enactments is the desirability of having a serving bureaucrat (normally of the rank of principal secretary) in the search committee. Kumar wonders: would it not lead to interference by the elements that are an external constraint? Interestingly, even in the process of the appointment of vice chancellors of central universities, no bureaucrat from the Ministry of Human Resources Development is involved (Kumar, 2010: 21).

Referring to the committees appointed in 2009 to overhaul the higher education system, Kumar felt that their recommendations should give space for fundamental principles of autonomy (from external and internal constraints), participatory decision-making and shared governance (boards of trustees, educational administrators, state government,

faculty governance and students), and finally to academic freedom and accountability (Kumar, 2010:21).

## **Review Committee (2012), Forerunner of Maharashtra Public University Act 2016**

The Department of Higher and Technical Education, Government of Maharashtra, appointed in 2010 three independent committees, to work in tandem for the following tasks:

1. Committee No. 1: To suggest long term strategies for enhancement of the relevance and quality of higher and professional education so as to meet the challenges that are emerging in the 21st century.
2. Committee No. 2: To work out a new Act for governance and management of public universities, and
3. Committee No. 3: To suggest ways and means for managing of large affiliating universities like Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur.

The Committees chaired, respectively, by Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Prof. Arun Nigvekar, and Prof. Ram Takawale, set up by the State Government of Maharashtra during 2010 comprehensively dwelt on the problems and challenges in general higher and technical education sector in Maharashtra. Titled Education in Maharashtra: Preparing for the Future; New Ideas & Pathways; the report of the committee set up by the government of Maharashtra, 2011 (Committee No 1) dwelt on the knowledge and learning that universities in Maharashtra should promote. The report of the Committee No. 2, The Maharashtra Public Universities Act, 2011, opened with the Preamble: Public Universities, in spite of the trend for privatisation of education, are playing and would continue to play an important role in shaping the future of millions of youth in Maharashtra for decades to come, in endowing them with learning and appropriate knowledge, values and guiding principles relevant to the 21st century (emphasis added. Report of Committee No. 2, 2011: 1; 56). A Review Committee chaired by Kumud Bansal (also known as the Apex Committee) was entrusted with the task of reviewing the recommendations of all three committees and recommend measures to enhance the quality of higher education in Maharashtra. The Apex Committee discussed the problems and challenges in this sector. Those that relate to university governance, curbing the menace of commercialisation, political-governmental interference, over-centralisation, etc., were surveyed here.

## **Antidote to Over-Centralisation and Safeguard to University Autonomy: MAHED**

The concerns and anxieties expressed over encroachment on university autonomy, and the over-centralisation of university powers and functions under the government control through persistent amendments and ordinances on Pune University Act, 1974 and Maharashtra University Act 1994, well up to and even after 2000, brought into sharp focus the urgent need for safeguards in the revisions of the university acts.

The Committee (No. 2), headed by Arun Nigevikar, entrusted to suggest changes in the Maharashtra University Act of 1994, suggested that the dormant Maharashtra State Council for Higher Education, should be revived with a new title, viz., Maharashtra State Commission for Higher Education & Development (MAHED) with an umbrella role in regard to policy in order to fulfil the expectations of the five major stakeholders, namely, the students and the parents, the faculty and the non-teaching staff, the employers, the society, and the State in the new world of the 21st century. The committee was convinced that the MAHED should be a stand-alone, independent legal entity with appropriate and adequate autonomy, funded by the State, run by academicians, scientists, technocrats, business and industry experts, and financial experts, and should be a conduit for funding of the public universities by the State Government. MAHED should be link between the State and the MHRD and various other education decisions making councils in the field of higher and professional education at the Centre as well as with the Planning Commission (Report of Committee No.2, 2011:7).

This recommendation on MAHED was endorsed and reiterated by the Apex Committee by emphasising its stand-alone independent legal entity character and its composition --- MAHED consisting of academicians, experts in science and technology, societal development and industry facilitating and guiding the higher education institutions in the State. It said that the university should be entrusted in the hands of academicians, with proven track record within and outside the university. It is mature peer process rather than electioneering that should prevail in the university. The Review Committee recommended that elections should be done away with.

While MAHED was not a stoutly defended proposal in the Maharashtra Public University Bill 2016 (GoM, 2016), the Act of 2016 carried it within the same spirit that was proposed and endorsed by the Apex Committee (GoM, 2017). The Maharashtra Public University Act of 2016 preferred a different nomenclature for MAHED, viz., Maharashtra State Commission for Higher Education, headed by the Chief Minister, as the authority of the State Government in charge of, and responsible for, the higher education in the State. The commission was envisaged to create synergy between various stakeholders, namely, the State Government, public and private universities, private skills education providers, and industries. In fact, the 2016 Act devoted an entire chapter on this Authority. But the composition of MAHED has far fewer academicians and experts from other fields, which the Apex Committee had emphasised, and was packed with officials (Report of the Review Committee, 2012; GoM, 2017: 73-78).

## **Curbing Commercialisation: Fee Fixation Committees**

While fee fixation was envisaged in the Maharashtra University Act of 1994 (GoM, 2003) as part of the objects of the universities and responsibility of different policy making and executive bodies, from the turn of this century there have been umpteen violations of its provisions as well as of the Supreme Court verdict that brought into force Fee Fixation and Admissions Regulation Authority in each state. But the menace of commercialisation did not stop. This was the reason behind the different committees starting from 2011, leading up to the University Bill in 2016 and finally in the Maharashtra Public University Act, 2016, stipulating a Fee Fixation Committees as an integral part of the Act for every undergraduate and post-graduate courses in general and technical and professional courses (GoM, 2017: 93).

The Apex Committee's recommendation that the university affairs should be in the hands of only academics and not in the hands of bureaucrats does not seem to have been followed by the University Act of 2016. For instance, in the composition of the Senate, the number of representatives from unaided private managements does not become clear from "ten Principals of affiliated, conducted, autonomous colleges" and "six representatives of managements of affiliated colleges or institutions..." (GoM, 2017: 39). It is equally unclear from the composition of the Academic Council: "eight Principals" in a body that decides courses and curriculum. It looks over-represented from the side of unaided private managements (GoM, 2017: 44-45). Therefore, the Apex Committee's recommendation that universities should be in the hands of only educationists is not borne out from the provisions regarding governance matters.

There has been much public outcry against the erosion of university autonomy and over-concentration and over-control of universities' powers and functions in the hands of the government. This was what led to the Apex Committee to underline that universities should be led by only academics and experts and not by bureaucrats and representatives of unaided private managements. And the Fee Fixation Committees for undergraduate and postgraduate courses appeared to have reduced the external interference in the university governance of higher education system.

The media, by and large, was appreciative of the Maharashtra Public University Act 2016. The Indian Express (December 9, 2016), for instance, felt that the bill proposed to strike a balance between elections and nominations to various university bodies to stamp out nominations of vested interests. Based on the recommendations of three different committees headed by Anil Kakodkar, Arun Nigvekar and Ram Takwale as well as the Apex Committee set up in 2010-11, the bill was tabled by Higher and Technical Education Minister Vinod Tawde after incorporating the suggested recommendations and changes by a 21-member scrutiny panel headed by Tawde himself. The bill proposed to usher into far-reaching changes in various areas of university activities, putting students' interests at the centre, as also to lend greater autonomy and eliminate rampant commercialisation of education. The bill proposes to establish internal quality assurance boards as a precondition for quality assessment by NAAC and University Grants Commission. To prevent profiteering by unaided institutions affiliated to universities, the bill proposed to set up a special committee to determine the fees and a regulatory mechanism at the state level.

Many crucial reforms suggested by the 2016 Act are still to be implemented. The first is that the MAHED has not yet seen the light of the day. The curbing of commercialisation of higher education with violations in the fee structure only in respect of medical courses becomes clear from the notification of the Fees Regulating Authority (Fees Regulating Authority, 2018).

## Conclusion

The trajectory of university governance in Maharashtra is not in consonance with the powers and functions of different bodies in discharging their assigned roles. The powers and roles spelt out in the three University Acts give a flavour of the changes, and in fact, perhaps the reasons for not explicitly spelling in the Acts itself about the roles and functions that should guard against external influences and pressures in fearless discharge of functions of the various bodies. The changes in the composition and functions of the different policy,

executive and academic bodies were on account of the pressure brought on by private managements forcing the government to come with amendments and ordinances to the University Acts that interfered in the governance and started eroding the university autonomy. The first sign and the beginning of external considerations influencing educational decisions, was the decision taken about the location of universities and institutions of higher education; this was the political consideration with an eye on electoral gains and the socio-economic and political clout it brought in. The second was the series of amendments to the Pune University Act 1974 to debar the universities from creating any posts, giving any increment in salary and other financial benefits, diverting any earmarked funds for any other purpose or incurring expenditure on any development works without the prior approval of the government. This, in effect, nullified the powers and duties of the University Senate and Executive Council.

Another bill in 1984 sought to bring about a common act for all non-agricultural universities and the proposal to altogether abolish student representation in the University Senate and severely reduce the representation of teachers in the University Senate. It also proposed that without prior government approval the university is debarred from exercising its fundamental functions like recruitment of teachers and non-teaching staff, giving any financial benefits to its employees or incurring any expenditure on the university. For the day to day problems, if the universities have to wait for prior government approval, the very purpose of the university, improved governance for providing quality education, is defeated.

