**Faculty of Social Sciences**
Department of Sociology
Division for Education

# Learning Diversity in India

## Do Priorities in Primary Education Enable Capabilities, Enhance Equal Opportunities and Encourage Cultural Diversity?

Martin Eksath



Girls at M. Venkatarangaiya Foundation School in a village outside Hyderabad, India (photo by Martin Eksath)

Supervisor:
Bosse Bergstedt

"The highest education is that which does not merely give us information, but makes our life in harmony with all existence."

Rabindranath Tagore[1]

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[1] Indian philosopher, poet and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, who began questioning the relevance of a system of education created by nation-states and instead proposed a system of education aimed at promoting international co-operation and creating global citizens. The quote derives from a public speech on the subject "The Vicissitudes of Education" 1892.
Source: Sisirkumar Ghosh, 2005, *Rabindranath Tagore*, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi.

# Abstract

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| Abstract: | Primary education of good quality is necessitous to development, democracy and social inclusion. India has subscribed to the goals of education for all by 2015 and has embarked on immense priorities in education to reach the goals. Goals are often measured in terms of outcomes of literacy or school attendance. The main objective of this thesis is to take one step further and explore whether these priorities in primary education has the potential to enable capabilities, enhance equal opportunities and encourage cultural diversity among the children in India. Pragmatism is my starting point and a mixed methods research strategy is used in order to perceive a comprehensive illustration of the social world. The thesis provides a background on the specific Indian context as well as a theoretical framework where central concepts are called into question. The empirical material is collected from various sources as major surveys and reports from institutions, work by researchers from various fields and my own understandings noted in reflective writing exercises. The results are accumulated and discussed in themes in relation to the research questions. The most notable conclusion is that quality is remarkably low in many schools with incompetent pedagogic performances and inadequate learning achievements. This fact works together with the in-built inequalities in the Indian society which instigates that many children will never get the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. |
| Keywords: | Primary education, India, democracy, enable capabilities, cultural diversity, equal opportunities, quality education, mixed methods, international comparative education, intercultural perspective. |

# Abbreviations

**AIES……..** All India Educational Survey
**CA………..** Capabilities Approach
**EdQual…..** Research programme on improving the quality in education (Bristol, UK)
**EFA………** Education for All
**EO………..** Equality of Opportunity Approach
**GoI……….** Government of India
**GPRG……** Global Poverty Research Group (Manchester, UK)
**IDS……….** Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex, UK)
**KGBV**…… Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (Girls in special hardship areas)
**MDGs……** Millennium Development Goals
**MDM…….** Mid-Day Meal Scheme
**NCERT…..** National Council for Educational Research and Training
**NCPCR….** The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
**NGO……...** Non-Governmental Organisation
**NPE………** National Policy on Education
**NSE………** National System of Education
**NSS………** National Sample Survey
**NUEPA…..** National University of Educational Planning and Administration
**OBB……...** Operation Black Board
**OECD…….** Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
**PISA……...** Programme for International Student Assessment
**POA……...** Programme of Action
**PROBE…..** Public Report on Basic Education in India
**RTE………** The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE)
**SC………...** Scheduled Caste
**SKP………** Shiksha Karmi Project
**SSA………** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
**ST………...** Scheduled Tribe
**UEE………** Universal Elementary Education
**UNESCO...** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
**WB……….** The World Bank

# Table of contents

# 1     Prologue with Introduction

The *Prologue* [1.1] will present my genuinely personal rationale for writing this master's thesis, while the *Background* [1.2] will provide the reader with the essentials that were the forerunner to the research questions. The *Purpose Statement* along with the *Research Questions* are presented in [1.3]. The intention of the *Disposition* [1.4] is to give a general idea of the objective of each chapter and simultaneously provide the reader with an overview at an early stage.

## 1.1   Prologue

Why does a middle age man with a wonderful family, a suitable job and an enjoyable life voluntarily exert himself with the gruelling ploughing evenings and weekends on a master's thesis instead of just getting on with life as usual? The prologue will shed some light on this indeed very reasonable question.

*Me, my family and India*
My extended family is part of the vibrant Indian Diaspora that is spread over the world and my wife was born in the likeable Indian city Bhopal which, regrettably, above all is known as the location of the Bhopal gas disaster in 1984 – the world's worst industrial catastrophe so far. Travels to India have increased my knowledge but most of all my curiosity on the enormously diverse country and the resilient, invisible bond that seem to stick this miscellaneous nation (as well as the Indian Diaspora) together.

*A study on implementation*
My bachelor thesis was a study of teachers perception of an evidence based method which was launched at a school in Sweden[2]. The method was reminiscent of a pedagogical cookery book with outstanding ingredients that had prior been rigorously assessed and evaluated by researchers at multiple schools. Still the outcome was not uncomplicated. The well-intended and tailored priorities had little bearing in the school context, and yet a vast majority of all participating teachers, pupils and staff in charge where very

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[2] Eksath, M., 2007, *An Exploratory Study of Teachers Perception during Implementation*, Lund University (original thesis in Swedish: *En explorativ studie kring lärares upplevelse vid implementering*)

enthusiastic about the method. It appeared as to prioritize and initiate the right action was the least difficult task for the school in its aim to make a change. Problems related to the prioritized action started when the hard work of implementing was actually done and daily routines took over.

*A study on education in contemporary India*
In 2009, I had the opportunity to spend a month at the University of Hyderabad to join an interdisciplinary course "Contemporary India" that introduced the India of today with a focus on the foundational diversities of Indian socio-cultural and political-economic realm and developmental issues in an overview manner. The course also brought up certain aspects and essentials of India from a historical point like caste, religion and socio-cultural stratification in order to make an understanding of the critical interplay of these factors in contemporary India. My term paper, with a related topic free of choice, was "Diversity in Equality in Contemporary Indian Education[3]", which somehow underpins this master's thesis.

*My work is a source of inspiration*
My place of work is with the Inspectorate of Educational Inspection of Sweden. Since the beginning of the 1990s the main responsibility for education activities lies with the local authorities, that is the municipalities and authorities for independent schools. The curriculum, national objectives and guidelines for the public education system are laid down by the Swedish Parliament and Government. The task of the Swedish inspection is to control whether the municipalities and the schools fulfil their responsibilities in relation to the regulations set out in the Education Act. The inspection also has to evaluate how well educational activities and schools are functioning in relation to the national objectives and the national curriculum, which has been a source of inspiration to this study.

*Education, democracy and core value basis*
An area of personal interest as well as related to my line of work is the focal point where education, democracy, development and politics meet in educational policies and reforms. The school system has to impart a fundamental core value basis[4] in order to be the vehicle for democracy where the goal is to educate actively democratic citizens. I have habitually pondered about problems related to passing on core values in Sweden. India is sometimes described a democracy forged together with a strong sense of unity in its diversity. As India and Sweden in many ways are opposite poles I find it exciting to gain knowledge on how core values reflect the priorities made in the Indian national policy of education in order to uphold the democracy in this immensely diverse nation.

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[3] Eksath, M., 2009, *Diversity in Equality in Contemporary Indian Education*, University of Hyderabad
[4] Translated from the Swedish word *Värdegrund*

*What is the essence of learning in a developing country?*

When finishing the term paper in Hyderabad I considered the question whether it is accurate to measure educational development as targeted in the UN millennium goal of universal primary education or by measurable learning outcomes such as literacy and school attendance. What is the meaning of school attendance if it is not coupled with quality and furnishes for essential capabilities to cope with life and endow with equal opportunities? What is the meaning of learning when learning has no real meaning or to put it in a context of rural India: what is the meaning of literacy when there is no meaning of reading for a poor girl doomed to domestic work in an illiterate family trying to make both ends meet? What is the relevance and what direction does learning give to the lives of the children of India? An adequate number of provocative inquiries have acted as a powerhouse when writing this thesis.

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| **My Rationale for Writing the Thesis** | My extended family is part of the Indian diaspora and journeys to India has encouraged a fascination vis-à-vis the diversity that appears to be unifying |
| | A liable elaboration of my bachelor thesis upon *implementation* and an enlargement of my term paper on *Contemporary India* in Hyderabad |
| | Relates to my line of work, associated with the fulfilment of the Education Act and evaluation of educational activities within the Swedish school system |
| | How important is the role of education and a core value basis in order to achieve "unity in diversity" and to uphold a democratic governance? |
| | What is really the essence of learning in a developing country? Is learning making grounds for equal opportunities by providing essential capabilities? |

**Figure 1.1:** Memo on researcher identity. Author, 2010 [see figure 3.5 *memos*]

Everything mentioned above has by some means encouraged me in writing this master's thesis. Curiosity and a strive to do a jig saw puzzle with all the pieces mentioned above is my driving force combined with a genuine wish that this thesis could be of use for a good cause.

## 1.2   Background

> *"By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning."*
>
> Mahatma Gandhi[5]

Now and then the matter of education has a rather narrow angle as i.e. whether the children are literate or not. The topic of this thesis aims at

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[5] Harijan: July 31, 1937

widening the horizon and relates to the focal point where education, democracy, development and politics meet. The thesis aligns with the conception of democracy, where education and politics join forces and team up in educational policies and reforms.

India's education system is based on two fundamental goals – universalization of elementary education (UEE) and Education for All (EFA). On 1 April 2010, India´s Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) came into force. The law made elementary education a fundamental right of every child and an entitlement for children in the 6-14 age groups. The aim of the law is to directly benefit out of school children.

The right to education needs to be fortified by a democratic system that has the ability of providing education that is merged with equality and quality[6]. Recent research in democratic education has found that the education as it is today does not reach the goals of educating actively democratic citizens[7]. Education is a social process and there are a lot of varieties of societies. However, fundamental values as the concept of actively democratic citizens might vary. Educational policies and criticism conveys a particular social ideal and a perception on what should be considered as fundamental values.

India has been exceptional within the developing world for resilience of its liberal democratic institutions. Various articles in the Indian constitution approve of education as a basic fundamental right[8]. Simultaneously, the possibility of real democracy in a country with such marked social inequality, depths of poverty and low rates of literacy has been questioned (Potter, et al., 1997:196). How does diversity and inequality have an impact on the planning of Education? Does the socio-cultural diversity call for prioritized tailored action or does it require a unity in the education system. India, has a population of over one billion people, roughly one-sixth of the world's population, and is the world's largest constitutional democracy (Sharma, 2002).

The democracy in India is a result of the diversity by frequent compromises and modification with its diverse groups (Ganguly & DeVotta, 2003:2). The diversity of India is often described as a unique and positive factor[9], which is emphasized in the national slogan "Unity in Diversity". The economic and social growth of India during the last decades has been rapid and generated much optimism. There are an extensive number of well-educated computer engineers and technicians. Simultaneously, India is a society

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[6] The National Human Rights Commission, India.
[7] *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study*, ICCS 2009 managed by *The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement*, IEA. See www.iea.nl/
[8] http://india.gov.in/citizen/primary_education.php (retrieved 30 May 2010)
[9] See "Reflexive writing exercises – memos from Hyderabad"

where high levels of inequality and contradictions exist. India is far behind China and the other BRIC[10] countries and is enclosing 46 per cent of the world's illiterates, and has an extensive proportion of the world's children not attending school (Kingdon, 2007).

## 1.3   Purpose Statement and Research Questions

Purposes for conducting research embrace for instance adding to the general knowledge base, influencing or measuring a change, understanding or measuring a phenomena, testing new ideas, describing the present or examining the past (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). The purpose of this thesis is to provide an overview of some of the major public education initiatives that have been launched and whether it is possible to suggest that these interventions have had a positive impact in regards of enabling capabilities, enhancing equal opportunities and encouraging cultural diversity. These are concepts that are likely to be fundamental in a vivid democracy.

The thesis is an overlap between the educational fields of [1] *international comparative education*, which focuses on the educational phenomena, practices and institutions within different societies in a comparative perspective, and [2] *the intercultural perspective*, which  embraces an understanding of the social and cultural implications of pedagogical transformation and that variables of gender, social class and cultural diversity are a concern of school and linked with problems of inequality.

I have constrained focus by demarcating issues of primary education. The National Policy on Education and resent actions taken attributable to the policy will be the starting point for the voyage. The starting point and the research questions in this thesis are:

**Do priorities in primary education in India enable capabilities, enhance equal opportunities and encourage cultural diversity?**
This question also compels another question i.e.:
**Is it possible to couple quality, equality and quantity?**

Many of the initiatives taken have not yet been thoroughly evaluated. Much is measured in outcomes such as literacy, but it is hardly possible to unshakably measure cause and effect of each initiative. There is a need to understand the culture, the people, the processes and the prerequisites for

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[10] BRIC; short for the proposed new economic superpowers of the world; Brazil, Russia, India and China

change. It would be naïve to indicate that this thesis will promote change and improve practice in India. I will however, by the use of a mixed methods design, explore and reflect upon the initiatives taken and discuss them as a combined effort to decrease the inequality in the, in other aspects, wonderfully diverse Indian society.


## 1.4   Disposition


The aim of the thesis is to investigate whether the Indian National Policy on Education has determined priorities in primary education that is likely to enable capabilities enhance equal opportunities and encourage cultural diversity in the social-culturally diverse Indian society. The objectives of the chapters are:

*Chapter1* [introduction] has presented my driving force for writing this master's thesis. Expectantly the reader is now acquainted with the incentive and the purpose of the study as well as the essentials that have been the foundation to the research questions.

*Chapter 2* [method] provides the reader with the epistemological and ontological considerations that influences and underpins this thesis as well as the practical and ethical considerations made. This thesis goes hand in hand with pragmatism and mixed methods, thoughts that might not be regarded as rock-solid as the fundamental paradigms. My aim is therefore to be thorough and comprehensive when putting forward my theoretical framework or knowledge claims on social science and to present bearing concepts.

*Chapter 3* [method] describes the design of the study, choices for the methods and their limitations, the methods used for data collecting and analysis as well as the accountability of the study. The thesis aims to provide substantial elucidations in order to avoid deception towards the readers. Detailed procedures in the research are expounded as the chapter describes the design of the study, choices for the methods and their limitations, the methods used for data collecting and analysis as well as the accountability of the study.

*Chapter 4* [theory] aims at giving a conceptual framework and an overview of the ambivalent terms of diversity, equality and quality coupled with education. This theoretical overview launches the main concepts in the thesis. Amartya Sen's Human Capabilities Approach lays focus on poverty, inequality and human development. Bhikhu Parekh's theories on cultural diversity suggest that education policies should bring about a national

belonging. Lawrence Stenhouse process model of curriculum theory and practice uses concepts like diversity, equality and quality to close the gap between policy and practice in education.

*Chapter 5* [theory] provides a contextual framework and focuses on the explicit Indian context with the discourse interrelated with the national slogan "unity in diversity" and the legislative support for primary education. The section will finish off by giving emphasis to a range of recent Indian government initiatives in order to develop elementary education in India. Since 2002 most of the programmes are part of the major initiative *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) with the goal to enrol all 6-14 year-olds in school by 2010, keep them at school and present them with quality education as a minimum until grade eight.

*Chapter 6* [results/empiricism] results are brought together in two major sections. In the first section significant outcomes are accumulated from surveys and reports conducted on Indian primary education along with results from various scholars concerned with diverse aspects of the topic. In the second section findings concerned with the process of implementation are brought forward.

*Chapter 7* [analysis and discussion] accumulates the theoretical background, the Indian context and the results to provide a framework for quality suitable for the Indian context. The empirics are explored in themes that depart from the research questions.

*Chapter 8* [conclusion] presents the most important results. Suggestions for further research are presented.



Photo by Martin Eksath; M.V. Foundation School in a village outside Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh India

# 2    Methodology I – Prerequisites and Influences

This methodology chapter provides the reader with the epistemological and ontological considerations that influences and underpins this thesis as well as the practical and ethical considerations made.

## 2.1    Introduction

> *"More useful research says something important about the phenomena under study. It is insightful, and its explanations are plausible. Many researchers find that to conduct this level of research involves mixing methods and perhaps also mixing paradigms"*.
>
> Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher and Perez-Prado (2003:19)

There are many different ways of knowing or understanding, like divine inspiration, insight or acceptance of dictates by authorities (Mertens, 1998). Research differs from other ways of knowing while it is "*a process of systematic inquiry that is designed to collect, analyse, interpret and use data in order to understand, describe, predict, or control*" (Mertens, 1998:2) an educational phenomenon.   A more specific definition of research is influenced by the researcher's theoretical framework where theory is being used to find relationships among constructs that describe or explain a phenomenon (Ibid, 1998).

This chapter is thus concerned with providing the reader with the authors' *theoretical framework* or knowledge claims on social science, unfolding the relationship between theory and research and discussing certain important terminology issues.  A sticky label like "interpretivist" or "post-positivist" could be valuable in structuring the understanding of phenomena, but also restrictive when enforcing uncompromising
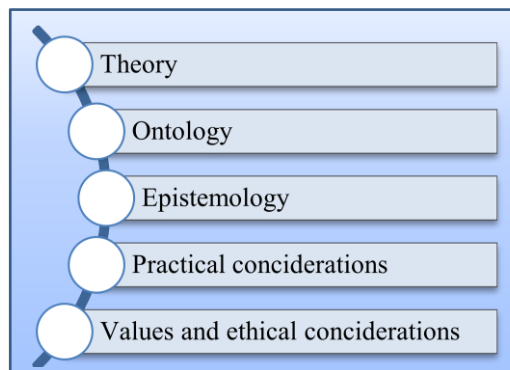


Figure 2.1: Influences on social research. Figure by author after Bryman, 2008:24

categorical differences. The thesis will merge with the pragmatic concern with mixed methods – "what works" – as solutions to important problems (Patton, 1990 in Creswell, 2003). The line of reasoning for mixed methods as a research strategy is based on a view that the world is not an absolute unity and different methods may help to get a more comprehensive and holistic picture of the social world, since the world occurs in different contexts (Creswell, 2003).

*Ontological considerations* provide a viewpoint where the being is regarded as an outcome of interaction between individuals, groups or societies. *Epistemological considerations* will portray an inductive view, where theory is generated out of research and where the emphasis is on the understanding of the social world and the interpretation by its inhabitants. My view upon the concept of meaning will be elucidated. The pragmatic view of mixed methods go well together with the concept of meaning (ibid, 2003). *Practical* as well as *values and ethical considerations* are other aspects that have further pointed out the orientation and thus been a foundation to what the thesis has developed into.

## What works?

Since paradigms are opposing worldviews or belief systems which direct the decisions researchers make (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998), the choice of paradigm associate with the driving force, the aim and expectations of the research and form the base for the following choices as regards methodology, methods, literature and research design.

This thesis does not aim to comprehend or solve the paradigm debate. Maybe there are no paradigms in social science since there are areas of overlap and shared aims between them (Bryman, 2008) while paradigms are said to be incompatible with each other (Guba, 1985, Morgan, 1998 in Bryman, 2008). Maybe science is just an assortment of theories, practices, research traditions and world-views with an indistinguishable range of application and with vital parts from distinctly "non-scientific" disciplines (Feyerabend, 1993).

My research is based upon "what works" where the problem is considered the most important and where a mix of methods could be applied as long as it supports a solution to the problem (Creswell, 2003). Since pragmatism or the pragmatic paradigm is described as the philosophical underpinning for mixed methods research (ibid, 2003, Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) pragmatism will be discussed in the next passage along with mixed methods, even though this thesis does not embrace the appraisal of pragmatism as the third paradigm. The passage will end by a discussion of triangulation of different perspectives.

## 2.2   Mixed Methods and Pragmatism

> "*Pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as to different forms of data collection and analysis in the mixed methods study*"
>
> Creswell, 2003:12

My aim in this thesis is to gain knowledge and explore an area of interest where my pre-knowledge is rather limited. What priorities in primary education in India work? Are there possible solutions that could aid in solving problems? Having this point of departure, I find pragmatism and mixed methods an appropriate foundation for my research and I to illuminate my reasons for this choice I will provide an overview of the general ideas of the two concepts.

The philosophical tradition of pragmatism rejects the notion of truth as a mirror or a representation of an independent reality (Baggini & Fosl, 2003:191). The core of pragmatism is the claim that an ideology or a proposition is true if it works adequately. True claims is simply to be thought of as something we can agree upon as effective to solve problems and in aiding us to progress in the world together, whether or not truth represents an independent reality (Ibid, 2003:191). Practical consequences should be accepted and impractical ideas should be discarded. Early pragmatists discarded the idea that truth about the real world could be uncovered solely by the use of a single scientific method.

Pragmatism is a set of beliefs and does not pledge to a specified system of philosophy or reality. Focus for the pragmatist researchers is on the "what" and "how" of the research problem (Creswell, 2003:11). Since the 1970s, the pragmatist epistemology has been given increased attention in the social sciences, due to the continuing debates over the status of social scientific knowledge (Biesta & Burbules, 2003) and it has sprung as a rejection of the enforced choice between post positivism and constructivism (Creswell 2003). Pragmatism endorse researchers to study areas that are interesting, with the use of methods that are appropriate for the situation and by utilizing the findings in accordance with the value system embraced by the researcher (Creswell 2003; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

When the research problem is considered important and the focus of attention then researchers should use pluralistic approaches to provide the best understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2003). This indicates that pragmatism, or the "philosophy of free choice", is the most applicable epistemology for mixed methods (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003) since the research problem is predominant and no philosophical loyalty is taken to

any other possible paradigm then the one that suits the situation (Creswell, 2003:11). What is then the justification of using mixed methods according to the devotees? Green suggests that mixed methods …

> "*...invites us to participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished...Better understanding of the multifaceted and complex character of social phenomena can be obtained from the use of multiple approaches and ways of knowing*".
>
> Green, 2008:20

To sum it up pragmatism holds an epistemological view that there are no beliefs or theories that without doubt can be judged as true. All theories or beliefs have the possibility of being revised in the light of new evidence or other changes in our beliefs. Pragmatism rejects the perception of a framework from within all claims to rationally justified belief could be evaluated, thus the pragmatic account of rationality supports an interpretative understanding of knowledge. Perhaps theoretical anarchism is more humanitarian and more likely to encourage progress than its alternatives (Feyerabend, 1993)?

Rejecting the notion of an obstructing general theory allows this thesis for alternate theoretical assumptions of what could be addressed as quality in education in the diverse Indian context – a context very different from my point of reference. Could then the only principle needed that does not obstruct progress be that "*anything goes*" (Feyerabend, 1993). A crucial issue is what is pragmatic but yet methodologically acceptable strategies in designing qualitative research (Flick, 2006).

