

Ideology & Higher Education Policy - A Historical Perspective and the Way Forward

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Abstract: *Ideologies have played a significant role in the evolution of knowledge and economic growth globally. From the free market dictum of Adam Smith to the Marxian ideology of dialectal materialism, the world after the Second World War has witnessed US hegemony through its emphasis on Total Factor Productivity (TFP), innovation and public private partnership. India's educational policy journey has predominantly focused on the access and equity consideration to the all round neglect in quality of education. The last decade is marked by increasing stridency for larger private sector role, freedom from regulatory control in a mosaic of Public Private Partnership (PPP). In recent times the ideological debates alternate between free markets vs. commanding role for the state in the education sector. With a new government in power, there is an upsurge in the Hindutwa ideology. The paper brings out the historical perspective of ideology and its impact on education both globally and in India and strongly advocates abdicating ideological fixation if India wishes to significantly ramp up its Human Development Index (HDI) and be the prime Asian power of 20th Century.*

Keywords: *HDI, PPP, TFP, Dialectal Materialism, Hegemony*

I. Introduction

Beliefs, values and world views are what sociologists consider as ideologies. It is a shared belief of a group of people of how they conceive of the world and through this ideation, the political, social and economic fabric of a nation is weaved. Be it Plato's idea of the king philosopher or Hobbes establishment of civil society through social contract, Rousseau's submission to General Will, Hegel's dialectal idealism or Marxian theory of a basic structure influencing ideas, history is a constant unfolding of ideas and their progress. Education provides a major catalyst to the germination of such ideas and act as a powerful contrivance in nation building. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the famous ideologues and their ideologies of the past and their impact on educational policy and nation building. For a country like India which was colonized by the British for a long time the ideology of imperialist interest and the policies that we have pursued since independence is a fascinating area of academic study. The path that we choose to pursue in the days ahead in terms of a new educational policy likely to be announced in 2018 would determine whether we are going to be academically autarkic or we have a genuine opportunity to become the premier Asian power of 21st century.

II. Objectives Of The Study

This paper attempts to study

- Global overview of ideology since the classical times and their impact on nations progress
- Educational policy in India in pre-colonial and post colonial ear and its impact on access, equity and excellence
- Ideological debates in recent times
 - The way forward

III. Global Overview Of Ideology Since The Classical Times And Their Impact On Nations Progress

The beginning of the 19th century was dominated by classical economists through the pioneering work of Adam Smith which was concerned with the **impact of free markets on Wealth of Nations and division of labour**. David Ricardo (1772-1823) took it forward through his advocacy of free trade based on comparative advantage philosophy. **He can be legitimately called the pioneer of globalization of the World**. While the Ricardian philosophy of free trade and division of labour was flourishing in UK, India being a colonized nation was sub serving the imperial interests of the British rule which **Dadabhai Naroji exposed through his drain theory**.

The British introduced English education in colonized India to reduce administrative expenditure by training Indians to carry out the middle level clerical work. Recruiting officials from England proved uneconomical. With the charter Act of 1813 laid, the company set out only one lakh rupee for promoting

modern science in India. Even this meager amount was not utilized till 1833. It was under Lord Macaulay and Raja Ram Mohan Roy western science and literature got aggrandizement through the medium of English. Indians; those who had enlightenment of English were given government jobs.

Followed by this, the Charles Wood dispatch recommended that education department to be established in every province and universities to be established in the model of London University in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras besides one government school in each district. 1858 was a watershed year when four universities at Calcutta, Madras, Delhi and Bombay were founded. Ravindranath Tagore and Salish Mukherjee propagated learning of Indian education and culture with modernization through Indian language.

The Commission of 1902 under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Raleigh recommended various measures curtailing the growth of education and changing the composition of university administration under the Act of 1904. The sessions of Indian national congress of 1902, 1903 and 1904 manifested discontent and condemned Raleigh commission. In 1909 Jamshedji Tata founded the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, discerning the exigency of scientific and technological skill development in direction of a capitalist economy. Tilak's Deccan education society for development of Sanskrit, countering Latin as a language which was the mother of all western language emphasized supremacy of Sanskrit. Gokhle and Ranade gave petition for compulsory universal education cutting across caste and religion. This was reiterated by Anni Besant in the Home Rule movement also.

The period (1944-1973) was mainly marked by global consolidation following world wars and colonization. UNO as a sequel to the failed League of Nations of 1919 and IMF, World Bank were set up to ensure exchange rate stability and to extend assistance to war ravaged countries. The key to phenomenal growth of US after the Second World War was the synergy between universities laboratories and industries and allured the best brains to American which has witnessed the significant global power through its elite universities like MIT and Harvard.

IV. Educational Policy In India In Pre-Colonial And Post Colonial Ear And Its Impact On Access, Equity And Excellence

India got independence during such a momentum period and recognizing the fact that the need of newly gotten independent nations would be different, two commissions were set up namely Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Committee 1948 and the Kothari Commission in 1955. The Kothari commission suggested internal transformation, qualitative improvement, and expansion of educational facilities.