The Maharashtra University Bill of 1993 sought to increase the government nominees in the various bodies and at the same time reduce the number of teachers and students on them. This was exactly what happened in the Maharashtra University Act, a year later, in 1994; it increased the strength of representatives and principals of unaided private colleges in the Senate and Executive Council. When a vice-chancellor tried to discipline private managements from violating the university rules in admissions and fees, an ordinance was promulgated for the removal of the vice-chancellor. Political elites setting up education institutions and government control of universities has been the legacy of higher education policy in Maharashtra in respect of governance. The amendments and ordinances that eroded university autonomy and made the universities subservient to the government of the day was the order of governance of universities right from the time of Pune University Act of 1974 right up to 2009. If there was a running thread with respect to university governance, it was the systematic delegitimisation and deinstitutionalisation, leaving universities no better than other government departments, intended to serve the interests of the owners of the educational managements who were ministers in the government. In some cases, the government mandated its prior approval to the university to exercise its fundamental functions; in some, it planted its own nominees, for example in the selection committee for recruitment and in some, like affiliation, it took away the powers to itself. It is doubtful if there is so much over-centralisation of university functions and over-concentration of university powers in the hands of the government in any other state.

Observers perceived the intensions and the preparatory processes involving the appointment of the three Committees and the Apex Committees during 2010-11 for thorough reform in governance of universities as both interesting and intriguing: interesting because the political elites with long tradition of their own educational enterprises, resisting university regulations, have now come forward to be regulated in weeding the menace of commercialisation and restoring autonomy and authority to the university to manage



its powers and functions. The Maharashtra Public University Act 2016 was the result of a series of committees between 2009 and 2012 to revamp the higher education system and curb the menace of its commercialisation. The MAHED, to be managed by academicians, scientists, technocrats, business and industry experts, and not by government nominees or representatives of unaided private education managements, as an antidote to over-concentration and biggest safeguard to university autonomy, was the most sought after agency, but it has not seen the light of the day. This is perhaps a reflection of the clout of the education-politics nexus in the sphere of higher education policy in Maharashtra. But the conscience that underlay in setting up of different committees and their proposals to cleanse the higher education system --- general, technical and professional --- from the menace of commercialisation seems to be pricking somewhat in the post-2016 contexts, as seen in the Fee Fixation Committee for every undergraduate and postgraduate course and in the Regulatory Authority as the watchdog to oversee the admissions and fee structure in respect of different courses. There is now less evidence of violation of the Apex Committee's strong recommendations that the university should be entrusted in the hands of academicians, with proven track record within and outside the university.

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## Technical Efficiency in Creating Students' Performance in West Bengal: A Non-Parametric Analysis

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### Abstract

This article focusses on analysing the efficiency of government-run primary schools in three districts of West Bengal, namely, North 24 Parganas, Dakshin Dinajpur and Purulia. The objectives are to measure the technical efficiency of the schools and to identify the environmental factors determining their inefficiency. For the first purpose, Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) has been used for 1698 schools considering two outputs (scores obtained by students of Class 3 in mathematics and language) and seven 7 different groups of school inputs taken from the Government of West Bengal's Utkarsha Abhiyan 2013. For the second purpose, Tobit regression analysis has been used. The results show that 6.60 percent schools turned out to be technically efficient, with overall mean efficiency of all schools being 0.78. Schools in Dakshin Dinajpur are relatively more technically efficient (13.70 percent) followed by Purulia (5.87 percent) then North 24 Parganas (5.23 percent). Severe depth of inefficiency is also noted within and across the districts and different groups. Significant slacks in various crucial inputs like teachers, classrooms and funds are observed. Monitoring of schools shows a negative impact on the efficiency of the schools. The impact of more educated and teachers with professional degree on school performance in primary schools turned out to be insignificant. Moreover, with time, schools tend to become more efficient. Feminisation of primary education affects the efficiency of the schools significantly. Schools implementing CCE programme have a positive impact on its efficiency. Distance of schools from an economic centre tends to hinder its technical efficiency; schools belonging to the tribal blocks performed efficiently in comparison to schools in non-tribal blocks. The article concludes that the main source of inefficiency in primary schools in a typical developing country is not just a resource crunch, but huge gaps in planning and implementation by the central authorities as well as managerial inefficiency of the school establishment.

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## Introduction

The governments of developing countries like India can achieve various developmental objectives by increasing the resource allocation and/or efficiently utilising the allocated resources. Since they suffer from a persistent paucity of resources, their efficient utilisation becomes extremely crucial. The 'merit good' and 'public good' nature of education, especially elementary education, calls for its government provisioning. The government of India, duly acknowledging the importance of education, has put it under the merit list of subsidisation (GOI 1997, 2004), where elementary education is considered as Merit 1 good and all other types of education as Merit 2 good<sup>1</sup>. The Kothari Commission (1965-66) followed by National Education Policy (1968) recommended increase in public expenditure on educational purposes up to six percent of GDP gradually. This idea was further reiterated by the Saikia Committee (1996), with an addition of the proviso that three percent must be diverted to primary education. The National Common Minimum Programme (2004) and Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) (2005) also made similar recommendations. However, such high investment was not affordable for India owing to the narrow fiscal space. An analysis of expenditure on education over time indicated that even though there has been rise in expenditure on education as the percentage of GDP, the share has stagnated near three percent of GDP during the last few years (Economics Survey 2014-15). Public expenditure on elementary education in India was estimated to be 1.75 percent of GDP (both centre and state expenditures combined) while, surprisingly, private expenditure on elementary education was around 0.71 percent of GDP (Dongre et. al. 2014).

However, studies point out that in spite of increasing allocation for the education sector, the return is not praiseworthy (Dongre et. al. 2014), thus indicating an inherent inefficiency in the system. Moreover, households also need to spend on education beyond just school fees; 24 percent of children in rural India attend paid tuitions. In fact, more than half the children in rural parts of Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha take paid tuitions (ASER 2013), in addition to other expenditures including book costs, examination fees, transport costs etc. Also, there has been a large amount of wastage or under-utilisation of resources in terms of low performance of students (ASER 2013, 2014), dropouts (DISE 2012-13) and educated unemployment (Labour Bureau 2012). All these lead to spiralling negative impacts on generation of human capital for future. Hence, given the persistent under-investment in education, the idea of efficient allocation of the resources and their optimum utilisation become significantly important.

The present paper addresses this issue, in select districts of West Bengal. West Bengal is a middle income state in the eastern part of India, bordering Bangladesh, and received a tremendous influx of refugees from that neighbouring country since the 1960s. It also receives large numbers of migrants from the neighbouring states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Assam, etc. Just like the rest of India, a large proportion of the population resides in the rural areas (68.13 percent as per Census 2011). Demographically, the state has more than

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1 Merit 1 goods are needed to be given more subsidies than Merit 2 good by the government. While Merit 1 goods include elementary education, primary healthcare, prevention and control of disease etc. Merit 2 good includes all education other than primary, urban development, family welfare etc. See GOI(2004).

50 percent of population belonging to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and religious minority groups, which are far higher than the national average (Census 2011). The population density of the state is as high as 1028 person per square kilometre, compared to the all-India average of 382 (Census 2011). The state has an average literacy rate of 76 percent with female literacy at just 66.55 percent (Census 2011). The high population density, large share of rural population, almost 20 percent of population under poverty line (Planning Commission 2013), an average literacy rate and a sizeable population from backward social groups make the issue of access and efficiency of government-provided primary education facility a critical component of the quality of life in West Bengal. Again, NUEPA (2010) posits that the access to primary schools, defined by availability and physical accessibility, to be one of the highest in West Bengal. In contradiction, ASER (2014) highlights it to be one of the few major states having overall drop of quality of education. These two incongruous factors make this state a very interesting case for a proper analysis of the efficiency of the educational sector in the country.

Given this background, the output variable in any efficiency analysis should be dealt with, with caution. While many argue that the quality of education, measured by the students' test scores etc, should be considered, others posit pure enrolment to be the right indicator of efficiency. This study takes into account the performance of the students in the schools as the measure of the outcome variable. The use of standardised test scores as a measure of the outcome variable are a common in literature various studies. For example, McCarthy and Yaiswarng (1993), Ruggiero (1996) and Tyagi & Singh (2009) have used it as outcome variable to measure efficiency.

Various works have focussed on the study of efficiency of educational sector (especially schools). Bessent and Bessent (1980), Bessent et al (1982), Ray (1991), McCarthy and Yaiswarng (1993), Kirjavainen and Loikkanen (1998) are some of the works measuring efficiency of schools. In the Indian context, Tyagi *et. al.* (2009) focussed on measuring efficiency of 348 elementary schools in Uttar Pradesh, using three outputs and eight school and non-school level inputs in his efficiency analysis. Sengupta and Pal (2010) captured the efficiency of primary school by using the district level data for India. Similarly, Sengupta and Pal (2012) measured efficiency of schools of Burdwan district of West Bengal, while Ghose and Bhanja (2014) focussed on measuring efficiency of primary and upper primary education across districts for West Bengal by using aggregate information at the district level. However, virtually no study on India, and hence on West Bengal, has been conducted for measuring efficiency at school level across the districts using students performance-based outcome variables (educational performance of the students) where the level and nature of slacks in inputs (degree of underutilisation) are also identified. The crucial rationale of a comparative analysis across districts is to locate the nature and impact of heterogeneity across districts, which otherwise are treated homogenous for policy makers in terms of education policies.

