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Mapping the Challenges of Educational Foundations at Primary Level: Historical Debates to Current Challenges

Sahana Sen
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Goa University, Goa, India

Abstract:
From the very end of 18th century, in hierarchical Indian society mastery of religious literature was considered as quality learning. Post World War II debates emphasised the freedom of choice. The quality discourse started taking shape with J.P. Naik's identification of a vicious circle where, 'the pursuit of quality has often linked itself with privilege and has become inimical to that of quantity, the pursuit of quantity in its turn has often lead to the deterioration of standards; and the pursuit of equality has often found to be inimical to that of quality', Krishna Kumar's 'universality', 'equality' 'quality' triangulation, to Christopher Winch way of looking at the commercial side of the quality through quality control and total quality management, and James Tooley' path breaking 'low cost private schooling'. Choice and diversity debates popularised the importance of parental choice in choosing schools for their children. Sociologists like Bernstein (1971) and Bourdieu (1970), looked into the dynamics of classroom and at pedagogic relations. The quality discourse that is intended to be developed in this work can be based on Bourdieu's Capital. Nevertheless, all the theorists have developed their arguments keeping in mind the child's wellbeing and in today's date it is more important to nurture these ideas to come up with a foolproof system which surpasses all the challenges and build today's children into tomorrow's leaders.
The study has been done purely on the basis of review of secondary literature and attempts to do a Historical Sociology covering articles from journals and books from libraries. Textual analysis of some major critical debates on quality has been conducted by highlighting ideologies of different scholars and thereafter understanding of what can be considered as essential to produce our 'child of substance'. But it is to be noted that it also not possible to point out a single theory/perspective that can be applied to the concept of quality education.

Keywords: education, quantity, quality, accessibility, pedagogy, curriculum, choice

1. Introduction
The child is the father of the man elucidates that today's child is tomorrow's man that makes or breaks the society in which we live in. Child rights, food and nutrition cater to its primal needs but without a profound social awareness and strong basic education the child shall never realise his rights, place and privileges in society, and most importantly duty towards society. Quality education is thus foremost among challenges and concerns to child protection.
The paper is divided into three sections and the main purposes that this paper aims at accomplishing are as follows:
- A theoretical understanding of importance of quality in education and understanding significance of education for a child's development
- Historical trajectory of importance of quality in education; Global trends and Indian context
- To analyze the different perspectives on quality through comparative understanding of different ethnographies

2. Section I
Education is a philosophical and a sociological concept, denoting ideologies, curricula and pedagogical techniques of the inculcation and management of knowledge and social reproduction of personalities and cultures (Oxford Dictionary of Sociology). One could draw from the ideas of Richard Peters[1], in whose opinion; education is not a word to which a precise meaning can be attached. It is not like any other word that conjures up an image of one single kind of activity[2]. Central to his analysis, there are three complex criteria which help to distinguish education from other human pursuits. The first criterion is that 'education' in its full sense, has a necessary

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[1] (Source – Wikipedia) Richard Stanley Peters (born 31 October 1919) is a British philosopher. His work belongs mainly to the areas of political theory, philosophical psychology, and philosophy of education Perhaps the most important work by Peters is "Ethics and Education". With this and his subsequent publications he significantly influenced the development of the philosophy of education in Great Britain and world-wide.
[2] Lawton, Denis and Peter Gordon. 1993. 'Dictionary of Education', Hodder and Stoughton

implication that something worthwhile is going on. Secondly, 'education' involves the acquisition of a body of knowledge. Such knowledge and understanding must involve the principles which underlie skills, procedural knowledge and information, and must transform the life of the person being educated, both in terms of general outlook and also in terms of becoming committed to the standards inherent in the areas of his education. Thirdly the processes of education involve at least some understanding of what is being learnt and what is required in the learning, so that for instance the learners are not 'brainwashed' or 'conditioned' into education, and some minimal voluntary participation in such processes[3].

According to Durkheim, 'Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its objective is to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states...' (Jayaram 1990). It can be pointed out that there can be different kinds of education depending on the different contexts in society. For instance, as in India to ensure that the marginalised sections get access to quality education, several alternative systems are being devised. Durkheim saw education as society's means of guaranteeing continuation of its existence by assimilating new individuals into it. It should help children how to learn to use the resources already developed by society and possibly help the child expand from this base. Since in the present Indian context it is necessary to focus on the social needs as well as the individual needs we can take Durkheim's educational theory as a reference point for interpretation. Disciplines, attachment to one's group and autonomy or self-determination are his idea of quality in education process which develops the child morally. Talcott Parsons in his consideration about school being an important agency of socialisation also considered differentiation of the social class in terms of actual achievement and differential valuation of achievement thus grading quality of student in terms of merit.

