on_education
Journal for Research and Debate

echoes of 'coloniality' in the episteme of indian educational reforms

Poonam Batra

The international education project that drives neoliberal reforms is entwined with ideas of modernity and development embedded in coloniality. Instead of learning from decolonized and subaltern knowledges, what we see is a disruption of diverse post-colonial processes via a reform policy transfer – constructed in decontextualized abstraction, rationalized by a target driven universal agenda. This paper draws attention to a possible continuity between colonialism – viewed not just as a geopolitical reality located in the past but an organised epistemological order – and the neoliberal agenda of internationalising education.

The international education project that drives neoliberal reforms is entwined with ideas of modernity and development embedded in coloniality. Instead of learning from decolonized and subaltern knowledges, what we see is a disruption of diverse post-colonial processes via a reform policy transfer – constructed in decontextualized abstraction, rationalized by a target driven universal agenda. This paper draws attention to a possible continuity between colonialism – viewed not just as a geopolitical reality located in the past but an organised epistemological order – and the neoliberal agenda of internationalising education. Control over knowledge production and practices have characterised processes of colonisation that used education to subjugate people of the colonised world. It is suggested that a 'coloniality'*1* characterised by patterns of power "constituted in culture, inter-subjective relations and knowledge production" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 30) has striking similarities with contemporary processes of internationalisation.

Colonial Education and its Discontents

Colonial education was hinged around a view of knowledge that emphasised the individual, scientific, and universal aims of education ahead of the social and cultural. This combined with the colonial construct of Indian society*2* shaped 19th century school education in India. The rejection of indigenous knowledge*3* and socio-cultural context in shaping curriculum in the diverse sub-continental landscape of India created a deep conflict between education and culture, isolating school-based knowledge from every-day reality of school children (Kumar, 2005). This isolation characterises the bulk of educational practice across India even today and lies at the root of India's poor performance in universalising critical education (Batra, 2015).

The 19th century colonial context was the site of several local struggles of a people who lived, since the late 15th century, marginal and subjugated lives under the hegemony of the feudal upper castes of Indian society. Some of these struggles*4* are reflected in the feminist and anti-caste writings and activism of Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890); Savitribai Phule (1831-1897); Tarabai Shinde (1850-1910)

and Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922). While the political struggle for freedom led by nationalist leaders drew upon ideas of rationality and modernity to challenge colonial rule, it did little to examine how 'colonial knowledge practices' reinforced Brahmanical hegemony[5] and patriarchy.

Jyotiba Phule sought to integrate critical rationality of modern science in organising education for Dalits and women. Recognising that the British government ignored the problem of education of the lower castes and women, Phule made several appeals to them to institute more inclusive policies on education[6]. Deeply influenced by ideas of rationality and modernity, Phule "demonstrates how state policy and dominant pedagogical practices are intrinsically interlinked" (Rege, 2010, p. 93); and soon realised that the policies of the colonial state favoured Brahmanical control of knowledge (Sinha, 2017). The long struggle for India's independence was indeed multidimensional, including the resistance of Dalits and women against Brahmanical domination. The discourse of anti-caste struggles rested on ideas of transformative education that would help overthrow forces that subjugated Dalits and women. Phule for instance, reimagines education as the *Trutiya Ratna*[7] (third eye) that has "the possibilities to enable the oppressed to understand and transform the relation between power and knowledge" (Rege, 2010, p. 93). The discourse of anti-caste struggles predated the nationalist discourse that focused on contesting 'western' forms of knowledge. The 20th century anti-colonial struggle that led India's freedom movement however, missed making any real epistemic consonance with anti-caste discourses.

Several counter narratives emerged in response to colonial education in India. Embracing modernity, Tagore initiated the movement[8] to popularise science amongst the masses. His endorsement of western science and associated modernity was to become a cornerstone of formal education in independent India. Gandhi's 'Nai Talim' was a response to two specific challenges of the time – the elite system of colonial education perceived to be culturally and economically irrelevant, as well as over 'who can be educated' primarily determined by upper caste hegemonic control, characteristic of Indian society[9]. The attempt here was to make education an act of 'deliberation' – that would address the immediate needs and concerns of a colonially subjugated society – rather than one based on 'an intrinsic view of knowledge' – inherent in the modernist-universalist frame of colonial thinking. This powerful idea of Gandhi was much ahead of its time, even as western debates on curriculum of the 1950s and 1960s continued to proclaim 'universal scientific principles' of curriculum design and relied on the philosophers' claim of identifying knowledge that had intrinsic worth (Batra, 2015).