This study aims to fill this void by fulfilling the following two objectives. First, the study attempts to measure the technical (in)efficiency of government run primary schools across three selected districts of West Bengal (one good performing, one average performing and one poor performing in terms of some selected educational outcomes), given the inputs these schools receive and utilize vis-à-vis the outputs they produce in terms of students' educational abilities. Secondly, the study aims to identify the environmental factors (factors which are not directly in control of the schools but can influence their efficiency, like

the quality and gender of teachers, distance and location, etc) influencing the efficiency scores of the schools. These are in no way inputs at the school level, but can affect the efficiency in which the outputs are created.

Following this introduction, the rest of the paper is divided into three sections. Section 2 deals with the data and methodology, Section 3 deals with the results for our two objectives and, finally, Section 4 deals with the conclusion and the policy prescription.

## Data and Methodology

### Selection of Sample Districts

The first criterion for choosing the districts was retention rate from the primary to the upper primary level. Data on retention rates are taken from the DISE District Report Cards for the year 2011-2012. The twenty districts were divided into five groups based on the retention rate from primary to upper primary. Each group had four districts, and can be classified in terms of their performances --- as poor performing (Malda, Purulia, Uttar Dinajpur and Darjeeling), near average performing (Hugli, Kooch Bihar, Jalpaiguri, Siliguri), average performing (Dakshin Dinajpur, Kolkata, Howrah, South 24 Parganas), above average performing (Purba Mednipur, Bardhaman, Nadia, Bankura) and good performing (North 24 Parganas, Paschim Mednipur, Birbhum, Murshidabad). Here the average retention rate for the state as a whole is 77.19. North 24 Parganas was considered as a good performing district, Dakshin Dinajpur as an average performing and Purulia as a poor performing district.

The second criterion was the proportion of Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs)<sup>2</sup> in the districts. Three districts were considered from this criterion as similar to the previous criterion --- North 24 Parganas as good performing (no EBBS), Dakshin Dinajpur as an average performing district (with one fourth of the blocks being educationally backward) and Purulia as a bad performer (with all blocks being educationally backward).

Hence, based on two separate criteria, the selected districts for the studies were North 24 Parganas as good performer, Dakshin Dinajpur as average performer and Purulia as poor performer.

### Data Source

The basic data on school inputs --- DISE school level raw data for the year 2013-14 --- were collected from the DISE website. However, the output variable, the performances of Class 3 students in mathematics and language, and some input variables were taken from the Government of West Bengal's Utkarsha Abhiyan 2013-14, under the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan in the state. Utkarsha Abhiyan is an initiative by the Government of West Bengal to assess

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2 The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of India identifies the EBBs based on a certain methodology. Initially, twin criteria of Female Literacy Rate (FLR) being below the national average of 46.13 percent and Gender Gap in Literacy (GGL) being above the national average of 21.59 percent were considered. Subsequently some blocks which were having rural FLR of less than 45 percent irrespective of the GGL were also considered. Besides, one block with high Scheduled Caste concentration with very poor, Scheduled Caste rural FLR is also included (<http://ssamis.nic.in/EBB/>).

the reading, writing and numerical skills of the primary school children based on previous year's competencies. Here a sample of students per class were chosen such that they represent different groups, like a mix of boys and girls, slow and fast learners, from privileged and depressed social backgrounds etc. For data collection, 1698 government run primary schools were considered --- 746 from North 24 Parganas, 219 from Dakshin Dinajpur and 733 from Purulia. Information on Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs)<sup>3</sup> blocks was taken from the website of the Government of West Bengal's Backward Class Welfare Department. Blocks are identified as ITDP or non-ITDP based on certain criteria devised by Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. Similarly, information on Educationally Backward Blocks was taken from the Ministry of Human Resource Development's official website.

### Methodology

The present study aims at measuring the efficiency of schools. There are two components of efficiency: Technical Efficiency (TE), which reflects the ability of firm to obtain maximum output from a given set of input and Allocative Efficiency (AE), which reflects the ability of the firm, to use the inputs to optimal proportion given their relative prices. The two measures, combined together, give the idea of overall or economic efficiency. The present study aims at measuring the technical efficiency of schools as its first objective, and to do so the method of Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) has been used.

Data Envelopment Analysis is a non-parametric linear programming technique of frontier estimation, originally formulated by Charnes, Cooper and Rhodes (CCR) (1978). The CCR model was introduced to address the problem of efficiency measurement for decision making units (DMUs) with multiple inputs and multiple outputs. They coined the term DMUs to include all non-market agencies like school, court, hospital etc which produces identifiable and measurable output from the measurable inputs but generally lack market price of outputs (and often some inputs as well). However, the CCR model was applicable only to technologies characterised by constant returns to scale globally. Later Banker, Charnes and Cooper (BCC) (1984) developed the CCR model to incorporate the variable return to scale technique of production and latter these models were substantiated by Färe, Grosskopf and Lovell (1985, 1994).

DEA provides us with an efficiency measure relative to a maximum likelihood estimate of an unobserved true frontier, conditional on observed data resulting from an underlying data generating process (Simar and Wilson 2007). The relative efficiency of school  $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$  is obtained by measuring the distance of its input-output combination to the frontier. This corresponds to finding a virtual school as a liner combination of all  $n$  schools, which produces at least as much, output as school  $i$  and uses as few inputs as possible.

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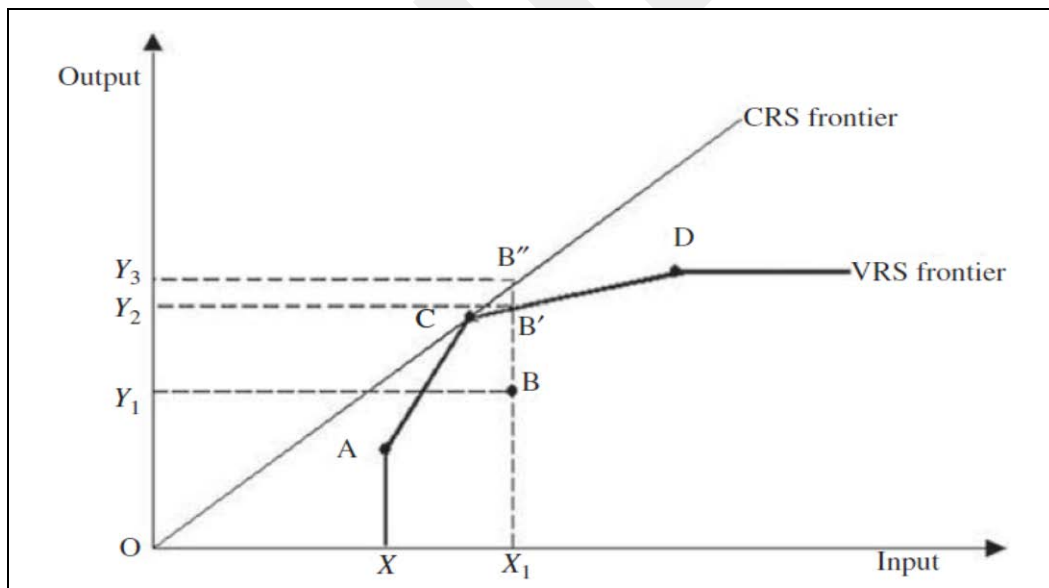
3 Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) are generally contiguous areas of the size of Tehsils or Blocks or more, in which Scheduled Tribe (ST) population is 50 percent or more total. However, some ITDPs may be smaller and non-contiguous. In order to achieve the twin objectives of socio-economic developments and protection of tribals against exploitation, the Government of India in August 1976 decided to mark the boundaries of the scheduled areas. This was done so that protective measures could easily be applied and proper development programmes could effectively be implemented ([www.tribal.nic.in](http://www.tribal.nic.in)).

Measurement of technical efficiencies can be of two types. Input-oriented technical efficiency deals with the maximum amount of input quantities, which can be proportionately reduced without changing the quantities produced as output. Output-oriented technical efficiency deals with the maximum output quantities that can be proportionately increased without altering the input quantities (Ray, 2004). Two different assumptions can be made while measuring relative efficiency --- constant return to scale (CRS) and variable returns to scale (VRS).

Figure 1 illustrates the basic ideas behind DEA and the return to scale. Four data points (A, B, C and D) are used here to describe the efficient frontier and the level of capacity utilization under VRS and CRS assumptions. In a simple one output and one input DEA problem, A, C and D are found to be efficient, while B is an inefficient DMU. So unit B can produce more output at point B' on the frontier (which is equal to theoretical maximum) utilizing same level of input at  $X_1$ . With constant returns to scale, the frontier is defined by point C for all points along the frontier, with all other points falling below the frontier (hence indicating capacity underutilisation). With variable returns to scale, the frontier is defined by points A, C and D, and only B lies below the frontier, i.e., shows capacity underutilisation. So, capacity output corresponding to VRS is smaller than the capacity output corresponding to CRS.