On a related functionalist framework, Dewey's education was concerned with growth and as serving a social function. By growth Dewey has referred to the way children grow up to take the place of the adults in society and thus bring with them the values fostered in them in their education (1916/1980, p46). Quality/content or process of education is emphasised as he said that 'growth is regarded as having an end, instead of being an end'. According to him it is the task of education to come to an educational aim in which social efficiency and popular culture are synonymous instead of being antagonists.

Althusser, on the other hand in his theory of Ideology considers the state to be an instrument of oppression following Marxist theory. In his comparison between the Repressive and Ideological State apparatuses, he considers education system to be an ideological state apparatus. Althusser from his neo-Marxist perspective asks the relevant question, 'What do children learn at school? His answer is that they learn to read, write, add and learn a number of elements of scientific and literary culture and the rules of good behaviour and the order established by the class domination. Despite the theoretical problems, Althusser's approach to quality is evident in addressing the aspects of the written as well as the hidden curriculum even though he could not address the problems of Marxist theory wholly. (Demaine 1981).

Freire calls traditional pedagogy the "banking model" because it treats the student (the colonized) as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge and prevents dialogue between the teacher and the student. The oppressors (the colonizers) or the teachers following the traditional forms of learning methods dominated the construction of curriculum similar to what the colonizers did through their cultural hegemony. As a result, the consciousness of the oppressed was never liberated. For instance, in terms of being relevant in the recent quality discourse, Bourdieu's (1970) conception of cultural capital which remains as the essence in quality debates, was developed by analogy with Marx's analysis of capital as a social relation, while Bernstein's (1965) notion of restricted and elaborated codes was inspired by Marxist scholar, Vygotsky (Livingstone, 1995).

Coming to discuss the Critical theorists' ideas, Zeus Leonardo has discussed how, the critical theorists have focused in the quality aspect of education, which is a much relevant issue in the present day. Critical Social theory (CST) is a multi-disciplinary knowledge base with the implicit goal of advancing the emancipatory function of knowledge. Students receive education in a discursive and material form; experience it in abstract and alienated form. Such educational experience does not ensure quality. Pedagogically speaking, quality education begins with a language of critique, at the heart of which is a process that exposes the contradictions of social life. Quality education allows students to become aware of, not necessarily actively working against, social injustice. Moreover, confronting social inequality also means that the children have access to discourses which arouse critical questions about the new world order. CST which is a recent innovation in education, Paulo Freire is the founder. (Leonardo 2004). CST is useful as a critical form of classroom discourse. Its contribution promotes criticism as a defining aspect of a quality education.

As it can be seen whether in the light of Functionalism or moving to the more recent Neo-Marxian and or Critical Social Theorists' points of view it is seen how significant education is in students' life and the changing significance of education in the modern industrialised society.

3. Section II
This section would be dealing with the changing significance of education in a child's life from a global perspective. This would focus on how the importance of education had increased as the debate around access to it shifted towards quality of it.

3.1. Global Perspective
Philip Brown talks about 3 waves of educational change that came over socio-historical development of British education and also similar trends came over U.S.A, Australia and New Zealand. The 'first wave' was characterised by a focus on mass schooling for the working classes in the late 19th century. The 'second wave' saw a shift from the educational provision based on Dewey's (1916) 'feudal dogma of social predestination' to a system based on individual merit and achievement. Then there was the 'third wave' which

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[3] Winch, Christopher and John Gingell. 2004. 'Key Concepts in The Philosophy of Education', London and New York, Routledge

was marked by a move to a system where, the wealth and wishes of the parents determined the education that the child received rather than the abilities and efforts of pupils. This marked a shift from meritocracy to parentocracy. But the Marxist criticism of liberal-democratic reforms showed that the reforms through mass-schooling had not given rise to improvement of life-chances of working class people. Thereafter, the drive for meritocracy largely increased inequalities in educational provisions to a great extent. The educational system should therefore be exposed to free market forces, which will both allow a greater expression of parental choice, and also ensure that the system will be organised for the benefits of the consumers rather than the providers and should not be considered solely as the responsibility of the state.

To talk about educational inequality in the West, a new debate that comes into discussion is that of choice and diversity. In order to gradually move towards emphasizing on quality aspects of education giving importance to parental choice became essential and gradually became determined by social class and ethnicity. (Tooley, 2000)

Gewirtz et al (1995) have classified the middle and working classes using terms such as 'privileged/skilled' and 'disconnected'. The material factor of poverty has frequently hindered the choices of the disconnected. Together with this there is the cultural capital. He uses the term educationally responsible to represent those people with cultural capital (parents with high educational qualification, high educational expectation from children, fewer children per family, and greater dissatisfaction about the school the child attended) and who have the interest in taking advantage of 'choice' system. They would make effective choices having the advantage of sufficient funds. On the other hand, the educationally irresponsible in the absence of cultural capital would be disadvantaged because the choice system requires having funds as a necessity. So choice has differential impact on different classes of people and cultural capital plays an important determinant role. In similar lines like Tooley, both Nambissan and Ball have identified those discourses favouring promotion of high quality primary schooling such as the Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) and the particular activities of one Individual entrepreneur (IPE) – James Tooley, also deserves mention. [4]

New Approaches to quality: Since the Jomtien Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand (5-9 March 1990), it became imperative for developing countries like India to focus on quality of primary education together with ensuring equal access to it. For categorising the meaning of quality in education the following broad parameters are considered: pedagogy, curriculum and patterns of assessment.

