

**EDITORIAL**

**LOOKING FOR EQUITY IN EDUCATION AMIDST  
GROWING COMMERCIALISATION IN EDUCATION AND  
SHADOW EDUCATION**

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Long ago, during monarchical rule, education was limited to rich children. Today, in the days of democracy, although there is universalisation of education, quality education is limited to children from rich families. “Equity and equality are related but distinct concepts: equity focuses on the process of ensuring a fair distribution of goods and services, whereas equality is about the final outcomes between different individuals. (Proulx & Lye 2016, p. 14). Equity is an issue in most parts of the world. Nations have the moral responsibility of ensuring equity in education. According to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2008, p.1),

“Equity in Education - means to provide equal opportunities in education regardless of abilities and aptitudes, age, gender, skin colour, sexual orientation, social background, religious or ethnic background, place of residence, family education or family finances. Equity in Education must therefore be understood on the system level, using a national perspective based on overriding legislation, regulations and syllabuses, and on an individual level, adapting the education to individual abilities and aptitudes.”

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American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2011, p.2) highlighted the situation in US in the following words:

“Unfortunately, the most effective teachers are unevenly distributed among schools. Students with the greatest needs often have the least access to the best teachers. Extensive research attests to the fact that children in high-poverty schools are much more likely than their more advantaged peers to be assigned new teachers, teachers who lack knowledge of their subjects, and teachers with lower academic skills. These factors contribute to lower achievement for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

Analysing US situation, the Equity and Excellence Commission (2013, p. 14)

“Our education system, legally desegregated more than a half century ago, is ever more segregated by wealth and income, and often again by race. Ten million students in America’s poorest communities<sup>20</sup>—and millions more African American, Latino, Asian American, Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native students who are not poor—are having their lives unjustly and irredeemably blighted by a system that consigns them to the lowest-performing teachers, the most run-down facilities, and academic expectations and opportunities considerably lower than what we expect of other students. These vestiges of segregation, discrimination and inequality are unfinished business for our nation.”

Raikes and Shaeffer (2016, p. 4) pointed out that

“In addition to disparities between countries, inequities also exist within countries in regards to pre-primary education. For example, in many countries there is a large gap in pre-primary enrolment rates between the richest and poorest quintiles of the population.”

Seriousness of ensuring equity in schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students has been highlighted by OECD (2012, p. 11) as follows:

“Schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students are at greater risk of challenges that can result in low performance, affecting education systems as a whole. Low performing disadvantaged schools often lack the internal capacity or support to improve, as school leaders and teachers and the environments of schools, classrooms and neighbourhoods frequently fail to offer a quality learning experience for the most disadvantaged.”

A few strategies suggested by OECD (2012, pp. 11-13) are: 1. Strengthen and support school leadership; 2. Stimulate a supportive school climate and environment for learning; 3. Attract, support and retain high quality teachers; 4. Ensure effective classroom learning strategies; and 5. Prioritise linking schools with parents and communities. UNESCO (2015, p. 1) gave following suggestion for equity at school level.

“ An equitable and quality lifelong learning approach would require at least: 12 years of publicly-funded quality primary and secondary schooling for all; Equal opportunities for all to access education and to learn, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups who are disadvantaged by factors such as gender, poverty, conflict or disaster, geographical location, ethnicity, language, age or disability; and relevant and effective learning outcomes, including, at a minimum, foundational literacy and numeracy skills that provide the building blocks for further flexible lifelong learning opportunities.”

Incheon Declaration of 2015 (UNESCO 2016, p. 7) stated that

“Inclusion and equity in and through education is the corner stone

of a transformative education agenda, and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. No education target should be considered met unless met by all. We therefore commit to making the necessary changes in education policies and focusing our efforts on the most disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities, to ensure that no one is left behind.”

