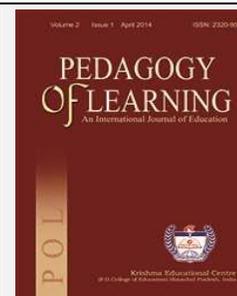


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Global Monitoring of Development of Education in the Era of Globalisation: A Critique

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Abstract

In the era of globalisation with education emerging as a basic requirement for the smooth functioning of the global economy, there has been globalisation of educational policy making. Several international institutions like UNESCO, World Bank, UNDP etc. are engaged in the process of educational policy making at the global level. The policy prescriptions of these institutions are intended to align education with the needs of the global capitalist economy. These policies are meant more for bringing people in the ambit of market by providing them with requisite skills and knowledge. Education has been converted from a basic human right into a developmental goal. The entire discourse on education for all has been emphasizing more on enrolment and retention of the children in the education system for a particular period of time, whereas education is being defined in terms of acquisition of pre-determined outcomes leading to its reduction to mere literacy, numeracy and life skills. The programmes aiming at universalisation of mere primary/ elementary education (inclusion!) and reducing the pedagogy to the achievement of fixed learning outcomes only (equitable quality!) have been planned and supported by global institutions actually for enabling inclusion of more and more people in the market economy. The global monitoring of the programmes for universalisation of education is intended to ensure that countries must adhere to norms and targets set by the international institutions along with regulating the nature and content of teaching-learning process as well as the pedagogic role of the teacher.

Keywords: Globalisation, Universalisation of Education, Educational Policy Making, Learning Outcomes

INTRODUCTION

In the present era of globalisation, education has come to be viewed as a basic requirement for the smooth functioning of the global economy not only for production purposes but also for enhancing consumption. The movement of multinational corporations across the globe in search of cheap labour and markets aims at finding labour as well as consumers equipped with appropriate skills. Such a situation does indeed involve drawing even the poorest of the world's population into the ambit of market by providing them basic education. World Development Report (1990) clearly depicts this intention while discussing its strategy for attacking poverty: The first element is to promote the productive use of the poor's most abundant asset - labour. It calls for policies that harness market incentives, social and political institutions, infrastructure and technology to that end. The second is to provide basic social services to the poor. Primary health care, family planning, nutrition and primary education are especially important (World Bank, 1990: 3). Such a notion necessitates concerted efforts towards universalisation of basic education. That is why there have been efforts to control and monitor the development of education at global level on the one hand and to redefine education more in terms of needs of global economy on the other.

GLOBALISATION OF EDUCATION POLICY MAKING

A significant paradigm shift in the field of education in the wake of globalisation has been the globalisation of education policy making. Earlier educational policy making was a national affair based on national priorities. But now it has become integrated to the global management of capitalism. In fact, the onset of globalisation has changed the political and economic scenario at global scale. The context of policy making underwent qualitative change. Education has no longer remained a 'national' entity to be planned by the national government keeping in view merely the socio-economic and cultural needs of the country. In the era of globalisation, the needs of the global capitalist economy have come to dominate the domain of education with its economic demands thus displacing the other socio-cultural and national considerations from its policy perspective. In this regard, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) state:

National policymakers now feel obliged to recraft education policies in relation to what they interpret as the emerging imperatives of globalisation, aligning them loosely to the values negotiated at the national or local levels. They take note not only of the comparative data produced by international organizations, but also of the educational values that have become globally dominant, expressed in a neoliberal social imaginary (Rizvi and Lingard 2010: 72).

Further, the emergence of a global world order has emasculated the national mechanism of education policy making. In its place, there has emerged a global mechanism for policy making. Along with UNESCO, a number of economic institutions like the World Bank, WTO and UNDP have taken up the task of education policy formulation at global level. Although, the policy discourse for educational development at global level has been addressing all the sectors of education, yet, we certainly find that the universalisation of primary/elementary education has remained a priority area. In fact, different international organisations have engaged themselves in providing policy directions and even in financial supporting the programmes for universal elementary education. Different documents prepared/published by these institutions have been highlighting the development of education

across the globe along with setting up the direction in which the programme for universalising education have to progress. Besides, a number of international conferences on the issue of education for all held in recent past have outlined the nature of educational initiatives for universalising elementary education especially in the developing countries.