1. Pedagogy (the science or art of teaching) - The highest quality teachers are those who have the mastery over the subject matter and pedagogy. But there are and should be other important factors that should go into the training of the teachers and the teachers should be trained to be sensitive towards the context of the students. The authoritarianism and autonomy in teachers are subjective aspects which have been discussed philosophically by Winch (1996). But apart from these a mechanism of assessment of the performance of teachers should be there in terms of gauging, to what extent students have learnt and how far they have been able to satisfy students' needs.

The Dakar Framework of Action (2000) held at Senegal went ahead of the previous Jomtien Education for All goals of universalising primary education in the ambitious but conceptually minimalist Millennium Development Goals (MDG) where quality is redundant in the Goal 6. The Dakar framework went further in positing 'basic education of quality for all' regardless of gender, wealth, location, language or 'ethnic origin', with respect to having well trained teachers and active learning techniques (Alexander, 2008).

Learners should be healthy and motivated enough to participate in learning process and have a supportive environment at home. Healthy development in the first three years of learning (UNESCO reports show that the underprivileged children from India benefit most from such programmes), Parental involvement in the child's learning process, Learning environments in school affect the child's performance. For instance, for the elementary schooling the school environment can range from a building to an open air gathering. (In Shantiniketan in West Bengal, elementary school takes place under a tree formal schooling or non-formal?) But only the outer aspects of school environment would not suffice to come to a conclusion if we do not take into account other school quality issues related to infrastructure like, the presence of adequate teacher learner material, textbooks, relationship between teachers and students, availability of water supply and toilets etc. are important determinants of students' achievements in India (Adams, Don 2000).

The National Council of Educational Research and Training, (NCERT) Quality Monitoring Tools (Alexander, 2008) are an exception to these tendencies and have two advantages over the generalised frameworks used by international agencies. Firstly, they attend closely and knowledgeably to local conditions and secondly, contain several generalised frameworks assuming that at different levels of education system, different kinds of information will be required.

2. Curriculum- The school curriculum is expected to represent some local and national values. In language, mathematics, science, social studies, not much variation exists across developing countries. Also the students learning process in primary education should begin through students' home language for achieving success. Daily life situations should be incorporated into creative activities fostering acquisition of reading and writing skills, which have an important impact on the development of reading and writing skills. The social attitudes in the marginal areas are difficult and the cultural patterns are rigid towards innovative patterns of learning. Political and economic instability can lead to discontinuities in policies and programmes. Together with this life skills training including topics such as health, hygiene, and etiquette are also increasingly attaining importance as part of the curriculum (UNICEF, 2000). This is essentially important for retaining the interests in studies for the children from disprivileged backgrounds.

3. Patterns of assessment- Diversity of ability are a natural human condition and any society should be able to if not take advantage, but acknowledge the differences in the curricular framework. Irrespective of diversities in abilities, it is possible

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[4] Advocacy networks spanning borders are not traditionally powerful players in international politics, but mobilising support for a particular cause they can influence international policies. They either work in dealing with ideas, values and causes related to environment or human rights (http://clg-portalxm.com, May 2011)

to measure educational performances and the assessments should be made against certain standards. If the aim of teaching is to induce learning, then it needs to be assessed (Winch 1996). Standard is the measuring stick against which the performance is assessed.

Academic achievement of the child in terms of literacy and numeracy represent educational outcomes. Testing as to how much the child has learnt becomes a screening device to decide who can continue to the next grade, is not necessarily a tool for improving educational quality of individual or the system. The more replicative of real life experience a test is the less likely it is to be generalizable to other non-examination contexts. The more context free a test is, the less certain one can be that the knowledge or skill involved could be put to use in specific contexts. But it is true that assessment through tests cannot provide a good account of what a pupil currently knows since a pupil will always forget much of what he has learnt for an assessment, so that the test will naturally be of poor validity for this reason (Winch, 1996).

Now, most of the discussions on meanings of quality in education has remained limited to input and output aspects and assessments of those parameters which are quantitative or are readily measurable. To state an instance, in the rural areas, differences in caste background, dominance of castes, occupation of families, attitude of teachers are important categories which describe the processes carried out in the rural schools which are clustered together at the lower end of the quality spectrum. Differences in the achievement scores among the villagers was not explained by merely the variations of educational inputs but by the changes in the educational processes like the teachers' orientation, attitudes, average length of the school day and students' attendance were negatively associated with schools located in the SC/ST concentrated villages (Anita, 2005).