Gandhi's 'Nai Taleem' was focused on bringing work and education together with the aim to develop in the young "attitudes of cooperation, social responsibility within a frame of equality and freedom of the human spirit." Tagore too saw the educational project as one that would liberate the self and others. In this sense, the anti-colonial vision of education for a free India envisaged by several nationalist leaders[10] contained in them a critique of the narrow individualistic aims of modernity. The 'indigenous principle' was about 'forging a link between the outer material reality with the inner capacity to reflect and develop insight' (Batra, 2015).

The distinction between colonial education and an education envisioned by counter movements initiated by nationalist leaders lay in the purpose of the educational project of the time. Whereas colonialism aimed to develop subservient citizens, the aim of nationalist leaders was to liberate the Indian people from the shackles of colonial English education and to create free citizens who could emancipate an India rooted in the diverse cultures of its people. The purpose of education offered in institutions[11] supported by nationalist leaders was to enable young minds to develop a national

imaginary of a free and independent India. Counter narratives to the colonial view of knowledge and practice of education were diverse, ranging from developing an integrated people with scientific outlook, a rational mind and self-reliance in an economic, social and psychological sense.

Distinct among these was Ambedkar's (1891-1956) concerted struggle against social injustice in a caste-based society and the Dalit women's movement that drew upon Ambedkar's political philosophy to fight the Brahmanical social order. Ambedkar was critical of nationalist leaders, including Gandhi, who "maintained that the caste system was a social matter and not relevant to the political struggle to attain freedom from colonial rule" (Mukherjee, 2009, p. 364). "Social and economic democracy" argues Ambedkar (1945, p. 447), "are the tissues and the fibre of a political democracy…Democracy is another name for equality." Ambedkar's ideas on democracy and equality developed from his close association with John Dewey (1859-1952) and his seminal work on *Democracy and Education* that strongly influenced[12] *Annihilation of Caste* (Ambedkar, 1935[13]).

Education in Post-colonial India

After two centuries of colonial rule, post-independence India foregrounded the aim of developing modern citizens via a robust educational system that would be guided by Constitutional[14] values of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity. Pivotal to this was Maulana Azad's contribution as India's first education minister and renowned Islamic scholar. Azad problematised the challenges of Indian education as providing free and compulsory school education and addressing questions of caste, gender and teacher education (Habib, 2015).

Critical to the post-colonial context of early independent India was the construction of an overarching national identity of 'unity in diversity' via modern education. Questions of modernity were crucial as the aim of education was to prepare the youth to develop scientific rationality, and participate in industrialisation and technological advancement. The Education Commission (GoI, 1966) viewed modernity and nationalism as synonymous. The central role of modern education was that of "nation-building." Hence, educational objectives were defined within the paradigm of national development. Modernisation meant engaging with the growing body of knowledge in science and technology and developing scientific temper.

Upper caste intellectuals had little interest in educating the masses. Nor did they question colonial knowledges structured on binaries such as tradition vs. modernity, subjective vs. objective. This represents a continuity of the role of some Brahman intellectuals whose status Rege argues (2010, p. 92), "was enhanced by the colonial regime that used the classification and categorisation of 'Indian tradition' to create norms for colonial rule." Thus, with the post-independence adoption of modern education, India glossed over its critique of modernity as well as the fact that modernity itself was constitutive of coloniality. The traditional vs. modern binary remained. This disallowed genuine engagement with questions of structural inequalities in Indian society that colonial education had succeeded in cementing.

For about twenty years between 1968 and 1986, the modernisation project was perceived by the state and the people as a means to achieve social justice, productivity, national integration and a rational outlook[15]. The post-colonial Nehruvian modernisation project focused on creating the scientific citizen who would imbibe the constitutional values of plurality, an open society that was democratic and secular. However, the Nehruvian emphasis on higher education, science and technology led to the neglect of the school system and in fulfilling the constitutional mandate of

universalising elementary education. As a result, the school system remained within the clutches of the colonial frame, 'universalisms of modernity', and an upper-caste imagination that saw little reason to support the cause of mass education. Tagore's and Gandhi's legacy of educational ideas remained at the periphery of mainstream school education and soon faded away from popular imagination. The frame of modernity constitutive of coloniality of power, that shaped India's education, surfaced in different ways since independence.