The 2015 Summit of International Teaching Profession highlighted global effort for equity and excellence of education in the following words:

“Around the world, education systems are establishing more complex goals for excellence and equity in education in the twenty-first century. No longer are providing basic literacy skills for the majority of students and higher order skills for a few adequate goals. Instead, the goals of schooling today are to develop a broader range of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for every student, including critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration.” (Asia-Society 2015, p. 7)

Following suggestions were given by the International Summit on the Teaching Profession 2017

“Achieving equity in education means ensuring that students’ socio-economic status has little to do with learning outcomes. Learning should not be hindered by whether a child comes from a poor family, has an immigrant background or by gender. Successful education systems understand this and have found ways to allocate resources to level the playing field for students who lack the material and human resources that students in advantaged families enjoy. In this way, education systems become powerful engines of social mobility. Furthermore, when more students achieve high performance, the whole system benefits”. (Gomendio 2017, p. 101)

Equity in education gets more difficult to achieve, when schools for disadvantaged gets new teachers in comparison to general schools. Equity in education has its root in political decision regarding quality of formal education system. Equity in education in formal school system cannot be ensured, in a nation that allows privatisation of education for compulsory school stage, which widens the gap between learning level rich and poor children.

### **COMMERCIALISATION IN EDUCATION**

Access to education has been accentuated by privatisation of education. Inability to cope with the demand for more and better education has made many nations go for encouragement to private initiatives in education. In all nations certain age groups are covered under free and compulsory education. Giving scope for private initiative for education of this compulsory group does not make the nations provide same quality education for all. Although government schools are free, the twenty first century has witnessed speedy expansion of high fee charging private education, widening the gap in quantum of availability of quality education between haves and have-nots. The amount of responsibility of the no fee charging government schools is getting continuously enfeebled by the self-decision of parents to go for fee charging private schools. In Indian situation, expertise in English and French languages are considered essential for getting better jobs not only in India, but also in foreign countries. Borooah and Sabharwal (2017, p. 34), in their study on inequality of access to education with reference to English as medium of instruction stated that “Facility with English offers significant educational advantages and international mobility, as well as access to global know-how.” Besides an international language as the medium of instruction, a few factors that make parents have a preference for private schools may be (a) smaller class size, (b) punctuality of teachers, (c) availability of a number of co-curricular activities for development of social and emotional skills, etc. The fact that the nearby government school has better qualified and better paid teachers than available in the private school does not deter the parents in preferring private school. Of course, there are instances of

government systems appointing *para* teachers paying them a remuneration that amounts to nearly 1/20 times of the remuneration received by regular government teachers, although both categories carry out the same work. Although importance of preschool education for the development of an individual has been reported in many studies, nations have failed to provide free pre-school education for all as a government initiative, giving scope for private initiative that starts widening the learning gap between rich and poor children starting from pre-school age. This is also the situation in a rich country like United States, although US National Education Association (2015) stated that

“*Great Foundations*: Quality early education helps prepare students so they can come to school ready to learn. A quality school readiness program requires that all students have access to: high quality early childhood education; full-day kindergarten; comprehensive health screenings and top-notch, well prepared teachers.”

Early childhood education is not yet compulsory in many nations and is mostly delivered by private organisations. Although Indian ancient literature reports about possibility of learning of a baby growing in a mother’s womb has been reported in a document of the Scottish Education Department in UK. There are also instances of private coaching (Shadow education) for early childhood education.

### **Growth of Shadow Education (Private Tutoring) as a Parallel System of Education**

Shadow education refers to private coaching for their children from their own school teachers or others, in the residence of the teacher, student or in a coaching centre and the practice is termed as “Shadow education”, that runs parallel to the formal education system. The motives for which parents send their children for private coaching are: (a) supplementary teaching necessitated owing to (a) shortage of teachers in schools, (b) poor quality of teaching in schools, (c) fitting the academic caliber of the