So a concern with the deeper philosophies in education is required to understand how the educational quality is manufactured, liberal tradition is giving way to neoliberal tradition, with the predominance of the commercial paradigm, even then how it is essential to assess how much educational value is being acquired by the child, and accountability ensures how much the quality standards in education are being maintained by the government, even though private schools have become the new face of quality education.

The principle of accountability is based on mutual obligation and keeping of promises, most essentially at the primary level, as it forms the foundation stone of future learning. Those institutions which provide poor quality services would go out of business. The quality systems should also be able to eliminate administrative errors in schools, including that of marking in examinations, neglect of qualification of teachers. In societies with unanimity of aims there is mostly little or no debate about aims but in countries like India which are complex and with opposing interests (as manifested by the Madrasas, and VHP schools) then debates and negotiations take place before aims are established.

Winch (1996) argues that values, religious or, moral, form a part of our beings, the way we look at ourselves, so are non- negotiable on most occasions. These values are reflected in the aims. When two sets of values are differing but not contradictory to each other, they can be incorporated in educational aims, but if moral or religious values of 2 groups are contradictory to each other then, then establishing aims become difficult, something that we see in India. All forms of education should allow every child to receive some form of grounding, i.e. to gain acquaintance with basic literacy and numeracy, a stock of historical, geographical and scientific facts about the culture. The real picture of India shows that in most government primary rural schools in India quite contrary picture is represented where even after 5 years of primary schooling a child is not able to write his or her name.

However, standards achieved at one point of assessment do not tell us how much knowledge has been gained since that can only be measured in terms of a before or after comparison between the time when the student entered school and its subsequent assessment. Value-added measures are dependent on measures of achievement because they measure the difference between two measures of achievement, difference being the main component of the measure of added value. Inspection tends to focus on the process of education, the teaching and learning that takes place within a school or, to put it another way, the practice of education which is most essential in elementary schools.

Lofty claims are being made that dialogue between U.S.A and developing countries is essential for defining educational quality (Adams, 1993). Here, there seems to be an inherent acceptance of the fact that quality standards of education in the U.S or the west European countries at any level is superior and therefore is considered to be an ideal model to be followed. But at the same time it is true that there are widespread differences diversities within and across countries to have a universally accepted definition of quality within a country and also across countries.

3.2. Indian Context

The word 'quality' has two meanings. The first is the particular or essential character, an inherent feature, property or attribute by which a thing may be identified or described. The second refers to the superiority or rank of particular merchandise (cf. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary) [20]. As mentioned earlier to engage with discipline of education is to engage with the activities and processes involved in it, which automatically means engaging with the aspect of quality in education. It necessarily involves a set of aims which guide the educational thinkers to reformulate and refine the concept of education and at the same time the concept of quality involved in it.

Rousseau's (1762) reflections on the innate goodness of the child inspired people such as Marti (1979)[5] in Cuba and Tagore (1931)[6] in India. Education should aim at wider societal and personal goals, and should develop scientific pedagogic techniques and curriculum components to educate children. Montessori's work and ideas involved a framework of specialised learning environment, a curriculum which addressed individual differences which acquired the key dimensions of quality, making 'Montessori school' synonymous with

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[5] Marti, J. 1979. On Education: Articles on Educational Theory and Pedagogy and Writings for Children from 'The Age of Gold' (New York: Monthly Review Press).
[6] Tagore, R. 1931. Religion of Man (London: Allen and Unwin).

'good education' for children. Quality in education now became centred on the idea of '*learner achievement*', which was now treated as predictable, with teaching methods being directed at making this more efficient (Kumar and Sarangapani, 2004). This was contrary to the Deweyan attitude, that the best consequences of education were the ones that could not be predicted, for they showed the inventive capacities of the learner

The foregoing discussion brings out the dominance of a 'western' definition of what constitutes good education on the rest of the world. The system of school education brought by Britain and other European countries to colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America drew on this tradition, and institutionalised close regulation through inspections and examinations. Passing examinations for certification and employment allowed for the proliferation of rote-based pedagogies and a textbook culture (Kumar, 1988). These features are visible symbols of poor quality. Attempts of bringing changes to such colonial legacy have been made by Gandhi (1937) and later Nyeyere (1968), proposed creating a new education system with an emphasis on self-reliance, equity and rural employment. Local, traditional, non- book-based learning of heritage crafts and the skills required for other manual work were taught in schools. But then the alternatives proposed by them, to what extent were they holistic, different, and accepted? In developing countries, the focus of the education system was also to improve efficiency and begin provisioning of basic skills to all. In most parts of South Asia, primary education and adult literacy remained low priority sectors of state policy.