Methodologically, mixed methods do not necessarily have to be linked to the pragmatic paradigm and could be applied along with other major paradigms as well. However, mixed method studies need to include qualitative as well as quantitative research questions [or hypothesis] in order to "*narrow and focus the purpose statements*" (Creswell, 2003:114). In my case, I started off with predominantly quantitative research questions in the term paper from University of Hyderabad[11]. Focus in that paper where on outcomes such as literacy or attendance rates.

Hammersley (1996, in Bryman, 2008:607) suggests three approaches to mixed method research; [1] *Triangulation*, which allude to quantitative research to cross-check qualitative research findings or the other way around, [2] *Facilitation*, which is when one research strategy is used in

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[11] Eksath, M., 2009, *Diversity in Equality in Contemporary Indian Education*, University of Hyderabad

order to aid research using the other strategy, or [3] *Complementary*, where two research strategies are used in order to merge different aspects of an investigation. This thesis affiliates with a wider notion of triangulation described in the following passage.

## 2.3   Triangulation

*"A triangulation of perspectives enlarges*
*the focus on the phenomena under study"*
<div align="right">Flick, 2006:74</div>

There is no single methodological technique or approach to research that would be preferable in most cases since different methods coerce a specified perspective on reality (Berg, 2009:5). "*Every method is a different line of sight directed toward the same point, observing social and symbolic reality*" (Berg, 2009:5). By combining different lines of action by triangulation it is possible to obtain a more comprehensive image of reality over and above a way of verifying the diverse elements (Denzin, 1978:292). Denzin expands the concept of triangulation to be not only a method to validate research findings, but a method that represents varieties of data, investigators, theories and methods.
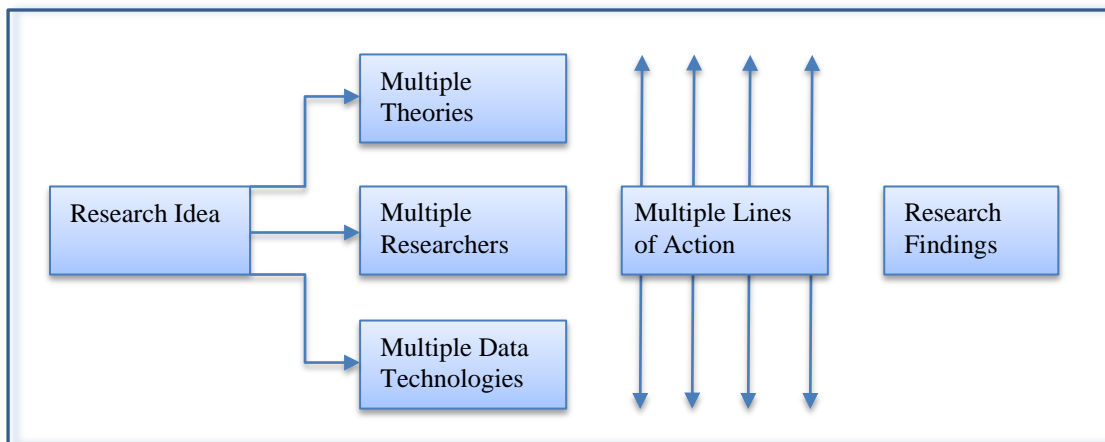


Figure 2.2: Multiple Lines of Action in Triangulation. Denzin in Berg, 2009

Denzin (1978:295) outlines four categories: [1] *Data triangulation* entails gathering of data through several sampling strategies, so that slices of data at different times and social situations, as well as on a variety of people, are gathered [2] *Investigators triangulation* consists of using multiple rather than one researcher studying the same object. [3] *Theory triangulation* consists of using multiple rather than one perspective when interpreting the data [4] *Methodological triangulation* refers to the use of more than one method for gathering data. Triangulation has been portrayed with a variety

of meanings over time, but methodological triangulation signifies the most common used meaning of the term (Bryman, 2008). There is a difference in methodological triangulation between *within-method* and *between-method* triangulation where between-method triangulation contains contrasting research methods, whereas within method involves variations of the same method (Denzin, 1978).

In this thesis diverse perspectives are contributing to the entirety. By *data triangulation*, I have retrieved the information from a multiply sources such as Indian national and transnational statistics, educational policies and plans from UN, the Indian government and authorities as well as passages from a more regional NGO. The data has been collected over different periods of time. I have ensured *investigators triangulation* by acknowledging that persons or alliances behind the data are Indian as well as international scientists with qualification from various fields of social science as well as public administrators. The *methodological triangulation* in this thesis consists of use of official statistics, literature review from diverse scientists as well as reflective writing exercises.

Both mixed methods and triangulation have been criticized and it is necessary to realize that these methods not inevitably are superior to mono-strategy research and it is inadequate and time-consuming to collect more data than needed with the argument that "more is better" (Bryman, 2008). Any research project has limited resources and triangulation or "*mixed methods research should ideally be more than the sum of its parts*" (O´Catrin et al. 2007, in Bryman 2008:624). Using different methods also calls for the researcher to be equally skilled in using each method in an appropriate way (Bryman, 2008).

## 2.4   Key Concepts

Key epistemological and ontological concepts, as *meaning* and *justification*, influence and thus underpin this thesis. These concepts have been collected and explored in this section.

**The Concept of Meaning**

> *The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regards to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person"*
>
> Blumer, 1969:5

Since meaning in this perspective derives from social interaction between people or groups, people will also produce various realities of the world. As reality is related to how different persons or groups create meaning, "*reality becomes an interpretation of various definitional options*" (Berg, 2009:10).

Consequently, meaning and the notion of the reality concerning diversity, equality and learning will differ between the different scholars that I refer to in this thesis. Referring to a wide range of scholars and perspectives, my aim is to aggregate collective meaning when analysing the results. Several basic elements are general in the concept of meaning between different schools of thought. For example, there is an agreement that [1] human interactions form the central source of data, [2] empathy and ability to take the roll of others is a key issue in formulating a theory and, [3] it is the inhabitants of a setting that should define their situation, and thus, the meaning of their actions (Berg, 2009:11). Accordingly, the references in this thesis consists of a large number of scientists from the Indian Diaspora, though I am aware of that these voices do not conform with the reality of the groups targeted for prioritized educational action.

**The Concept of Justification**

> "*The conceited view that some human beings, having the divine gift of creativity, can rebuild creation to fit their fantasies without consulting nature and without asking the rest of us, has not only led to tremendous social, ecological, and personal problems, it also has very doubtful credentials, scientifically speaking.*"
>
> Feyerabend, 1987:711

The logic of justification is an important part of epistemology, however justification should not "*dictate what specific data collection and data analytical methods researchers must use*" (Johnson, 2004:16). Some writers imply that research methods should be tied up to certain a certain set of beliefs, but there is no perfect correspondence between method and epistemology. Ontology and methods are more "free-floating" than often supposed (Bryman, 2008:593). "*Frequently methodological issues are steered by quite other considerations* [than theory]*, some of a highly practical nature*" (Platt, 1996 in Bryman, 2008:593). Dissimilarity in beliefs as regards what logic of justification is the most appropriate, should not stop a researcher from utilizing data collection methods from another paradigm (Johnson, 2004).

According to the pragmatist view, a mixed methods approach makes justified beliefs justified while it "*is likely to result in complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses*" which gives rise to the foremost source of justification in mixed methods research (Johnson, 2004). However

Miller (2003) argues "*if mixed methods as a field of study are to survive deeper scrutiny, it needs a framework where some consistent justification can be made in terms of the issues interference, logic-of-choice, supervenience, and rules*" (in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). There are many theories and opinions concerning logic and when beliefs qualify as knowledge. This thesis will constrain the discussion to the concept of reasoning. Two methods of reasoning are often referred to in logic, i.e. as deductive and inductive reasoning. This thesis aligns with inductive reasoning, which is more exploratory, at least in the beginning, and operates the opposite way, progressing from [1] distinctive observations or findings, where the researcher tries to find [2] patterns, which could generate to wide-ranging [3] generalizations and theories (Bryman, 2008).

## 2.5   Practical and Ethical Considerations (values)

Values are a form of preconception that can intrude at basically any point in the process of social research (Bryman, 2008:24). Ethical considerations are part of my framework that has pointed out the direction in this work. Values have been discussed in the above passages as well, but will now be highlighted, since it is an important argument for the study (Creswell, 2003).

Sometimes practical concerns are linked with values. As an example, practical considerations have to some extent piloted the methodological issues in this thesis. I have chosen to embrace the pragmatic meaning of truth and to disregard the on-going question of science and philosophy concerning on what basis we should acknowledge or reject certain beliefs. Truth might represent a dependent or an independent reality; however in this thesis my focus has been on the research questions.
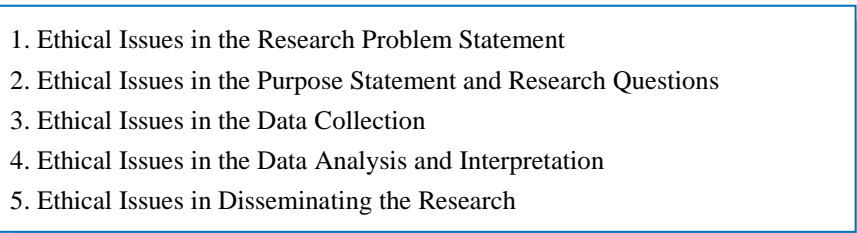
> 1. Ethical Issues in the Research Problem Statement
> 2. Ethical Issues in the Purpose Statement and Research Questions
> 3. Ethical Issues in the Data Collection
> 4. Ethical Issues in the Data Analysis and Interpretation
> 5. Ethical Issues in Disseminating the Research

Figure 2.3: Ethical Issues to Anticipate, in Creswell 2003:62-ff

In the *prologue and introduction*, I present a rationale why I consider this significant problem of importance. To recapitulate, I find India an illuminating example of how a third world country, without the credentials the democracies of the first world possess, has managed to institutionalize a viable form of democracy where diversity is a key ingredient.  However, my objective and what I find is the importance of the study is that the

sustainability of democracy in this diverse nation depends on education as a necessity for decreasing the inequality. Ethical issues in the research problem statement could be whether the study might further marginalize or disempower the study participants or whether individuals will benefit from the study or not (Creswell, 2003:63). The main work done in the study is carried out in a yellow house in Lund 6 500 kilometres from the children in elementary schools in India. Children attending school today will hardly neither benefit nor suffer from the study, but an ambition is that this study could be a part of a larger undertaking for a positive development of elementary education in India.

The research purpose statement and research questions [included in 1.3 *Purpose statement and Research Questions* and in 3.1 *Research Process*] are of importance to avoid deception, i.e. when participants understand the purpose of the study otherwise than the researcher (Creswell, 2003:63). I chose to widen this description in order to avoid deception towards all readers of this thesis by providing substantial elucidations in the methodology chapters. Since not stated elsewhere I hereby state that this thesis is not associated with any sponsorship.

Ethical issues in data collection involve the researchers respect for the sites or participants of the research (Ibid, 2003:64). Data in this study has to a large extent been collected by other sources like scholars, statistic agencies government or public service organisations. It is difficult or even impossible for me to ensure that ethical codes between the data collector and the participants have been followed.  I have, however, tried to exclude less significant sources and where possible I have tried to unveil the research process during data collection. Likewise, I acknowledge that major organizations, as UNESCO, OECD or the Indian NGO´s, certainly not are unbiased, which is the reason for the use of multiple sources in this thesis.

Good ethical decisions in the data analysis and interpretation is of even greater importance when both quantitative and qualitative data is used (ibid, 2003:66). An ethical problem here is to justify the importance of the research problem by reviewing studies that have prior explored the problem (ibid, 2003:81). In this case I will not review a single, isolated study, but look into larger groups of studies [see 3.1 *Research Process*]. The ethical dilemma in this case is to be genuine and setting the study *"within a tradition of inquiry and a context of related studies"* (Rossman et al. 1999 in Creswell, 2003:81), and not simply replicate what someone else has studied before.

Ethical issues in writing and spreading research concerns issues on language use, not to misuse results and to release details on the research so that readers themselves can determine the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2003:67). According to this I have reflected intensely on language to keep a

balance between language that could be easily understood and still vigorous enough to encourage the reader. More detailed procedures in the research will be penetrated in the following chapter. Some photos have been attached to the chapters. The reason for this is to keep in mind that the children are at focus even though much of my investigation concerns policy at a Meta level.

Finally, I must state that due to the nature of my investigation, I will only take part as a diminutive subject during the process in the theory chapters concerning the Indian context and results. I will however return and take an active part in accumulating the theoretical background and the results to and explore the empirics in themes that depart from the research questions.

## 2.6   Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have provided the reader with my theoretical framework on social science and expectantly given plausible explanations for the choices made.

I consider the research problem the most important in this particular research and a fixed paradigm could withdraw focus from the genuine research problem rather than providing support to a solution to the problem. I further argued for the use of mixed methods as a research strategy based on a view that the world occur in different contexts and diverse methods may help to broaden the horizons and perceive a more all-inclusive picture of the social world. Pragmatism was particularised in the chapter since it is described as the philosophical underpinning for mixed methods research and a thought that go well together with the concept of meaning.

The thesis delivers an ontological stance where the being is regarded as an outcome of interaction between individuals, groups or societies. Accordingly the epistemological perspective reveals an inductive view, where theory is generated out of research and diverse perspectives are contributing to the entirety. Emphasis is on the *understanding* of the social world and the *interpretation* by its inhabitants. The information derives from a multiple sources and the data has been collected over different periods of time. The methodological triangulation consists of use of official statistics, literature review from diverse scientists as well as reflective writing exercises and I have attempted to unveil the research process during data collection.

# 3 Methodology II – Research Design

There are two main functions of a research design. One is to relate to the identification and/or development of procedures as well as the practical and logistical measures taken to be able to embark on the study (Kumar, 2005). The second is to put emphasis on the quality in these procedures (ibid, 2005). This chapter will describe the design of the study, choices for the methods and their limitations, the methods used for data collecting and analysis as well as the accountability of the study.

## 3.1 The Research Process

On the whole a research process is concerned with only two questions, i.e. [1] what do you want to find out about, and, [2] how do you attempt to find the answers (Kumar, 2005:16).

In order structure these questions, I will use an outline of the main steps in qualitative research (Bryman, 2004:269), which suits the chosen design.

**The Research Question**
The initial research question and *"the first signpost"* (Creswell, 2003:105) in this thesis was pioneered as*; has the National Policy on Education determined priorities which have reduced inequality in the social-culturally diverse Indian society.* This problem was drawn from the paper *Diversity in Equality in Contemporary Indian Education* (Eksath, 2009). It was to be considered as a general statement of the orientation of the thesis and the broadest research question that could be asked (Creswell, 2003). The output of that question has operated as the starting point for the more qualitative question in the thesis namely: *Do priorities in primary education in India enable capabilities, enhance equal opportunities and encourage cultural diversity?* As a corresponding addition the thesis askes: *What is quality in primary education in India?*

During the process of the study both qualitative and quantitative research questions have been used in different stages in order to broaden and narrow the focus.

**Example of research questions used**

| Qualitative | What has been discovered in the process of implementing? |
|---|---|
| | How could the achievement with method x be explained? |
| | How could the failure with method x be explained? |
| | How is diversity and equality addressed in the methods? |
| Quantitative | Is the impact on school attendance varying between the states? |
| | What differences exist between the states that have fully implemented the methods compared to other states? |

Figure 3.1: Figure by author, 2010.

The quantitative questions are mainly connected to the use of official statistics and used in order to establish causality between the public education initiatives taken in order to improve elementary education in India and the possible outcome in i.e. literacy rates and learning achievements. The qualitative questions are mainly connected to the literature review where phenomena are explored separately in different themes.

**Selection of Relevant Sites and Subjects**

The research was initially conducted during a month's studies at the University of Hyderabad 2009 where the focus was on the foundational diversities of Indian socio-cultural and political-economic sphere in contemporary India. Concerns of elementary education and the affiliation with socio-cultural factors emanated from a term paper and a field visit to an elementary school administered by M.V. Foundation. The selection of primary education as the object of study was chosen on account of a preconception that this is the area within education in India that has been most criticized in terms of low quality. Primary education is also the target in UN´s millennium goals, which is another motive for my choice.

**Collection of Relevant Data**

The different methods chosen to collect relevant data and to coerce a diverse perspective on reality are [1] analysis of official statistics and existing databases, [2] literature review of empirical research studies and project evaluation reports executed by government agencies in addition to independent researchers, and [3] through reflexive writing exercises.

[1] *Official statistics and existing databases*

The statistics have to a large extent been gathered in the beginning of the study or even prior to the study during my time at the University of Hyderabad. The data derives from a range of sources such as [1] annual data published by *GoI* under the label, Selected Educational Statistics, [2] annual data from *NUEPA*, which assembles material on all elementary schools linked to the priority of preference - Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, [3] comprehensive sample surveys e.g. the National Sample Survey (NSS) and, [4] the All India Educational Survey (AIES) piloted by *NCERT* as a census conducted intermittently, the most recent in 2002, and, [5] the 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report carried out by *UNESCO* and

aims at tracking if the world is on track to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015. The criteria I set up for deciding what surveys to use in the thesis were that I wanted data from influential international organizations as well as Indian organizations of significance. Most of the major international as well as Indian organizations that provide statistics have been criticized for various reasons. I have hence been careful not to depend on just a few sources. In addition I wanted to ensure that both governmental as well as NGO´s were represented. Finally, I wanted documents that have not been to dated, since I had reason to believe that the situation has changed in India in comparison to a couple of decades back. For a more detailed list of sources, see Appendix I.

[2] *Literature review of research studies and project evaluation reports*
There are two major reasons for conducting literature reviews i.e.; [1] to provide a framework prior to the study or, [2] to let the literature be a vital part of the end product to provide a comprehensive understanding (Mertens, 1998:35). This study applies to both reasons mentioned above. The literature review will "*provide a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of the study with other findings*" (Creswell, 2003:30).

To provide a framework for the study I spent a considerable amount of time at the splendid library at the University of Hyderabad and with help of the references from the literature browsing through data basis. My aim when exploring the existing literature was to identify the following issues;

**Issues to identify to adopt understanding of the literature**

- What is already known about the area?
- What concepts are relevant to this area?
- What research methods and research strategies have been employed in studying the area?
- Are there any significant controversies?
- Are there any inconsistencies in findings relating to the area?
- Are there any unanswered research questions in this area?

Figure 3.2: Figure by author inspired by Bryman, 2008:81.

The central question in the thesis was drawn from this initial investigation since the question whether the priorities in the National Policy on Education had been a success story or not remained unanswered. Outcomes regarding e.g. literacy rates, school attendance or learning achievement could be defined as encouraging or undesirable depending on expectancy or what the outcome should be related to. In order to enhance my understanding I basically searched for literature in two different domains; [1] The Indian framework and [2] Concepts that seemed to be of relevance. These two domains have interchanged throughout the process of this thesis. When I learned more about the Indian context, such as the minimal expectations upon girls learning achievements in some rural areas contrasted with the

extreme anticipations on the middle class children of suburbia, I continuously found new concepts of relevance. Then again, finding myself with an accumulated bundle of bearing concepts I yet again had to return and learn more about the Indian framework in order to delimit myself and select the most essential concepts, which is one of the significant controversies in this topic. When looking for books, articles and papers, I have combined some of the following keywords in numerous varieties; primary education, India, democracy, enable capabilities, cultural diversity, equal opportunities, quality, education, mixed methods, policy, unity.

During this process I also was engaged in an on-going process concerning the relevance of different research methods. In addition to the two domains of literature mentioned above, I also spend considerable time studying literature on research design and methods in order to be able to make the most use of the findings. The following literature map illustrates the domains where literature was acquired
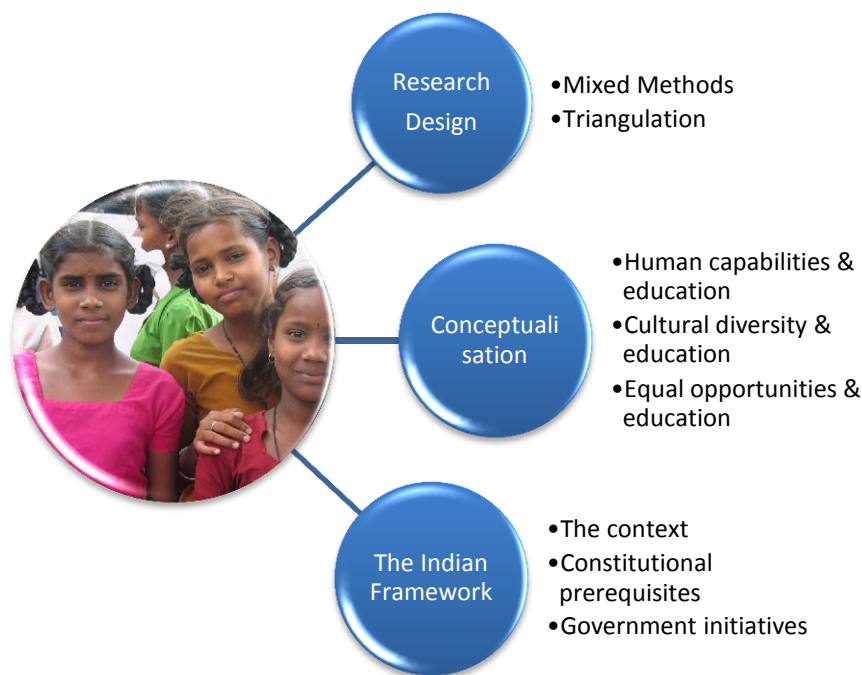


Figure 3.3: Literature map. Figure by author, 2010

[3] *Reflexive writing*
Reflexive writing is meant to "*capture your thinking process while you are engaged in it*" (Luttrell, 2010: 469). In reflexive writing, the author combines personal experience with careful observation and/or critical thinking about a specific feature of his/her experience (Behrens & Rosen, 2007). The contribution reflexive writing provides is that writing is basically for the author himself which brings about an commitment and expansion of your thinking "*without worrying about drawing conclusions or making an argument*" (Luttrell, 2010:469). I have found this very useful throughout the process of writing this thesis. It has been a very creative process which at

times has driven the process of writing this thesis forward and occasionally verified findings on a personal level. Reflective writing goes under a range of labels, such as memos, notes-on-notes or freewrites.