Independent India's first four decades were mired in several exigencies such as conflict with neighbouring countries and weak economic growth. This period saw little by way of concerted state intervention in improving access to school education for the masses. Although efforts were made to make available well researched school knowledges that challenged colonial frames such as in history teaching, most of school and teacher education was steeped in 'universalisms of modernity'. A textbook culture, unimaginative teacher education frozen in colonial times and a rote-based examination system characterised most of school education. Formal school education remained disconnected from everyday life and the intellectual agency of knowledge production and practices rested with experts and the bureaucracy. The teacher was a mere agent of the state and its project of modernisation (Kumar, 2005; Batra, 2005).

Liberalisation of the Indian economy, started slowly in 1984 leading up to the New Education Policy (GoI, 1986), and post-Jomtein*16* international pressures compelled India to initiate nation-wide reforms of its school system. Concepts associated with child-centred education were imported as 'policy borrowing' became the norm with scant regard to their theoretical genesis and practical applicability in diverse social, economic and cultural contexts. Importation of concepts marginalised any attempts to seed innovative ideas that resonated with the lived realities of diverse childhoods. Sriprakash (2010, p. 304) shows how "child-centred models do not always seek to hand-over greater control to children in the instructional aspects of pedagogy, despite reform language which suggests otherwise". Market-led reforms, starting with the acceleration of liberalisation in the 1990s, led to large-scale testing of learning outcomes that sought to standardize school education. A consonance between a neoliberal framework and the behaviouristic outcome-based model of education driven by an international policy discourse was firmly established in India. Questions of quality education were divorced from processes of teaching and learning and from questions of social and economic inequities.

Examining the Episteme of Reforms

The inadequacy of neoliberal reforms in engaging with pressing social and political concerns engenders the need to examine the epistemological frame that underpins these reforms. The relationship between coloniality and epistemology and between knowledge and power have been examined by several scholars (Mignolo, 2005; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991; Foucault, 1982). Coloniality of power is seen as "a principle and strategy of control and domination that is constitutive of western modernity as a series of unfolding political, economic, cultural and educational projects…The interrelations between modernity and coloniality in the discursive institutionalisation of modern schooling were produced and maintained in part through the concepts of civilisation and the disciplinary practices of civilising" (Baker, 2012, p. 13). With multiple meanings, practices and experiences, colonialism was also a cultural project whose influence is palpable in contemporary Indian society. According to Pinar (2015, p. 223) neoliberal reforms mirror colonialism that "increases cultural dependency and political subjugation while encouraging modernisation with its rhetoric of rights and reparation."

A major shift in educational thinking associated with neoliberal reforms in India is with regard to conceptions of 'quality education' and associated 'knowledge practices'. The attempt here is to understand how this has been positioned and repositioned in the backdrop of the colonial as well as the post-colonial context of education in India. The larger aim is to explore aspects of coloniality and modernity that underlie the episteme of reforms and how these sustain continuities with India's colonial past; and simultaneously, also offer the promise of removing the 'epistemic veil' that obstructs national educational imaginaries.

Neoliberal Reforms and Processes of Internationalisation

Based on the human capital approach, the neo-liberal agenda of education is designed to fulfil individual aims and self-interest defined in narrow economic terms. This has created a wedge between the needs of society and policy formulation. The Indian and larger Southern context is markedly different from a 'western' context that the 'international education project' seeks to transfer educational reform from. The sheer scale and diversity of populations within the region poses formidable challenges and opportunities for contextual innovation. For instance, the educational agenda foisted by internationalist interests upon societies of the South is in sharp contrast to the agenda of the subaltern in societies like India – Dalits and minorities; tribal and indigenous groups; women and migrant labour that make up more than two-thirds of the Indian population.

Questions arising from attempts to develop a nuanced socially-embedded discourse on curriculum and pedagogic approaches remain marginal to the discourse of reform; failing to attract the attention of national and international researchers. In the absence of concerted research on realities of educational practice, scholars attributed 'implementation failures' of reforms to 'low state capacity, poor administration, poor delivery system, poor community information and corruption/leakages' (Kingdon et al, 2014, p. 55). Through a case study of the education reform movement in India, Ball (2017) uncovers how a *discursive ensemble* projects a state of crisis in education, thereby creating the rationale for processes of educational reform. Neo-liberal imaginaries are disseminated, legitimized and reassembled in relation to and as part of a global education policy community (Ball, 2017, p. 30). The educational discourse promoted internationally has created a 'domestic-foreign dichotomy', locating the system's perceived failure with practices and structures within the home context. This, argues Stone (2004) justifies the imperative for policy transfer.