3.2.1. Precolonial Period

The concept of education in India today needs to be understood in the light of the country's history. India has a long history of formal educational institutions in the pre and early colonial period mostly established under the aegis of religious institutions, or caste and trader's associations such as the madrashah, gurukul, or pathshala. But the formal system of education was limited to privileged few, according to Naik. The females, untouchables and other lower castes, religious minorities were not allowed to have access to education and the children's early learning experiences were limited to learning only some caste based learning experiences. Education in Ancient India was based on Vedic philosophical verses. So education in the early times in India was influenced by religious verses like in West where Churches controlled education in schools. During the early Vedic period education was available to most but started becoming discriminatory as the caste system started evolving. Under the influence of Buddhism, a uniform system of equal provision to all was introduced. The major change introduced under Buddhism was the rejection of rituals, ceremonies, caste discrimination and education was made available to all including women, who desired to learn. (Keay, 1918)

Islamic influences on the Indian educational system prevailed in the years between A.D 1000 and the 1700s. Education in these schools was intimately informed by the Islamic religion. Gender segregation (Purdah system for the women) occurred in education under their influence. The traditional society was elitist and hierarchical and since then changed very little. In traditional society education was centred on religion. The three upper or twice born castes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya held the political and economic power, so also had easy access to education.

3.2.2. Colonial Period

From about A.D. 1600 the French, Portuguese, Dutch, and British traders and other trading companies in India led to the start of European influences on the Indian education system. This period was marked by the emergence of Christian missionary schools in India with Roman Catholic beliefs and focus on individual's salvation. The modern western values started colouring the educational issues and gradually new forms of educational inequalities started reappearing (Gupta, 2006). The aim of the British administrators was mainly imperialistic and tried to create a system of education for the upper classes although they eliminated some of the in-egalitarian aspects of the traditional educational system. The British never developed the programme for universalization of education. All that they did was they tried to spread it as much possible on a voluntary basis. But this effort did not have much effect on the problem. Indians made more liberal provision for student support such as free clothing, free school meals, health services, hostels and scholarships. This provision was made on a limited scale. Considerable progress has been made in the expansion of facilities at the elementary stage of education between 1950 and 1975.

Lord Curzon (Viceroy, Governor General of India, 1899-1905) also clearly realized that wider extension of education in India and improvement of its quality were chiefly matters of increased expenditure. They could not be expected to pay serious attention to the needs of mass education or grow enthusiastic over the idea of imparting education through the languages of the people. It was much easier for them to teach in English. The idea that every child should be given free and compulsory education for at least four years was first put forward by Dadabhai Naoroji (1882). In 1937, Mahatma Gandhi introduced the Wardha Scheme of Basic education which proposed a course of basic education starting at the age of 7 imparted through mother tongue. In addition, textbook centred pedagogy that began under British rule still continues to shape education in schools even today. The Indian society grew up stratified based on class while these stratifications were justified as rewards or retributions for one's actions in earlier lives and that religion would be the method of sanctification.

It implied "learnedness" or familiarity with religious literature in depth, "purity" or preservation of the ancient traditional interpretations unalloyed by modern influences".[22]

What was needed was a programme where the individual would be free from the tyranny of caste and would be able to think in secular and egalitarian ways. But this did not happen. The system which was based on individualism and competition destroyed the positive aspects of the old system but tyranny of caste system remained. So the positive values of individualism, and competition which had created opportunities for all especially in the west was not able to increase opportunities and created an unequal society. Another

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[22] Naik, J.P. 1979. 'Equality, Quality and Quantity: The Elusive Triangle in Indian Education', International Review of Education, 25(2/3). Jubilee Number.167-185

negative aspect of the society was the overemphasis on information gathering, apparent neglect of development of skills and promotion of appropriate values. The system assumed that the knowledge was somehow outside individual, that it was good for the individual to acquire as much of it as possible and store it in the brain irrespective of the fact whether it is relevant to life and environment of the student. Here the major emphasis on information gathering in education and undue emphasis on rote memorization, what Paulo Freire calls the banking system of education.

Although the aim of the British system of education was to teach the three Rs (*R*eading, *W*riting, *A*rithmetic) and knowledge related to day to day usage but the aim of rote memorization, mentioned earlier and the medium of instruction being English, the weakness of the system was further strengthened. But by 1854 the controversy between the traditional and the new systems of education was decided in favour of the latter. The quality of the new system was now to be judged in terms of the needs of the society. The teachers however were competent and effective. But extending an education system to the poor that was built for the middle classes was unsuccessful and the wastage was high, particularly at the elementary level (Naik, 1979).