In this study, reflective writing has for the most part been used during a month course at the University of Hyderabad where focus was on the foundational diversities of Indian socio-cultural and political-economic sphere. Self-reflection of particular events, processes and forms of knowledge was used to make an understanding of the critical interplay of diversity factors in contemporary India. The method used was keeping a journal at hand all the time for constant reflection. Every evening three key words where put on a blank page to jumpstart thinking and reflection the next day (ibid, 2010). The purpose was to a major extent to explore and consider the dual nature of the author as studying and observing as well as being a subject of the world and the surroundings. What was the author's effect and perception upon the subject? How does this affect the analysis?

Most important is to establish a regular writing practise that works for the writer and develop a system for organizing the memos in for example important topics (ibid, 2010). This was made out of various topics, but memos were also used for finding out the personal relevance of this research.

| Memo on ... | Example of question |
| --- | --- |
| Researcher Identity | What makes you care about this topic? What are your beliefs based upon? What are your passions? What are your preferences as a researcher? |
| Coming to Your Questions | What is my prior experience? What am I sure about? What is unclear? What do I need to know? Could I be wrong? What is your rationale for choices? |
| Using the 100-Word Strategy | Why does the topic matter to you? Why does it matter to the field of education? |
| Ethical Guidelines | Ethical Guidelines? Possible dilemmas? Steps I will take? |

Figure 3.4: Memos sorted by categories. Figure by author inspired by Luttrell, 2010.

The purpose of the memo on *Researcher Identity* is to detect the authors personal relevance of the research, while *Coming to Your Questions* is a way to uncover what the researcher already knows about the topic and what would be interesting to learn more about (Luttrell, 2010). *Using the 100-Word Strategy* is a strategy to narrow down and refine the thinking, while *Ethical Guidelines* is a way to visualize dilemmas and take concrete action (ibid, 2010).

**Interpretation of Data and Drawing of Conclusions**
The findings that have emerged from the data have been interpreted in the context priory stated, i.e. the theoretical framework with the use of multi methods research combined with my pre-knowledge and framework stated

in the introduction. The center of attention when drawing conclusions has been on delineating the problems involved with the priorities made by the Government of India (GoI) in order to reduce the inequality in the social-culturally diverse Indian society. The thesis has addressed the research questions through a wide range of empirical research studies and relevant existing databases in order to catch reality with diverse perspectives.

## 3.2   Choices and Limitations

Due to time and resources the study has to a large extent been conducted far away from the object of study - primary education in India. At this stage I do not consider this a limitation in relation to the collecting of data. Rather it has been more of an ethical dilemma being far away and in another context than the persons I want to make a change for. An early choice was not to do a case study, with the motive that I need to understand more about the context prior to doing a more narrow research.

A choice made was the selection of government initiatives, where the motive for the choice was to congregate the major schemes launched in a recent period of time. As a contrasting pole I also chose to take a look at an NGO, since NGO's generally play an important part in the Indian social and political arena.

## 3.3   Quality Assurance Criteria - Accountability

> "*There is considerable unease about the simple application of the reliability and validity criteria associated with quantitative research to qualitative research. Indeed, some writers prefer to use alternative criteria that have parallels with reliability and validity*"
>
> Bryman, 2005:289

In most circumstances it is neither possible nor considered necessary to prove an unbiased approach (Kvale, 1995) and in this research I will go along with the alternative criteria of trustworthiness and authenticy. In the following section I will critically reflect on the accountability of the study and correspondingly on the choice of method.

**Trustworthiness**
When Lincoln and Guba introduced their ideas on trustworthiness 1985 an opportunity for naturalistic inquirers was provided to explore new ways of

articulating validity, reliability and generalizability (Lincoln and Guba 1985:329). Their concept of trustworthiness then contained the four quality standards of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability which parallel the positivist criteria of assessing quality in research, i.e. internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Bryman, 2008:377).

| Criteria for assessing quality | Significance of criteria |
|---|---|
| **Trustworthiness** | Credibility (similar to internal validity) |
| | Transferability (similar to external validity) |
| | Dependability (similar to reliability) |
| | Confirmability (similar to objectivity) |
| **Authenticity** | Fairness |
| | Ontological authenticity |
| | Educative authenticity |
| | Catalytic authenticity |
| | Tactical authenticity |

Figure 3.5: Figure by author inspired by Guba & Lincoln in Bryman, 2008:377-380.

*Credibility* is parallel to internal validity and is established through several strategies, i.e. prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity, member checks, and, triangulation (Mertens, 1998). Credibility "*asks if there is a correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints*" (Mertens, 1998:181). The notion of similarities between constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them are measured (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 237). A researcher should try and use as many methods as possible (ibid, 237) to make the research credible, which is also done in this study. A recommended technique to assure credibility is triangulation (Bryman, 2008:377, Mertens, 2998:183) which is the technique employed in this thesis.

Member checks, or respondent validation (Bryman, 2008: 377), is considered the most important criteria for establishing credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, Mertens, 1998). Member checks is not used in this thesis with the argument that the study takes place at a reasonable distance from the object of study which is the rather substantial group of all children enrolled in primary education in India. This thesis has a top-down approach were government initiatives are being studied at a Meta level. A negative case analysis could for instance concern collecting additional data from a school as a bottom-up approach. To some extent data has been collected from the M. Venkatarangaiya Foundation School in India. A negative case analysis would be an appealing way to proceed with additional studies associated to this thesis. Persistent observation conveys that the researcher

should add depths to the scope by prolonged engagement and thus avoiding coming to a conclusion without sufficient observations (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:237). This study has not adopted observation as a method, but collecting of data has persisted for a period of 2½ years, which has given me sufficient time to reflect and consider upon the conclusions.

*Transferability* is identified by Guba and Lincoln (1989) as a term parallel to external validity, i.e. "*the degree to which you can generalize the results to other situations*" (Mertens, 1998:183). Since there is no single, universal true interpretation in the naturalistic paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) the individual subjective meaning is central. The issue of importance in this quality standard is to provide the reader with sufficient data and thick descriptions in order to facilitate the reader to make judgements by applying the descriptions into their own personal experiences and find similarities (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:224). A "thick description" contains an extensive and careful description of the time, the place, the context and the culture in which the study took place (Ibid, 1989:341). My aim in this thesis has been to provide a thick description and hence safeguard quality standards.

*Dependability* is the quality standard which parallels reliability in a postpositivist paradigm and it concerns the stability of data over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:242). Researchers should secure that the process of research is logical, traceable and clearly documented and researchers should adopt a case study protocol that details each step in the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:242, Mertens, 1998:184). This auditing approach should ensure that complete records of all details are kept during all phases of the research process (Bryman, 2008:378). Due to this very demanding process, auditing has not become a popular approach to ensure dependability (ibid, 2008). My aim has been to strive for an inner logic in the text and that the reader should be able to follow each step in the research process.

*Conformability* is the qualitative parallel to objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and refers to the process of verifying that data, interpretations and outcomes is not fabrications of the inquirer's imagination, but have all have been established from the contexts and persons (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:243). All data should be able to be tracked to its source (Mertens, 1998:1984). The researcher should keep a self-critical account of the research process, reflect on values and be able to show that the research has been conducted in good faith (Bryman, 2008:379). Guba and Lincoln propose a "conformability audit" where a peer auditor could attest and verify that all data could be traced to the original sources (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:243). My attempt in this thesis is to be exceedingly transparent with motives, sources and conclusions. The reflexive writing exercises have been a part of this process to encourage an on-going reflexivity during the research process. As stated earlier, I am well aware of that neither key

organizations as e.g. OECD, UNESCO nor the Government of India or the Indian NGO´s are unbiased. They are all driven by aims and agendas and it would be naïve to suggest that there are no hidden agendas related to power issues.

*Authenticity* is a quality standard about the wider set of issues in relation to the political impact of the research (Bryman, 2008:379). While trustworthiness primarily is a methodological criterion that parallels the positivist assumptions, authenticy has emerged from explicit constructivist evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:245). The purpose of this quality standard is to help researchers to understand their role and answers the question "*has the researcher been fair in presenting views*" (Mertens, 1998:184). The authenticity criteria have not been very influential and the emphasis on practical outcomes is controversial (Bryman, 2008:380). Any case study could use the authenticity criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:245), but I find it rather thorny to use in its full potential in this study. My desire is that the shortcomings of primary education in India could be modified and that this study could take a diminutive part in that process. This however is a belief that does not qualify as knowledge and as regards the authenticy criteria it is not fully accentuated in this thesis.

## 3.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter has expounded on the research design. I have provided answers to how this research has embarked upon the research questions or problems. The initial research question was the quantitatively directed; *has the National Policy on Education has determined priorities which have reduced inequality in the social-culturally diverse Indian society.* This problem was drawn from the paper *Diversity in Equality in Contemporary Indian Education* (Eksath, 2009). The output of that question gave directions to the more qualitatively directed: *Do priorities in primary education in India enable capabilities, enhance equal opportunities and encourage cultural diversity* and further: *What is quality in primary education in India?*

Different methods have been used in order to collect data and to coerce a diverse perspective on reality like analysis of official statistics, literature review of empirical research studies as well as through reflexive writing exercises. The empiric has basically been explored in two different domains that have unceasingly interchanged throughout the process. Those spheres of influence have been the Indian framework besides concepts that appeared to be of relevance to primary education in India like equality, diversity and quality.

In addition the chapter explored the practical measures taken to be able to manage the study, like choices for the methods and their limitations. The most critical part of the investigation has been the gathering of literature, since many sources are biased. The use of multiply sources is a way of dealing with this problem.

Finally the chapter put emphasise on the quality in the procedures and the accountability of the study. In order to assess quality in the research the concept of trustworthiness is used, containing the four quality standards of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Due to the nature of the study, the additional quality standard of the authenticy, which focus on practical outcomes, is not fully accentuated in this thesis.



Photo by Martin Eksath; M.V. Foundation School in a village outside Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh India

# 4    Theoretical overview I - Diversity, Equality, Quality and Education

This theoretical overview will provide the reader with the main concepts to be used in the thesis. Education at a policy level is the core of the study. Amartya Sen's Human Capabilities Approach is a main alternative to the standard economic frameworks putting focus on poverty, inequality and human development. Bhikhu Parekh's pluralist perspective on cultural diversity suggests that education policies should, within a frame of equal rights and opportunities galvanize a national belonging. Diversity, equality and quality coupled with education will be elaborated in the last passage in this chapter ministered by Lawrence Stenhouse process model of curriculum theory and practice where he wants to close the gap between policy and practice.

## 4.1    Definitions

**Diversity**

The concept of diversity is an ambivalent term with different meaning depending on point of departure. Basically, diversity is an umbrella term which includes a range of visible and non-visible differences that exist between people such as race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age and socioeconomic status. *Diversity refers to all of the characteristics that make individuals different from each other*[12]. In its stringent form, *diversity* is a noun meaning[13]:

| Diversity | Different meaning of the concept |
| --- | --- |
| [1] Variety | A variety of something such as opinion, colour, or style. |
| [2] Social inclusiveness | Ethnic variety, as well as socioeconomic and gender variety, in a group, society, or institution |
| [3] Discrepancy | Discrepancy, or a difference from what is normal or expected |

Figure 4.1: Figure by author 2011

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[12] University of Greenwich: http://www.gre.ac.uk/students/equality/what-is-diversity (retrieved 4 August 2010)

[13] Encarta Dictionary: http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/diversity.html (retrieved 30 July 2010)

Diversity is a well-known term in dissimilar disciplines of science such as biology, political science and in human recourse workplace studies. In the context of society and culture, diversity is usually mentioned when discussing multicultural societies. This thesis will relate diversity to Parekh´s cultural diversity.

### Equality

The concept of equality is another tentative term. In this thesis I will relate to Sen´s capabilities approach where equality embraces a perception of fairness that is justified by equality of opportunity. *Equality* is a noun meaning[14]:

| Equality | Different meaning of the concept |
|---|---|
| [1] State of being equal | Rights, treatment, quantity, or value equal to all others in a specific group |
| [2] Equation with equal quantities | An equation in which the quantities on each side of an equal sign are the same. |

Figure 4.2: Figure by author 2011

Equality thus indicates a state of balance.

### Quality

*Quality* is a noun with numerous different associations where only some of the most fundamental are listed below[15]:

| Quality | Different meaning of the concept |
|---|---|
| [1] Standard | The general standard or grade of something |
| [2] Characteristic | A characteristic of somebody or something |
| [3] Excellence | The highest or finest standard (often used before a noun). |

Figure 4.3: Figure by author 2011

I will later on explore the concept of quality in education, with outlooks from all the different theories in the chapter, but deeper scrutinized by Stenhouse's´ curriculum theory and Naik´s value triangle.

### Primary Education and Elementary Education in India

The first eight years of school in India are termed *elementary education*, which broadly corresponds to the compulsory education period of 6-14 years of age. Elementary education is usually split into two parts with five years of *primary school* (grade 1-5) followed by three years of *upper*

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[14] Encarta Dictionary: http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/diversity.html (retrieved 30 July 2010)
[15] Encarta Dictionary: http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/diversity.html (retrieved 30 July 2010)

*primary* or *middle school* (grade 6-8). Following the recommendations of the National Policy on Education, efforts have been made to achieve a common structure of schooling across the country; however decisions regarding the organization and structure of school education are the prerogative of state governments. Consequently, considerable variations are found in the organizational patterns of schooling across the different states of India.

## 4.2   Human Capabilities Approach

> *"Equality of What?"*
> Amartya Sen 1979[16]

Indian Nobel prize winner (1998) and welfare economist Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (CA) has come forward as the leading alternative to customary economic frameworks to deal with a variety of economic, social and ethical questions with a general focus on poverty, inequality and human development (Clark, 2005). CA could be regarded as a meta-theory, and does not suggest specific action or policies but education issues as literacy and universal enrolment could serve as inevitabilities in order to enhance capabilities to improve quality in life. I will build more upon this further on in the discussion.

The overruling rationale of development according to CA is the enlargement of human capabilities rather than economic growth. Economic growth may be essential for human development, but at times it is not enough (Sen, 1983) and like Aristotle, Sen maintains that "...*wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else*" (Sen, 1990:44). Corresponding to these lines, CA is suitably described by Nussbaum as, "*a species of a human rights approach*" (Nussbaum, 2006:78).

CA makes a distinction between growth mediated and support led development (Sen, 1999). Growth mediated development is carried out as expansive economic growth, accompanied by an increase in capital, wealth, employment and social service facilities which in turn pilots an expansion of the basic capabilities. The mechanisms of support led development is rather the opposite and conducts through competent welfare programmes, such as successful education programmes (ibid, 1999).

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[16] In his Tanner Lectures at Cambridge University

CA makes a distinction amid human *capability* to function and *functioning* where capabilities refers to the opportunities that individuals have to realise diverse functionings of significance for the individual (Sen, 1999).

> *"A capability is a potential functioning; the list of functionings is endless. It might include doings and beings such as being well nourished, having shelter and access to clean water, being mobile, being well-educated, having paid work, being safe, being respected, taking part in discussions with your peers, and so on. The difference between a capability and functioning is like one between an opportunity to achieve and the actual achievement, between potential and outcome"*
>
> Walker 2006: 165

An example of capability in relation to this thesis is literacy. The function would then be when someone is actually reading. Another illustration of capability would be school attendance and the function would be if you actually learn anything while being there. Capabilities are more than skills solely and an individual also needs the freedom and opportunity to convert the possessed resources, like literacy or attending school, into various achievements or outcomes.

When appraising the quality of life we should be concerned about what people are able to accomplish (Sen, 1983). Quality in education then becomes to support the development of autonomy and the ability to make choices in life, rather than merely providing children with the resources needed to learn. Or as elaborated by Unterhalter …

> …"*the capability approach urges that when making evaluations in education we should look not just at inputs like teachers, hours in class, or learning materials or outputs, earning from a particular level of education … Evaluations should look at the condition of being educated, the negative and positive freedoms that sustain this condition and the ways in which being educated supports what each and every person has reason to value*"
>
> Unterhalter, 2007:75

Another issue of importance concerns the distributions of education, which could be a source of inequality since it could limit an individual's control over necessities (Sen, 1983).

Advocates of CA dispute that it is critical to pin down fundamental and universal capabilities in order to make it possible to evaluate inequalities and to a further extent hold governments to account when there is little progress (Nussbaum, 2000, 2006). Sen however points out that there is a diversity of capabilities poles apart, depending on individual differences and

differences in societies (Sen, 2009). Different social and economic relations of power and inequality can hold back disadvantaged groups from converting their heterogeneous resources into capabilities and beneficial functionings (Ibid, 2009). Expected group inequalities differ for example between a European context (gender, age, social class, ethnicity, religion and so forth) and an Indian context where focus on caste, gender and origin of residence is considered the most appropriate and relevant (Majumdar & Subramanian (2001). Significant inequalities and disparities between groups in India can be expressed in terms of life expectancy or nutrition but also as e.g. literacy (Ibid, 2001).

Understanding of poverty in terms of capability deprivation has led to an increased concern of the stance of education, as its role in reducing poverty, as well as a core component of development and human well-being (Govinda 2003: 81). Even though Sen is reluctant of defining capabilities he and Nussbaum have elucidated their understandings of education as a key capability (Nussbaum 2004).

**Human Capability Approach (CA) and equality**
The CA defines the rationale of education as enabling individuals to accomplish manifold functions that are essential for an empowered way of life. In order to accomplish this rationale in the rural communities in India, education has to be made meaningful and relevant to the children in these communities (Dreze & Sen, 2002). When evaluating equality in the education that is provided it has to be based on what each child has a reason to value. There is a need for an understanding of the diversity of human capabilities (Sen, 1999).

Major public education initiatives could enhance equality and protect development of freedoms and develop capabilities in children, irrespective of markers of discrimination (Sen, 1999). Equality could involve the freedom to attend school in a safe environment and to participate as a unique individual in a diverse society. I will elaborate on whether the education initiatives taken by the Governments of India have supported a school where each child, irrespective of caste, gender or origin of residence, is provided with the necessities to convert various resources into capabilities and beneficial functionings.


# 4.3   Cultural Diversity Approach

*At first, we were told, the goal was 'integration'. Now this word rapidly came to mean 'assimilation': a black man could only become integrated when he started behaving like a white one. [...] And now there's a new catchword: 'multiculturalism'. In*

*our schools, this means little more than teaching the kids a few bongo rhythms, how to tie a sari and so forth. In the police training programme, it means telling cadets that black people are so 'culturally different' that they can't help making trouble.*

<div align="right">Salman Rushdie, 1991:137</div>

In the following passage Indian British political philosopher Bhikhu Parekh will argue for a pluralist perspective on cultural diversity where education policies could play an important role. But first I will present the broader framework of multiculturalism.

## Multiculturalism

Salman Rushdie´s sarcastic characterisation of multiculturalism originates from a British setting. Depending on the historical and geographical context in which it is employed, multiculturalism can have a range of different meanings and it has been used both descriptive and normative (Haywood, 2007:313). The term 'multiculturalism' emerged in the 1960s in Anglophone countries in relation to the cultural needs of non-European migrants (Modood, 2007) and the term multiculturalism is scarcely used in India, although the contemporary Indian society is much more deeply multicultural than many of the western countries (ibid, 2007:5). The term most often used in India is *cultural diversity*, as illustrated in the national idiom, *unity in diversity* as well as in the thoughts of Gandhi (Parekh, 2010:136).

There are various discourses on multiculturalism. Social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen, uses the term in relation to minorities and concludes that there are two strategies; (1), the *melting pot strategy*, where traditions of all cultural groups are merged, acculturated into the majority culture and eventually assimilated into a new cultural pattern and (2), *cultural pluralism* [or *diversity,* authors remark], where equal validity of multiple dissimilar subcultures are acknowledged as part of a genuinely plural society (Eriksen, 2002). The critical issue is power since the majority usually has the power to define whether minorities should be like themselves or be allowed to be different (Erikson, 2003:144).

Some anthropologists heavily associates assimilation with the melting pot strategy (Haviland et al. 2008:375). In the western world assimilation has been employed as a way of dealing with effective immigrant and minority integration in the liberal nation states. In Sweden, as an example, immigrants have to a large extent been treated as individuals and to take part of the Swedish nation 'acquire the Swedish tools which can be needed to manage on one's own in Swedish society' (Soininen, 1999:692). In USA as well as in several European countries the active and state-sponsored realization of diversity has been neglected while the promotion of assimilation is extensively apparent (Joppke and Morawska, 2003).

> *"Assimilation is historically the first and sociologically the most "natural" response to the contradiction between public civility and private particularity ... because incorporation can be achieved without appearing to challenge the established primordial definitions of civic competence"*
>
> Alexander, 2001:244

The merging concept where multiculturalism stands for assimilation has been criticized since there is an inevitable risk of exclusion from the society if you fail to get assimilated (Parekh, 2000). This thesis will go along with the mosaic notion of multiculturalism, which as a descriptive term refers to cultural diversity. As a normative term it involves a celebration of communal diversity, based on either the right of different groups to be acknowledged or to the claim of benefits to the larger society of moral and cultural diversity (Haywood, 2007:313).

**Cultural Diversity**

The political philosopher Bhikhu Parekh argues for a pluralist perspective on cultural diversity where multiculturalism is not primarily about differences in identities rather what is embedded, as *"human beings are at once both natural and cultural, both like and unlike, and like in unlike ways* (Parekh, 2000: 11). Diversity is according to Parekh, an epistemological condition, a learning experience and the source of the dialogical, two-way character of multiculturalism (ibid, 2000). A diverse society according to Parekh is a society where its …

> *traditional culture should not be given pride of place, that the minority cultures are equally central to its identity, that they should be respected and even cherished and not encouraged to disappear over time, and that the ethnic minorities consist not of individuals but of organized communities entitled to make collective claims*
>
> Parekh, 2000:7

Parekh suggests that it is realistic to develop a political structure of a multicultural society established on a solid perception of unity, a deep-rooted respect for diversity and by strengthening "*a common sense of belonging among its citizens*" (Parekh, 2000:341). The sense of belonging in a truly multicultural society is too diverse to be based upon shared cultural, ethnic or other characteristics; rather it has to be founded on a shared commitment to the continuing existence and well-being of the political community (Parekh, 2000:341). According to Parekh, "*human rights principles provide a sound framework for handling differences, and a body of values around which society can unite*" (The Runnymede Trust, 2000: Preface).

The discourse on multiculturalism as cultural diversity mirrors the portrayal of India which has been conceptualized in terms of accumulation of the various cultures and communities that have co-existed within the same territorial and social space which is the foundation of the contemporary plural and federal nationalism of India (Singh, 2008:6, 48).