The instrumental aims of education promoted by a neoliberal agenda ironically furthered historical colonial ideals. With the opening up of the Indian economy, English education became a significant part of educational reforms. Not only did schools in India started teaching English from grade I onwards, but many state schools started separate English medium sections. The English language, a tool for colonial domination and a symbol of modernity (Vishwanathan, 1989; Advani, 2009) acquired enhanced criticality during neoliberal reforms. The importation of educational concepts and policy orientations led to the dismantling of existing structures and processes of education – uprooting the existing while unable to root the 'new', leaving the educational space depleted. Similar processes had evoked sharp reactions in several Southern societies, leading to inward looking ideas of identity and nationalism; foregrounding 'indigenous' thinking without critical reflection; thus undermining diversity and democracy (Batra, 2019).

As a result, several countries of the South including India face the challenge of ineffective reforms manifest in increasing rates of school failure and poor learning outcomes[17]. As non-state actors

redefine the educational space, narrow conceptions of quality emerge; leading to major policy shifts away from a national imaginary of quality universal access to education. For instance, despite a national curricular discourse[18] in India initiated in mid-2000s, that created space for integrating local and diverse knowledges, stressing the role of the teacher in processes of re-contextualisation; schools across India are overwhelmed with unimaginative and alienating measures of reform.

Notions of Quality and Knowledge as constituted in Coloniality?

While examining the tension between quality, equality and quantity, Naik (1975) brought to light how coloniality assigned specific meanings to the idea of quality education and how these meanings became the mainstay of India's education system. In Naik's view (43), quality is a relative concept and was defined according to the value premises adopted by the colonisers. Hence, there is a "close link between 'quality' of education and the social power-structure that defines it". The British emphasis on 'the individual rather than the social goals of education' argued Naik, best served colonial interests (1975, p. 46). The 'link between quality and privilege' was thus established by colonial education and this continued to shape education in India well after independence.

The first serious attempts to release education from the colonial frame in independent India were made by the National Education Commission (GoI, 1966). Key ideas in this Commission were around shifting the notion of quality closer to the idea and practice of equitable education. A common school system that would ensure that children from diverse sections of society attend neighbourhood schools was proposed. The specific strategies to implement such ideas of equitable quality failed to form part of India's first education policy[19]. This was despite the constitutional commitment to universalise elementary education. The colonial frame within which school teachers were being prepared was left undisturbed until as late as the second decade of the current century. Concerns of equality and social justice thus remained disengaged from those of quality education. Deep colonial roots of the modern education system resisted change even as post-colonial India attempted to decolonise knowledge practices[20] via institutes of higher education.

The policy narrative of positioning quality *as* learning outcomes, constructed by neoliberal reforms, created the further logic of marginalising the teacher, undermining her agency and the need for epistemic engagement. The criticality of relating concerns of quality to an "understanding of the broader historical, socio-economic, political and cultural context within which they are embedded" (Barrett, 2013, p. 6) was brushed aside. Disseminated through the discourse of 'big data' on learning achievement, the minimalized idea of quality ensures that arguments of social justice and equitable education remain embroiled in a game of numbers; and the construct of 'quality' escapes critical scrutiny. This has been characteristic of educational reforms in India and much of the global south.

Even as India entered the second decade of neoliberal reforms, the challenge before educators was to reposition knowledge as the fulcrum of sustaining the constitution-led vision of education towards equity and social justice. This opportunity came around the National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005) and the National Curriculum for Teacher Education (NCTE, 2009), establishing the need to re-contextualize knowledge in curriculum; and with the passing of a central legislation that made the right to education (RtE) a fundamental right (GoI, 2009). Grounded ideas of preparing critical teachers, developing a critical curricular discourse and a new set of textbooks in consonance with these ideas set the ground for decolonising the basic frame of school education. Engagement with diversity, local knowledges, active citizenship and democratic pedagogies were key to this frame of educating teachers and children. This proved to be a more difficult task, as

marginalization of knowledge embedded in social realities characterized the Indian educational project since colonial times. First, via the colonial imposition of its forms of 'essentialist education' through an alien language, later through the 'importation' of concepts of educational practice that failed to take root in a culturally diverse and locally rooted Indian society (Batra, 2015).