3.2.3. Post Independence India

The essence of modern education introduced by the British was the attainment of knowledge for the improvement of life which was carried forward during the freedom struggle and the consequent movement that took place for the establishment of a national system of education (1906-1947). The modernization of the upper classes did not mean the modernization of the whole society. The gap between the elites and the masses continue to get widened. The benefits of education remain inequitably distributed, the upper and the middle classes got most of the rewards while the masses have continued to remain illiterate. This was the idea of quality learning in traditional India, with socioeconomic context as a strong determinant of access and quality learning. (Naik, 1975)

The fundamental rights which are a part of the Constitution include some provisions which safeguard the interests of the children. For instance, the Article 15, there should not be discrimination against children on the grounds of gender, class, caste. Article 15 (3) states that under certain conditions special provisions could be made in favour of women and children. Again another, article which makes it mandatory for the children to attend school is the article 24 which prohibits children to work in factory or in any other hazardous conditions. Part of article 39 e) and f) that is with respect to the interests of the children, is that the state shall secure and develop its policy to ensure that the children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner devoid of any abuse, and they are not subjected to any form of any exploitation. So the importance of education for all children is important and is institutionalised through the constitutional provisions. Moreover, the Convention of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989, and ratified by India in 1992, recommended all the states to understand the importance of child rights and make primary education compulsory and available to all and should encourage regular attendance at schools and reduction of dropout rates.

The current system of education is marked by the failure to enrol, and also ensure basic learning of vast masses of children belonging to different subordinate groups, linguistic and cultural minorities thus linking social and educational underprivileged. With increasing competition, school managements have become more authoritarian and teachers often inflict and suffer abuse as a result children are driven to suicide, or commit violent acts., girls traumatised by sexual harassment, Dalit children by caste atrocities. Thus schools instead of being safe havens have become compounded with serious problems. The issue of access has remained intrinsically involved with the issue of quality and has occupied dominant position in educational discourse. Therefore, declining levels of quality has generated much debate, and poor quality is often considered as the main obstacle to achieving universalisation of education (Velaskar 2010).

The post-independence agenda of education whether envisaged by Nehru, (designed on a developmental model of capital accumulation, liberal philosophy of equality, neglected elementary education as a programme of planned development), the Radhakrishnan Commission (1949), the Kothari Commission (1966) or the National Policy on Education (NPE) (1986), had an emphasis on science and technology. Elementary education received the much needed comprehensive attention with the constitution of an Education Commission in the mid-60s aimed at fostering a 'just meritocracy' and 'mass primary schooling' was essential for the democratic access to education (Velaskar 2010).

The goal of the common school system and thereafter the neighbourhood school were all aimed at having schools which would be open to all children, irrespective of caste, community, religion, economic conditions or social status, where access to good education will depend on talent, and no tuition fee will be charged. But obviously objection to such an option came from the well to do, who complained about the substandard quality of such schools and that since parents should have the freedom to choose schools for their children, so they should not be forced in anyway. Suggestions such as these for the transformation of the elementary education came from late Shri Rajagopalachari and Acharya Vinobha Bhave.

It was the National Policy on Education (1968) which for the first time started a significant trend of looking into the actual reasons as to why some of the students chose to remain outside schools and elementary education received the much needed attention. As a result of this there was an increased attempt to institutionalise Non Formal Education meant for the students who are not a part of the mainstream in an attempt to mainstream them and thus wanted to shed the burden from itself of the responsibility of providing equal quality education to all children up to age 14.

The second shift which occurred in the educational restructuring was the outcome of economic liberalisation was the entry of World Bank in education sector. Public Private Partnership is increasingly advocated as the method of implementing the government schemes in partnership with the private sector (Velaskar, 2010). Despite the established beliefs of education contributing to the spreading of modern values World Bank is spreading some messages which are hampering equal access to quality. Many non-state

institutions are entering into the market which has commodified education and has increased competition among schools to increase enrolment, with profit motive the divide increased between the rich and poor with respect to access to quality education.

The education policy has undergone drastic change. In the recent times, the DPEP and the Sarva Shikshya Abhiyan (SSA) were the recent programs to deal with crisis in primary education. The DPEP showed that the only way the state or the centre can meet the aim of ensuring full literacy is by borrowing money. With DPEP and the SSA the Jomtien slogan of 'Education for All' is brought into play. But DPEP is lacking since it is not located in the broader framework of providing equal and quality elementary education to all.

3.3. Quantity to Quality

Naik has mentioned some improvements that have been made in terms of quality in elementary education since 1921 when the transfer of control over education system went over to the Indians till 1975. To reach higher standards a much larger variety of subjects are taught than earlier, additional attention was given to co- curricular activities, resources were provided by the state to improve the physical infrastructure of the schools. Introduction of teacher training, professional preparation of teachers was given, unlike during the colonial rule when most elementary teachers had just completed elementary schooling. Continuity of efforts was required for the worth-whileness of results. Even though new institutions have come up, the number of substandard institutions has also increased, because in the face of increasing demands it has often not been possible for the new institutions to come up with the minimum requirements. Efficiency of the system has always been questionable which has affected the motivation among students, deterioration of professional standards among teachers among others. Programs for qualitative reforms are lacking specially with respect to developments of skills and values, even Gandhi had made some attempts and at present Winch (1996) has pointed out its importance with respect to quality.