## Cultural Diversity Approach and equality

> *"Universal education is a vital first step towards the*
> *provision of equality of opportunity to all citizens"*
> Draft Fifth Five-Year Plan[17], 1974

Parekh proposes a number of national reforms for a state to in support of a multiculturalism based on the idea of a shared political community (The Runnymede Trust, 2000). Some of the proposals concerning multicultural education are of particular interest in relation to this thesis. Education policies should, within a frame of equal rights and opportunities, invigorate a national belonging based upon a shared national identity of political and institutional values. Education should be based on a mixed curriculum that reflects the nation's historical and contemporary cultural diversity, grounded on multiple identities.

The cultural diversity approach stresses that a truly diverse society should use policies to galvanize a national belonging within a frame of equal rights and opportunities. What is then to be defined equality of opportunity? In 1989 Richard Arneson argued against the use of *equal outcome* or *equal resources* as the preferred concept to equalise members of a set domain in social decisions and thus proposed that classical welfarism should be replaced with *equal opportunity for welfare* (Arneson, 1989). People within a society or a domain have different needs, but sometimes relevant differences are ignored in the name of equality as a uniformity of treatment, and a consequence could be injustice, inequality and even discrimination (The Runnymede Trust, 2000). Parekh states that equality has to be delineated in regards to cultural diversity and put into operation in a "*discriminating but not discriminatory manner*" (The Runnymede Trust, 2000: Preface).

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[17] Ever since the independence in India, developmental plans for a period of five years are being developed by the Planning Commission

## 4.4   Quality in Education

*"Equality, quality, and quantity –*
*the elusive triangle in Indian education"*
J.P. Naik, 1975[18]

In 1975 J P Naik described quality in education as the *value triangle* of education consisting of quality, quantity and equality alluding to quality education for all (Naik, 1975). According to Naik, solving this triangle implicates quality in education. But when something has quality it is often perceived as something being less accessible than an alternate of the same entity that lacks quality (Kumar, 2004:2). In what way is it achievable to pair quality with quantity?

As indicated in the definition passage *quality* has numerous different associations shaped by ideological, social and political interpretations and to couple quality with education does not make the term more clear-cut. This thesis started off by asking whether the National Policy on Education has determined priorities that have reduced inequality in the diverse Indian society. Quality education in relation to this question could thus be proclaimed when the priorities made have constituted a society less unequal. According to Sen and the Human Capabilities Approach quality in education is to support the development of autonomy and thus the ability to make choices that could change life in a positive direction.  Parekh´s standpoint is that education policies should fortify a national belonging based upon a shared national identity of cultural diversity, grounded on multiple identities. Could quality in education then be measured in a successful outcome regarding a cultural diverse society based on equal rights and opportunities?

In this final passage of the chapter I will put the pieces together and conceptualize the elements under the flag of quality in education, in a way that helps the reader to take part in the discussion. I will provide a brief revision on the general discourses on quality education with a specific focus at what could be defined as quality regarding the priorities stated in the education policy at a Meta system level.

**Discourses on the concept of quality in education**
When I have explored the literature on quality in education it is noticeable how often the term *quality* is brought up and equally striking how seldom I

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[18] J.P. Naik (1907-1981) was an Indian educationalist who had a most prominent influence in originating and promoting Indian educational research, in institutionalizing educational innovations and reforms, and also in educational planning and policy-making.

have found the term defined. The notion of quality "*implies two or more versions of the same thing, arranged in a hierarchical order implying the relative presence of a valued characteristic*" (Kumar, 2004:2). However, the notion of quality education seems to have dissimilar meanings depending on diverse contexts and on different levels as well as on the researcher point of departure and thus the concept needs to be operated into criteria that are functional (Stephens 2003:12). *Quality is* […] *directly related to what occurs in two educational contexts: firstly in the more focussed environment of the classroom; secondly in the wider context of the school system and social context in which the classroom is embedded* (Stephens, 2003:4). Both settings have a mutual relationship with each other (ibid, 2003), still this thesis will mainly focus on the wider context.

The current concern for quality in education has its immediate origins in the idea of globalization or specifically in the *uncertainties* associated with it since [1] the discourse on globalization is changing rapidly and [2] there is no consensus on the implications for education (Kumar, 2004). The uncertainness and the stress of competitiveness accompanying globalization "*are reflected in the manner in which quality is being defined and applied in the context of education*" (Kumar, 2004:4).

According to Barrett et al, there is a divide concerning how to define quality in education between [1] *the Economist View* and [2] *the Humanist View* where the former predominantly favours the use of quantitative measurable outcomes, e.g. student performance, attendance rates or literacy outcomes as a form of universal measurability, while the latter focus on the content itself as inclusion, democratic governance and learner-centered pedagogies (Barrett et al., 2006:2).

Correlating with *the Economist View* and the *Humanist View* a review of the international literature on the concept of quality uncovers a distinction between researchers in favour of the concept of "*education*" and others supportive of the concept of "*schooling*" (Barrett et al., 2006:2). "*Education*" could be coupled with the humanist view and refers to the process of teaching and learning in order to develop desirable qualities among the learners while "*schooling*" could go in pairs with the economist view and implies the provision of effective education by means of institutionalized and organized learning (Ibid, 2006).

Kumar refers to the two conflicting assessments of quality in education as the relationship coupling [1] *education and work* versus the relationship linking [2] *education and culture* and concludes that they need to go together since both are ways of coping with the intensely competitive, highly insecure global situation (Kumar, 2004:5). Supporting the notion that both perspectives need to accompany each other and well aware that my

choices of portrayal are neglecting the in-between views, I will commence with a description of the two perspectives separately.

**The economist view – quality as education and work**
The economist view stresses the role of human capital in the form of education principles and the relevance to the market as the key orientation criteria for selecting discourses (Bernstein, 1996:87). This perspective is essentially influencing organizations such as the World Bank (Barrett et al., 2006).

> *Education is* [...] *key to enhance India's competitiveness in the global economy. Therefore, ensuring access to quality education for all, in particular for the poor and rural population, is central to the economic and social development of India.*
>
> The World Bank, India Profile 2009[19]

Another organization that could be linked to the economic view is the OECD, where quality is defined in terms of educational effectiveness, i.e. to what extent policy or school factors have an impact on, or could be associated with, educational performance levels (OECD, 2005:13).

**Quality as educational effectiveness according to OECD.** Further elaborated in Appendix II
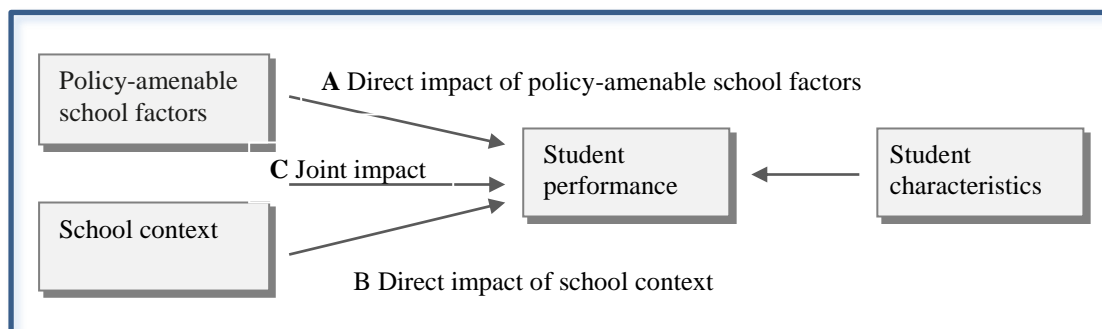


**Figure 4.4** PISA variables used in the analysis of school quality. OECD, 2005

In the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA, quality in student performance is adjusted after asserted fixed background conditions of the students. Interrelations between policy-amenable school factors, school context and student performance are measured. In PISA, quality in education is "*an attribute reflected in the learner as a product of an educational system*" (Kumar, 2004:6).

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[19]http://www.worldbank.org.in/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/INDIAEXTN/0,,contentMDK:21493265~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:295584,00.html

**The humanist view – quality as education and culture**

The humanist view accentuates the context and the culture in which schools exist, and that quality in education cannot be reduced to independent, unconnected factors quantitatively assessed and compared between unalike settings for education and learning (Stephens 2003:7).

UNICEF and the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 recognize the quality of education as a prime determinant of whether Education for All is achieved stating that "*quality is at the heart of education – a fundamental determinant of enrolment, retention and achievement*" (UNESCO, 2005:31). UNICEF states that this definition acknowledges an understanding of education as "*a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context*" (UNICEF, 2000). Quality in education, according to the Dakar Framework, refers to [1] desirable characteristics of learners (healthy, motivated students), [2] processes (competent teachers using active pedagogies), [3] content (relevant curricula) and [4] systems (good governance and equitable resource allocation).

**Quality outcomes according to UNICEF.** Further elaborated in Appendix III

| Quality occur when children are… | Learning what they need to learn, for learning throughout life |
| --- | --- |
| | Healthy, well-nourished, and free from exploitation, violence and labour |
| | Aware of their rights and have opportunities to realize them |
| | Able to participate in decisions that affect their lives in accordance with their evolving capacities |
| | Able to respect diversity, practice equality, and resolve differences without violence |

**Figure 4.5** Figure by author 2011 after Jeanette Colby in *Defining Quality in Education,* 2000

Corresponding with UNICEF, Stephens discusses that the concept of quality in education cannot be separated from culture as it is a matter of subjectivity and determined by cultural ideas, values and norms in a society (Stephens 2007:44). Factors that may influence the policy process as well as the outcomes depend largely on the context of the actors involved which influences their motivation, cognitions and power (Bressers, 2004). Schools are part of a multifaceted culture of values, norms and set in a framework of divergent social and power relationships and quality in education necessitates an understanding and respect of the underlying culture (Stephens 2003).

**Overlapping components and inclusion**

Fundamental components in quality in education could be mutually included or overlap between *the Economist View* and the *Humanist View*. Barrett et al. distinguish five fundamental components of quality in education, namely: [1] effectiveness, [2] efficiency, [3] equality, [4] relevance and, [5] sustainability, that could be included in either view (Barrett et al., 2006:15).

In his analysis of the quality in primary education in developing countries Stephens links quality in education with the quality of decision-making (Stevens, 1991). This could conclude the system's ability to cope with exclusion of marginalized groups which is often referred to as "*inclusion*" (PROBE, 1999; Balagopolan and Subrahmanian, 2003, Govinda, 2003).

> "*The usage of quality often carries a moral overtone, reminding us that the expansion of access refers to children, especially girls, of marginalized and oppressed groups*"
>
> <div align="right">Kumar, 2004:6</div>

*Inclusion* suggests a responsibility to reshape a system which has so far acted as a mechanism of exclusion in a cultural sense (Balagopolan and Subrahmanian, 2003).

**Conceptualizing quality in education**
British educationalist Lawrence Stenhouse produced one of the most recognized process models of curriculum theory and practice and argued that teachers or other stakeholders need to take an active role in curriculum development. I will use curriculum in the meaning described in Kelly as the content of an area of study that has been designed as attached to the total programme of an educational institution (Kelly, 2009:9) which in this study equals the priorities made in the national policy of education, i.e. as a policy implementation process. The policy implementation process is in general characterized by the interaction between the governmental organization and the target groups of the policy (Bressers, 2004).

> "*a curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice*"
>
> <div align="right">Stenhouse, 1975:4</div>

The gap between policy and practice was viewed by Stenhouse as the central problem of curriculum development and yet more of the advancement of education itself (Kelly, 2009:129). The aim of research is to stimulate development by bringing this gap to a close (Stenhouse, 1975). The general problem when looking into the priorities made in primary education in India in relation to Stenhouse´s model, is whether there is a match between the planned government initiatives within primary education with the implemented/ operational curriculum and the needs of the children.

The primary focus in policy-making should be on the learning process rather than at the outcomes and policies should be designed as a proposal to be tested, rather than an outline to be followed (Rudduck, 1995:55). The

central problem in conceptualizing quality in education, according to Stenhouse, lies in its depreciation of its relation to culture (Stenhouse, 1975). There is a need to develop an understanding of human actions in the light of diverse value issues and culture. Stenhouse argues that education enhances people's freedom and creativity which pilots us into culture as a *system* to think with (Kumar, 2004). Any curriculum that is practically effective and productive has to go far beyond mere schooling to explanation and justification of the purposes for transmission and an exploration of the effects of the exposure is likely to have (Kelly, 2009:9). A policy process should, according to Stenhouse´s process model, begin with developing a map where all stakeholders should bring forward what is needed to develop powers of understanding (Ruddick, 1995:70). A policy should be used by students as well as policymakers to develop an understanding of human actions in the light of diverse value issues (Rudduck, 1995:55).

Curriculum should be viewed as a hands-on and exceedingly moral issue as well as a changeable process, capable of transforming human action and culture into action. The process model is thus essentially a critical model because it honours meaning-making as fundamental and considers learners as subjects rather than objects (Stenhouse, 1975). In my view the design proposed by Stenhouse (figure 4.6) is useful to integrate concepts earlier described in this thesis and to conceptualise the relevance of the priorities made in the national policy of education.
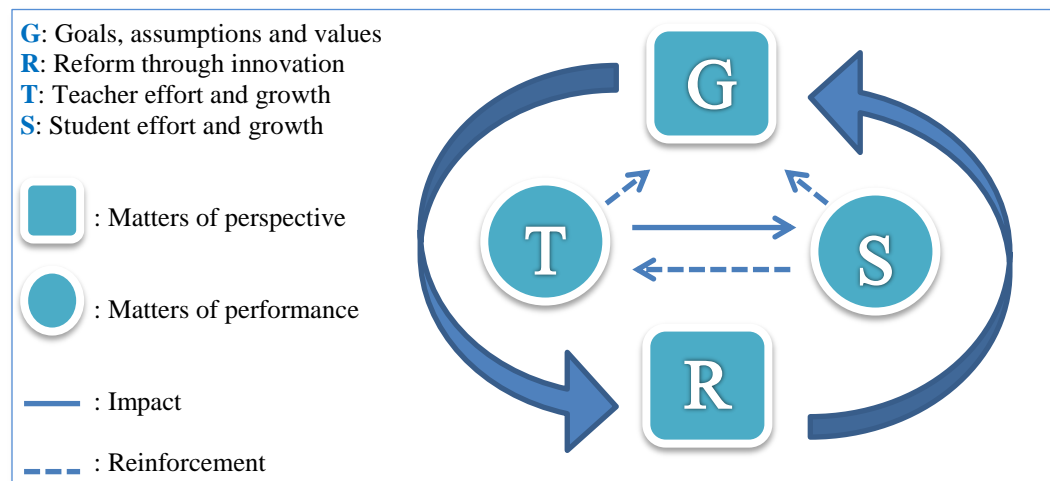


**Figure 4.6** Figure by author 2011 after Lawrence Stenhouse in *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development,* 1975

The figure places the goals of education [G] in a direct and dynamic linkage with the capacity of a system of education to reform itself [R] by means of innovation (Kumar, 2004:9). Could the goals in the priorities made in India be coupled with reform through innovation? The shaping of goals and reforms is a *matter of perspective* in a longer time-horizon [■], while *matters of performance* rest on a horizon of immediacy [●]. The figure distinguishes impact [→] from reinforcement [┄]. A student teacher dyad is

seen in the figure. The student makes an impact on the teachers' growth while the teacher reinforces the students' awareness of what works and what does not. The goal-reform dyad forms an embedding context, but the students as well as the teachers are continuously reinforcing the system with energy, if the system is dynamic. For instance, if the Indian government has launched a reform aiming at improving literacy it is necessary that [G] unceasingly is enforced with "reality" from the T-S dyad in order to improve the reforms. Reforms stand for an awareness at all levels of decision-making. Decision makers as well as teachers and pupils have to be aware of that concepts in curriculum and policy reflect values, aims and assumptions and are embedded in a social, cultural and political context (Stenhouse, 1975). Concepts in education i.e. "aims", "process", "evaluation" or "ability" are not un-problematic or value-free and "*in any curriculum planning conceptual clarity is a sine qua non* [prerequisite, authors remark] *of effective practise*" (Kelly, 2009:29). Are the aims and goals in the priorities made in the Indian National Policy on Education well-defined?

The use of systematic evaluation and the design above could help to organize our perception of quality. The curriculum model helps to say what *efforts* and *gains* by the students and teachers that are essential components of assessment and it is possible to judge the system´s *capacity to reform itself by encouraging new practices* (Kumar, 2004:11). The major weakness as well as strength of the curriculum process model is that it nourishes upon the quality of teachers (Kelly, 2009). In my opinion this makes the model realistic since it reflects a reality where many teachers are cultivating their wisdom while some are not up to much.

## 4.5   Chapter Summary

This chapter has given a conceptual framework of the ambivalent terms of diversity, equality and quality and related these theories to education.

The overruling rationale of development according to Sen's Human Capabilities Approach is the enlargement of human capabilities. CA makes a distinction between human *capability* to function and *functioning* where capabilities refers to the opportunities that individuals have to realise diverse functionings of significance for the individual. Capabilities are more than skills. An individual also needs the freedom and opportunity to convert the possessed resources into various achievements or outcomes. A capability for a child could be school attendance and the function whether the child actually learn anything at school. There is a need for an understanding the diversity of human capabilities. When evaluating equality in the education that is provided it has to be based on what each child has a

reason to value. Quality in education is to support the development of autonomy and the ability to make choices in life.

Parekh is critical of the merging concept of multiculturalism and argues for a more pluralistic and mosaic perspective of cultural diversity. A multicultural society, like India, is too diverse to be based upon assimilation in forms of shared cultural, moral or other characteristics. Multiculturalism should not be about differences rather what is embedded as a common sense of belonging among the citizens. Education policies should, within a frame of equal rights and opportunities, stimulate a national belonging based upon a shared national identity of political and institutional values. Education should be based on a mixed curriculum that reflects the nation's historical and contemporary cultural diversity, grounded on multiple identities.

Diversity, equality and quality coupled with education were elaborated in the last passage in the chapter. Many scholars identifies a divide concerning how to define quality in education between the Economist View that primarily favours the use of quantitative measurable outcomes and the Humanist View that above all focuses on the content itself. The perspectives need to accompany each other.

Stenhouse process model of curriculum theory and practice is useful to integrate concepts and to conceptualise the relevance of the priorities made in the national policy of education in India. Quality occurs when there is a match between the planned government initiatives within primary education with the true needs of the children. Education enhances children's freedom and creativity which directs them into culture as a system to think with. Priorities in primary education have to go beyond schooling to explanation and justification of the purposes for transmission and the effects the exposure are likely to have. Priorities in education are thus a moral issue as well as a changeable process, where human action and culture turns into action.
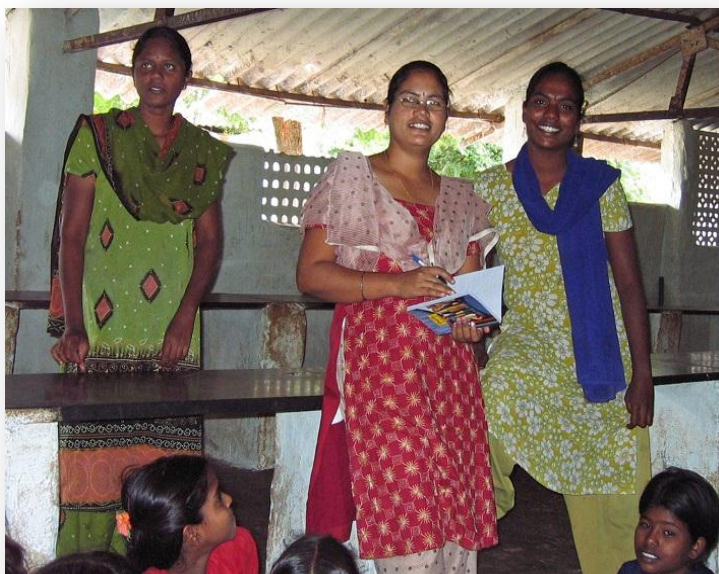


Photo by Martin Eksath; M.V. Foundation School in a village outside Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh India

# 5 Theoretical overview II – The Indian Framework

This theoretical overview will provide the reader with a conceptual framework providing an understanding of education, policies and priorities in India.

## 5.1 The Context

The Indian context is a blend of a vivid democracy shaped by frequent compromises with its diverse regional, ethnic, and caste groups (Ganguly & DeVotta, 2003:2). India's excessive diversity of cultural practices, languages, customs, and traditions are a consequence of five millennium of intermingling between different groups (Dutt & Chatterje, 2005). Simultaneously, India is also a diverged society embodied by considerable inequalities of opportunities and outcomes (Drèze, & Sen, 2002). This diverse context enfolds the second largest education system in the world with 200 million children aged between 6 and 14 (UNICEF, 2004).
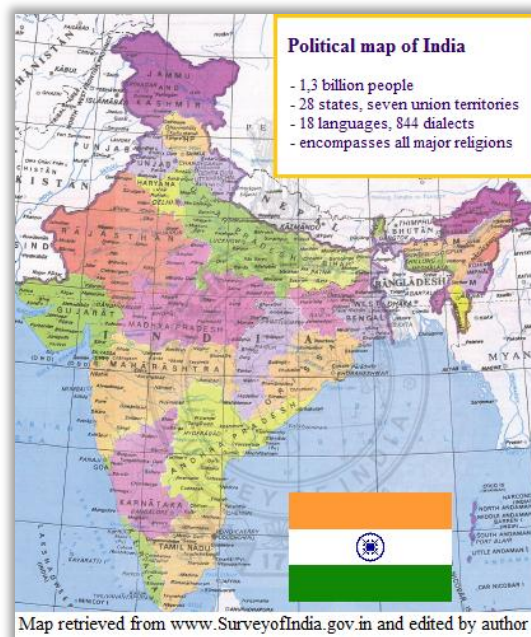


Figure 5.1: Political map of India

**Unity in Diversity**

India does not have a resilient uniform national culture, but philosophically many Indians accentuate the country's cultural diversity and tolerance of difference (Dutt & Chatterje, 2005). Since ancient times India has been described as a multicultural country, but the motto "*Unity in Diversity*", was reinforced by Nehru as a vision of a multilingual and multi-ethnic society following independence (Kothari, 2006:36, 53). Nehru and other Indians of influence during the time of Indian independence helped to forge an awareness of India that had not existed earlier; a recognition that the socio-

political pluralism and religious diversity is the source of India´s strength which makes the whole greater than the sum (Sharma 2002:69).