FIGURE 1

**The Production Frontier and Returns to Scale**



Source: Author's understanding.

Being a non-parametric analysis, DEA doesn't presuppose any production or cost function. DEA measure can use multiple inputs and multiple outputs to provide a single measure of efficiency. Moreover, it doesn't require a priori weight specification for inputs



and outputs. DEA focuses on achievable, by performance each DMU is compared to other DMUs or itself overtime, not a hypothetical ideal or average performance (Epistein and Henderson 1989). Over the last few decades DEA has become an important tool of measurement of efficiency of non-profit public sector, because it does not require information on prices of inputs and output, but requires information on input and output which are readily available, especially for the services provided by government like health and education.

The study uses an output oriented measure of technical efficiency using VRS technology using seven input sets and two outputs (Table 1). The inputs used in the studies are classified in four groups following the standard literatures: The physical infrastructural inputs, Labour inputs, capital inputs and other inputs.

TABLE 1  
Inputs and Output for DEA Analysis

| <i>Inputs</i>  | <i>Output</i>                               |
|--|---|
| <b>A. <u>Infrastructural Inputs</u></b>  |   |
| 1. Direct Infrastructural Input (classroom-student ratio) - DII  |   |
| 2. Toilet (per-student)  |   |
| 3. Other Direct Input Index (computer aided learning, electricity and library) -ODI  |   |
| 4. Other Indirect Input Index (kitchen development device, meals in school, head master room, boundary wall, water, playground)- OII | 1. Average Scores in language in Class 3    |
| <b>B. <u>Labour Inputs</u></b>   |   |
| 5. Teacher and Headmaster per student  | 2. Average scores in mathematics in Class 3 |
| <b>C. <u>Capital Input</u></b>   |   |
| 6. Teaching Learning Material Grant and Contingency Grant to school per student (in log term)  |   |
| <b>D. <u>Other Inputs</u></b>  |   |
| 7. Logarithm of number of working days   |   |

Note: The various infrastructural input indexes (namely ODI and OII) were constructed using the formula used for construction of the HDI index by the UNDP 1990.

Index= (Actual – Minimum)/ (Maximum-Minimum). For the output variable, average marks in Class 3 for the schools in mathematics and language (writing and reading) was considered.

For the second objective, Tobit regression analysis has been used. The Technical Efficiency score of each DMU calculated from DEA analysis lies between 0 and 1, where 1 represents the most efficient and 0 represents the least efficient DMU. In the second stage of analysis the TE scores from DEA are used as dependent variables and since the scores are bound within the values 0 and 1 with one or more observation lying at upper limit, OLS regression cannot provide satisfactory results. In such case of two bound censoring, ML estimates of Tobit Regression is considered to be more effective (Maddala 1983). The use of Tobit regression at second stage for DEA analysis is common in literature. Kirjavainen and

Loikkanen (1998), Rassouli-Currier (2007), Sengupta and Pal (2010, 2012), etc, have used Tobit regression in the second stage analysis. For independent variable a set of “environmental factors” are used which can influence the Technical Efficiency scores of the DMUs but not within the control of the DMUs.

The methodology has been extensively used to identify the efficiency across different DMUs, particularly using multiple inputs providing multiple outputs. Its usage is particularly appropriate for publicly owned service delivery sectors, where prices (or even shadow prices) are not easily calculated. For public policy, DEA has particular importance where the government can track the proper utilization and lack of it of inputs that are offered. However, the trade-off that is to be recognized here that a DMU which appears to be efficient in utilising small inputs may not be treated as a success story of public policies, because it might have received small and insignificant share of actual resource allocation. The methodology fails to identify the allocative efficiency, along with equity concerns of a public policy debate.

## Results

### Efficiency Measures

Of the 1698 schools considered for DEA analysis, only 112 schools (6.59 percent) turned out to be relatively technically efficient with average efficiency score to be 0.78 implying that on average all schools can increase their output by 22 percent with same input volume if it produced these outputs as efficiently as the 112 schools on the efficiency frontier (Table 2).

TABLE 2  
Summary of DEA Results of 1698 Schools

| <i>Item</i>                             | <i>Results From Technical Efficiency Analysis</i> |
|---|---|
| Number of Efficient Schools             | 112   |
| Percentage of Efficient School of Total | 6.59  |
| Mean TE Score of All Schools (AM)       | 0.778   |
| Mean Score of Inefficient Schools(AM)   | 0.762   |
| Median Score of All Schools             | 0.80  |
| Standard Deviation                      | 0.157   |
| Minimum Score                           | 0.211   |
| COV                                     | 20.18   |

*Source:* Analysis from DEA results

A high degree of variation in efficiency score across different schools is noted. For some schools the magnitude of efficiency score is so low that it is possible to increase the outputs by more than 100 percent through efficient utilisation of existing resources.

Not only that large proportion of schools turned technically inefficient but the depth of inefficiency is also high. Almost 50 percent of schools lie below the TE score of 0.80.

Table 3 below shows district-wise comparisons. It is observed that significantly larger proportions of schools in Dakshin Dinajpur are relatively efficient compared to other two districts with higher average technical efficiency scores. Interestingly, North 24 Parganas was initially considered good performer, Dakshin Dinajpur average and Purulia the poor performer. However, it is observed that Dakshin Dinajpur performs relatively better than the other two districts and even Purulia has a higher proportion of schools which are relatively efficient compared to North 24 Parganas. Although the mean efficiency of Dakshin Dinajpur is higher than other two, North 24 Parganas is doing better on average than Purulia.

TABLE 3  
Performance of Schools Across Districts

| <i>Item</i>                    | <i>North 24 Parganas</i> | <i>Dakshin Dinajpur</i> | <i>Purulia</i>   |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Number of Efficient Schools    | 39(5.23 percent)         | 30(13.7 percent)        | 43(5.87 percent) |
| Mean Score of All Schools (AM) | 0.78                     | 0.80                    | 0.77             |
| Median Score of All Schools    | 0.8                      | 0.82                    | 0.80             |
| Standard Deviation             | 0.147                    | 0.169                   | 0.163            |
| Minimum Score                  | 0.317                    | 0.253                   | 0.211            |
| COV                            | 18.85                    | 21.23                   | 21.16            |

*Source:* Analysis from DEA results

Table 4 shows the depth of inefficiency across the three districts. Of the three, Dakshin Dinajpur is doing relatively better. The efficiency scores shows a negative skewness for all three districts implying that a large number of schools lie near the peers in all the three districts. However, one can notice variation in the efficiency distribution.

TABLE 4  
Distribution of Technical Efficiency Scores

| <i>Item</i>            | <i>North 24 Parganas</i> | <i>Dakshin Dinajpur</i> | <i>Purulia</i> |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Q1 (Bottom 25 percent) | 0.67                     | 0.684                   | 0.66           |
| Q2 (Median 50 percent) | 0.8                      | 0.82                    | 0.80           |
| Q3 (Low 75 percent)    | 0.9                      | 0.95                    | 0.89           |
| Skewness               | -1.122                   | -1.12                   | -0.61          |
| Kurtosis               | 2.52                     | 3.32                    | 2.86           |

*Source:* Analysis from DEA results

TABLE 5  
Performances of School Across Different Groups

| <i>By Category</i> | <i>Percent of Efficient Schools</i> | <i>Mean Efficiency</i> | <i>S.D</i> | <i>COV</i> |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Rural              | 6.26                                | 0.77                   | 0.157      | 20.23      |
| Urban              | 8.57                                | 0.79                   | 0.157      | 19.84      |
| ITDP               | 6.85                                | 0.77                   | 0.16       | 20.88      |
| Non-ITDP           | 6.50                                | 0.78                   | 0.15       | 19.26      |
| EBB                | 6.16                                | 0.76                   | 0.16       | 20.83      |
| Non-EBB            | 6.96                                | 0.79                   | 0.15       | 18.93      |
| Boys               | 11                                  | 0.75                   | 0.17       | 22.53      |
| Girls              | 11                                  | 0.76                   | 0.16       | 20.66      |
| Co-Educational     | 6.55                                | 0.77                   | 0.16       | 20.17      |
| Bengali            | 6.56                                | 0.77                   | 0.16       | 20.40      |
| Non-Bengali        | 14.28                               | 0.77                   | 0.15       | 20.26      |

*Source:* Analysis from DEA results

The performance of the schools across different groups can be analysed from the Table 5. Schools in the urban areas perform relatively better than schools belonging to rural areas in efficiency terms. Interestingly, schools belonging to tribal development blocks are performing relatively better than those in the non-tribal blocks. A larger proportion of the same-sex schools have turned out to be efficient compared to co-educational schools. However, on an average, TE scores of co-ed schools are higher than the average TE scores of same gender schools. It is also to be noted that non-Bengali medium schools have done relatively better than Bengali medium schools in terms of proportion of efficient schools; however, the average TE scores are same.