The urge for inclusive growth found reflection in introduction of article 21A in 2002 through a momentous amendment to the constitution bringing in free and universal education to children from the age of 6 to 14. The Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan (SSA) is emblematic of the urge to ensure higher access to education to all sections of the population.

The ideological underpinning during 1970-1990 was dominated by a leftist leaning reflected in the works of D.D. Kosambi's & pioneering research of Romila Thapar, Irfan Habib and Bipin Chandra on ancient, medieval and modern India. They highlighted the importance of studying history from the standpoint of material conflict of the times rather than through the presume of religious city of bigotry. This reflected the in the NCERT text book also. With the liberalization of Indian economy from 1990 the private sector has been allowed significant entry into the educational sector and the prime beneficiaries have been subjects like engineering, medical and management. This sector has contributed nearly 60% the growth witnessed since 2000. The succeeding paras will bring-out the impact of such initiatives on access, equity and excellence.

Impact of Educational Policy on Access, Equity and Excellence

The gross enrolment ratio in India has gone up from 5% in 1980 to 17% during 2012-2014. The 12th plan has fixed a target of achieving 25% GER, however quality improvement in higher education and global employability has remained a serious challenge cutting across both the private universities and state universities. The 12th plan has highlighted access, equity and excellence as the three cornerstones of higher education. The position on growth of GER is given below:

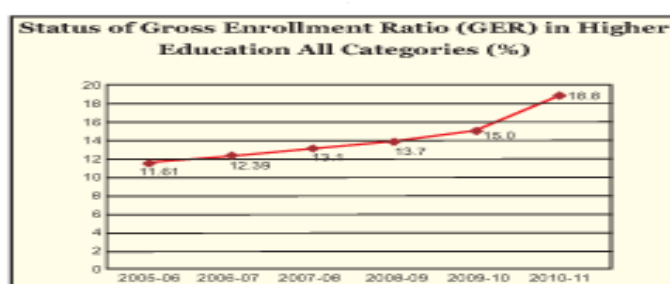


Figure 1: Status of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education all Categories

Source: Selected Educational Statistics-2005-06; Statistics of Higher and Technical Education -2006-07, 2007-08, 2008 09 (Provisional) & 2009-10 (Provisional), All Indian Survey on Higher Education-2010-11 (Provisional)

The other major issue is whether increasing access has provided equal advantage to all sections of the society. Tables below provides this picture

Table-1: Impact of Access to Education on different Sections of Society

Grouping	1999-2000	2007-2008	Population Share
National Average	10.1	17.2	100
SC	5.1	11.6	16
ST	6.4	7.7	7
MUSLIM	-	9.6	13

Source: National Sample Survey Organization Data 2006

It would be seen therefore that compared to upper caste Hindus, SC/STs and Muslims have been advantaged. On the issue of quality the following table brings out the comparative position of India viz. EMEs like China, Brazil and South Korea and developed countries like USA. These tables hold important lessons in terms of educational policy initiatives for a nation like India.

Table-2: Trends of Research & Patents Globally

Country	Quality of Research Institutions	Industry Collaboration	PCT Patents Granted/(Million)
USA	5.8	5.6	137.9
South Korea	4.9	4.7	161.1
China	4.2	4.4	6.5
India	4.4	3.8	1.2

While no new educational policy was brought in by the NDA government in 1998 they constituted a committee under Mukesh Ambai to suggest a way forward in the higher education sector.

Ambani-Birla Committee (2000)

envisioned the creation of a knowledge based economic and society and induce competitiveness through public private partnership. They strongly pitched for complete privatization of universities. The report propounded liberal foreign direct investment policy while limiting to science and technology and research. Moreover they pointed out excessive regulations discourage private spending and highlighted the need to encourage freedom in operation, flexibility to innovate with government playing the role of a facilitator.

Sam Pitroda Knowledge Commission (2009)

Differed from the approach from UGC which emphasized the need for greater proliferation of colleges and universities rather than the quality. While recommending expansion of the number of universities to 1500 in the country it emphasized the need for improving quality through global partnership through foreign universities. It strongly pitched for a new regulatory commission which will bolster the cause of quality through a independent regulatory authority for higher education (IRAHE). The commission also recommended an additional allocation of 1.5% of GDP to higher education. The other features were freedom to charge students fees, commercial use of university facilities, the government providing land and private sector finance.

The Narayan Murthy Report (2012) : has recommended

has recommended the autonomy in finance, regulatory, academic and administrative aspects, resources ensuring availability of land, infrastructure and connectivity, fiscal incentives to encourage investment and attracting funding, enabling environment for free movement of faculty and students to promote collaboration with world class institutions abroad, freedom to accredit-with global accreditation agencies to put Indian institutions on par with the best. It has highlighted the need for allocation of suitable funds for providing scholarships to enable students to enhance research in Ph.D. programs, setting up centre of excellences or in the form of technology parks, setting up new universities, developing new knowledge clusters. In specific terms the committee has recommend up-gradation of 75 top of the class universities, with investment ranging from ₹ 175 to ₹ 200 crore per university, creation of 20 world class universities with an investment of ₹ 500crore per university, and creation of 20 new national knowledge clusters through the public private partnership. The estimated investment for the 5 year plan is of ₹ 40000 crore with government corporate partnership and creation of a council for industry and higher education collaboration as a nodal agency.