As a result, the turn of policy discourse towards the centrality of teachers in fulfilling the neoliberal agenda made teachers complicit in taking forward narrow school-based reforms (Biesta, 2015); leaving very little latitude for them to exercise agency in real classrooms (Long et al, 2017). A major intervention of India's Supreme Court (GoI, 2012) sought to restructure the vision and regulatory mechanisms of teacher education in the country to align better with constitutional values and outcomes. Accelerated by a changing political climate, the moral ideals of 'cultural nationalism' aligned with a neoliberal thrust on learning outcomes and teacher performance further marginalized the role of critical knowledges, mirroring the colonial experience. As this piece is being written this is the single most critical challenge that confronts education in contemporary India – one that threatens to tear into the social fabric of a plural society.

Making the Case for Epistemic Transformation

Associated with the urban elite, colonial education was severed from the cultural and economic realities of the rural masses. This disconnect created a major void. Upper caste nationalist leaders paid little heed to the contradiction[21] that Ambedkar underlined when India became a republic in 1950 – the contradiction between the political life of Indians, who would enjoy 'one vote one value' – and the social life of its people, who would continue to struggle to achieve the idea of 'one man one value'. Several attempts to bring education closer to people and their culture via language as well as social and psychological access were frustrated during colonial and post-colonial contexts. While colonial power was about political control, modernity for most nationalist leaders educated through colonial education was about rationality and scientific thinking. The thrust on modernity during the Nehruvian era was about developing scientific temper and an attitude of rational thought, sought to be developed via technical and higher education. The post-colonial modern education system assumed a 'natural' convergence between 'modernity' and ideas of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity enshrined in the Indian Constitution. However, the inseparable link between colonisation and modernity (Escobar, 2004; Mignolo, 2007) meant that the 'modern system of education' adopted by independent India was embedded within a discourse of hierarchy and power. In this sense, the 'modernity' project of independent India warranted by default, a continuity with the project of 'coloniality', long after the British left. The absence of mass education for over four decades after independence, gave the youth of India little opportunity to carve their identities as citizens of a 'democratic political and social order'. In Chatterjee's (2004) view, the bulk of the Indian people continued to function as 'subjects of political society' rather than as 'citizens of civil society'. A colonial-feudal nexus appeared to have become the frame within which modern education was being advanced. The most privileged, largely upper caste Indians reaped most of the benefits of the modern system of education and aspired to be global citizens.

Recognising the counter-hegemonic nature of a 'modern' system of education, Ambedkar accorded it central importance in his endeavour to 'overthrow the hierarchical structure and ideology of caste'. Ambedkar's ideology of liberation drew from enlightenment philosophy, the indigenous thoughts of Budhha, Phule and Kabir and his own political struggles. Ambedkar's socio-political thought was rooted in 'social democratic liberalism' wherein criticality was accorded to a synthesis between individuals, community and society (Velaskar, 2012). Even though Ambedkar was considered 'an

unalloyed modernist', who believed in science, rationality and the modern state for the actualisation of human reason (Chatterjee, 2006, p. 77), his philosophical context was the enlightenment and his social context the Indian society (Rodrigues, 2017, p. 102). Equality was the overriding principle of Ambedkar's struggle; an encompassing value (Velaskar, 2012; Rodrigues, 2017).

Drawing on the political philosophy of Phule and Ambedkar, scholars have argued how engagement with colonial oppression provides a vision of education for social transformation (Rege, 2010; Velaskar, 2012); emphasising the need to view education as deliberative democracy and curriculum as an act of social dialogue (Batra, 2016). Rege (2010) demonstrates how social movement practices based on 'Phule-Ambedkerite Feminist Pedagogies' offer critical sources of pedagogic innovation and new knowledge. Building on the knowledges and experiences students from diverse social backgrounds bring to class, enables a reimagining of pedagogic processes and a re-examination of the major 'canons' of disciplines taught.