CHANGED CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

While viewing education in the context of the needs of the global economy, there has been a redefining of nature and role of education in the global discourse on education. The modern and democratic conception of education views it as a process of harmonious development of the individual and social, economic and political development of the society. Besides, in a democratic society, education aims at developing young students into democratic citizens enabling them to participate actively in the society and the polity. Such a conception of education based on the principle of equal opportunity to all envisages wider access to education and attainment of knowledge.

Such a conception of education has also found resonance in some recent international documents such as the Report of the Delors Commission of UNESCO entitled *Learning: The Treasure Within*, which states that education has a fundamental role to play in personal and social development. Education is one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war (UNESCO, 1996:12). *Learning to Be* earlier document by UNESCO also viewed education with the same vision when it states that over a long term, education stimulates, accompanies or sets a seal on social and political development, as well as on technical and economic development (UNESCO, 1972: xxii)

However, in the dominant education policy discourse at the international level in the era of globalisation, education has been viewed more as an economic category and as a developmental goal. The World Bank views education as fundamental to development and growth. While outlining the *Education Strategy 2020* it states:

Access to education, which is a basic human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is also a strategic development investment. The human mind makes possible all other development achievements, from health advances and agricultural innovation to infrastructure construction and private sector growth. For developing countries to reap these benefits fully—both by learning from the stock of global ideas and through innovation—they need to unleash the potential of the human mind. And there is no better tool for doing so than education (World Bank, 2011: 11).

Moreover, in the view of the Bank education yields its greatest benefits in countries undergoing rapid technological and economic change because it can give workers the ability to continue acquiring skills throughout life, as well as the capacity to adapt to new technology (Ibid.: 12).

Thus, there is a considerable change in the concept and role of education over time; from a process of complete human development and as an indispensable ingredient for overall development process, it is now being viewed in the dominant educational discourse as a set of certain basic skills and attitudes required for the smooth functioning of the global economy. Such defining of education more in economic terms has resulted in dilution of its

broader societal role especially in a democratic society. Such an education is not aimed at developing enlightened citizens for a democratic society rather it is merely intended to develop literacy-numeracy and life skills for advancing the market economy. Education is merely viewed as an instrument for improving productivity, promoting consumerism and thus enabling human being to become a useful resource for the global capital.

With regard to this changing complexion of education, eminent educationist Prof. Anil Sadgopal comments: The goal of education excludes building a democratic, egalitarian, just, secular and enlightened society. Instead, education has become an instrument for only improving productivity, promoting consumerism and establishing market control over knowledge and the public mind such that every human being becomes a 'useful' resource for the global capital (Sadgopal, 2010:33). Literacy skill is all that the masses need, argue the market forces, so that they can read the product label and advertisements. Its somewhat evolved form would be adequate for factory workers to read production instructions and to use even the Internet. Critical thinking, creativity, scientific temper, analytical abilities, sense of history or philosophy, aesthetic appreciation and other such educational attributes need to be reserved for the privileged few (Sadgopal, 2003:98).

However, in international documents education is discussed not without reference to progressive terms such as human right, equality, equal opportunities, inclusiveness etc. Therefore, this does not mean that the social values of equality and democracy have been abandoned, but rather that they have been re-articulated, subordinated to dominant economic concerns (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 72). For instance, by propagating basic education for all and emphasizing gender equality in access to education the World Bank is attempting to realise the goals of fertility control, child health, protection of environment and awareness about goods and services, the conditions necessary for smooth and profitable operation of the transnational capital.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TOWARDS UNIVERSALISATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

While recognizing the fact that education is directly related to the economic growth and development in a global economy, there has been increased international emphasis on the universalisation of elementary education. This is because of the fact that a minimum level of education has been viewed as the basic requirement for the smooth running of the global economy with regard to consumption of both goods and services.

A major milestone in international efforts regarding universalisation of primary education was the *World Conference on Education for All*, which was held in Jomtien, Thailand from 5-9 March 1990. The Conference was convened jointly by the executive heads of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank. The Conference was co-sponsored by an additional 18 governments and organizations, and was hosted by the Royal Government of Thailand. Delegates from 155 governments, including policy-makers and specialists in education and other major sectors, together with officials and specialists representing some 20 intergovernmental bodies and 150 nongovernmental organizations, discussed major aspects of Education for All in 48 round tables and a plenary commission. They framed 'World Declaration on Education for All' and the 'Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs'.