The strong constitutional democracy, acknowledged since 1947, is in fact the glue that holds the exceptionally diverse Indian society together (Sharma in Ganguly & DeVotta, 2003:85). However, the mantra formulates a paradox and a problem. According to Heesterman the words "Unity in Diversity" could at best express an aspiration rather than a reality, but more probably is that the expression stands for a chant to deal with "*the threat of both disruptive diversity and oppressive unity*" (Heesterman in Blussé, 1987:83). The possible solution lies in the hands of the regions, since they have the role of mediating between the national unity and diversity of its parts (ibid, 1987). This view is substantiated by Sharma who argues that the devolution of power from the central government to the states has "*raised enormous challenges for India´s political and economic development and does not ensure efficacious democratic governance and programmatic national development*" (Sharma, 2002:15). Most governing decisions in India are taken at a state level and the states differ from each other in many aspects. This further implicates the diversity of the country. Some are governed by left wing politicians others by right wing, some focus more on certain issues, for instance education, than others.

**The Social Context**
The social context applies to the socio-economic environment of persons or groups and rope in family and relatives, caste, class, gender, economic conditions, religious beliefs, social demography and so forth. Social factors play a crucial role in literacy achievements and exceedingly influence the educational chances of children in India since educational choices are governed by household decisions (Dreze, 2003). A family in India often contains of extended kin groups and is a central social institution of traditions, practices and sustained patterns (Patel, 2005:22). The strong family bonds in India function as what Bourdieu refers to as *habitus* - a mediator between structure and

Figure 5.2: The social context (Figure by author)

practice that provides a conceptual comprehension (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996). In this sector I will provide an overview with some indicators of importance, well aware of that in reality these factors have to be understood
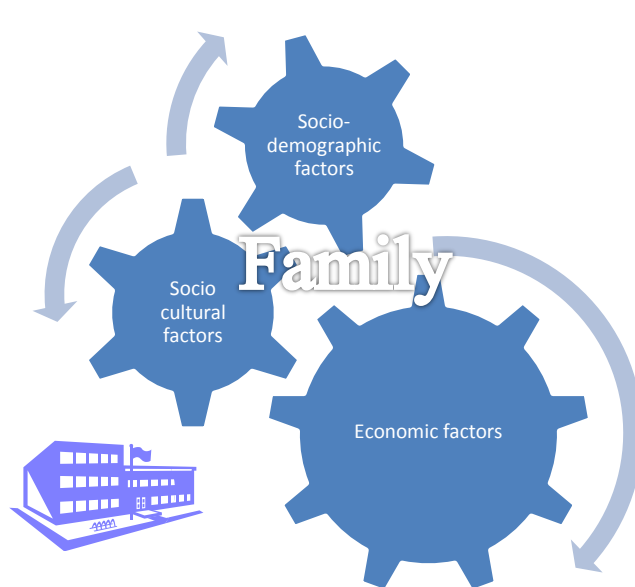
holistically. I must also stress that this section focuses on the conceivably negative implications of the social context in relation to primary education in India. The reader must bear in mind the complexity and diversity of the Indian society and the unfeasibility of generalizing.

*Economic Factors*
Economic factors influences the educational decisions families make in India. Researchers have studied how economic factors relate to and encourage primary school enrolment, school attendance and fulfilment as well as achievements and learning outcomes. A lot of out of school children come from households with a low per capita income and household wealth enhances the probability for school enrolment for girl in particular (Ramachandran, 2002; Dreze and Kingdon, 2001). The family occupation also affects the school attendance. For instance, children from non-agricultural households hold a greater chance of retaining in school since they are not needed to retain from school to work as agricultural labourers (Jha and Jhingran, 2002). I will further on elaborate on gender, but it has also to be regarded as a major economic factor since educational motivation among Indian parents and families are highly gender specific. Parents' predominantly economic reasoning is that educating sons is a potential future wage earner for the family (WB Report, 1997). An investment in a *son's education* could also upgrade the parent's social status and self-esteem which in turn could endow the family with opportunities for social mobility (PROBE, 1999). Investing in a daughter's education on the other hand is considered among many Indian families as resources drifting to the future husband's family and thus an inferior investment (WB Report, 2007).

Poverty and low income has effect on how well the children attain in school and the number of children that drop-out since many poor families are in need of the services of their children (Jha and Jhingran, 2002). As a whole the demand for education is strong among all economic and social groups in India (PROBE, 1999). The contexts of poverty like instability, uncertainty, the need of commitment of children in work, food insecurity and illiteracy are shaped by economic conditions that significantly influence the drop-out rates and affect the lives of many children in India (Jha and Jhingran, 2002).

Government schools in India are free in the sense that they do not charge tuition fees. However it could be quite expensive for a parent with low income since it involves fees for exams, sports, school uniform, note books, stationary and so forth that could add up to a considerable amount. Sending a child to a government primary school is in a broader sense "*far from free*" (Dreze, 2003:980). Segmenting the education on school-related expenses that parents have to pay has fortified "*hierarchies of access*" (Ramachandran, 2002). The government has nevertheless initiated several schemes to provide free textbooks and uniforms as well as providing free meals to all children, which will be explored further on. When analysing why children drop out of elementary school in India two major reasons were found; [1] the child was needed for other duties, and [2] the schooling was too expensive (PROBE, 1999).

*Socio Cultural Factors*

In India a person is a member by birth in social groups as the family, the extended kin group, the cast or tribe and religion. Educational decisions are most often made by the household and the child is rarely consulted (Dreze and Kingdon, 2001). Socio-cultural categories or groups like girls, lower casts, particular tribes and certain religious groups that could suffer from educational disadvantages will be brought up in this section.

Girls attending primary school could be faced with discrimination rooted in a wider socio-cultural context which sustains gender inequalities in a patriarchal society (Chanana, 1990). The gender inequality is significantly larger among rural girls in the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes where the main part of the illiterate population is to be found (Ramachandran, 2002). Since a girl normally spends more time undertaking domestic work in a family than a boy the opportunity costs of a girl's time is higher which leads to fewer enrolments and larger dropout rates among girls in primary education (Jha and Jhingran, 2002; WB Report, 1997). Girls are socialized to help in the family to fit into the future role as a wife and a mother while boys are not expected to do much more than to study (Chanana, 1990). The gender division of labour have strong implications for female education as education of girls is seen as a wasteful investment (Dreze, 2003; PROBE, 1999). Another implication stemming from gender issues is that there are obstacles to girl's education as absence of schools in a safe distance as well as a high proportion of male teachers (Jha and Jhingran, 2002; Chanana, 1990; PROPE, 1999).

Caste is a division of society into groups, categorized in a harsh hierarchical order out of the concept of purity and pollution. The institution of caste, as the primary basis of social stratification in the Indian society, is considered a most important source of the existence of inequality in education in India (Naik, 1975). At the lowermost end of the hierarchy is the scheduled casts (SC) and the scheduled tribes (ST). The social status in terms of cast affect schooling patterns in primary education all over India and children from SC/SC are less likely to complete enrol or complete schooling (Dreze and Kingdon, 2001; Jha and Jhingran, 2002). Especially children from the SC families are less likely to attend school and have considerable lower school attendance rates and higher drop-out rates than children from other families at the same income level (Nambisan, 1996; Ramachandran, 2002). A serious impediment for the education of children of SC is that their families are often physically as well as socially



Photo by Martin Eksath; Girl at Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh

segregated in the villages in rural India and, additionally, the children are often the first generation learners in families with a high degree of illiteracy (Jha and Jhingran, 2002; PROBE, 1999; Ramachandran, 2002).

Tribe is not a part of the Hindu caste structure, but a social category of importance since India has the largest tribal population in the world, consisting of over 400 tribal communities and constituting over six per cent of the Indian population (Chandra et al, 2008:135). The cultural identity amongst the tribes are regularly strong and the communities are egalitarian disparate from the caste societies (Jha and Jhingran, 2002). The acceptance of a non-tribal teacher by the tribal community depends on the teachers understanding and respect of the tribal culture and practices (Ibid, 2002).

India is a secular state in a comprehensive manner, meaning state neutrality towards all religions and treatment of *religion* as a private matter (Chandra et al, 2008:32). The attitude towards education is however often influenced by people's religious beliefs and religion is an important socio-cultural variable which influences the educational achievements of children (Vaidyanathan and Nair, 2001). As a whole, the educational status of Muslims are considerably lower in comparison with other groups, which is indicated in low literacy rates and a lower grade of enrolment as well as higher drop-out rates (Jha and Jhingran, 2002).

*Socio-demographic Factors*
Socio-demographic factors concerns the relation between general socio-cultural factors and processes in the population as family size or seasonal migration. States with high grades of mal-nourished children and poor health show a low grade of school attendance and achievement in school since hunger obviously is a limiting factor (Ramachandran, 2002; Dreze, 2003). Family size affects schooling of the children due to costs, but also because the elder daughters have to stay at home to take care of the younger siblings (Dreze and Kingdon, 2001). In the under-developed areas families seasonally have to migrate in order to seek employment. When children migrate they are frequently engaged in earning money for the household or looking after siblings and rarely take part of educational activities (Jha and Jhingran, 2002).


# 5.2   Constitutional Prerequisites


> *… We must ensure that every Indian is educated and skilled…We should seek not just functional literacy, but good quality education…I wish to see a revolution in the field of modern education in the next few years.* [20]

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[20] Prime Minister's address to the Nation from the Red Fort on Independence Day, 2007

**Legislative Support for Education**

In 1947, India's first education minister, imagined a strong central government control over education with a standardized educational system (Sripati & Thiruvengadam, 2004:150). Due to the cultural and linguistic diversity of India, this was not possible to achieve, with the exception of some of the higher education forms. The government was given supremacy over the national policies for educational development and could by this means standardize certain parts of the education all over the country (Ibid, 2004). The state governments became the major provider of elementary education in India.

The objective of Indian Primary education is to realize the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE)[21]. The Constitution of India (86th Amendment) Act 2002, enacted in December 2002 seeks to make education free and compulsory, and a fundamental right for all children in the age-group 6-14 years. Article 21 A put emphases on this;

> *"The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."*
>
> Article, 21A in Part III - "Fundamental Rights", the Constitution (2002)

Article 46 of the Constitution emphasizes the needs for special groups;

> *"The State shall promote, with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people ..."*
>
> Article 46, the Constitution (2002)

**The National Policy on Education**

In 1966, the Education Commission, often referred to as the Kothari Commission, coined the term "common school system" for the first time in India as a means to improve the school system (Jha, in Verma et. al., 2007:129). For a common school system based on equal opportunity a model of neighbourhood schools were set up (Ibid, 2007) and The Kothari Report stated that "*each elementary school should be attended by all the children in its neighbourhood irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic condition or social status, so that there would be no segregation in schools*" (Naik, 2008:95). In 1968, the Indian National Policy of Education was welcomed as an important flagstone in the progress of improving the quality of education in India (Aggarwal & Agrawal, 1989). The 1968 Policy stressed, among other issues, the importance of equalization of educational opportunity and brought forward focus on [1]

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[21] http://india.gov.in/citizen/primary_education.php (last checked 6th February 2011)

correcting regional imbalances in educational facilities, [2] promoting social cohesion by improving the standard of education, [3] education of girls, and, [4] developing education for the backward classes. There were wide discrepancies, though, between the states regarding the emphasis they located to education as well as in their capacity to invest in it. This made the disparities in the educational accomplishments of children in different states noticeable[22].

In 1986, the Government of India unveiled the new National Policy of Education (NPE). The policy made primary education a national priority and pictured an increase in resources to a minimum of six per cent of GDP (NPE86;36). The NPE contains the National System of Education (NSE), which is to guarantee some uniformity although taking into account the diversity of regional education needs. The NSE states that

> *"...up to a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex, (should) have access to education of a comparable quality"*
>
> NPE86:5 (1986)

The policy brings forward Education for Equality (NPE89, Part IV) where special emphasis is laid on the

> *"...removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far"*
>
> NPE86:7 (1989)

Literacy and participation/attendance are two major issues of importance that are brought up for various groups, such as women, scheduled castes and handicapped in order to achieve equality in education.

Regarding Elementary Education the NPE emphasizes two aspects; keeping all children in school up to 14 years of age and a *"substantial improvement of the quality of education"* (NPE86:7). The latter embraces a child-centred approach with an activity based process of learning as well as improvement of school facilities.

GoI also re-enforced the *Programme of Action* (POA) in the same year, comprising implementation of several centrally sponsored schemes to improve primary education across the country (Aggarwal & Agrawal, 1989:80). One of the 24 different subjects is to improve elementary education and to enforce "Operation Blackboard" to facilitate improvement

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22 http://www.worldbank.org.in/

of primary school quality. This includes three large rooms usable in all whether, blackboards, maps, toys, learning aids and a library. In addition at least one teacher should work in every class and at least 50 per cent recruited in the future should be women (NPE86:14).

**Compilation of Key Proposed Measures in the NPE 1986 and PoA 1992**

| Proposed Measures | Summary |
|---|---|
| Common Educational Structure | 10+2+3 pattern, a broad-based general education for all pupils during the first ten years |
| | Diversification of courses takes place only at the higher secondary level (grades 11 and 12) |
| Common Curricular Core | Promotion of components cultivating a national identity; i.e. constitutional obligations. |
| | Promotion of common values; i.e. egalitarianism, democracy, secularism, gender equality, removal of social barriers and protection of the environment. |
| Provision of Equal Opportunity | Equal access to schools and equal conditions for success |
| | Awareness of equality all through the core curriculum |
| Minimum Levels of Learning | To be laid out for each stage of education |
| Essential School Facilities | Three all-whether reasonably sized classrooms [Operation Blackboard] |
| | Provision of blackboards, maps, toys and necessary aids |
| | Minimum of one teacher per class as soon as possible |
| | At least 50 % of the recruited teacher should be women |
| Education for Equality | Various provisions for girls of SC/ST or other minority groups |
| | Incentives for families to send children to school, i.e. scholarships for specific groups, recruiting teachers from SC, focus on indigenous languages |

Figure 5.3: Figure by author inspired by compilation by Srivastava in Verma et. Al., 2007:143. Sources: GoI, 1986, GoI, 1992

Overall, the Programme of Action contains excellent and well-intentioned attributes on various aspects on education. Critique however is that there is a lack of resource-based deadlines and how to requisite and achieve the gigantic funding that is acquired for most of the proposed actions (Aggarwal & Agrawal, 1989:81).

**The Right to Education Act (2009)**

> *"No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law."*
>
> Article 21, chapter 3 of the Indian Constitution

Article 21 of the Indian Constitution is to ensure the fundamental right for the people in India. It serves the purpose to protect the personal liberty and life. The right to life includes e.g. right to health, to personal dignity, to decent food and to clean and pollution free environment. 1 April 2010 the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) was added to Article 21 which guarantees that RTE is enforced as a fundamental right.

The RTE is to ensure that every child in the age group of 6-14 years has an entitlement to quality elementary education and *"to reach their fullest potential"* (GoI, 2009). The children shall be bestowed with eight years of elementary education in an age appropriate classroom close to their neighbourhood. Schools need to meet the terms with infrastructure and teacher standards for an effective learning environment. Teachers will be trained and should attend school habitually and promptly, realize curriculum directives, assess learning abilities and regularly meet parents. Teachers will have to work together with the norms appointed by an Academic Authority within five years. The setting shall be child friendly and have clean water, separate toilet facilities for girls and boys and pay attention to health and hygiene issues.

Schools that do not fulfil the norms and standards laid out in the Act within three years will be closed down while private schools will have to apply for recognition. If they fail to live up to the standards, they will be penalized. It will not be allowed to deny any child admission from schools and children with disabilities should be educated in the conventional schools. It will be mandatory for private schools to enrol 25 per cent of the children from low-income families, by random selection. The Central and state governments will have a joint financial obligation for RTE. The Central government estimates the expenses and a percentage of these costs will be handed over to the State governments, who will be responsible for allocating the remaining funds necessary to implementation. At the school level, School Management Committees (SMCs) consisting of local authority officials, parents, and teachers shall bring School Development Plans into being. The SMCs shall further monitor the utilization of government grants and the improvement of school environment and ensure that school quality is coupled with equity. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has been mandated to monitor the implementation of this historic Right. (GoI, 2009)

**Focal points of the Right to Education Act**

| 1 | Free and compulsory education in the 6-14 age groups made a fundamental right |
|---|---|
| 2 | Assurance of quality education (i.e. adequate teachers, child-friendly setting, infrastructure and sufficient hygienic standards) in schools. |
| 3 | Reservation in private schools (25 % children from underprivileged families) |
| 4 | No denial of admission |
| 5 | Local School Management Committees to ensure that school quality is coupled with equity |
| 6 | Shared financial responsibility and increased funding |
| 7 | A pressure on schools to live up to the standards |

Figure 5.4: Figure by author, 2011 inspired by GoI, 2009.

**International Goals and Declarations of Importance**

The right to education is the right to participate in the world and a right to a democracy and a development that is sustainable and founded on social justice (Chatterjee, 2006:1). This is basically a message from the UN declaration of Human Rights and a major component of the national development of primary education which was recognized at the World Conference of *Education for All* in Jomtien in 1990. The main issues in the Education for All is [1] how to mobilize resources and use them effectively to reach the goal of basic education opportunities for all and, [2] how to carry out basic education in a way that will maximize the beneficial consequences for each learner as well as for the society (ibid 2006). The Education for All focuses on universal access for all but also on learning achievements in primary education. The focus on quality in learning rather than on the mere number of years spent in school delegates a responsibility for countries to contrive opportunities for learning (Ibid, 2006). The *Education for All* recommends countries to adopt a broad, integrated education programme that focuses on district level and with active partnership between Central, State and District governments. In India this programme is titled Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

The *World Education Forum* in Dakar in 2000 provided an opportunity to assess the achievements and failures linked to education and to put forward common *Millennium Development Goals*. The United Nation Convention of the Rights of the Child was used as a platform to assert the right of children to quality education (Chatterjee, 2006). The *Millennium Development Goals* includes among others [1] 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 and, [2] improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (UN, 2010). *Education for All* and most of the *Millennium Development Goals* are to be achieved by 2015 (Ibid, 2010).

## 5.3 Resent Government Initiatives within Primary Education

A number of huge public education initiatives have been embarked on in order to give greater priority to improving elementary education in India. Since 2002, most of the programmes are part of the major initiative *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA). Many other measures that have a direct influence on the education initiatives have also been undertaken, e.g. organizing local *Village Education Committees* and the transferring of power to the people

materialized by the local institutions of *Panchayati Rai*. A *Panchayat* is a village communal system where people select delegates for direct representation and an important feature of democracy in India. In this section I will provide a brief overview of some of the initiatives taken.

**Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**
In 2001, the Central Government introduced its flagship Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) - Campaign for Universal Education. The SSA is one of the largest programs of its kind in the world. It seeks to meet the needs of almost 200 million children living in over a million habitations all over India. The aim of the Programme is to enrol all 6-14 year-olds in school by 2010, keep them at school and present them with quality education as a minimum till grade eight. (WB, 2009)

Accomplishing the goal involves support of teachers training, development of teaching materials, as well as ways to monitor learning outcomes. Primary schools will be situated with a maximum of one kilometre from all habitations in order to increase accessibility. One of the objectives with SSA is to bridge all gender and social category gaps at elementary level education before 2010 (Sachchidananda, 2005). This consists of textbooks at no cost to all female and low caste students, special facilities for girls. Districts will obtain grants to support students with disabilities (Kingdon, 2007). The SSA has two important features for a positive outcome, namely that is has a broad framework for implementation as well a Programme with budget allocation (Sachchidananda, 2005). The framework for implementation includes highly decentralized features by reason of India's diversity. The states are suitable to form context-specific strategies and many schemes are delivered through implementing at village level. More than 7,000 NGOs are participating in the SSA, holding e.g. bridge-courses. (Kingdon, 2007)

**Mid-Day Meal Scheme**
In 2001, the Indian Supreme Court directed all states to implement the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDM) as an incentive for children to remain in school. Every child in every government and government assisted primary school is provided with a free hot cooked mid-day meal every day at school (Kingdon, 2007). Public mobilization encouraged the states to act and by 2006, the MDM scheme was near universal and part of the daily routine in all states providing lunch to about 120 million children every day. This makes it the largest school meal scheme in the world (ibid). The MDM scheme is centrally funded where the central government provides grains, funds transportation and pays for the food preparation costs. The state government in return is responsible for providing the infrastructure for cooking the meals.

**District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)**
In 1994, the government introduced the District Primary Education Programme to regulate the elementary education system in India through district specific planning and action (Sachchidananda, 2005:13). In the

following year The National Elementary Education Mission (NEEM) was set up in order to mobilize all resources to achieve the goal of universalized elementary education (UEE) by the year of 2000 (Dhawan, 2005:74). The aim of DPEP is to universalize access to school and to eliminate drop-outs, to improve learning achievements and to reduce inequalities amongst gender and social groups (Chatterjee, 2006:27). The fundamental principle of the DPEP is capacity building and a vital part of this is embracing a holistic approach to endorse primary education through regionalized planning and integrated programming (Dhawan, 2005:56). The DPEP covers 273 districts in 18 states and are now part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Ibid, 2006:27).

**Lok Jumbish**
Lok Jumbish stands for a people's movement to achieve elementary education for all and has a holistic understanding about universal elementary education (Dhawan, 2005:57). The programme is implemented by instituting an interface amid the local community, the teaching profession, the educational administration and the learners (Ibid, 2005:57).

**Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS)**
This programme was launched to provide access in school-less habitations (Chatterjee, 2006:26). The scheme supports flexible strategies for out of school children through bridge courses, summer schools, remedial courses for school children, drop-in courses and so forth (Ibid, 2006:26). Small schools, so called EGS Centres or alternative schools, are set up in remote areas and aims at functioning as transitory facilities until the children can be substituted by official government primary schools (Govinda, 2008:14). Over 107 000 EGC centres have been set up (Chatterjee: 2006:26).

**Operation Blackboard (OB)**
Operation Blackboard started in 1987-1988 and is now a part of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The objective is to arrange for basic facilities in elementary schools (Chatterjee, 2006:84). As in many other education programmes a focus has been on recruiting women teacher. This scheme however made it mandatory with at least 50 per cent women teachers (Ibid, 2006:85). The aim is at improving the school climate and enhancing learning achievements in primary education and more than 523 000 schools had joined the scheme in 2004 (Sachchidananda, 2005).