A summary of the mean level of input slack for all the schools taken together is presented in Table 6. It depicts that the highest level of slack is in other direct infrastructural inputs, followed by toilets and then teachers and classrooms. It is interesting to see this, as, given the premise that these crucial resources are scarce, a significant proportion of these inputs are going unused. Funds which are, in literature, claimed to be underinvested, are also having significant slack. As it can be conceptually agreed that these resources should not be decreased as they are essential and scarce in the state, in effect this analysis means that with the help of these inputs the schools can produce more outputs easily.

TABLE 6  
Summary of Input Slack on Average

| <i>Input</i>                       | <i>Percent of Mean Slack out of Total Input</i> |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Class per Student                  | 64.71   |
| Toilet per Student                 | 70.00   |
| Teacher and Headmaster per Student | 65.00   |
| Other Direct Infrastructure        | 79.69   |
| Other Infrastructure Index         | 29.80   |
| Log Fund per Student               | 18.64   |
| Log Working Day                    | 0.20  |

*Source:* Analysis of the DEA results.

### Determinants of Efficiency

The paper identifies various environmental factors not in control of the schools but can affect their technical efficiency. The major environmental factors taken into analysis are as below.

- a) Monitoring (MONIT): Number of visits by cluster resource coordinators and block resource officers were considered. A positive impact is expected.
- b) Proportion of female teachers to total teachers (FEM\_TOT): Feminisation of primary education is expected to have a positive impact due to motherly compassion and tenderness of teacher towards students.
- c) Age of the school (AGE): is expected to have a positive impact on efficiency as the schools may earn reputation over time among the people.
- d) Teachers with graduation degree and professional degrees: Professional degrees of teacher include teachers with diploma in basic teaching, B.Ed, M.Ed or any diploma in special education. Higher education is expected to have a positive outcome on efficiency.
- e) Distance from district headquarters (DIST): This is expected to have a negative impact on efficiency in terms of connectivity for teachers and students and administrative issues.
- f) Implementation of CCE in schools: Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) is expected to have positive impact on the performance of the schools.
- g) Dummy variables for whether the schools belong to rural or urban region, Educationally Backward or non-Educationally backward block and whether the schools belong to ITDP blocks or not are taken separately.

In this analysis, some other variables were also considered, namely, the proportion of religious minority, district income per capita, etc. But either they had some serious multi-collinearity problem or they turned out to be highly insignificant determinants in the model. Hence they were dropped.

Before proceeding on to regression, the nature of dispersion and skewness of the observed variables were checked by exploratory data analysis to find whether the variables followed normal distribution and therefore whether regression would be appropriate here or not. It was found that almost all variables had skewed distributions. Furthermore, they also showed presence of outliers that did not fit in the inherent pattern of their distributions. To solve the problem, we used ladder analysis to have the transformation of original variables to make them suitable for analysis (Table 7). All the explanatory variables have been checked for multi-collinearity by Variance Inflation Factors (VIF). The dependent variable is technical efficiency score which taken at level as it did not require any transformation.



Focussing on environmental variables, it is interesting to note that the monitoring variable, turned out to be significant but with a negative sign, implying that this variable has been negatively impacting the efficiency of the schools. This result partially contradicts the available literature (Grosskopf et. al. 2001) where monitoring tend to enhance the efficiency. This result might hint to some endogeneity as monitoring is carried out more regularly on the less efficient schools. Age of the school has turned out to be positively and significantly effecting the TE and is highly significant, implying that over time the schools get more enrolment and they become efficient. This may hint that some gestation periods for schools are needed to reach the efficiency levels.

It is also observed that the higher qualified teachers in the primary schools are not going in the favour of its performance and both the variables have turned insignificant in enhancing the productivity. The implementation of the CCE programme in the schools tends to increase the performances of the schools. This variable has turned out to be strongly significant.

The further the schools from the economic centre of the district are, the lesser is their efficiency. There is no significant difference between the rural schools and urban schools and also between schools belonging in EBB and non-EBB blocks, however, in case of ITDP blocks, as one moves to non-ITDP blocks the efficiency increases.

## Conclusion and Policy Prescription

The present research thus postulates that there exists inefficiency in the primary school education in the three selected districts of West Bengal. Out of 1698 schools considered, only 112 (6.59 percent) turned out to be relatively technical efficient. Regional diversion appears to be high too. Dakshin Dinajpur had the highest proportion of schools that are technically efficient as well as a better average TE score compared to other two districts. Though North 24 Parganas was initially considered to be better performing than Dakshin Dinajpur and Purulia, it turned out the opposite in terms of technical efficiency of schools. Analysis of efficiency across different groups shows that schools belonging to urban areas, Non-EBB blocks and ITDP blocks are doing better than their counterparts. Non-Bengali medium schools are doing relatively better than Bengali medium schools on the average efficiency front. Input slack analysis shows that crucial inputs like infrastructures and teachers as well as funds which are considered scarce are underutilised and can help achieve higher output. In terms of environmental factor few interesting things are observed, the monitoring variable turned out to be negatively affecting the efficiency that hints at a low quality of monitoring or bureaucratic problem in West Bengal. Secondly, the better qualified teachers are not effecting the efficiency requires a policy intervention in terms of quality of teaching. The positive impact of CCE indicates a policy success and requires in depth coverage. The policy makers need to look at every inefficient school and proper action is needed so as resource utilisation can be improved. The determinants that play a vital role in increasing efficiency level also indicate that most of them can be tackled either with long-term planning or by quick intercession by the school authority. However, there is one important limitation of all efficiency related studies: since the efficiency measurement is a relative concept, it may vary for different groups and settings and thus the results should be interpreted with caution. Also, DEA only measures efficiency relative to best practice within a particular sample. Thus, it is not meaningful to compare the scores between two different studies

because differences in best practice between the samples are unknown. Though it also fails to identify the broader perspective of allocative efficiency and equity of an educational budget outlay, nevertheless, the analysis can provide a tool of monitoring for policy makers to measure the technical efficiency capabilities of government-run public schools.

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## Book Reviews

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YERAVDEKAR, Vidya Rajiv and TIWARI, Gauri (2017): *Internationalisation of Higher Education in India*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp 285.

The higher education landscape is changing, as are its international dimensions as a result of the economic, political, social/cultural, and academic developments. The book seeks to highlight the changing landscape of higher education towards its internationalisation. The authors attempt to point out the need to place more attention on internationalisation at home. The book not only provides insights into the process of internationalisation in higher education for its national audience, but also its important contribution to the understanding of higher education in India and its internationalisation efforts for an international audience. The book starts with a well worked out introductory section. There are eight chapters in the book and each chapter is divided into various sections. Each chapter is accompanied by detailed references which are worth appreciation.

Chapter 1 on “Indian Higher Education System” provides an introduction to some salient features of the Indian higher education system and the important aspects of its chronological evolution while reflecting on the similarities of the system in India with those countries that were formerly colonised by the British. Further, the authors discuss the governance and regulatory framework of the system including the framework of quality assurance management. While reflecting on the regulatory structures that accounts for the lack of initiative and dynamism which obstruct the progress of internationalisation, the authors discuss some of issues such as keeping out private participants from decision-making processes, legislative backlogs, uncoordinated partnering between regulatory bodies and undifferentiated allotment of funds, etc. An important argument that runs throughout the book is that only such internationalisation will help the Indian system to move in the direction of massification and differentiation.

Chapter 2 on “Globalisation and Internationalisation” deals with the theoretical elucidations of globalisation and internationalisation. The chapter includes discussions on elements of meaningful internationalisation, benchmarking indicative information and pointers of successful internationalisation, under the subtopics of: internationalisation as a matter of strategy; the variables that add up to internationalisation of higher education; quality assurance and student satisfaction: the heart of institutional performance benchmarking; the rationales for practicing internationalisation; and internationalisation at home. Moreover, an important yet frequently overlooked aspect of internationalisation, viz. the economic approach, has been covered in this chapter under the topic of Internationalisation of Higher Education: Changing Variable of Demand and Supply in Borderless Development. They also discuss important topics like obstacles to meaningful internationalisation of higher education along with multiple concerns related to quality assurance.

Chapter 3 on “Cross-Border Higher Education: A Constantly Evolving International Student Market” of the book offers an overview of the dynamics of cross-border student mobility in the international student market. The chapter starts with the very idea of cross-border higher education and further discusses the elements of higher education mobility; such as international student mobility, program mobility, franchising, twinning, double and joint degree, articulation, international mobility. The authors discuss Yeravdaka’s (2012) identification of four levels of distinctive patterns in the evolution of cross-border mobility of higher education students, programme mobility, branch campuses and education hubs. It also discusses the ideas of some of the scholars, namely, Varghese (2008) and Garrett and Verbik (2003) about the cross-border education. The authors bring out that cross-border mobility comes with some such perils that pose an even greater obstacle to the developing countries such as India – the countries that have traditionally been the “sending” countries, the risk of leading to brain-drain, and the difference in quality and mission between mother institutions and their branch campuses along with their operations. They also bring out the challenges related to the lack of “world class” talent and infrastructure on the part of India and the resulting lack of enthusiasm at the end of “world class” institutions in partnering with the Indian institutions. In a section on ‘Cross-Border Higher Education - A Profitable Proposition,’ the authors discuss the fact of the matter that CBHE is an article of trade and investment across the globe and based on the recent reports of Institute of International Education (IIE). They point out that the CBHE is something that generates millions of dollars for the traditionally strong ‘host’ countries. It also discusses how the market driven considerations bring some positive strains into international education and also the rising concerns about accreditation and quality assurance in the CBHE with special reference to India. The authors spell out how the lack of competent faculty members, lack of sufficient enrolment and insufficient funding are challenging issues regarding the sustainability of international branch campuses in India.