Through the Right to education (and now the more recent Act of 2010) it was meant that this will be ensured but whether the quality aspect of it being ensured could be decided by assessing the outcomes or the performance aspect of the students. Equality of provisions of resources does not ensure the equality of outcomes. The Constitution (Ninety-Third) Amendment Bill, 2001 contains a provision that "the state shall provide free and compulsory education...in such manner as the state, may, by law, determine". The Public Report on Basic Education in India (PROBE) in India gives a distressing picture of the BIMARU (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa) states. To correct the situation a proper manpower, infrastructural facilities in terms of equipments, textbooks, revision of text books which many a times have an urban bias, could be required to make learning an enjoyable experience (Kumar 1998).

There is another dimension that has to be looked in to for instance from the micro level. Child education will not be possible if the adult literacy is low. Similarly, in the rural areas, the distinction between a school which is performing from a school which is lacking should be made in terms of quality of teaching (Majumdar, 2006). With acute shortage of teachers, inequality in public funding in these schools the persistent questions that arise is that 'How do they deal with the challenge of motivating the first generation learners?' In the urban and semi-urban areas, there are these schools with shortage of students and surplus of teachers (West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh), and are facing the possibility of being closed down, while in the less privileged areas there are government schools where there are one or two teachers managing huge classes.

Such innovative pedagogic techniques which definitely involves some form of autonomy and responsibility on the part of the teachers, demonstrate 'what works' is a school system at a time when there is so much talk about 'what does not work' (Majumdar, 2006). So, it is necessary to look into the collective identities of the children who remain out of school who are mostly children in the rural areas of peasant families, tribal families, and scheduled castes. Many are victims of dam construction and tourism industry. Little has been done to promote their need of tribal education.

Privatisation at all levels of education structure has accentuated both class divisions and mobility struggles. As a result, there was consolidation and polarisation of systemic hierarchy. So the hierarchy of different quality schools began since the pre-colonial times with the elitist structure and higher class caste that could get access to the gurukuls (which provided privatised education). This was followed by the English medium schools in the colonial era and the missionary schools with again an imperial motive of producing English educated intelligentsia, in the post-independence era charitable educational trust (http://www.bvbdelhi.org/, June 2011) like Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (1938) was aimed at providing high quality education. So since then high quality was defined in terms of private sector. Gradually Navodaya Vidyalayas have come up to provide good quality education from within government sector to the bright and talented children who are high achievers but are left uncovered by the present school system. (Nambissan and Batra 1989), till the time low cost private schools are catering to the poor in the contemporary times. Together with this there is particularly in India the rampant increase in the number of tuition classes which also are being taken advantage of by the affluent at the cost the poor who remain doubly disadvantaged because of the high cost of tuition classes and the poor quality of government school education. Thus multiple accounts of quality are emerging from different perspectives and vying for space in the educational decision making process.

The shift from viewing education as a matter of privilege to regarding it as a right put tremendous pressure on school to improve its overall efficiency (Anita, 2005). At present the nature of hierarchy is such that schools in the upper most ranges are the so called 'best schools. They offer exclusive curricular packages, with prestigious international credentials. They are considered to be of the highest quality. While at the bottom, there are two layers, one is the system of state schooling, associated with the most poverty stricken core of the rural and urban economy and above that is the new privatisation (Velaskar 2010). But the formal system of education which still reproduces inequality and hierarchy has accommodated those children who were earlier not a part of the formal system.

4. Section III

Here I would like to portray the comparison between four scholars- sociologist, historians and educationist, who in their respective books discussed their visions of looking at how to impart quality education, methods and implications. Firstly, Nita Kumar, in her book, 'Lessons From School: History Of Education In Banaras', had as her objectives, to look at the educational history of Banaras in terms of accounts of actors like pundits, merchants, artisans, the challenges to the indigenous education system from the modern colonial system of education and thus portray the creative resistance which is presented in terms of a struggle for survival between the colonial state and its hegemony, and colonised population, for preserving their culture and heritage. The question of different forms of resistances that she raises is portrayed through the dichotomies of modernity versus tradition, Hindu identity versus Muslim identity, reproduction of occupation across generations, contradictory role of women in education. She traced the daily lives, their vibrant culture to bring out how the different ideologies, get to influence the educational scenario in the 'holy city.' She conforms with Durkheim's and Dewey's ideas. With the growing interest in education and also as a part of their research in Banaras, Nita Kumar had understood that due to the dismal condition of the schools there it would be impossible for her daughters to get educated, so she and her husband took the unusual step of establishing their own school. She discusses, the many reformists, synthetic and creative educational projects tried in Banaras over the past 100 years, but most were rendered unsuccessful due to pedagogic inefficiency. The socialisation of the city girls remained unsuccessful as the school education of the girls seemed to create a 'Aryan mother- modern educated' synthesis, aiming at socialising the girls with intention of reproducing motherhood.