Both Phule and Ambedkar underline 'situated knowledge' as critical to opening the possibilities of enabling the oppressed to understand and transform the relationship between knowledge and power (Rege, 2010). Ambedkar's political philosophy included the idea of social and political action as central to the battle for freedom and equality. While for Gandhi, swaraj was about breaking the shackles of colonial rule and of oneself, Ambedkar's idea of freedom constituted the liberation of the oppressed and a commitment to social equality. As Rege argues, both Phule and Ambedkar tried to refashion modernity by including the critical aim of establishing an egalitarian society as part of the anti-colonial struggle. This was the essential epistemic difference that modern education failed to discern and that neoliberal reforms seek to gloss over.

Conclusion

The path that India took in adopting modern education carried with it a constituted coloniality in which the hierarchical and hegemonic character of Brahmanical power remained central. The colonial epistemic frame that favoured Brahmanical hegemony was left uncontested despite initial post-colonial attempts to link quality education with ideas of social equity and justice. These ideas were deeply related to Ambedkar's vision of a free and democratic India articulated by him in the Constitution. Deeply influenced by Dewey, Ambedkar regarded democracy as 'associated living', central to which are ideas of equality, fraternity and mutual respect for each other (Mukherjee, 2009). For both Phule and Ambedkar, the democratisation of the method of knowledge includes seeking the integration of "the principles of *prajna* (critical understanding) with *karuna* (empathetic love) and *samata* (equality)" (Rege, 2010, p. 93).

Maulana Azad, India's first education minister made a strong case for the democratisation of education for all, emphasising its criticality in developing citizenship but was unable to institutionalise it. India's first education policy (GoI, 1968) lost the opportunity to create this critical epistemic shift. In his last book, Naik documents how suggestions to link quality with equity and justice; and to ensure equality of opportunity for the underprivileged and poor met with strong disapproval, even hostility (Naik, 1982). Twenty years later India's New Education Policy (GoI, 1986), embedded in the early phase of liberalisation, succeeded in institutionalising educational inequities by establishing differentiated curricula and schooling systems. As neoliberal reforms became mainstream, Right to Education and school and teacher education curricula reform of the mid-2000s tried to address questions of equity and quality. The neoliberal project appears to have succeeded in severing quality from both concerns – processes of teaching and learning, as well as an

education for social justice. Questions of curriculum, linguistic and social diversity in classrooms, locating learning in social-cultural contexts and developing teachers' professional repertoires and agency in bringing about social transformation are specific to Indian society (Batra, forthcoming).

The key question being glossed over the century-long transition from colonial rule to neoliberal reforms is the question of addressing inequality in and through education. The episteme of reforms, rooted in coloniality occludes any genuine attempts to do 'epistemic justice'. In order to engage with the multiple realities that characterize diverse and often contested societies of the global South, it is necessary to remove the 'epistemological veil' rooted in coloniality. The construction of anti-colonial national imaginaries in the diverse societies of the South including India, can provide new discourses of education. These can enable the imagination of transformative pedagogies, help reclaim education spaces and sustain epistemic justice.

References

Advani, S. (2009). *Schooling the national imagination: Education, English, and the Indian modern*. Oxford University Press.Ambedkar, B. R. (1935/2014). *Annihilation of caste: The annotated critical edition*. Verso.

Ambedkar, B. R. (1945). *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables* (1945) In Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches, vol. 9, ed. Vasant Moon (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1991). Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, New Delhi: Govt. of India.

Baker, M. (2012). Modernity/coloniality and Eurocentric education: Towards a post-occidental self-understanding of the present. *Policy Futures in Education*, *10*(1), 4–22. https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2012.10.1.4

Ball, S. J. (2017). Laboring to relate: Neoliberalism, embodied policy, and network dynamics. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *92*(1), 29–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2016.1264802

Barrett, A. M. (2013). Education quality and social justice in the South: An introduction. In L. Tikly & A. M. Barrett (Eds.), *Education quality and social justice in the global South: Challenges for policy, practice, and research* (pp. 1–8). Routledge.

Batra, P. (2005). Voice and agency of teachers: A missing link in the National Curriculum Framework. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4347–4356.

Batra, P. (2015). Curriculum in India: Narratives, debates, and a deliberative agenda. In W. F. Pinar (Ed.), *Curriculum studies in India: Intellectual histories, present circumstances* (pp. 35–63). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137477156_2

Batra, P. (2016). Education in Conflict: Redefining the Contours of Change. *British Educational Research Association (BERA) 2016.* University of Leeds.