It would be seen from the above that all these three reports are looking at the private sector as the prime mover for improving quality of higher education in science, technology and management through global partnership by creating an appropriate public private partnership module.

V. Ideological Debates In Recent Times

The Bhagwati And Panagariya Model of market economics wants abdication of asphyxiating control of UGC and increasing role for the private sector. Based on the US university model they want complete privatization of universities to take advantage of India's demographic dividend, autonomy to the universities in the matters of finalization of curriculum, charging of fees and recruitment of faculty.

Neo Left Model of Amartya Sen wants the government to be the prime movers to improve human capability. While lamenting that the public allocation for education has been consistently meager Prof. Sen feels that the Kerala model which has ensured high human development index should be the preferred option.

RSS Model in contradistinction the BJP's ideological mentor RSS is highlighting the importance of getting back to our classical roots and the primacy of our ancient texts like Bhagbat Gita and use of Sanskrit as a major lingua-franca. They seem to be deeply influenced the philosophy of Arjya Samaj which considered Vedas to be superior to western religious scriptures. There is also a stubborn opposition to FDI inflow which they apprehend will corrupt our indigenous culture.

The Bhartiya Sikshan Mandal (BSM), an RSS affiliated education body has prepared the education draft to Indianise the current education sector. There will be mandatory learning in mother tongue till grade 8 while taking up classical languages like Hebrew, Sanskrit, Arabic, Greek the next four years. The proposal affirms besides the breakup of 8+4+3 pattern replacing the present 10+2+3 pattern, it is also to do away with entrance exams to engineering and medical colleges.

VI. The Way Forward

Be it the conservatism theory, rightist ideology, the neo left and the neo liberal theory, all of them consider quality education as a vital cog for a fast growing economy. Our ancient scholastic tradition through some of the world's first universities in Nalanda and Taxila and the handful of elite education institutions like IITs and IIMs hold important lessons for our educational policy since 50% of our universities are in the state sector with very poor infrastructure, academic quality and research. India ranks very poorly in terms of human development index. This is largely due to inadequate public investment in education and research and development, as would be seen from the table-3 below.

Table-3: GER, HDI & Public Expenditure % on Education

Country	GNI	HDI	GER	Mean Year of Schooling	Public Expenditure as % of GDP
USA	52308	0.914	95%	12.6	5.6
UK	35002	0.892	61%	12.3	5.6
Germany	43409	0.91	57%	12.9	5.1
Japan	36747	0.89	60%	11.3	5.6
France	36629	0.88	51%	11.1	3.8
Russia	22617	0.778	75%	11.7	5.9
Korea	30345	0.89	100%	11.8	4.1
China	4477	0.79	35%	7.5	3.7
India	5150	0.586	23%	4.4	3.3

Source: Human Development Report 2014

One of the key ingredients for improving India's quality quotient would be improving the skill levels of our educated pool. Robert Solow had therefore rightly flagged the importance of total factor productivity where productivity contributed by Labour and Capital become the sine-qua-non of a nation's global competitiveness. While both India and China started broadly at the same level in terms of per capita GDP during 1950 China has significantly inched forward during 1980-2000 largely due to improvement in the factor productivity as the following table would show.

Table-4: Sources of Growth in China

Parameter	1953-1978	1979-1994
Output Growth	5.8	9.3
Capital Input Growth	6.2	7.7
Labour Input Growth	2.5	2.7
TFP Growth	1.1	3.9
Contribution of Production	18.0	41.6

Source: A.P. Thirlwall - Economics of Development-Theory and Evidence

Famous philosopher John Dewey said " not perfection as a final goal, but the ever enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in life. The bad man is the man who no matter how good he has been, is beginning to deteriorate, to grow less good. The good man is the man who, no matter how morally unworthy he has been is moving to become better. Such a conception makes one severe in judging himself and humane in judging others". This proposition needs to find its essence in the education policy as Swami Vivakananda said education is the making process.

In the same vein Bertrand Russell observed that in the state of New York, it was till lately illegal to teach that communism is good and in soviet Russia it is illegal to teach communism is bad. No doubt one of these opinions is true and one false, but no one knows which. Education should flow beyond ideological, political and religious ideological mindset and give way to an epoch which fosters globalization and world economic growth, without being circumscribed by ideological extremities. Global economy has shifted from manufacturing to knowledge driven one. **In Bertrand Russell's words "reverence for human personality is the beginning of wisdom, in every social question, but above all in education"**. The demographic potential of our nation is extra ordinarily high. The much awaited new education policy should transcend ideological extremes to focus on quality up scaling to ensure that the youth of India can legitimately hope to be the prime power of Asia in the 21st century.

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