 My second text was, 'Life at School: An Ethnographic study', by Meenakshi Thapan. Her study was conducted in the Rishi Valley School, located in Chittor District of Andhra Pradesh. Here she sought answers to the questions – what life at school is all about, what is the character and functioning of RVS like? And tried to bring a final solution to humankind's eternal question, 'what does it mean to educate?' The school seems to be catering to the elite section of the society, there is no discussion on inaccessibility of the school to the poorer sections, therefore, does not leave space for comparing with other public schools. In terms of standing out in the network of alternative schools in India she did not mention the implications of such kind of a school, whether this kind of an ideology has created students with a different mind–set. Although she constantly tried to emphasize the importance of Krishnamurti's teachings, there was a substantial group of students and teachers who felt it was impractical. Through this study Thapan was essentially aiming to show how an ideology acts as the guiding force for the entire schooling pattern, and is the determining factor for the quality of schooling but there are too many contradictions and dilemmas around the practice of ideological discourse.

My third book was 'Quality Concerns in Education' by Manzoor Ahmed Bhatt conducted in the Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir. The main objective was to bring about comparative account of the government and private primary schools in qualitative terms. Secondly, He wanted to compare the academic achievements on gender basis, per capita expenditures, socioeconomic status of the parents of the students of classes V and VIII. At the end of his study he found that private management schools were better effective than public management in producing better achievement levels, despite low institutional expenditures, since operational ability of private schools is better than the other. Private schools are biased towards high economic status parents. Mixed results like expenditure and achievement levels are negatively related unlike other studies where high expenditure, high socioeconomic status, quality of schooling were determinants of better achievements. Anantnag has made progress in the field of education. The school facilities have reached the rural areas and there has been an increase in the enrolments, but the standards of education provided in these schools did not provide a good picture. But while the approach of Bhatt was to bring out the miserable condition of the public schools as against private schools with respect to some variables, he only limited himself to the analysis of the statistical findings, not revealing anything majorly new, but has of course mentioned the possibility of having a much more in-depth research taking in much more intricate details of curricular details of the trouble-torn zone of Kashmir. Finally, to choose a book that covered the recent emergence of low cost private schools, I chose, 'Beautiful Tree' by James Tooley. He had covered Kenya, India, China, Ghana, Nigeria, but my focus was on the city of Hyderabad. The main intention of the author was to explore the possibilities of how the private school entrepreneurs working in the poor communities can contribute enormously to bringing about universal education. The World Bank people, the financers of his study were difficult to convince, that low cost schools with substantial profit margin were running to cater to the lower class poor. As the significant theme that emerges out of this study is a pertinent dilemma or a question - the private entrepreneurial spirit is like the sun and the public education is the moon which tries to eclipse the sun but only temporarily because the aura of the sun gets exposed soon. Public education is a permanent feature of human civilisation; will the private spirit eclipse it permanently?

The approach taken by Manzoor Ahmed Bhatt and Tooley are similar in the sense that both have critiqued the quality of government schools.

5. Discussion and Findings

The importance of child's protection is of utmost importance starting from the Indian Constitutional provisions to the Millennium Development Goals mentioned in the World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000). Among the burning issues that remain matters of concern in protecting the child is providing quality education. Therefore, how we build a child of substance poses serious questions. Just as mentioned in Child Protection in the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), every child is to be protected from neglect, violence, abuse so that they are healthy and can lead proper lives. Education being the mother of all cultures (Scharfe, 2002) should be given a greater footing in enhancing the capability of the child, thus establishing the aforementioned characteristics as evils. This attention should be in no way segregated and every child should be receiving proper care in terms of meaningful education in order to make them self-reliant, self-confident so that they can relate to their roles and responsibilities towards their family, society and state. It has been theoretically established how significant quality education is for developing the critical thinking in the child. Through the

global trends of meritocracy, parentocracy, rise of choice systems it is clearly emerging how smaller components of educational process is being analysed to ensure that through a correct mix of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment patterns the child receives quality education. But all this would not be achieved if the Indian society cannot rise above the evils like caste segregation, gender segregation persistent problems of good quality education at the cost of high price and other forms of inequalities and begins to value talent and most importantly understands the value of education in a child's life. Finally, the comparative account of the four scholars aim at a better understanding of quality education taking into account various aspects in a child's life as their points of analyses which gives a real picture of what was, is and what can be done to improve the quality of education and thus the life of a child. Engaging with these debates combing theory and ethnography as a part of Indian experience is the need of the hour.

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