Batra, P. (2019). Comparative education in South Asia: Contribution, contestation, and possibilities. In C. C. Wolhuter & A. W. Wiseman (Eds.), *Comparative and international education: Survey of an infinite field* (Vol. 36, pp. 183–211). Emerald. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-367920190000036011

Batra, P. (Forthcoming). Politics, policy and practice of teacher education reform in India. In W. T. Pink (Ed.) *Encyclopaedia of school reform.* Oxford University Press.

Biesta, G. (2015). What is education for? On good education, teacher judgement, and educational professionalism. *European Journal of Education*, *50*(1), 75–87. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12109

Chatterjee, P. (2004). *The politics of the governed: Reflections on popular politics in most of the world*. Columbia University Press.

Chatterjee, P. (2006). B.R. Ambedkar and the troubled times of citizenship. In V. R. Mehta & T. Pantham (Eds.), *Political ideas in modern India: Thematic explorations: Vol. X Part 7* (pp. 73–90). Sage.

Escobar, A. (2004). Beyond the Third World: Imperial globality, global coloniality and anti-globalisation social movements. *Third World Quarterly*, *25*(1), 207–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/0143659042000185417

Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, *8*(4), 777–795. https://doi.org/10.1086/448181

GoI. (Government of India) (1966). *Education and National Development: Report of the Education Commission 1964-66* . New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Education.

GoI. (1968) *National Policy on Education 1968*. New Delhi: Ministry of Education.

GoI. (1986). *National Policy on Education.* New Delhi: Government of India, MHRD.

GoI. (2009). *The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act.* New Delhi: Gazette of India, Government Press.

GoI. (2012). *Vision of Teacher Education in India: Quality and Regulatory Perspective, Report of the High-Powered Commission on Teacher Education Constituted by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.* New Delhi: MHRD.

Habib, S. I. (2015). Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and his ideas about the national education system. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, *12*(2), 238–257. https://doi.org/10.1177/0973184915581920

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, *14*(3), 575–599. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066

Harding, S. (1991/2016). Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's

lives. Cornell University Press.

Kingdon, G. G., Little, A., Aslam, M., Rawal, S., & Moe, T. (2014). *A rigorous review of the political economy of education systems in developing countries* (EPPI-Centre reference no. 2203). Department for International Development (DFID), London, UK.

Kumar, K. (2005). *Political agenda of education: A study of colonialist and nationalist ideas*. Sage.

Long, C., Graven, M., Sayed, Y., & Lampen, E. (2017). Enabling and constraining conditions of professional teacher agency: The South African context. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, *14*(1), 5–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0973184916678681

Massey, J. (2005). Dr. Ambedkar's vision of a just society. In M. Shabbir (Ed.), *Ambedkar on law, constitution, and social justice* (pp. 153–169). Rawat.

Mignolo, W. D. (2005). The idea of Latin America. Blackwell.

Mignolo, W. D. (2007). DELINKING: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality. *Cultural Studies*, *21*(2–3), 449–514. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162647

Mukherjee, A. P. (2009). B. R. Ambedkar, John Dewey, and the meaning of democracy. *New Literary History*, *40*(2), 345–370. https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.0.0083

Naik, J. P. (1975). *Equality, quality and quantity: The elusive triangle in Indian education*. Allied.

Naik, J. P. (1982). *The Education Commission and after*. Allied.

NCERT. (2005). *National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005*. New Delhi: National Council for Educational Research and Training.

NCTE. (2009). *National Curriculum for Teacher Education (NCFTE): Towards a Humane and Professional Teacher*. New Delhi: National Council for Teacher Education.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2013). *Empire, global coloniality and African subjectivity*. Berghahn.

Pinar, W. F. (2015). *Curriculum Studies in India: Intellectual histories and present circumstances*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural Studies*, *21*(2–3), 168–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353

Rege, S. (2010). Education as Trutiya Ratna: Towards Phule-Ambedkarite feminist pedagogical practice. *Economic and Political Weekly, 45*(40), 88-98.

Rodrigues, V. (2017). Ambedkar as a political philosopher. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *52*(15), 101-107.

Sinha, A. (2017). Caste question, Marxism and the political legacy of B. R. Ambedkar. In *a seminar organized by 'The Marx Circle', Calicut on April 5*. Accessed on 25 March, 2020. http://www.mazdoorbigul.net/pdf/Caste-Question,-Marxism-and-Political-Legacy-of-B-R-Ambedkar.pdf

Sriprakash, A. (2010). Child-centred education and the promise of democratic learning: Pedagogic messages in rural Indian primary schools. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *30*(3), 297–304. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2009.11.010

Stone, D. (2004). Transfer agents and global networks in the 'transnationalization'of policy. *Journal of European public policy, 11*(3), 545-566.