The Jomtien Conference affirmed education as a fundamental right of all people of all ages across the world. It recognized the role of basic education in human development and emphasized that countries should take consistent measures in this direction. The conference document emphasized that human being of any age shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. The satisfaction of these basic learning needs will empower human beings and will act as a foundation for human development (UNSECO, 1990:3).

Article 3 of Jomtien Declaration emphasized that priority should be given to education of girls and women to remove all gender stereotyping in education. To remove the educational disparities, access to education shall be available to all undeserved groups such as poor, rural and remote populations, minorities, refugees etc. Special attention should be paid to the learning needs of disabled persons. The education of disabled person should be considered as integral part of education system (UNSECO, 1990:4-5).

The World Conference on Education has proved to be a turning point in the efforts towards universalisation of basic education. It represented a collective attempt to address the basic learning needs of all children along with outlining the framework for realization of this goal. However, while fostering the agenda of basic education for all, it paved the way for interventions by international funding agencies in the education systems of developing and underdeveloped countries of the world by providing aid and loans for their basic education programmes. India was also the signatory of the declaration of this conference. As an immediate fallout of this conference, the primary education sector was rather reluctantly opened to enthusiastic external aid organisations on a large scale (Tilak, 2002: 287).

After a decade from Jomtien Conference, another significant international effort in the direction of universalisation of education was the organisation of 'World Education Forum' in Dakar, Senegal from 26 to 28 April, 2000. More than 1100 participants from 164 countries, sponsoring agencies and non-governmental organisations gathered in this three day Forum to assess progress toward Education for All (EFA) since Jomtien Declaration and to turn the vision of 'Education for All' into a reality.

The World Education Forum was preceded by EFA 2000 Assessment, a detailed assessment of the current status of basic education in more than 180 countries along with the evaluation of the progress made by these countries in achieving the goal of education for all in the post-Jomtien period. It was observed that although during this period many countries developed desirable policy framework for achieving EFA targets and received financial support from international institutions yet the goal of achieving universal access to, and completion of basic education by 2000 could not be achieved.

As a follow-up to the EFA 2000 Assessment and renewing commitments to the achievement of education for all, the World Education Forum adopted the Dakar Framework for Action entitled "Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments". While outlining the role of education it stated: Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalisation (UNESCO, 2000: 43).

The Dakar Framework set six major goals related to education for all to be achieved in a time-bound manner. These goals are:

- expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality; ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (Ibid.: 36).

Further, the Dakar Framework recognised that achieving Education for All will require additional financial support by countries and increased development assistance and debt relief for education by bilateral and multilateral donors, estimated to cost in the order of \$8 billion a year. It is therefore essential that new, concrete financial commitments be made by national governments and also by bilateral and multilateral donors including the World Bank and the regional development banks, by civil society and by foundations (Ibid.: 45).

Furthermore, the Dakar Framework reaffirmed a significant role of international community in developing the strategies and mobilizing the resources needed to provide effective support to national efforts (Ibid.:44).

Moreover, a significant recommendation of World Education Forum was to undertake regular assessment and monitoring of progress towards EFA goals and targets. This recommendation paved the way for preparation and annual publication of Global Monitoring Reports of EFA. In this way, a policy framework for constant intervention in the education systems of the developing countries and the regulation and monitoring of the development of education in these countries has been created.

Besides, along with viewing education as a fundamental human right, it has been defined as a developmental goal to be achieved by each country for sustainable development and for effective participation in the emerging global economy. It is in this context that the goal of Education for All was linked to Millennium Development Goals.

A Millennium Declaration was adopted in September 2000 by leaders of 189 countries at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York. In this declaration, commitments were made to work together to build a safer, more prosperous and equitable world. These commitments were translated into eight quantifiable and measurable goals known as the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by the year 2015. Out of these

eight Millennium Development Goals, Goal 2 and 3 were closely related to the education for all programme. The Goal 2 regarding achieving universal primary education emphasised on ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling. The Goal 3 called for eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015. This emphasis on improving the girls' participation in education is in consonance with the global agenda of education for all on the one hand and that of improving the economic position of the poorest people on the other. It has been reiterated time and again that education, especially for girls, has social and economic benefits for society as a whole. Educated women have more economic opportunities and engage more fully in public life. As mothers, they tend to have fewer and healthier children who are more likely to attend school. All of these benefits are key to breaking the cycle of poverty (United Nations, 2005:10).