Further, in the chapter’s section on Indian branch campuses, the authors mention that the privately managed institutions have succeeded in opening their campuses in other countries and the campuses of these institutions are extensively patronised by the students who are Indian by descent and who are familiar with the brand identity of home institutions and are also keen to associate with an Indian institution. It also points out that the Indian branch campuses have not done as badly as many of the branch campuses of developed countries in the Middle East where several fared poorly or were shut down. At the end of the session, the authors elaborately discuss the establishment of education hubs in India as new pathways of institutional mobility. A section of the chapter delves deep into this dynamics and presents a note of forewarning along with recommendations about the matter for Indian educationists.

Chapter 4, “Regulations and Reforms to Promote Internationalisation,” presents an overview of the regulatory stipulations in respect of internationalisation, including a brief mention of the legislative and extra-legislative reformative actions related to internationalisation. The chapter also goes deep into the common regulatory loopholes that allow institutions --- both Indian and foreign --- to ‘slip through the cracks.’ The chapter discusses in detail the UGC’s proposal for setting up of the CIE to function in collaboration with the AIU; the resolutions of Mysore Statement and Amritsar Statement; the document of Welfare of Foreign Students, 2008 and the CNR Rao Committee’s major recommendations on

the entry of foreign universities into India. While discussing the Foreign Education Providers Bills of 2007 and the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill 2010 in detail, the authors pointed out the difference between the executive order, “the Establishment and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Education Institutions” and the lapsed bill --- it is that the former allows the issue of degrees by a foreign institution while the latter, if it had become an act, would have allowed the award of the degree by an Indian institution. Further, the chapter also made a mention of the AIU’s 1999 guidelines for grant of equivalence to the degrees awarded in India by foreign providers; AICTE’s 2005 Regulations for Entry and Operations of Foreign Universities in India in imparting Technical Education and the three important conditions of UGC on Promotion and Maintenance of Standards of Academic Collaborations between Indian and Foreign Educational Institutions. The authors offer a commendable view regarding how the present government accords importance to internationalisation and what are its plans to include it in New Education Policy document. Further, the authors bring forth an important aspect of the regulatory structure as its “obstructionist” stance in the respect of private participation. In this regard, they mention that the Indian Government’s regulatory structure is not well suited to help private participants thrive as they are overly burdened with centrally bureaucratic and political regulations so private institutions are reduced to functioning sub-optimally. This, along with the success of private institutions in internationalisation, presents an interesting paradox: it speaks of the dynamism and resourcefulness of private institutions in the face of the burden of having to generate funds and complying with stringent regulatory guidelines. The chapter also brings forth some of the important discussions on the feasibility of GATS policy with respect to higher education. Thus, at the end of chapter, they also present a brief overview of the opportunities that might be of particular interest to foreign providers.

Chapter 5, “Internationalisation in Comparative Context,” presents internationalisation of higher education in a relational context by examining India’s performance in relation to other countries. The authors utilise in this chapter three frameworks for this evaluation: global rankings, the concept of ‘World Class’ universities, and the comparative performance of India and neighbouring countries with regard to internationalisation. The discussion on rankings reflecting on the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), was towards answering the question whether rankings and world-class universities go hand in hand. The discussions also suggest that India must develop its own ethos of excellence in internationalisation and, therefore, it would be unwise to borrow properties from the developing world and apply them to the Indian landscape of higher education. The authors also reflected that insofar as competition for inbound international students goes, India faces the most daunting threat from its neighbours to the East. Further, they say that India certainly faces stiff competition from other Asian countries as it moves forward in its efforts to internationalise education. The authors rightly say that though India has the advantage of having many internationally competitive institutions, it has disadvantage on the other scores as a result of weak political will. Moreover, the Indian government has neither expressed willingness to offer incentives and free zones to attract potential partners and students, nor has it outlined target students to guide its efforts on the course of internationalisation. In this regard, they also mention that the flip side of the competition would be India’s performance with those countries that share common variables-geographic location, colonial history, and developing country status. The chapter presents an overview of

the performance of some of India's neighbours in respect of internationalisation. They also brought out that regulatory framework emerges to be the weak link in the chain and the chapter touches upon the important lessons to be learnt in this context.

Chapter 6 on "International Student Mobility: Old and New Patterns" deals with the global patterns of student mobility and some salient characteristics of inbound and outbound student mobility in India. It also brings out that in India, there is no definitive description of who an international student is. Sometimes, we follow the UNESCO definition and, at other times, the one set out by the IIE. There is no certainty whether students enrolled in distance education mode or those enrolled "off-campus" could qualify to be called international students or not. The authors very rightly suggest that we should widen the horizons and not make too much of the length of the programme, whether it is "on-campus" or not. They further discuss that in addition to the skewed ratio between inbound and outbound students in India, there are other disproportionalities as well. Also, international students in India are not as diverse as one might apprehend it to be --- as they are coming from a few identifiable sources. Besides discussing the findings on the survey report of perceptions of international students of the Symbiosis Centre for International Education (SCIE), and their engagement with the host institutions and the country, they also point out that the student group is 'walking a tight rope' in terms of finances and would greatly benefit from assistance on this front. They further discuss the outflow of international students from India to the US and about the recent activities of the office of US-India Higher Education Corporation as an important channel through which academic exchanges come between higher education institutions in the US and India in areas of collaborative research, study abroad programs, faculty exchanges and seminars for higher education administrators. At the end of the chapter, the author's suggestions for government to initiate strategies to increase the catchment area of international students and develop more regional hubs in the country, is quite appreciated. The chapter also discusses some of the popular vehicles of academic mobility within cross-border higher education, like Erasmus Mundus programme, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), Study India Programme and Study Abroad Programme. The discussion goes further over to the emerging pathways of distance education or programmes in the MOOCs.

Chapter 7 on "India's Soft Power and Internationalisation" discusses the concept of national soft power in relation to internationalisation of higher education. The authors mention that internationalisation of higher education is an indomitable instrument of 'soft power;' it is not only the enrolment of international students but that it also refers to the capacity to influence others' behaviour through the employment of non-coercive factors. Reflecting in the context of national foreign policy, soft power refers to those resources that alter the country's ability to influence another country's decision-making processes. The authors say that a country's higher education system's visibility on and its involvement with the global higher education scene is one of the important markers of its 'soft power.' They also point out that though India has inadvertently been privileged on that front, it has not done enough to harness that resource, as can be gathered from the previous discussion. Thus central to the discussion is the argument that higher education systems in the developing Asian and African countries suffer from systemic lapses. The authors reflect that the recent initiatives by the Indian Government towards internationalisation are indeed a throwback to the time when India enjoyed a headship role in much of Asia and Africa.

They further mention some such initiatives – the shining example of initiatives related to the “South-South cooperation” as the Pan African e-network project, which links Indian universities with their counterparts in 11 African countries. Another one is on India-Africa Virtual University (IAVU) Project where the government has engaged the IGNOU to forge many partnerships in the spirit of the south-south cooperation. The book also mentions that the IAVU meets the demand for higher education at many levels such as offering scholarships, designing programmes and courses, formulating curriculum, promoting collaborations and coordinating action plans and consultation mechanisms. It also says that the main contributions of ITEC’s towards skill training and expertise-sharing and its initiatives are directive, demand-driven, response-oriented, and that these focus on capacity-building of the partnering developing nation. There is at the end a discussion on the ICCR and its contribution to inbound international student mobility.

The last chapter is on “Internationalisation of Higher Education in India: The Way Forward.” It presents concrete and specific recommendations to enhance the inbound student mobility in India. The recommendations are divided into those that are institutional and others that are policy oriented. In the beginning, the authors point out that the picture of internationalisation of higher education in India is not bright and, moreover, the recent advances in respect of internationalisation are a gift of the entrepreneurial spirit of private sector. On Indian Government’s effort for creating world-class universities, they say that merely copying the world-class university template from the western countries will not serve the purpose. But a university must have internationally competitive professoriate. The authors have brought to light many ways to improve the inbound mobility of international students such as focus of the government on short-term certificate programmes, student friendly administrative services; online processing of admissions; fee waiver for international students; restructuring of academic programmes; a judicious balance of classroom teaching and modern delivery methods; academic exchanges.