Stroud, S. R. (2019). Echoes of pragmatism in India: Bhimrao Ambedkar and reconstructive rhetoric. In R. Danisch (Ed.), *Recovering overlooked pragmatists in communication* (pp. 79–103). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14343-5_4

Velaskar, P. (2012). Education for liberation: Ambedkar's thought and dalit women's perspectives. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, *9*(2), 245–271. https://doi.org/10.1177/097318491200900206

Venkatesh, K. (2016). Education for liberation: Exploring Mahatma Phule's work in education. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, *13*(1), 121–144. https://doi.org/10.1177/0973184915603176

Viswanathan, G. (1989). *Masks of conquest*. Columbia University Press.

Recommended Citation

Batra, P. (2020). Echoes of 'coloniality' in the episteme of Indian educational reforms. *On Education. Journal for Research and Debate, 3*(7). https://doi.org/10.17899/on_ed.2020.7.3

Download PDF version

Do you want to comment on this article? Please send your reply to editors@oneducation.net. Replies will be processed like invited contributions. This means they will be assessed according to standard criteria of quality, relevance, and civility. Please make sure to follow editorial policies and formatting guidelines.

poonam batra

Poonam Batra is Professor at the Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi, India.

1. Although colonialism dates back to 17th century, it continues today as 'coloniality'. See Mingolo, 2007; Quijana, 2007).
2. Several historians have pointed to the continuities in the colonial constructs of Indian society and national imaginaries.
3. Indigenous knowledge indicates a plurality of knowledge systems even during colonial India.
4. There were several movements across the Indian subcontinent that used modernity to challenge casteist practices especially among communities that saw education as key to liberation from Brahmanical hegemony.
5. This term implies dominance of upper caste over backward, schedule castes and tribes in India.
6. In October 1882, Phule prepared his Memorial Addressed to the Education Commission, also known as the Hunter Commission after its Chairman, Sir William Hunter. Accessed on 25 March, 2020 http://ghalibana.blogspot.in/2010/11/memorial-by-mahatma-phule-to-hunter.html
7. *Trutiya Ratna* is a play written by Phule in 1855. The play projects Phule's vision of education and has been used as a frame by several scholars to understand education as a new mode of social perception (Venkatesh, 2016, p. 129).
8. Tagore popularized science through his idea of *loka-siksha* (popular education).
9. Gandhi's Nai Talim, also referred to as 'Basic Education' or the 'Wardha Scheme' was about an education that would give equal respect to intellectual and manual work.
10. Tagore, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Vivekananda presented critical anti-colonial ideas of education.
11. The transfer of education to the control of provincial governments under elected Indian ministers as a result of changes introduced by the 1919 Montague-Chelmsford reforms, marked the end of direct colonial responsibility for education. Nationalist leaders understood well how education was used by colonisers to shape the minds of the young to create a subservient Indian populace. Hence, several Indian leaders invested in educational institutions that would encourage the young to understand the trajectory of the freedom struggle and to participate in its strategic interventions.
12. Several scholars have written about this (See Mukherjee, 2009; Stroud, 2019).
13. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* was delivered as a speech in Lahore in 1936 when it was first published. The essay had been first presented at a seminar in New York in 1916. The second edition was published in 1937 as *Annihilation of Caste: With a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi*. The third edition was published in 1944, including another essay, *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*".
14. Ambedkar chaired the Committee that drafted the Constitution of India.
15. This was reflected in the Five-Year Plans, developed, executed, and monitored by the Planning Commission of India, set up by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister.
16. The first World Conference on Education for All was held in March 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand.
17. In India the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Surveys and National Achievement Surveys (NAS) undertaken by NCERT indicate continued stagnant or declining levels of learning achievement.
18. National Curriculum Framework, 2005 (NCERT, 2005).
19. The first education policy of independent India (1968) failed to incorporate some of the most critical recommendations of the National Education Commission (GoI, 1966).
20. Critical social science research in India has made major contributions in this regard.
21. Ambedkar's speech on 26th January, 1950, when India adopted her Constitution: "We are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality…" See Massey, 2005.