**Para-teacher schemes - Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP)**
Since the middle of the 1990s a number of states have established varied types of low-cost untrained education workers known variously as s*hiksha karmis, shiksha mitras, vidya volunteers*, etc. (Kingdon, 2007:190). Following is a brief description of the Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP), which has been implemented in the state of Rajasthan. The core strategy of the SKP is mobilising the village community to take responsibility to ensure quality education for every child in remote backward villages, in order to universalise primary education and deliver quality education (Chatterjee,

2006:27). Community involvement is the key factor for success in this project as in several of the other initiatives. Teacher absenteeism has been considered to be a major hindrance in achieving universal education and SKP addresses teacher absenteeism by training local youth to act as para-teachers (Ibid, 2006:27). These local youths are known as Shiksha Karmis.

**Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyala (KGBV)**
Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyala aims at reaching girls living in small scattered habitations at a considerable distance from schools (Chatterjee, 2006:84). The scheme is only being implemented in so called "educational backward" sectors in 21 states of India (Ibid, 2006:84). The aim of the programme is to make quality education available by assembling 750 primary schools with a comprehensive system of support for evaluation, teacher learning material, academic support and a community interface to facilitate for families to send their daughters to schools (Ibid, 2006:84). Several similar initiatives have been taken. Another example of a programme for compulsory elementary education for girls is the Kasturba Gandhi Shiksha Yojana. The aim here is also to establish residential schools for girls in all districts where the level of female literacy rate is low (Sachchidananda, 2005).

**Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education (RRTE)**
This programme was launched in 1987 in order to improve the quality and competencies of teachers (Dhawan, 2005:73). Between 1987 and 1990 almost 1.8 million teachers were trained in the programme aiming at orienting the teachers in main priorities of the national policies (Ibid, 2005:73). The National council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was set up in 1993 in order to enforce effective implementation of teacher education.

**NGO's – An Example; M. Venkatarangaiya Foundation**
There are a number of educational NGOs that have emerged and grown rapidly. *Pratham*, which is the largest, publishes reports on learning achieve- ments. Other are to mention some; *Digantar*, *Azim Premji* and *MV Foundation*, whom all have contributed to educational improvements in a number of dimensions, as by advocacy voice, research capacity and capability to mobilize funds for education (Kingdon, 2007:191). I will provide a brief description on the M.V Foundation (MVF), which I was given the opportunity to visit in June 2009.

The MV Foundation (MVF) started 1991 and is a private, charitable Trust in Andhra Pradesh working to abolish all sorts of child labour through universalizing primary education (Shukla & Ali, 2006:113). The motto of MVF is that *every child out of school is a working child* and the organization believes "*ensuring access to education is the only real answer to tackling the problem of working children*" (Jagannathan, 2001:11). The methodology is to build awareness among rural families and conduct mobilization camps for the children (Shukla & Ali, 2006:113). MVF uses a

broad range of strategies to encourage working children to be in the school system. Short and long-term residential camps are operated, where the aim is to help the children as well as their parents in the process of withdrawing the children from work and preparing for school (Jagannathan, 2001:12). The children stay at the camps and apart from teaching activities the camps have incorporated street plays as well as a campaign for children to motivate other children. The MVF-programme involves follow up measures to prevent drop-outs (Shukla & Ali, 2006:113).


## 5.4   Chapter Summary


India is a multicultural, multilingual and multi-ethnic society with a motto, *Unity in Diversity*, implicating that the socio-political pluralism and the religious diversity is the source of India´s strength which makes the whole greater than the sum. However, the social context applying to the socio-economic environment of children and their families exceedingly influences the educational chances of children in India. Economic factors influence the educational decisions families make. Socio Cultural Factors, as family, extended kin group, cast, tribe or religion, exceedingly influence the educational choices of a child. Socio-demographic factors concerns the relation between general socio-cultural factors and processes in the population as family size or seasonal migration, which equally effect educational opportunities of a child.

Constitutional prerequisites indicate that there is a strong legislative support for primary education. The distribution of power from the central government to the states and local administrations instigate differences between the states in regards their capacity to invest in education. The disparities in the educational accomplishments of children in different states are thus noticeable. The constitution of India pursues education to be free, compulsory and a fundamental right for all children in the age-group 6-14 years. The National Policy of Education (NPE) from 1986 is to guarantee some uniformity although taking into account the diversity of regional education needs. NPE emphasizes a *"substantial improvement of the quality of education"*. The *Programme of Action* (POA) from the same year comprises implementation of several centrally sponsored schemes to improve primary education across the country. The PoA contains excellent and well-intentioned attributes on various aspects on education, but there is a lack of resource-based deadlines and how to achieve the funding that is acquired for most of the proposed actions. Additionally India is playing their part in the UN commitments to achieve *Education for All* and most of the *Millennium Development Goals* by 2015.

Several public education initiatives have been introduced in order to develop elementary education in India. Since 2002 most of the programmes are part of the major initiative *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) which is one of the largest programs of its kind in the world. The aim of the Programme is to

enrol all 6-14 year-olds in school by 2010, keep them at school and present them with quality education as a minimum till grade eight. Many other measures that have a direct influence on the education initiatives have also been undertaken, e.g. organizing local *Village Education Committees* and the transferring of power to the people materialized by the local institutions of *Panchayati Rai*.



Photo by Martin Eksath; M.V. Foundation School in a village outside Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh India

# 6    Results and Empiricism

In this chapter the results from the various sources [see 3.1 The Research Process] are put forward and not explicitly commented. The next chapter will analyse, comment and accumulate the result in relevance of the Indian context and the theoretical background. The results in this chapter are gathered in two major sections. In the first section significant outcomes are accumulated from the main surveys and reports conducted on Indian Primary Education during the recent years. I have allowed UNESCOs *Global Monitoring Report 2009* and the Indian *ASER report 2010* to spread out more because they are recent, have an extensive coverage and complement each other. In addition results from various scholars concerned with diverse aspects on the topic of primary education in India will be brought forward. In the second section findings concerned with the process of implementation are brought together.

## 6.1    Assemblage of Significant Outcomes

**Education for All - Global Monitoring Report 2009**
In UNESCOs report *Education for All - Global Monitoring Report 2009* (with the sub-title *Overcoming inequality: why governance matters*), progress towards the EFA[23] goals is tracked for each country. In this passage I will highlight some positive and negative features of importance concerning the development of primary education in India in relation to the global goals of reaching the standards of *Education for All* at 2015.

| Positive development | Negative development |
|---|---|
| On track to achieve enrolment ratio | Dismal quality of reading and counting |
| High attendance rates by handicapped | High degree of teachers absence |
| Large increase in enrolment | Low-fee primary schools |
| Strong ownership – low degree of aid | Low part of national income on education |

Figure 6.1: Table by author based on UNESCO, 2010

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[23] A majority of the world's countries committed at the turn of the new century to achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2015.

Four positive trends regarding primary education in India are highlighted in the report. Out of the seventeen countries with the most children out of school, just three – Bangladesh, Brazil and India – are on track to achieve primary enrolment ratio in excess of 97 per cent by 2015. A second positive feature is that India has the lowest inequality gap in school attendance rates between children aged 6 to 11 with disabilities compared to those without handicaps. In the countries compared, the range is from 10 per cent in India to almost 60 per cent in Indonesia. Further, India has been able to show success associated with sector-wide approaches in education, such as large increases in enrolment. Finally, a strong national ownership that is based on a two-way partnership between national Governments and donors are of vast importance. India has low levels of aid dependency, high levels of government capacity and strong national institutions for capacity development. This has led to a firm control of setting priorities and as well as implementing its national programme in action. (UNESCO, 2010)

Negative trends on the other hand are the low quality of primary education. In a 2007 survey in India, fewer than half the children in grade 3 could read a simple text and only 58 per cent could subtract or divide. Another quality aspect where India is heavily criticized is the huge amount of teachers that never turn up at school. An average of 25 per cent of the teachers are absent from school. According to the UNESCO report India annually loses 2 billion dollar due to teachers getting paid but not coming to work. An indicator of low Government school quality is that private primary schools have grown rapidly in recent years in India. Low-fee private schools are spreading in areas serving the most disadvantaged populations, e.g. children in slums. In South Asia, India spends more of its national income to education than Bangladesh (2.6 %) and Pakistan (2.7 %). However India's 3.3 per cent is far lower than its BRIC comparatives as of the world medium of 4,9 per cent. (UNESCO, 2010)

**ASER 2010**

India aims to ensure that all children between 6 and 14 years old *attend school regularly* and *receive useful and relevant education*. Every year since 2005, Pratham, a NGO, has facilitated the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)[24] . The aim is to evaluate whether the public expenditures are leading to the desired outcomes, explicitly if the children in rural India attend school, if they know how to read in their native language and whether they have the skills to carry out basic arithmetic. ASER 2010 also included a visit to over 13,000 government schools in order to assess the fulfilment of those standards specified in the Right to Education Act that are easy to measure. The ASER report is restricted to rural areas.

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[24] More on ASER in Appendix I

The report shows that 96,5 per cent of the children between 6 and 14 years old in rural India are enrolled in school. This is an increase since 2005, when 93,4 per cent of the children were attending school. 71,1 per cent of the children are enrolled in government schools, while 24,3 per cent are enrolled in private school, which has been a continuous rise since 2005 when 16,3 per cent were enrolled in private schools. Most figures in the ASER report show an immense variety in outcomes amongst the different states. The private schools have increased considerably in the south of India. The percentage of children in private schools in Kerala are 54,2 per cent and in Karnataka 54,2 per cent, while some other states, mostly in the north have very low proportions of children enrolled in private schools (e.g. Bihar, 5,2 % and West Bengal, 5,9 %). The differences between the states are equally substantial in regards of school attendance. However, there are states, like Bihar, that are generally low performing, that have made a notable improvement.
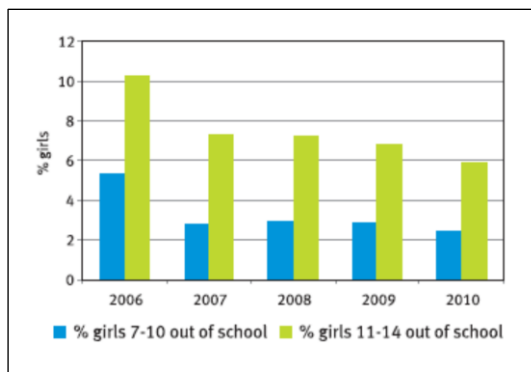


Figure 6.2: Figure by ASER. All India: Proportion of girls not enrolled in school
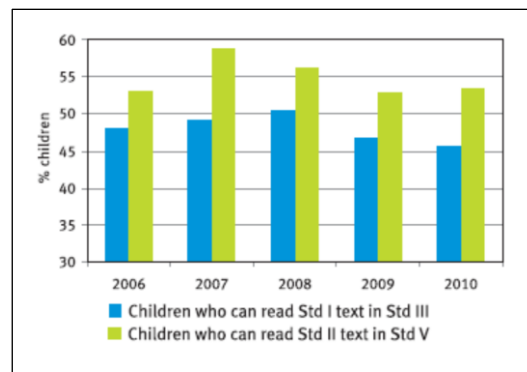


Figure 6.3: Figure by ASER. All India: Proportion of children who can read

In Bihar, 96,6 per cent of the boys and 96,4 per cent of the girls in the age group 11-14 years old, were attending school in 2010. Four years earlier the numbers were much lower, and furthermore there where a gender difference that has now declined [2006, 87,7% of boys and 82,4% girls were attending school in the 11-14 age group]. The amount of out of school girls has steadily decreased (figure 6.2) and are now 5,9 per cent of the girls in the 11-14 age group. Here too, the states differ and in Rajasthan (12,1%) and Uttar Pradesh (9,7%) there are still a considerably high proportion of girls that are out of school and there is little progress to be seen between 2005 and 2010.

The reading ability is still low and has not increased since 2006. ASER measures whether children in school year five can read a text that is proposed for children in school year two and whether children in school year three are able to read a text premeditated for children in school year one. Almost half of the children (53,2 %) in year five are not able to read the texts that they were supposed to be able to read after two years in school.

Some states however, like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, have seen an increase in the ratio of children that are able to read.

The children's ability to do simple mathematics (i.e. recognize numbers and do basic operations like solving two digit subtraction) has on average declined since 2006. The decrease is a few per cent points on all age groups, though some states like Punjab has made substantial progress and make an exception. An example of the decline is that children in the fifth school year who could do uncomplicated division problems plummeted from 38 per cent in 2009 to 35.9 per cent in 2010.

It is commonplace in India for the children to take paid extra tuition classes after school. The ASER report show an increase of children in government schools that turn to paid additional help. The percentage has increased in all age groups 2007-2010. In grade VI, as an example, there is an increase of children taking paid additional tuition from 23,5 per cent (2007) to 27,6 per cent (2010). For children in private schools there has been a decrease; for children in grade VI, from 24,1 per cent (2007) to 23,9 per cent (2010). In states like Bihar and West Bengal where private school enrolment is low, the proportion of children in grade V enrolled in government schools who take tuition classes is very high (West Bengal-75.6%, Bihar-55.5%). All together, the figures are indicating that more children in government schools are in need of additional help.

| Standard | Assessment |
|---|---|
| Enrolment/ private school enrolment | + Increase in enrolment to 96,5 % in the rural areas.<br>0 Substantial increase of children enrolled in private schools<br>- Considerable variations between the states. |
| Out of school girls | + A steady decrease, but higher proportions in some states. |
| Reading ability | - No change in reading ability, except in some states. |
| Math ability | - Decrease in children's ability to do simple maths. |
| Private tuition | 0 Private tuition decreasing for children in private schools, and remain at the same level for children I government schools. |

Figure 6.4: Table by author based on ASER, 2010

*Fulfilment of the standards in the Right to Education Act (RTE)*
On top of records on enrolment and school attendance the ASER Report 2010 encloses data on the assessment of school infrastructure variables in the RTE. 13 021 rural government schools in 522 districts were visited. The report has aggregated an *"RTE infrastructure indicator"* for each school established on seven variables of availability, i.e. usable separate toilets, a kitchen for cooking mid-day-meal, safe drinking water and a playground. ASER 2010 observed that above 60 per cent of the visited schools fulfilled

the infrastructure norms stipulated by the RTE[25]. Nevertheless, more than 50 per cent of the schools require additional teachers, while one out of three calls for more classrooms. 62 per cent of the schools had playgrounds, 81 per cent had a kitchen for preparing mid-day-meal and 7 per cent had safe drinking water. 70 per cent of the schools had separate toilets for girls and boys, though only 37 per cent of them were in working function. The ASER Report has checked whether the number of infrastructure facilities could be correlating with learning outcome at a school level, but could not confirm such a correspondence. More teachers are needed in the schools in India, but despite of this fact the ASER 2010 found that learning outcome was negatively correlated with the pupil teacher ratio (PTR). The number of primary schools with every teacher showing up at school on the day of the ASER visit has decreased from 73.7 per cent in 2007 to 63.4 per cent in 2010. Children's attendance stayed close to 73 per cent during the same period, but here as well there is a substantial variation between the states.

In short, the ASER report 2010 show that looking at India as a whole there has been a prominent increase in enrolment, a significant progress towards the goals in the RTE, but a failure in increasing the quality of education. (ASER Report 2010)

**Results from researchers**
The results from researchers gathered in this passage are based on previous statistics that are slightly more timeworn than the indicators from the Global Monitoring Report 2009 and the ASER Report 2010. The reports are recent though and results from the researchers provide a perspective over time and an overlook of what these researchers have found noteworthy. The researcher that I have most frequently related to in this passage is Professor Geeta Gandhi Kingdon at the University of London, who is a development economist with a special interest in the economics of education,

*School Attendance Rates*
Current attendance rates are more trustworthy indicators of schooling participation than enrolment rates, in view of the fact that large enrolment rates could mask nonattendance or drop-out later in the school year (Kingdon, 2007:9). What the attendance rates show is if the children are in school, not if grades have been completed or if minimum levels of learning has been reached. In the attendance rates from the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) 1993 and 1999, school attendance among rural 6-10 year old girls increased by 20 per cent and among rural 6-10 year old boys with 12 per cent, which are substantial increases. In the rural 11-14 year age group, girls increased by 14 per cent and among rural 6-10 year old boys

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[25] About 50per cent schools had more than four (out of seven) facilities, which according to the ASER Report 2010 indicates a fair degree of compliance with RTE norms in the first year of the Act.

with 5 per cent, increases. Urban increases were smaller than the rural. In four of the states, attendance rates rose by over 25 per cent in this six-year period. The differences between the states are large, from Kerala and Himachal Pradesh ranging from 97 per cent to almost 100 per cent attendance to a couple of states with less than 50 per cent schooling attendance. Overall, nearly 80 per cent of all 6-14 year olds were attending school in 1999 (Kingdon, 2007).

*Literacy Rates*
Perhaps India's biggest educational failure is its continuation of high illiteracy rates (Chandra et al, 2008). On the other hand literacy rates in the population aged 7 years and older escalated in the 1990s from 52 per cent to 65 per cent. The increase of 13 per cent is the largest in any decade since beginning of records in 1816. The gender gap also began to close distinctly during the 1990s (Kingdon, 2007).

The differences between the states are large ranging from 91 per cent in Kerala to 49 per cent in Bihar. Some states have made very rapid progress with increasing literacy while others were more mediocre. "*Any major improvement in national literacy in the future will depend crucially on its progress among young persons in the four large north Indian states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh* (the so-called BIMARU or Sick States) *which have lagged behind particularly seriously in the past*" (Kingdon, 2007).

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 1993 and 1999 show positive trends in age-specific data. Between those six years, literacy rates rose very rapidly in the rural areas and especially among girls – with about 15 per cent in girls 6-19 years old. The urban development was slower, but still positive. Taken as a whole, the increase of the national literacy rate for boys and girls (6-19 years) was roughly 10 per cent.

*Learning Achievement Levels in Primary Education*
The education system in India is contextually disconnected to the world the children live in and education most often focus on memorization rather than understanding (Yashpal in Kumar et al, 2005). Both learner and teacher are limited within the contours of rote learning and repetition. The child's curiosity is seldom addressed by teachers in India (ibid). Education in India today does very little in the socialization and thinking process where basic values are formed even if there is a considerable empowerment factor for disadvantaged groups in the act of just going to school in itself (Dreze in Kumar et al, 2005).

The prerequisites for learning are thus poor, but how is the result? The NGO, *Pratham*, conducted a survey of learning achievement in 2005 and a follow-up in 2006. "*In 2006, nearly 47 % of school children in grade 5*

*could not read the story text at grade 2 level of difficulty*" (Kingdon, 2007). 55 per cent of grade 5 and 25 per cent of grade 8 children were not able to solve a basic division problem. In both reading and arithmetic, as in literacy as mentioned before, there was a considerable variation in student performance between the States. "*In the bottom five states in 2005, 62-75 % of grade 5 children could not solve the same division problems*" (Kingdon, 2007).

*School Facilities*
In 1999 the PROBE Team published a survey done in 1996 concerning schooling facilities in 242 villages across five north Indian states. PROBE found inadequate school infrastructure, e.g. "*26 % of schools did not have a blackboard in every classroom, 52 % had no playground, 59 % no drinking water, 89 % no toilet, 59 % no maps or charts, 75 % no toys, 77 % no library and 85 % no musical instruments*" (PROBE Team, 1999, in Kingdon, 2007). In 2005, the ASER report revealed that improvements had been done but the infrastructure was still poor. In 2005 "*34 % of primary schools had no drinking water and 58 % had no functioning toilets*" (Kingdon, 2007).

*Teacher Effort*
Different studies indicate a very high degree of teacher negligence in schools. A survey of teacher absence in rural India in 2003 made three unannounced visits to each one of 3700 schools in 20 major states of India. They found that, on average, 25 per cent of teachers in government primary schools were absent from school on a given day. Among teachers that were present, only about 50 per cent were actually engaged in teaching (Kremer et. al., 2004). Absence rates ranged to a large extent between the States, from 15 per cent in Maharashtra to 71 per cent in Bihar. Only in one public school (out of 3000) had a teacher ever been dismissed for repeated absence (ibid). The PROBE survey (1996) found an equally low level of teaching activity in schools with no teaching activity in half of the sample schools.

> "*Inactive teachers were found engaged in a variety of pastimes such as sipping tea, reading comics, or eating peanuts, when they were not just sitting idle. Generally speaking, teaching activity has been reduced to a minimum in terms of both time and effort. And this pattern is not confined to a minority of irresponsible teachers - it has become a way of life in the profession*"
>
> PROBE Team, 1999:63, in Kingdon, 2007

*Mid-Day Meal Scheme*
There are yet no thorough evaluations of MDMs impact on children's school enrolment and attendance or health status, but a number of micro studies imply major increases in enrolment immediately after the

introduction of midday meals, e.g. 36 per cent in Madhya Pradesh (Kingdon, 2007).

## 6.2 Descriptive Assemblage of the Process of Implementation

*Government policies and commitment*
The OED Education Evaluation for India (Abadzi, 2002) indicates that government policy and commitment is what matter most for the poor in order to get access to primary education. Abadzi show that the government commitment in the late 1980s and in the 1990s has "*significantly increased access to primary education for the poor*" (Abadzi, 2002). However, the OED also concludes that challenges remain to achieve progress in the lower casts and for girls' education (Ibid, 2002). The result above is paralleled in case studies of the District Primary Education Programme (Pandey, 2000). The OECD concludes that government policy has a larger impact upon primary education access and outcomes in the developing countries as in Europe (OECD, 2004:11). Since government policy is to ensure that adequate resources are provided, education outcomes for the poor, as learning achievement and completion of primary school, is crucial (OECD, 2004:11).

*Leadership and persistency works*
The ASER Report 2010 underscores that persistency and focus works and a strong and long-standing leadership has stood out to be essential to bring change. The report points towards that it is inevitable to start with a strong centralized leadership, but equally important, to create a resilient constellation of local and school level leadership that understands the goals to be realized and are truly dedicated to them. However, the report also implies that an established leadership could be a problem if they are not open to change or adopting new strategies to make further progress to their work, which has been the case in some states.

An unshakable focus has brought some states in for successful achievements. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have focused resolutely on the makeover of classrooms improved on getting better quality learning environments. Punjab has achieved progress in learning through focused activities. Bihar, a BIMARU state, has concentrated exclusively on enrolment and accomplished impressive results. The children's poor attendance in schools, which was not a matter of attention, has not changed much though. (ASER Report, 2010)

*Community involvement in school design*
Case studies indicate that community involvement in school design has been an encouraging factor when it comes to increasing school facilities to improve the standard of quality (Abadzi, 2002; Pandey, 2000). This does in an indirect way trigger learning achievements since buildings and school facilities that are not up to scratch could hold back learning achievements (Ibid).