student to the expected entry requirement for admission into a school, (d) to make students competent for entrance tests conducted for entry into professional courses, ( e ) compensatory education for slow learners, etc. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, yearning for better quality education has steered many parents to go for getting shadow education, which has pervaded most of the world. A few studies that report this issue at various levels are: (a) World - (Bray 2007, Dang & Rogers 2008; Bray 2009, 2011, & 2013, Bray, Mazawi, & Sultana 2013; Campani 2013; Kassotakis & Verdis 2013; Mazawi, Sultana & Bray 2013), (b) Asia (Bray & Lykins 2012); Cambodia( Brehm & Silova 2014); (c) Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina (Jokić, Soldo & Dedić 2013); (d) Cyprus (Lamprianou & Lamprianou 2013); € Egypt (Hartmann 2013); (f) France (Oller & Glasman 2013); (g) Kazakhstan (Akimenko 2017); (h) Malta (Buhagiar & Chetcuti 2013); (i) Portugal (Neto-Mendes, Costa, Ventura, Azevedo & Gouveia 2013); (j) Slovenia (Faganel & Trnavčević 2013); (k) Turkey (Tansel 2013; and Altinyelken 2013) and (l) United Kingdom - England (Ireson & Rushforth 2014). Prevalence of shadow education is not identical throughout the world. Buchanan, Worth and Aston (2015, p.4) in their evaluation report about the affordable small group and one to one tuition to school provided by Tutor Trust, Manchester, UK stated that

“At the time of the evaluation the Tutor Trust would charge primary or secondary schools between £18 and £26 for an hour of tuition. Based on groups of three pupils receiving 25 tuition sessions, the total cost of the intervention is estimated at approximately £185 per pupil.”

Guill and & Spinath (2014, p. 7) stated that “Western European and North American countries have quite low tutoring rates, ranging from less than 10% upto about 25% of an age cohort, while private tutoring is much more common in Eastern European, Asian, and African countries.” A study may need to be undertaken to ascertain if private tutoring is a significant cause for which, in PISA 2015 (OECD 2016 a & b; 2017 b & c), western countries including US fell behind east Asian countries. Becoming aware of the adverse effect of performance of regular school teachers for their

participation in shadow education system, many nations have introduced curbs on such participation.

In India, the Right to Education Act (MLJ 2009, p.8) stated that “ No teacher shall engage himself or herself in private tuition or private teaching activity.” However, it remains in paper. No authority bothers about this restriction, as in many institutions, monthly salary of a teacher is less than the amount received by a non-skilled daily labourer, and such a low paid teacher can have certain amount of income from private coaching. Authorities also do not bother about private coaching on payment given by teachers receiving approved government salary, due to the fact that many parents sending their children for private coaching consider it as a prestige issue. Teacher shortage is rampant not only in private institutions, but also in government institutions. Sujatha (2014, p. 13) in her study of private tuition in states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharastra and Uttar Pradesh found that percentage of private tuition varied in rural areas from 20.67% in Andhra Pradesh to 66.53% in Kerala and in urban areas from 38,75% in Andhra Pradesh to 72.72% in Maharashtra. “Private tutoring industry has recorded a growth of 35% in the last five years in India.”(Gupta 2017, p. 191). Lakshmanasamy (2017) in a study on household expenditure on private coaching found that only rich families go for private tuition for their children. UNESCO (2017, p. 109) stated that “In India, in 2007/8 about 40% of urban secondary students received private tutoring, compared with about 26% of rural students.” Due to increased use of shadow education, schools and even higher education institutions no longer give stress on examining body specified minimum percentage of attendance for students of specific courses. Such a situation has also given rise to new tasks for teachers and their institutions. When a student, finds teacher teaching a topic that s/he had already covered in his/her private coaching, may create problems in the classroom that can affect the learning of other students. Teachers in such situations need to take stock of the learning of each student in coaching classes and give them appropriate learning tasks. Although, shadow education is rampant in India, there are many teachers who do not give private coaching and take care of their studends even by visiting their homes. Above discussion indicates that equity in education will be a far reaching goal even at the



end of 21st century, not only in India, but also in developed nations.

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