The role of education in the process of development was re-affirmed by the World Summit for Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002. The Summit while viewing eradication of poverty as the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, particularly for developing countries highlighted the universalisation of education as significant means for dealing with poverty. It regarded education critical for promoting sustainable development. Therefore, it called for integrating sustainable development into education systems at all levels of education in order to promote education as a key agent for change. In this regard, the Summit emphasised the need to ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and will have equal access to all levels of education (United Nations, 2002:10). It is therefore essential to mobilize necessary resources, including financial resources at all levels, by bilateral and multilateral donors, including the World Bank and the regional development banks, by civil society and by foundations, to complement the efforts by national governments to pursue the following goals and actions:

- a) Meet the Millennium development goal of achieving universal primary education, ensuring that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling;
- b) Provide all children, particularly those living in rural areas and those living in poverty, especially girls, with the access and opportunity to complete a full course of primary education (Ibid.: 61).

Such initiatives of linking the developmental problems to the provision of education are the reflections of human development paradigm taking roots in the international policy discourse.

In the year 2011, the World Bank came up with a new education strategy named as "Learning for All: Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to promote Development" for realizing the goal of universal primary education. This strategy was presented with a ten year agenda for learning by all especially by the disadvantaged children. The central point in this education strategy is upon actual acquisition of knowledge and skills by all rather than mere enrollments in the school (World Bank, 2011:25). Keeping in view the role of education in poverty reduction, growth and development and enhancement of human lives, the Bank framed its efforts in two directions: better management of education system at country level and development of global high quality knowledge base (ibid.:31). The Bank emphasized that

to enrich the knowledge of school going children, proper strategy should be implemented. This strategy involves three major areas namely knowledge generation and exchange, technical and financial support to the countries and partnership among the different stakeholders of education sector to ensure better learning of all children irrespective of their caste, gender, economic level and any other inequality. The Bank also devised different kinds of indicator namely performance, outcome and impact indicators to measure the success of this strategy (Ibid.:73-74).

The leaders and representatives of different nations of the world held a meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015 to adopt a new universal developmental agenda in the form of 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by the year 2030. In fact, the eight Millennium Development Goals whose time period ended in 2015 were transformed into 17 intergovernmental set of aspiration Goals having 169 targets. These goals are more comprehensive than Millennium Development Goals. The goals address the issues of poverty, hunger, health disparities, quality education, gender parity, women empowerment, modern and sustainable energy, sustainable cities, protection of the environment etc. Out of these seventeen Sustainable Development Goals which are to be achieved by 2030, the Goal 4 is related to education. This Goal calls for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In the Declaration for outlining the 'Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' reads as:

We commit to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels — early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational training. All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. We will strive to provide children and youth with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities, helping our countries to reap the demographic dividend, including through safe schools and cohesive communities and families (United Nations, 2015:11).

UNSECO in collaboration with UNICEF, World Bank and other such intergovernmental agencies organized the World Education Forum 2015 at Incheon in Republic of Korea from 19-22 May, 2015. More than 1600 participants from 160 countries participated in this forum and adopted the Incheon Declaration 'Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all'. The Declaration reaffirmed education as a public good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights. Education is viewed as essential condition for peace, tolerance, human fulfilment and sustainable development. The Declaration reads as:

Our vision is to transform lives through education, recognizing the important role of education as a main driver of development and in achieving the other proposed SDGs. We commit with a sense of urgency to a single, renewed education agenda that is holistic, ambitious and aspirational, leaving no one behind. This new vision is fully captured by the proposed SDG 4 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and its corresponding targets. It is transformative and universal,

attends to the 'unfinished business' of the EFA agenda and the education-related MDGs, and addresses global and national education challenges (UNESCO, 2015: 67).

The achievement of these goals requires huge financial resources which could not be met only with public financing. Therefore, the Declaration has emphasised the need for mobilizing funds from non-state actors to supplement public financing. It also calls upon developed countries, international donors, middle income countries and international financing mechanisms to enhance funding to education and to support the implementation of the EFA agenda.