*M.V. Foundation (MVF) – an evaluation*
Shukla and Ali have evaluated the work done by M.V. Foundation (MVF), a non-government organisation earlier described in chapter 5. The methodology of MVF is to raise the conscience of predominantly parents of child labourers in the rural areas. During the first eight years of the programme 1000 children have attended camps for working children involving teaching activities and street games. 3500 children have additionally been motivated to go to school and the latest phase of the programme covers 6000 children in 36 villages (Shukla & Ali, 2006:114).

The work done by MVF indicates that [1] Universalization of education and abolition of child labour are one and the same, [2] Parents of working children are willing to make changes to facilitate for their children to go to school, [3] For most parents the income of the working child is not the motivating factor for sending their child to work, [4] NGO´s are not an alternative to using government schools, since NGO´s cannot provide an infrastructure at the necessary scale, and [5] Involving the local village communities is a capacity when universalizing elementary education (Ibid, 2006:214). Shukla and Ali conclude that that the working children are highly motivated to go to school and that there is a demand for education even among rural parents of the economically weaker sections of society. However, sometimes the society shows a "*lack of faith in the fact that people, even poor people, value education and learning and are willing to make extraordinary sacrifices to educate their children*" (Shukla & Ali, 2006:114).

*Education and the decentralization of power*
Universalizing elementary education is a way for the Indian government to deal with social exclusion represented by caste. Another way to deal with exclusion is the distribution and decentralization of power. The education budget is often a responsibility of the 25 state governments. Furthermore, the state governments are organized in region, district, block and village where power is distributed. Since 1992, many states have local village governments, Panchayati Rai. The aim of District Primary Education Programme, DPEP has been to decentralize education and encouraging local ownership through village education committees (VECs). However, according to Alexander, there is a tension between the two commitments, decentralization of power and reduction of inequalities of gender, caste and

tribe on one hand and universalization of primary education and eradication of illiteracy on the other. Decentralization could lead to inequalities, since different priorities are made at the local level concerning education (Alexander, 2000:83).

## 6.3   Chapter Summary

Results from the two major reports as well as from the researchers are quite consistent. Positive trends are that in relation to the global goals of reaching the standards of *Education for All* at 2015, India has made remarkable progress and is one of few countries with many children out of school that are on track to achieve the enrolment ratio in excess of 97 per cent by 2015. India also has the lowest inequality gap in school attendance rates between children aged 6 to 11 with disabilities compared to those without handicaps. India has shown success associated with sector-wide approaches in education, like the large increases in enrolment. Another positive factor is the low degree of aid which is coupled with high levels of government capacity and strong national institutions for setting priorities and implementing the priorities in action. The fulfilment of the standards in the Right to Education Act, i.e. the assessment of school infrastructure, shows a positive development and that a lot has been done during the first year of the act.

A negative trend, on the other hand, is the low quality of primary education. Only around half the children in grade 3 could read a simple text or subtract or divide and the quality is even decreasing over time. Another major problem is that a vast amount of teachers never turns up at school. Low-fee private schools are spreading which is an indicator of low Government school quality. Children in need of paid private tuition remain high. This could indicate a low quality in primary education in government schools. Finally, India spends a comparably low part of the national income on primary education, though it has increased during the last few years.

Evaluations of the process show government policy has had a larger impact upon primary education access and outcomes in developing countries since government policy is to ensure that adequate resources are provided. Persistency and focus work and a strong and long-standing leadership have stood out to be essential to bring change. Community involvement has been shown important in order to increase school facilities and thus trigger learning achievements. Evaluation of the MV Foundation indicates that that the working children are highly motivated to go to school and that there is a demand for education even among rural parents of the economically weaker sections of society.

# 7 Analysis and Discussion

Has the National Policy on Education determined priorities that have reduced inequality in the diverse Indian society? Have the priorities made constituted a society less unequal? Has Naik´s value triangle [quality, quantity, equality] been solved by the priorities made and shown the way to quality education for all? In this passage I will accumulate the theoretical background, the Indian context, and the results and provide a framework for quality suitable for the Indian context. The empiric will be explored in themes that depart from the research questions. In the next chapter, the foremost results and their consequences will be discussed.

## 7.1 Accumulation of the Theoretical Framework

The Capabilities Approach (CA) emphasise on human development by enabling the individual's capabilities in order to reduce poverty and inequality. Following is a figure to draw out the essence of CA in relation to the bearing concepts of the research questions.

**Education and capabilities approach**

| Framework | Welfare Economy |
|---|---|
| Theory | Capabilities Approach |
| Rationale | Primary focus on increase of human capabilities rather than economic growth |
| Understandings of diversity | Different people, cultures and societies may have dissimilar values and wishes |
| Understandings of equality | Equality of rights and capabilities |
| Understandings of quality | Quality measures what people or societies are able to achieve |
| Understandings of education | A basic capability |

Figure 7.1 Figure by author, 2011.

The cultural diversity approach stresses that a truly diverse society should use policies to galvanize a national belonging within a frame of equal rights and opportunities. The figure below shows upholding thoughts in the cultural diversity approach in support of the key conceptions in this thesis.

**Education and multiculturalism - cultural diversity**

| Framework | Political Philosophy |
|---|---|
| Theory | Multiculturalism – cultural diversity |
| Rationale | A society celebrating communal diversity and established on a solid perception of unity |
| Understandings of diversity | A multicultural society is too diverse to be based upon shared cultural, ethnic or other characteristics |
| Understandings of equality | Human rights principles a framework for handling differences |
| Understandings of quality | Quality measures a societies respect for diversity and the common sense of belonging among its citizens" |
| Understandings of education | Policies should, be based upon equal rights and contemporary cultural diversity and encourage a shared national identity |

Figure 7.2: Figure by author, 2011.

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The process model of curriculum theory and practice accentuates that priorities in primary education should communicate the priorities in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice. Figure 7.3 illustrates the main features of curriculum theory coupled with the fundamental concepts.

**Conceptualizing quality in education**

| Framework | Education |
|---|---|
| Theory | Curriculum theory |
| Rationale | Primary focus on the process. Policies should be designed to close the gap between policy and practice by paying attention to culture and values |
| Understandings of diversity | Policy reflects different values and aims and are embedded in diverse social, political and cultural contexts |
| Understandings of equality | An awareness in decision-making where everyone´s realities are needed in the process to improve reforms |
| Understandings of quality | Quality occurs when there is a match between planned government initiatives with the true needs of children |
| Understandings of education | A moral issue and a changeable process, where human action and culture turns into action |

Figure 7.3: Figure by author, 2011.

# 7.2   Accumulation of the Indian Framework

In order to make the framework comprehensible I will display the gathering of particulars upon the Indian framework in the same way as above.

**The Indian Framework**
Characteristics from the Indian framework are extracted and laid in relation to diversity, equality, quality and education.

**The Indian context**

| Understandings of diversity | - 1,3 billion people, 28 states, 18 languages, all major religions, plenteous minority groups and indigenous people |
| Understandings of equality | - distribution of power from central government<br>- family a social institution making decisions<br>- non-agricultural households more likely to attend school<br>- gender-specific: son´s education better investment, girls socialized to domestic work, male teachers<br>- Strong hierarchy/social stratification/casts and tribes |
| Understandings of quality | - lack of facilities, i.e. toilets |
| Understandings of education | - Second largest education system in the world |

Figure 7.4: Figure by author, 2010.

## Reflective Writing

This passage is an accumulation of keywords and phrases upon the foundational diversities of Indian socio-cultural and political-economic sphere. The memos are accumulated from reflective writing exercises during a month's summer course at Hyderabad University, India.

**Memos from Hyderabad**

| Framework | Reflexive writing by author during a months stay in India |
| --- | --- |
| Understandings of diversity | - An omnipresent pride of the slogan "unity in diversity".<br>- A diversity and richness of influences that maybe is unique in the world. A world of contrasts. |
| Understandings of equality | - Human rights principles strong in theory and in what people express.<br>- Prioritizing of marginalized groups in education.<br>- Still a noticeable acceptance that people have different preconditions and inequality is "natural". |
| Understandings of quality | - Quality measures the achievement of the millennium goals.<br>- School quality also concerns facilities (i.e. toilets) |
| Understandings of education | - Policies focus on reducing inequality and achieving the millennium goals.<br>- A general dissatisfaction with the quality of elementary education.<br>- Education is considered important for most parents/groups, but there are exceptions (i.e. farmers) |

Figure 7.5: Figure by author, 2010.

The memos provide a point of reference in relation to the theories in the thesis. The memos derive from everyday people I have spoken to, from scholars during classes, from newspapers, television, cinema and from what I have set eyes on during my stay in Hyderabad. The memos go well in line with the discourse in this thesis.

# 7.3 Accumulation of Results

The results below are associated with the significant outcome variables, the process of implementation, or with both. I have selected an assortment of results that all in all could provide an all-encompassing contextual background for the upcoming discussion in themes.

**Results and associated with theories**

| Result/Process | Theory | Association |
|---|---|---|
| A major increase in the school enrolment ratio | Capabilities approach | School enrolment and attendance = capability, Actually learning anything = functioning |
| | Cultural diversity | Children need to be in school in order to cultivate a strong sense of common belonging; a unity in diversity |
| | Curriculum theory | - |
| Continuous low school quality in terms of reading and counting skills | Capabilities approach | Literacy = capability, Reading = functioning, in this case the children achieves neither capability nor functioning. Children are *not* provided with the necessities to convert resources to capabilities and beneficial functionings. |
| | Cultural diversity | Different kinds of literacies in different cultures to be considered. Literacy not simply the ability to read and write, but an act of communication with different meaning in different cultures. |
| | Curriculum theory | Outcomes are not the central and defining feature. Content and means develop as teachers and students work together. A reform aiming at improving literacy needs to be constantly enforced with "reality" from the Teacher-Student dyad in order to improve the reforms |
| Strong ownership in terms of strong national institutions. Durable leadership, focus and persistency | Capabilities approach | Support led development (i.e. mechanism of support lead development through competent welfare programmes) |
| | Cultural diversity | A truly diverse society should use policies to galvanize a national belonging |
| | Curriculum theory | Policy and curricular documents on education in India contain aims of education preceded by an account of national concerns and priorities, and the role perceived for education in nation building. |
| High degree of private tuition: an increase for children in government schools. | Capabilities approach | Education a key capability for empowerment and reducing poverty. It has to be accessible for all children (i.e. free of expenditures) |
| | Cultural diversity | The understanding and the development of universal values e.g. tolerance and democracy, should be ensured through quality education |
| | Curriculum theory | - |
| High grade of community involvement; NGO´s, panchyarats, family commitment | Capabilities approach | Group agency - Democratic deliberation as the most beneficial and valuable way for a group to achieve change and realize its own goals |
| | Cultural diversity | Equality has to be delineated in regards to cultural diversity. Equal opportunity is not the same as equal resources. Equal validity of multiple dissimilar subcultures should be acknowledged. Education an arena for participation and belonging |
| | Curriculum theory | A possibility for the stakeholders to bring forward what is needed for learning. A possibility to achieve quality in education by recognizing the value of culture. |
| Children are highly motivated to go to school. Families in all socio-economy groups find education important | Capabilities approach | Capability- A potential functioning, i.e. an opportunity to achieve something (i.e. motivation). |
| | Cultural diversity | - |
| | Curriculum theory | - |
| Rapid development in ESA infrastructure, as kitchen for mid-day meal, toilets, drinking water and school facilities. | Capabilities approach | Capability- A potential functioning, i.e. an opportunity to achieve something (i.e. toilets and clean water gives an opportunity to achieve a truly wanted outcome). Equality – freedom to attend school in a safe environment and to participate as a unique individual. Children are provided with the necessities to convert resources to capabilities and beneficial functionings. |
| | Cultural | - |

72

| | diversity | |
|---|---|---|
| | Curriculum theory | There is a need to develop an understanding of human actions in the light of diverse value issues and culture. |
| Low quality teachers. Indeed a low grade of teacher attendance, effort and activity | Capabilities approach | A negative freedom (i.e. education does not support development and potential functionings) |
| | Cultural diversity | Education should promote the full development of the human personality, i.e. the cultural dimension of the learners' well-being. |
| | Curriculum theory | The process of learning, cultivation of wisdom and emphasize on interpretation and meaning-making is quality in education, which is highly dependent on the quality of teachers. |
| Rote learning and repetition, low degree of socialization and thinking process, i.e. low degree of empowerment | Capabilities approach | Equality in education has to be based on what each child has a reason to value. There is a need to understand the diversity of children's capabilities. |
| | Cultural diversity | Diversity is an epistemological condition, a dialogical learning experience. Education should be based on a mixed curriculum grounded on multiple identities |
| | Curriculum theory | Learning should focus upon the cultivation of wisdom and meaning-making in the classroom. Teaching should invite to critical testing rather than acceptance. |
| Firm focus on human rights principles | Capabilities approach | Individual agency - The individual freedom to set and follow goals for a value of personal reasons, though that goal might not improve his or her well-being. Functioning –opportunities to realise diverse functionings of significance for the individual |
| | Cultural diversity | Human right principles – a body of framework around which a diverse society can unite |
| | Curriculum theory | Respect for the variability of contexts and different pupils |

Figure 7.6: Figure by author, 2011.

# 7.4 ❶: Do Priorities in Primary Education Enable Capabilities?

Life could be regarded as a variety of "doings and beings" that are valuable for each individual. To assess the quality of life, according to the capability approach (CA), you need to evaluate these functionings and the capability to function. In this section I will discuss educational equality in relation to the results and to the CA. I will elaborate on whether the education initiatives taken by the Governments of India have supported a school where each child, irrespective of caste, gender or origin of residence, is provided with the necessities to convert various resources into capabilities and beneficial functionings. Further I will discuss if the education provided is based on what each child has a reason to value and if education offers the necessary fundamentals for enabling partaking in a democratic society.

In Sen´s capabilities approach, the term equality supports a perception of fairness that is justified by *equality of opportunity*. Major public education initiatives could enhance equality and protect development of freedoms and develop capabilities of children, regardless of signposts of discrimination (Sen, 1999). I find that the Constitution of India has a firm focus on human rights principles in line with the CA. It highlights individual agency, i.e. the individual freedom to set and follow goals for a value of personal reasons. Further, the Constitution of India attach importance to the need to ensure

basic capabilities in line with the CA and articulates an understanding of education as a basic capability, which entails a range of specific fundamental educational capabilities that are essential for an empowered way of life. But what significant capabilities should the education priorities equalize for all children? This judgement is, according to Sen, predominantly a matter of democratic processes of active participation and decision-making. A lot of the decision-making in India concerning education is made locally. This compels that, at least theoretically, locally enforced decisions could equalise opportunities for the children. Whether this is the case, could be a rationale for further investigation.

Poverty could be viewed as an unconditional lack of capability and education a basic capability because of its potential to lessen poverty and simultaneously being a fundamental element for development and human well-being (Govinda, 2003). The recognition of education as a basic capability for empowerment and reducing poverty compels that the Indian government makes education accessible for all children. This is constituted under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE). The RTE places the responsibility of ensuring enrolment, attendance and completion on the Government and not on the parents.

The accessibility and distribution of education could be a source of inequality if it limits a child's control over necessities (Sen, 1983). Ways of making education accessible for all has been portrayed in the thesis, e.g. private schools have to reserve 25% of the seats to children from poor families and are later refunded by the state. However, education has to be strictly free of all expenditures to be genuinely accessible for all children. This is not the case today due to the high degree of extra private tuition that many families and children in government as well as private schools find necessary to learn what should be learnt in school.

A positive feature related to the accessibility of education is the fast development in ESA infrastructure. Providing hot mid-day meals, separate and clean toilets, drinking water and other school facilities ensures a potential functioning, i.e. an opportunity to achieve a truly wanted outcome like necessary knowledge and skills. Freedom to attend school in a safe and healthy environment and to participate as a unique individual in a diverse society safeguards equality. Children with limited means are thus provided with the necessities to convert resources to capabilities and beneficial functionings.

Education plays a significant role in the expansion of other capabilities, some of which are essential for the children in the future when they are to participate on equal terms as individuals in a democratic society. The commitment and the high grade of community involvement in implementing

the priorities in primary education in India is a positive factor. Democratic deliberation is a beneficial and valuable way for a group to achieve change and realize its own goals, but there is also a need for an understanding of the diversity of human capabilities (Sen, 1999) and a number of NGO´s have been influential in proposing, initiating as well as implementing priorities in the Programme of Action (PoA). The local panchyarats are part of the implementation and families in all socio-economy groups find education important as they recognize education as a capability, i.e. an opportunity for the children to achieve a better life in the future. Studies (ASER, 2010; PROBE, 1999) confirm the family commitment and the demand for education.

Universal enrolment could serve as inevitability in order to enhance capabilities to improve quality in life. Figures show a major increase in school enrolment ratio and attendance which passes as a capability. But education also has to be made meaningful and relevant to the children in diverse communities (Dreze & Sen, 2002). Functioning occurs when a child is actually learning anything while at school. The low grade of teacher attendance and effort while in the classroom serves as a negative freedom because it does not support development and potential functionings. In order to support the children there is a need to understand the diversity of their capabilities. Equality in education has to be based on what each child has a reason to value. Primary education in India is to a large extent based on rote learning and repetition. The interaction between the teacher and the students are restricted to short questions and predisposed answers, an activity that generally does not promote reflection, understanding, socialization and awareness of the children's capabilities, but rather contributes to a low degree of empowerment.

Education is a fundamental capability, but it is also and a prerequisite for achieving other capabilities in addition to capabilities yet to come later in life. Learning mathematics could for instance expand the children's different functionings associated with mathematical reasoning and problem solving. The ability to read and actually understand what you are reading expands the ability to reason, reflect and argue and thus participate in the society. Fundamental capabilities, as knowing mathematics or how to read, widen the children's sets of opportunities and capabilities and pave the road for more complex capabilities. Low school quality in terms of reading and counting skills could on the other hand, diminish children's opportunities in life. If the children do not learn to read or write or use elementary mathematics they achieves neither capability nor functioning and are *not* provided with the necessities to convert resources to capabilities and beneficial functionings. Or in other word, the children of poor farmers might have to stay poor farmers for the rest of their lives and to a low extent participate as active and influential members of the civic society.

## 7.5 ❷: Do Priorities in Primary Education Encourage Cultural Diversity?

In a society people have to interact and cooperate and find viable social practices of living together. The more diversity, the more a society is needed to obtain a shared vision of unity and to recognize the desirability and the inevitability of cultural diversity (Parekh, 2000). It is certainly a challenge to develop a strong sense of joint commitment and collective belonging in a country with India's history and diversity in shape of regions, religion, caste and gender.

Human rights principles and national policies could act as a body of framework around which the diverse Indian society can unite and as seen in the results there is a firm focus on human rights principles in the constitutional prerequisites. The right to education is recognized as a human right and to ensure the implementation of the RTE Act in India, an autonomous body, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, has been established by the government of India. India does have strong national institutions that have the ability to bring policies like the RTE into being in order to galvanize a national belonging. The national slogan "Unity in Diversity" launched by Nehru is often mentioned and referred to in textbooks as well as pamphlets and papers.

Unity in diversity requires the society to merge the demands of unity and diversity and not to equate unity with uniformity which could even weaken a country´s ability to accommodate diversity (Parekh, 2000). The government and the state should not insist on a shared comprehensive national culture with an affiliated uniformity of values. Unity should be constantly cultivated by a country´s diversity, and diversity should be sheltered and regulated by a mutual framework of unity (ibid, 2000). In order to ensure that various cultural communities are able to preserve and transmit their languages, customs, history and beliefs a high degree of community involvement is needed. The NGO´s and the panchyarats are important players to safeguard that equal validity of multiple dissimilar subcultures are truly acknowledged. Since equal opportunities are not the same as equal resources, the state governments and the panchyarats in India play an important role today in distributing resources.

Education, should, according to the cultural diversity approach, be an arena for participation which should cultivate a common sense of belonging midst diverse cultures and to help them identify with each other and with the nation (Parekh, 2000). The increase in the school enrolment ratio in India is thus positive since the children need to be in school in order to cultivate this strong sense of common belonging; a unity in diversity. The continuous low

school quality in terms of reading and counting skills is a problem though since literacy is not simply the ability to read and write, but an act of communication with different meaning in different cultures. Typical government teaching in India is characterized by rote learning, i.e. "*fact transmission, propositional knowledge and ritualized understanding* […] *and restricts children's responses to one or two words, provides limited feedback, and offers few opportunities for ideas to be developed*" (Alexander, 2000:558). The purpose of education should not be to stuff the child's mind with superficial information about different cultures, but a dialogical learning experience, which is far from the reality in most Indian schools. Education should promote the full development of the human personality, i.e. to help the children to acquire universal values as tolerance and democracy as well as a self-critical identity and a profound respect and love for differences (Parekh, 2000).

The low grade of teacher attendance, effort and activity does certainly not help to promote these qualities. India is a culture of extremes though, and some cultures use a form of pedagogy that focuses on the relationship between the teacher and the learner and is often used in experimental music and dance settings (Alexander, 2000:558). This is diametrically opposite to rote learning. The question arises why Indian primary education in general makes so little use of the cultures that nurtures alternative pedagogic traditions?

# 7.6   ❸: Do Priorities in Primary Education Enrich Quality in Education?

Quality occurs when the planned government initiatives within primary education correspond with necessitates of the children. Essentials differ from child to child, from culture to culture and alter over time. In order to achieve quality, the aims and goals in education need to be well-defined and firmly embedded in recognized values (Stenhouse, 1975).

The aims in the priorities in Indian primary education define a socio-political standpoint that is regarded as desirable and advantageous for people living in a democracy and is based on human rights principles. The Plan of Action and EFA show certain values as respect for the variability of contexts and the different needs for various pupils depending on class, gender, caste etc. The Indian Constitution and the priorities in primary education enclose values of national concerns and priorities, and the role of education in assembling a nation to unity in diversity, as they are currently understood. According to the curriculum theory, education has a twofold undertaking in understanding and respecting the present values and

simultaneously developing a critical appreciation of them. Though the Indian Constitution, the strong national institutions and the durable leadership are positive factors that have firmly staked out the role of education in India of today, the aims of education could simultaneously not solely be justified on the basis of the national agenda (NCERT, 2005:21; Stenhouse, 1995). To ensure quality in education the priorities in education should concern with moral issues as well as being a changeable process, where human action and culture constantly is turned into action.