On the section on public policy oriented approaches, the authors opine that in order to make the visa and registration formalities simpler, the Indian Government must collaborate with foreign embassies and aim for a close-knitted and more harmonious interplay between the concerned ministries, UGC, AIU, higher education institutions, etc. It has also been mentioned that private institutions have taken the lead in India to gain more from introduction of recent modes of cross-border higher education, such as offshore branch centres, distance education and MOOCs. The lone exception is the IGNOU whose contribution to distance education in Africa is appreciable among the public institutions. Further, the affiliating structure of state universities makes it exceedingly difficult to incorporate dynamism and innovativeness into the workings of these institutions, so that internationalisation is still a goal too far afield. Towards the end, keeping in view the initiatives taken up by private institutions towards internationalisation of higher education, the authors rightly say that what is very much required is that as India takes on internationalisation, the regulatory bodies join hands and work with private participants. Moreover, as the scale of engagement in internationalisation is increasingly tipping in favour of private institutions, issues in quality assurance, accreditation and evaluation in international collaborations and international student mobility cannot be adequately addressed without bringing private interests into the heart of the public policy on higher education. The chapter ends with a note that the MEA’s recent initiatives with respect to

internationalisation are commendable and that India's headship role, especially in the South Asian region, must be borne in mind as the Indian Government undertakes collaborative initiatives in higher education. The chapter concludes the discussion by identifying and tying together various strains in the book that are particularly important to the subject.

While reviewing the book, it has been observed that the work has been done meticulously --- a work which was by no means easy. Though the book is based mainly on secondary sources, some of the chapters are excellent and very technical and informative in nature, and have been guided by the purpose of furthering the cause of internationalisation of higher education in India to follow. The chapters come up with well informed discussions on various issues relating to some of the hottest topics in the context of internationalisation in higher education. The grouping of subsections of the chapters has been done nicely. One of the advantages of the book is that sources of information are quite up-to-date. On the whole, the present book will be immensely illuminating for both students and researchers as well as for general readers who are interested in having probing insights into the process of internationalisation in higher education nationally and also in understanding the higher education in India and the efforts at its internationalisation for an international audience. Moreover, as expected by the authors, the book may be of use as a means to forging a dialogue with those who have a stake in higher education and those who see internationalisation as a way forward.

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RAJPUT, J. S. (2016): *Indian Education in Times of Global Change*, New Delhi: Shipra Publications, ISBN 9788175418516, Hard bound, ₹ 995.00

This book is a collection of J S Rajput's writings over the last decade on about 20 different topics. A look at the topics of chapters makes it clear that this is a work on value education, dealing with spiritual and moral values, and how it should be packaged in the curriculum and imparted to and inculcated in students. The themes relate predominantly to the school education sector. It relates to Mahatma Gandhi's and Swami Vivekananda's views and teachings on values, the essentials in education in ancient India, educational goals at international levels like the Jomtien Declaration (1990), Dakar Declaration (2000) on Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals (2005) and the Delor's Report, brought out by UNESCO in 1996. While dealing with these goals, the focus is on how India fared in achieving the Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) and Right to Education (RTE) before and after 2010. This is thus a book dwelling on the role of education in the context of today's tensions and impediments to the right to education of the marginalised, such as women and girls, SC/ST and Dalits, minorities, slum children, etc.

In the very first chapter, a substantive one entitled "Education Policy Formulation: The Decade Ahead," we get a glimpse of Rajput's ideas and views on a range of aspects, levels and sectors of education including the current scene, deficiencies and changes needed.



On Elementary Education, Rajput feels that education cannot move ahead until the holistic nature of the growing-up is coordinated and managed comprehensively. Special attention will have to be paid to the health, nutrition and care for the children. Some of the other imperatives which Rajput stresses include special initiatives by the panchayats to focus on imparting child friendly, joyful and stress free learning, for the PTAs to become active and supportive, for the local community to determine primary school timings and mid-day meals to be streamlined, free from pilferage and corruption (pp 10-12). A major issue in Secondary Education, Rajput feels, is to equip children to comprehend and appreciate the various aspects of the diversity that characterise India's culture. Among other things, Rajput also says skill orientation must be a compulsory component of secondary education (p 12).

The quality of Higher Education (HE) is far from satisfactory. Universities and colleges should renew curriculum on an on-going basis. In vocational education, interest must be developed in working with hands and acquisition of productive skills right from the beginning of schooling --- along the lines of Gandhi's views on education. Value orientation needs conscious integration with general education at each stage and across all the sectors and levels of education system (p 18). Finally, in Rajput's view, the non-negotiables in education include serious implementation of the common school system at least in urban areas; private investments in higher education is essential but unbridled commercialisation is not to be permitted; and, finally, only those fully proficient in pedagogy and skills and having an aptitude for teaching should be appointed as teachers (pp 28-29).

Rajput reverentially acknowledges that the Gandhian perceptions on education are rooted in Indian culture. Development is based on working with the hands and acquiring learning and knowledge, while traditional skills should not be discarded. Educational development should mean an integrated development of head and heart, covering an individual's intellectual, emotional and spiritual development (p 35). The concerns about education, according to Rajput, relate to positioning curriculum not just as a course of study; it should cover the entire gamut of learning and draw on the best from body, mind and spirit (p 45). In his view, curriculum is co-terminus with the role of education as Gandhiji enunciated and also as the Delor's Commission (1996) envisaged. Rajput further elaborates it while discussing about "Harnessing Education Systems for Comprehensive Learning." He draws attention to Delor's Report to UNESCO. (The International Commission on Education for the Twenty First Century, was brought out UNESCO in 1996.) This concerns universalising access to basic education and higher education for all the eligible students. The most outstanding objective of education in the 21st century is learning to live together and achieving social cohesion.

Rajput's idea on education is that it should be an instrument to refashion a society so that it should be deeply imbued with all the values enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Besides, it has to be spiritual and religious, truly in accordance with the diverse socio-religious and cultural background of India. Education should embody the principles, philosophies and thoughts of our educational thinkers, philosophers and nationalist leaders. Gandhi's views on education involving hand, head and heart, his view on vocational skills based education should be our guiding star for education at the school level, as a foundation.

Rajput is moved by the ideas on education expressed by philosophers and the values upheld by sages, seers and thinkers from the ancient to the modern times. He devotes separate chapters to the views and teachings of some thinkers, like Swami Vivekananda and

Mahatma Gandhi. In relation to themes like Philosophy in Education and the New Classroom (p 153), Rajput draws heavily on the teachings and ideas of Gandhiji. The one refreshing feature of Rajput's views on education is his grip on the constitutional provisions as well as the various policy and government initiatives over the decades and on what gaps are where (pp 157-58). This approach is also followed when he deals with the Millennium Development Goals, especially UEE and RTE (pp 170-72). With respect to Gender Equality and Human Rights, or with Education and the Marginalised Groups, Rajput's anguish over the violence against women is palpable (pp 184-85). Rajput reposes faith in education, especially in curriculum with explicit priority on prevention of crimes against women (pp 188-89). After surveying the discrimination against girl child and women, SC/ST and Minorities, Rajput comes to what is to be done and lays special emphasis on provision of UEE besides legal and legislative measures (p 205).

Chapters 14 and 15 on "Policy Perceptions on Value Education" and "Role of Education in Peace Process" serve as the culmination of issues which Rajput highlights while drawing inspirations from the ideas of saints and sages, educational thinkers, and national and international leaders as well as highlighting the global policy declarations. In these two chapters, Rajput systematically reviews the constitutional provisions and measures underlined by the NPE (National Policy in Education) documents of 1968, 1986 and 1992 as well as by the sub-committees of the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE). Besides the moral and spiritual values, Rajput surveys the policy recommendations on education about religions rather than on religious education as emphasised in the different commissions on education. Rajput makes it a point to refer to different documents and extensively quotes from them.

On education's role in peace processes, Rajput starts with the constitutional provisions, surveys tensions at the global level (pp 224-28) and turns to how it has to start in schools and colleges where practically every classroom is a multi-religious congregation. The peace process has to start with teachers and especially teacher trainers as "soldiers of communal harmony and human values" (pp 228-29). Although themes like the Union-State Relations in Education, Academic Excellence and Institutional Leadership find a place in this collection, the major focus of Rajput's writings is on how to draw attention to the values that should be embedded in education and the faith in the capacity of education to solve all the societal ills.

This book is a valuable addition to the literature on the essential aspects of education --- values and morals from ancient to modern India, the teachings of saints, seers and sages; concepts and philosophies on education; importance and value of education for individuals and the country; Mahatma Gandhi's ideas and teachings on education; in fact the Gandhian model of education and Gandhi's views on gender equality, untouchability and violation of educational rights of the marginalised including girls and women, ST/ST and Dalits, the minorities; the constitutional provisions on importance of education, recommendations of various commissions and committees about the values and morals in education and the rights of the marginalised; and curriculum as the process through which these values are to be inculcated at the primary and secondary stages of schooling.

JOHNSON, David (Ed) (2010): *Politics, Modernisation and Educational Reform in Russia: From Past to Present*, Oxford, United Kingdom: Symposium Books.