The Report of the World Education Forum while highlighting the economic role of education vis-à-vis global economy has stated categorically that a central function of education is to foster the skills and competencies that will enable learners to support themselves and their families, and contribute to the sustainable economic development of the communities in which they live. Decent work and entrepreneurship can be ensured through properly designed and organized education, including technical and vocational education and training that prepares learners for the labour markets of tomorrow (Ibid.: 14).

Moreover, in recent years, there has been a shift of focus in international education policy discourse from expansion of basic education for improving access, enrolment and retention to concern for quality of basic education. The quality of education is being defined in terms of learning outcomes of the basic education programmes. Such a trend reflects on the one hand a considerable progress in improving enrolment world-over and on the other hand highlights the lack of meaningful learning as an outcome of improvement in enrolments. The recent World Development Report published by the World Bank states: Children learn very little in many education systems around the world: even after several years in school, millions of students lack basic literacy and numeracy skills (World Bank, 2018: 5). Further, more than 60 percent of primary school children in developing countries still fail to achieve minimum proficiency in learning, according to one benchmark (ibid.: 8). Learning deficits are largest for poor people (ibid.: 78).

The Report describes such a situation as a learning crisis and analyses it in the context of work skill shortage in the workforce. It states:

Because education systems have not prepared workers adequately, many enter the labor force with inadequate skills. Measuring adult skills in the workplace is hard, but recent initiatives have assessed a range of skills in the adult populations of numerous countries. They found that even foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy are often low, let alone the more advanced skills. The problem isn't just a lack of trained workers; it is a lack of readily trainable workers. Accordingly, many workers end up in jobs that require minimal amounts of reading or math. Lack of skills reduces job quality, earnings, and labor mobility (ibid.: 9).

While diagnosing the learning crisis, the Report delineates four factors responsible for the inability of education systems to achieve desirable learning outcomes such as unprepared learners, unskilled and unmotivated teachers, lack of learning-focused inputs and poor management and governance. In this context, the Report calls for a commitment to 'all for learning' by education systems world over and using learning as a guide and metric for the

provision of education and for assessing its effectiveness. It also suggests three strategies to this effect. These are:

- Assess learning—to make it a serious goal. Measure and track learning better; use the results to guide action.
- Act on evidence—to make schools work for all learners. Use evidence to guide innovation and practice.
- Align actors—to make the whole system work for learning. Tackle the technical and political barriers to learning at scale (ibid.: 16).

Such an international policy discourse of focusing on learning outcomes has already found its expression in the policy documents of the developing countries in recent times. For instance in India, the Twelfth Five Year Plan document and the Draft of New Education Policy have emphasised on improving the learning outcomes of school students. Besides, the shifting focus of the international policy discourse vis-à-vis Education for All towards learning achievement of the students would also lead to extensive use of global testing programmes such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) etc.

Further, in this context of improving the learning outcomes of students, there has been emphasis on teachers' accountability as teachers are viewed as the most important determinant of student learning. In the emerging scheme of things, teachers are supposed to work towards the achievement of the fixed learning outcomes by students at different learning levels. In this way, on the one hand, the learning process will be oriented only towards the achievement of set learning goals and on the other hand the role of teacher in the educational scenario will be confined only to teach to achieve already determined learning outcomes. Such a situation while delimiting the learning process of the students would also lead to impinging on teachers' pedagogic role in the classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

In the era of globalisation with education emerging as a basic requirement for the smooth functioning of the global economy, there has been globalisation of educational policy making. Several international institutions like UNESCO, World Bank, UNDP etc. are engaged in the process of educational policy making at the global level. The policy prescriptions of these institutions are intended to align education with the needs of the global capitalist economy. These policies are meant more for bringing people in the ambit of market by providing them with requisite skills and knowledge. Education has been converted from a basic human right into a developmental goal. The entire discourse on education for all has been emphasising more on enrolment and retention of the children in the education system for a particular period of time, whereas education is being defined in terms of acquisition of pre-determined outcomes leading to its reduction to mere literacy, numeracy and life skills.

The programmes aiming at universalisation of mere primary/elementary education (inclusion!) and reducing the pedagogy to the achievement of fixed learning outcomes only (equitable quality!) have been planned and supported by global institutions actually for enabling inclusion of more and more people in the market economy. The global monitoring

of the programmes for universalisation of education is intended to ensure that countries must adhere to norms and targets set by the international institutions along with regulating the nature and content of teaching-learning process as well as the pedagogic role of the teacher.

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