The central problem to handle in order to achieve quality in education is to genuinely understand human actions in the light of diverse value issues and by recognizing the value of culture (Stenhouse, 1995). India has a mix of government and local control over priorities in education which could be one way of embracing the local culture. The high degree of community involvement in the shape of numerable and influential NGO´s as well as family commitment invites critical testing of priorities rather than acceptance. When planning priorities in education it is indispensable to attend to the contextual particulars, as characteristics of the social structure and the customary conditions (Stenhouse, 1975). The rapid development in ESA infrastructure is one indication that this is obviously taken into account by the authorities in India. However, a gap between policy and practice seem to arise at the classroom and individual level.

The curriculum approach aims predominantly at closing the gap between policy and practice and is thus dependent upon the existence of interpretation and meaning-making in the classroom. The low grade of teacher attendance, effort and activity in India embodies a severe limitation on what could happen educationally. Policies should not primarily be considered as an assemblage of pamphlets for implementation, but rather as a constant interaction of teacher, students and knowledge. Rote learning, common in Indian primary schools, is far away from being that active process associated with reasoning outlined by Aristotle, where teaching should invite to critical testing rather than acceptance. Neither according to the curriculum model, nor to policies directed by the Indian government, should children be regarded as objects to be acted upon. There is need for a shift from teaching to learning in order to enhance children's freedom and creativity which directs them into culture as a system to think with.

Curriculum theory advocates that content and means develop as teachers and students work together. The continuous low school quality in terms of reading and counting skills in primary education ought not to be the central and defining feature. Improving literacy is only accurate if the reform is constantly enforced with "reality" from the teacher-student dyad. Otherwise, literacy endangers to be a skill with no profound meaning for the child.

## 7.7 ❹: Is it Possible to Couple Quality, Equality and Quantity?

In the previous sections I have discussed the research questions whether priorities in primary education in India enable capabilities, enhance equal opportunities and encourage cultural diversity. J. P. Naik studied the education system in India in relation to the goals and concepts of equality, quality and quantity. The questions discussed so far in this thesis bring about the inquiry whether it is possible to couple quality, equality and quantity? The concepts are relative, their emphases vary from time to time and to synchronize the achievement of these goals is an extremely difficult and conflicting task (Naik, 1975). The concept of quality has, according to Naik, often been connected to a privilege, quantity to reduced ambitions while equality has been set in relation to the inequalities in the social order (Ibid, 1975). Are these interpretations accurate? Could it be that it is not possible to achieve education for all without reduced ambitions regarding quality? Might it be impossible to reach a state of equality in a socially segregated society and what aspects of life should then be equal? Is it within reach that the priorities in Indian primary education have been able to solve the illusive triangle of equality, quality and quantity?

Firstly, I will provide a brief reflection and recurrence on the bearing concepts in this thesis. Quantity, as the least ambiguous concept, stands for the capacity of the educational system of primary education in India to *provide and secure education for every child in the age group of 6-14 years*. Quantity totals children who actually participate and engage in education. Equality supports a perception of fairness that is justified by *equality of opportunity*. Each child should, irrespective of caste, gender, origin of residence or socio-economy, be provided with the necessities to convert various resources into capabilities and beneficial functionings to enable partaking in a democratic society.

Quality, as a straightforward concept, occurs when there is a match between the planned government initiatives with the true needs of the children. However, there is a need to take the concept one step further. Education necessitates promotion of values and ideals in society as equality of opportunity and respect of diversity. Quality in education should enhance children's capabilities, direct them into culture as a system to think with and thus help the children to develop such values. Education should be a changeable process, where human accomplishment and culture turns into action and contributes to social development. A prerequisite for quality is autonomy of thought and action and the capability to learn how to learn. Ability to learn as new requirements arise in inexperienced situations is

necessary to function autonomously in a democratic society (NCERT, 2005).

The data on student learning levels, teacher absenteeism and school facilities paint rather a gloomy picture of the situation of schooling quality in India; the low level of learner achievements in Indian primary education indicates that the main target should be to continue the teacher – learner process (Aikara, 2004:224). There *has* been a notable success in the enrolment of children, especially from the disadvantaged sections, but there has not been adequate improvement in the teaching – learning process in the schools" (Aikara, 2004:224). Accordingly, the increase in enrolments has not been paired with an increase in learning as indicated in several reports (ASER, 2010). The situation today is regrettably that a vast majority of the children who enrol in primary school have no other choice but to attend to government schools, run by unmotivated teachers and where the children are exposed to rote learning in a setting where the teacher should not be challenged by any true involvement from the children.

The Government of India and its Committees seems well aware of the problems. Several statements from the Government declare a national commitment to provide education that promotes equality by removing disparities and equalizing opportunities.

> *"To promote equality, it will be necessary to provide for equal opportunity to all not only in access, but also in the conditions for success. Besides, awareness of the inherent equality of all will be created through the core curriculum.*
>
> *GoI, 1992*

GoI have initiated and shouldered several measures to manage the illusive triangle of equality, quality and quantity. These measures have been discussed in chapter 5. Most measures have been included in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) and enforced as a fundamental right.

> The Right to Education Act is to ensure that every child in the age group of 6-14 years has an entitlement to quality elementary education and "*to reach their fullest potential"*
>
> GoI, 2009

The RTE further stipulates that every child should be entitled to a child friendly environment with teachers that live up to the standards for an effective learning environment. Educational development is however extraordinarily complicated due to the large number stakeholders and the long period for any policy to realize its goals (Hadad, 1995:90). But until this date the large increase in enrolment has paradoxically increased

difficulties in providing quality education due to the teacher absenteeism which has led to a continuous understaffing (ASER, 2010, Ramachandran, 2005, PROBE, 1999).

Naik´s triangle has not been solved regarding quality issues. If quality is not solved, equality will not be solved either, since quality education is a prerequisite for equality of opportunities. Is it then possible for the school system alone to solve issues of inequalities in the Indian society?

> "*The ever-recurring inequalities of our society, whether of class, caste, gender, region or tribe (or a combination of these) inevitably get reflected in the education system. Conversely, our educational institutions and practices help widen asymmetries* "
>
> Sethi in Kumar et al, 2005:5

Sethi blames the inequalities in society, but correspondingly thinks that it is of most importance to establish "*an educational paradigm that is as inclusivist as possible*" (ibid). However, "*education by itself cannot bring about equality in an unequal society, but it should not worsen the inequality* (Aggarwal & Agrawal, 1989:98)". Studies show that "*to correct educational inequality, socio-economic inequalities, which give rise to the varying performance of children from poor and rich families, have to be corrected*" (ibid).

What the authors are implying is that education alone does not do away with inequality. "*In the interaction with social stratification, education at best may contribute to alter the nature or extent of inequality*" (Aikara, 2004:35). On an individual level though, education contributes very much to one's social status – thus education can give a notion of perceived equality (ibid). When you speak about equality through education it is important to be concerned both with the access to education as with the learning achievements. (ibid)

There is a wide range of opinions regarding education in India. Chandra's judgment is that "*with rare exceptions the system of public education has become virtually dysfunctional*" (Chandra et al, 2008:708). Kingdon, on the other hand, is of the opinion that there are several reasons for more optimism about progress of school education in the future, specifying the later public education initiatives brought up in this paper as well as the number of NGO's that have emerged (Kingdon, 2007). The process of reducing inequality in India has to be alliance between education system and everyone else in the Indian society striving for removal of disparities as well as building a society upon diversity. My standpoint is closer to Kingdons´. The public education priorities made all point in an encouraging direction. However, India urgently needs to strengthen and secure teacher quality in order to achieve the success they strive for.

# 8 Conclusion with Epilogue

In this final chapter, I will illuminate some of the most important results and discuss implications on further research.

## 8.1 The Most Important Results

This thesis has aimed at widening the horizon and relates to the focal point where education, democracy, development and politics meet. The thesis aligns with the conception of democracy, where education and politics join forces and team up in educational policies and reforms. The purpose of this thesis has been to provide an overview of some of the major public education initiatives that have been launched and whether it is possible to suggest that these interventions have had a positive impact in regards of enabling capabilities, enhancing equal opportunities and encouraging cultural diversity. These are concepts that are likely to be fundamental in a vivid democracy.

The general picture in this thesis is that two major problems in primary education occur. First, the *quality that is exceedingly low* in too many schools with insufficient facilities, low teacher attendances as well as incompetent pedagogic performances and inadequate learning achievements. Secondly, a major implication for improvement is *the in-built inequalities in the Indian society*.

The low quality instigates that many children will never get the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. It has also implications for the democracy in India, since ability to learn is necessary to function autonomously in a democratic society. Low quality teaching thus weakens the foundations for a vivid democracy. The education system in India needs to ensure that teachers have the knowledge as well as the capacity to secure that aims in policy become reality in the classroom for each individual child. In a report by McKinsey on a vast number of educational reforms the conclusion was that "*context, culture, politics and governance will determine the course*

[…but] *the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers*" (McKinsey, 2007[26]).

Children from different socio-economic groups attend school together in neighbourhood schools. Correspondingly, parents that have the economic resources to a large extent either try to avoid the low quality government schools or pay for extra private tuition. Consequently, the education system as a whole does not enhance equal opportunities and thus inclines to increase social segregation. India is a diverged society embodied by considerable inequalities of opportunities and outcomes. School mirrors that society. Gandhi's opinion on education was that it should be the institution for a non-exploiting social and economic order (Dhawan, 2005). This ought to still work as a fundamental value in a democratic society. Education is a process of empowerment and thus "*an instrument of social change, of promoting the right values that should guide citizens in a modern secular democracy*" (Ibid, 2005:82). India has a still a long way to go until education fully encompass the process of empowerment.

## 8.2   Implications on Further Research

Most other analyses I have studied have either focused on outcomes at an outsized Meta level or plunged into a pint-sized pond with descriptive case studies. The focus on outcomes has often involved potential causalities between a launched method and for instance literacy. The case studies, on the other hand, have habitually been rather restricted, and although interesting they have not always made me more acquainted with primary education in India.

This thesis has aimed at being an overview. Some issues of assumed importance, as the widespread corruption, have been left out. I acknowledge the interaction of culture and pedagogy as critical to comprehend how patterns of gender, caste and class have an effect on the values of universal education and that policies sometimes could stand for enforced or conflicting values (Alexander, 2000). This is an area for further studies. But my prime selection of topic for further studies would relate to the results that I found most important; the *low quality interaction between the teacher and the child* and the role of the school as regards *the in-built inequalities in the Indian society*. There is reason to believe that the two topics team up and thus should be highlighted together. The bottom line is the norms and values

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[26] The McKinsey report links quantitative results with qualitative insights on what high-performing school systems have in common. Focus is on issues that transcends cultural and socio-economic contexts. The report was requested by the OECD

of a democratic society and whether all members in a democracy are given equal opportunities to actively participate and contribute to change and development. Following are some potential future research questions associated with democracy;

- How could primary schools in India make the classroom processes more contextualized to the local conditions and thus correlate education with the real problems of life?

- How could a democratic and highly decentralised education with a high degree of local responsibility avoid risks of escalating inequalities between states, regions, Panchayats and groups of people?

- How could Indian primary education ensure the right of each child to knowledge and personal development and communicate the norms and values of a democratic society?

The issues above are comparable to these I ponder over daily at my work at the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. An additional question could thus be:

- Could an educational inspection in India help to nurture the school quality through regular supervision and thematic quality evaluations in a similar way as done in Sweden by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate?

## 8.3 Epilogue

Well, let us bring the prologue to mind: have the gruelling ploughing evenings and weekends on this master's thesis been worth it? Indeed, my knowledge, but furthermore my curiosity on India, has ceaselessly increased. Whether the municipalities and the schools fulfil their responsibilities in relation to the regulations set out in the Education Act are issues that I ponder over daily at work with the Inspectorate of Educational Inspection of Sweden. Working with this thesis has been a source of inspiration in my daily work and I have treasured the moments of reflection on what could be regarded as the essence and meaning of learning for the children in India contrasted by the children in Sweden. These are cultures poles apart, but I have found similarities as well as differences. Without doubt there is much to learn by looking over the fence at another culture.

The intercultural perspective has provided me with the pre-knowledge that cultural perspectives play a part in how reality is interpreted differently, and that a diversity of perspectives is essential to understand social and cultural implications of pedagogical transformation. The educational field of international comparative education has provided me with a playing field where I have been able to make use of scholars from different disciplines;

scholars that all share an interest in the social dimensions of education. Educational policies and reforms could act as a vehicle for democracy and as a way to make a change, but each society has to define its core value basis. India's´ way of cultivating democracy is by a strong sense in unity in diversity.

I will wind up this thesis by "*The analogy of the saree - a designed piece of clothing",* which signifies an Indian view of how unity in diversity attaches to education.

> *"Over the years, beautiful designs, patterns and textures have been printed and woven into the saree, and yet, several thousands of years of Indian history have not tried to stitch the saree. It is worn in many ways and fits all sizes. It is equally good for working, dressing up or sleeping in. The final effect is the combined effort of the person who designs the cloth and the person who wears it - of the designer and the user. ...Our educational designing has to be somewhat like the saree, more a tool than a finished product, a tool that comes alive in the hands of the teacher, its application being the combined effort of the designer and the user".*
>
> Kartikeya V. Sarabhai and Sanskriti R. Menon[27]



Photo by Martin Eksath; M.V. Foundation School in a village outside Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh India

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[27] Article in The Hindu May 20 th May, 2001) http://www.hinduonnet.com/folio/fo0105/01050460.htm

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# Appendix I: Available Sources of Data

● *A view inside Primary Schools - A World Education Indicators (WEI) cross-national study* **(UNESCO, 2008)**

The study in this report was conducted in 2005-2006 and derives from 11 diverse countries. The data for India however cover four states only: Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. The aim of the study is to understand and monitor the factors shaping the quality and equality of primary education.

● *Reaching the Marginalized - EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010* **(UNESCO, 2010)**

The report is a follow up ten years after the international community adopted the six Education for All goals in Dakar in 2000. It states that "*the world is unequivocally off track for the Dakar goals and the battle to achieve universal primary education by 2015 is being lost*" (UNESCO, 2010:5). However the report provides overview of the current situation and proposals for further action in order to reach the most marginalized groups. Special focus relate to the scheduled castes and tribes in India, who remain disadvantaged at all levels in education.

● *Annual Report 2009 - 2010* **(GOI: Ministry of Human Recourse and Development, 2010)**

This report is an extensive commentary from the Indian Government along with the different ministries with a responsibility on education. The report provides a total overview of the diverse educational sectors as well as in depth analyses concerning for instance gender and disability.

● *Access to Elementary Education in India: Country Analytical Review in India* **(CREATE, 2008)**

CREATE 2008 was administered by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, NUEPA. CREATE stands for The Consortium for Educational Access, Transitions and Equity and is a research programme consortium sponsored by the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

● *ASER: Annual Status of Education Report 2009* **(Pratham, 2010)**

ASER means impact in Hindi and the aim of this annual report is to substantiate whether educational development programs have led to desired outcomes. The report is carried out by Pratham, aided by 25,000 volunteers from NGOs, citizens' groups, government and educational institutions, who donate 4 days of their time. ASER is the largest annual data collection effort

with children in India and the only annual source of information regarding learning levels of children in elementary school. (ASER, 2010).

● *Seventh All India Educational Survey* **(NCERT, 2005)**
State or National assessments of learning achievement in primary education in India is carried out periodically by the NCERT as research studies. This is the only systematic monitoring in India that is carried out before the students reach the end of grade 8 (Aggarwal, 2002). The survey was carried out in 2002, and the report was published in 2005.

● *Public Report on Basic Education in India* **(PROBE, 1999)**
The PROBE 1999 is not a public report made to the government, but is described by the PROBE team as a *people's report made to Indian citizens*. Explanations and analysis are based on observations and what people told the researchers. The PROBE survey was carried out in the autumn 1996. The survey covered schooling facilities, and a sample of 1376 households, in 234 villages where randomly selected.



Photo by Martin Eksath; M.V. Foundation School in a village outside Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh India

# Appendix II: Quality in Educational Effectiveness Approach (OECD)

| EDUCATION PRODUCTION FUNCTION | **Resource input variables:**<br>• Pupil-teacher ratio<br>• Teacher training<br>• Teacher experience<br>• Teachers' salaries |
|---|---|
| SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS | **School organizational factors**<br>• Productive climate culture<br>• Achievement pressure for basic subjects<br>• Educational leadership<br>• Monitoring/evaluation<br>• Co-operation/consensus<br>• Parental involvement<br>• Staff development |
| EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND INSTRUCTION | • High expectations<br>• Orderly climate<br><br>**Instructional conditions:**<br>• Opportunity to learn<br>• Time on task/homework<br>• Monitoring at classroom level<br>• Aspects of structured teaching:<br>- co-operative learning<br>- feedback<br>- reinforcement |

Source: OECD, 2005 referring to Scheerens and Bosker, 1997.

# Appendix III: Defining Quality in Education (UNESCO)

## LEARNERS AND TEACHERS AS LEARNERS

**Health and Psychosocial Development**
• Good health and nutrition status
• Learner confidence and self-esteem
• Regular attendance for learning
• Early assessment of disabilities
**Home**
• Home/school/community partnerships
• Family support for learning
• Positive early childhood experiences

## ENVIRONMENTS

**Physical Elements**
• Access to quality school facilities including water and sanitation
• Class size
**Psychosocial Elements**
• Peaceful, safe environments – especially for girls
• Effective school discipline, health and nutrition policies
• Inclusive environments
**Service Delivery**
• Provision of health services

## QUALITY OUTCOMES

• Learning what they need to learn, for learning throughout life
• Healthy, well-nourished, and free from exploitation, violence and labour
• Aware of their rights and have opportunities to realize them
• Able to participate in decisions that affect their lives in accordance with their evolving capacities
• Able to respect diversity, practice equality, and resolve differences without violence

## CONTENT

**Materials**
• Comprehensible, gender-sensitive relevant to schooling
**Curriculum**
• Based on defined learning outcomes
• Non-discriminatory and student centred
• Unique local and national content
• Includes Literacy, Numeracy, Lifeskills,
• Includes relevant knowledge on gender equity, HIV/AIDS, health, nutrition and peace
**Standards**
• Standards and targets for student learning

## PROCESSES

**Students**
• Intervention and special assistance where needed
• Time on task
• Access to language used at school
• Relevant, student-centred methods leading to active participation

**Teachers**
• Competence and school efficiency
• On-going professional learning for teachers
• Positive and gender-sensitive teacher/student relationships
• Belief that all students can learn and commitment to student learning
• Feedback mechanisms that target learning need
• Frequent monitoring and assessment by teachers that leads to further learning
• Positive living/working conditions

**Supervision and Support**
• Adjustment in school hours and calendars to support student learning
• Administrative support and leadership
• Using technology to decrease rather than increase disparities
• Governments those are supportive of education systems
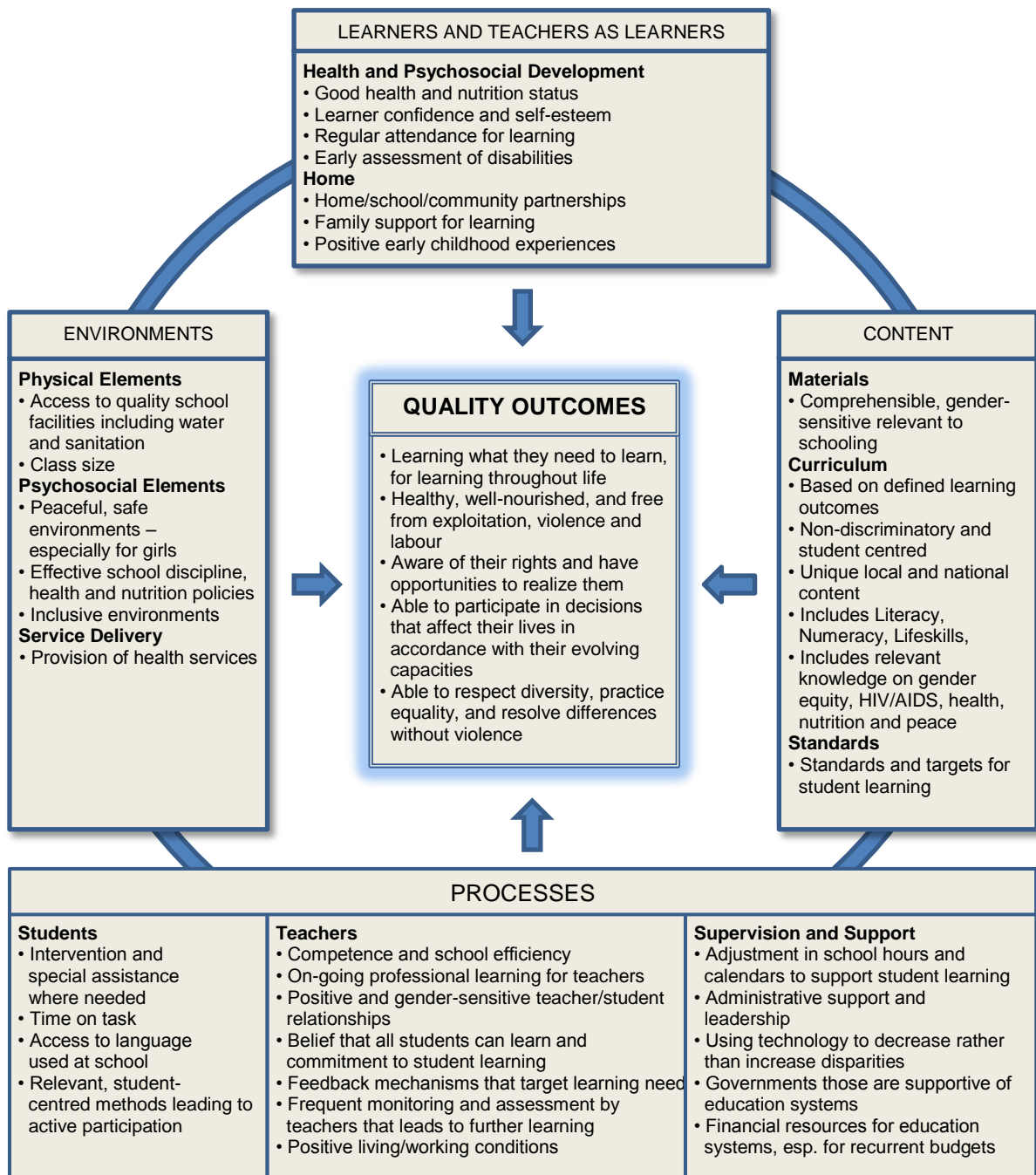• Financial resources for education systems, esp. for recurrent budgets

Figure by author 2011 after Sadig Rasheed in *Defining Quality in Education* UNICEF, 2000