This is an important collection of essays on the theme of contemporary educational reforms in Russia brought out in the prestigious series Oxford Studies in Comparative Education with David Phillips as the series editor. The articles herein cover the entire gamut of school and higher education, and reflect the complexities and struggles with which the current set of changes have been brought about in higher education, though there is greater attention on the tertiary stage. The volume rightly acknowledges that policy reforms in the politics and economy of Russia have been a long drawn process, beginning with glasnost and perestroika. Reforms in education, however, have unfurled through a separate set of debates and policy changes. While in economic reforms there has been an agreement on changing and realigning Russia to the market economy and to international competition, in education policy there have been differences in views — how to retain some specificities of Russian culture even while ushering into the knowledge economy which will help Russia compete in international markets. There are historical legacies in higher learning from the Tsarist era, as also the Soviet one — not all of which can be dismantled or cast aside in the contemporary reorganisation bid. It is these contested changes that this edited volume puts together.

Methodologically, even though essays in the volume are in essence case studies with different specific frames of the ‘same’ phenomenon — viz. educational reform in a post-liberalised Russia — an interesting slant is the justification of the comparative lens of social inquiry to study a single country phenomenon. Normally, comparisons involve multi-country studies, or a paired comparison of similar political systems for divergences in a policy trajectory. In the case of this volume, the ‘same’ theme of educational modernisation, undertaken in other countries, is the implicit comparator. It forms a backdrop, so to say, against which difference, divergence and specificities of the Russian case can be discussed. While the term ‘modernisation’ connotes, conceptually, the post-second world war efforts in the third world to transform both culturally and structurally on the pathways of a developed West, the attempt is at cloning its experience notwithstanding the differences of context on account of colonial background, structural conditions of poverty, and cultural differences and plurality. In the case of Russia, and in this volume, a central theme is Russia’s isolation in the past from the West European enlightenment and modernisation process, of which it should have been an integral part with natural assumptions and expectations.

This volume is of interest for many reasons. For scholars of comparative education there is a quest to know the difference or similarity with which the erstwhile Soviet state began to adopt the ideas of competition, quality and excellence. These ideas are driving educational reforms around the world. Given Russia’s unique communist experience under Soviet rule, and prior to that the tsarist autocracy, its pathways have been different from the tradition of renaissance and reform that had influenced the Western countries. This distinctiveness of Russia vis-a-vis the West is justified as the rationale for a unique examination of the Russian reform experience. In order to do so, the lenses adopted are multifocal — culture, history, pedagogy, and educational policies and management ideas underlying the plethora of discussions in the various chapters.

An important contribution is that by Robert Harris, a historian of Russian education. Giving a detailed overview of state and private education in the 19th and 20th centuries, he traces the historical emergence of state education under the tsarist autocracy and under the control of Orthodox Church. He notes that there was a basic dualism — while the rulers wanted modern education for military purposes, they were wary of its effects in terms of the development of a critical, thinking bent mind. Besides, mass education could not take root as there was apprehension amongst the rulers that the educated lower class and minorities were a potential social class likely to revolt against the tsarist autocracy. Critical inquiry developed largely as a private endeavour amongst the youth belonging to the well-to-do families. Here foreign educated tutors were engaged, and there was a social status accorded in the acquisition of French literary skills and ideas. Overall, the system was top-down, elitist, with nothing as offering for the masses, and with active censorship of publishing.

But private journals flourished, serfdom and feudalism were critiqued, and student protests were rampant by 1857. The University was given some autonomy and academic freedom, but only in order to effectively control the protesting students. The outcome was a bureaucratic and state dominated education sector, one that was in support of authoritarianism. So it is not without reason that in some of the contributions of the volume, there is an anxiety to note how much of the Western experience of democracy can be seen as being adopted in Russia — see the contribution by Judith Marquand. In other words, an examination of politics, specially the political theme of democracy which is essential to the concept of modernisation, is a central endeavour of the volume.

Margarita Pavlova focusses on more contemporary aspects of education reform in Russia, using the twin themes of culture and markets. She argues that the political and economic crisis of 1988 did not take away the attention of modernisation from education for long. The educational agenda was back in discussion by 2000. In this year the national doctrine on education was issued. The aim of this doctrine was to arrest the decline in the quality of education. Based on this doctrine, an action plan was developed for educational development until 2010. Pavlova describes education as a complex process. On the one hand, it is embedded in the cultural tradition and in ideas about international development, on the other it is a complex structural process. The author argues that while economic reform was not a contested process, as there was an acceptance on the need for transition to market economy and liberalisation as a way to achieve economic development, educational development has been a contested process, as openness and liberal education have contesting interpretations. Among the reformers there are two clear groups — one group argues for a path of reform based on development of people in line with market values and competition based international economy. These are referred to as the 'late modern models of education.' These models are arguably different from the 'modern' models of education where the emphasis is on equality of educational opportunity and development of citizenship. In the 'late modern model' there is a blurring of boundary between education and training. Secondary education is intended specifically to develop the capacity for working and to train for jobs. In contrast, a second group of reformers is in favour of liberal education and sees the real value of education as knowledge. In this argument the prior experience of the Soviet education system, with its emphasis on knowledgeable people, is still relevant. So whereas the first set of views are in line with a 'competition state,' the second set are more in line with the ideas of a welfare state. The author argues that the strategy of

modernisation adopted by Russian state is a compromise between these two views — it is at once both global and local. It is apparent that a second political theme of modernisation, which the volume refers to specifically, is the competing notions of the liberal state.

The discussions on culture are unique as they argue that a knowledgeable person is not merely a masters of science. He or she needs to have the ability to solve any problem in any sphere of activity; so the focus is on a person with competency to solve problems in any activity. There is also a focus on profiling education which is oriented towards increasing the opportunity for students. Profiles have been developed by an elective study in future years with courses that support compulsory subjects and which help forge specialisation. So modernisation in Russia has two separate goals — first, to socialise persons in national culture, and second, to prepare them to live and work in a market friendly state.

Pavlova notes that educational modernisation in Russia addresses this duality with an influence of both cultural tradition and modern international discourses. It is under this impulse that a traditional five year programme has been restructured to accommodate the bachelors and masters degrees. Another element of change is the introduction of standardised tests. Elena Minina describes the introduction of standardised test for university admission — the unified national test as a pillar of modernisation. It is a combination of school leaving test and university entry examination. In the Soviet era there was no single nationwide school leaving or university admission test. The University selection procedure was based on different competitive exams. Now, one standardised test is used across the country. It is intended to objectify the knowledge assessment, and is developed and administered by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. According to the author, these tests will reform Russia's educational landscape by providing equal opportunity for access to higher education. It is also said to have prevented corruption and make higher education a demand driven industry.

Judith Marquand argues about the lack of values of democracy in the higher education in Russia. While the specific experiences she talks about are drawn from the Tembus Tacis project in Siberia of which she was the director, Marquand is concerned about the remoteness of Soviet Russia to Western ideas of democracy during the 70 years of communist rule and, prior to that, under the tsarist autocracy. However, in the 19th century, Russian scientists were determined that Russian education should not lag behind its European counterpart. Students normally entered the university at 17 or 16 years of age. The universities were modelled after the Humboldt University. But the Bolsheviks did not emphasise on the development of critical thinking. The content of curriculum and text book was all prescribed centrally in Soviet Union. There was no room for local variation. The inputs and processes were tightly controlled by the centralised state, and specific outputs were assumed to follow. The system laid emphasis on rote learning and passive acceptance. In 1987, Gorbachev attempted some changes. But the major reforms happened only by 2000. These developments include a modern system of professional education, and tested quality of tertiary education. The author argues that now the educational methods and concepts of democracy are closely related. The author also gives detail of Tempus Tacis project located in Siberia. Through the project, an understanding of Western democracy has been disseminated even in remote region such as Siberia. In 2003 Russia signed the Bologna agreement, advancing the process of integration of its university system with their European counterparts.

Fedodova and Chigisheva visualise the restructuring of higher education from the perspective of governance and management. Historically the Russian system has been centralised, yet some of its features developed in the merit based examination of the 19th century: The university council was the highest authority for educational, disciplinary and judicial purposes. The university rector was elected. A university board worked as an executive body and this was made up of the elected rector, deans, and selected university professors. Besides, there was also a provision for external inspection of higher education institutions. Over time the changes were made such that the power of university council were reduced and the autonomy was abolished. There were social and political movements against this autocracy. And by 1884, a new regulation was in place to provide for the return of university autonomy. But with the Bolshevik revolution, once again, changes were made to this regulation that had restored university autonomy. The legacy of bureaucratic control has proved to be a real negative in the Russian university system.

The pieces that refer to school education in particular include Andrea Laczik's analysis of the policy of free school choice as an element of modernisation. School choice is considered a leading element of school reform through an introduction of market type competition and emphasis on the demand side. The Soviet state, in contrast, worked as a supply side actor, emphasising uniformity, and political and ideological control, with no room for parental choice. Gorbachev's perestroika lessened the central control on schools — both from the state and its Ministry of Education, and from the party's political ideology. What obtains on the ground as a process of autonomy is the greater possibility to choose schools. But limitations of financial capacity to pay on the part of parents are a serious concern still.

Overall, the contributions offer very valuable insights into the contested process of educational reform in Russia, its political dynamics as the sector embraces and adopts the Western ideas of liberal education for the sake of competitiveness. Serious challenges, however, remain for the project of political democracy in Russia — an institution central to the idea of modernisation that is the central concern of this volume. That, however, is an endeavour for the future, specially as politics is a process of incessant contest and change.

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