

## 1 Introduction

Deprivations in a wide range of economic, social and political dimensions reinforce the systematic exclusion of poor and marginalised groups from rights to quality education, compounded by widening inequalities in many countries. Difficulties in achieving Education For All (EFA) targets persist, despite increasing international and national level awareness of the importance of EFA for a wide range of developmental purposes, and as a human right in itself. Increased allocation of resources to basic education and the expansion of facilities have helped achieve significant progress in many countries, but the scale of the challenge remains high. In particular, it is noted that in both sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, entrenched social biases prevent certain social groups from achieving equitable opportunities and outcomes in education.

Two broad themes underpin the contributions to this *Bulletin*. First, how can policy processes respond to the challenge of promoting inclusive education? The application of discourses of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' to the fundamental problems of inequality and the importance of promoting equity builds on existing debates on the 'value added' of these terms (Kabeer 2000). Their prevalence and currency in Northern policy discourses (as Sayed and Soudien demonstrate, this volume) in a context where the dominant tropes of policy discourse spread rapidly (and often with little thought to their applicability and relevance in different contexts) needs to be unpacked in terms of relevance for the South. Second is the importance of localising and contextualising the study of processes of exclusion and inclusion. Several contributions report on research carried out amongst groups which are newly included into the processes of formal schooling in both countries.

from groups that have experienced institutionalised exclusion navigate their entry and presence within schools, and the rules and procedures that facilitate (or not) their entry and presence is a cross-cutting theme in this *Bulletin*.

This *Bulletin* draws together contributions relating to the research project 'Learning about inclusion and exclusion in education: policy and implementation in India and South Africa'.<sup>1</sup> The contributions

# Introduction:

## *Exploring Processes of Marginalisation and Inclusion in Education*

R a m y a S u b r a h m a n i a n

represent some of the conceptual thinking and the empirical work that has been carried out as part of a 20-month study in India and South Africa and which is shortly drawing to a close. In this project, we have identified the 'race' gap in South Africa and the 'caste gap' in India in relation to education access, opportunity and outcome, as meriting closer attention. The *Bulletin* thus serves as a vehicle for preliminary dissemination and discussion of the ideas and findings of the project, and as such, represents work-in-progress. All articles in this volume (apart from that by Govinda) are written by researchers associated with the project, and reflect the focus of the project on building processes of research exchange between the two countries.

Data based on the dominant administrative categorisations of populations by race and caste in both countries reveal that certain social groups are clustered at the bottom of the educational ladder, increasingly less so in terms of sheer physical access (as measured by enrolment data), but continuingly in terms of entitlements to quality education. As Soudien (this volume) demonstrates, gaps between the racial categories of Africans and whites in South Africa are high in relation to education. The literacy gap (measured as achievement of Grade 5 or more) is 23 percentage points. Only 11 per cent of Africans graduate from high school (Grade 12) compared with 63 per cent whites, even though Africans constitute 79 per cent of the whole population. Similarly, in India, the categories of 'Scheduled Caste' and 'Scheduled Tribe' lag significantly behind other social groups in gaining access to education.<sup>2</sup> Although the scale and the nature of the challenge is somewhat different between the two countries (in India, the challenge of facilitating access remains significant), both countries reveal some significant similarities, which are used as the starting point for cross-country learning in this project.

This research project seeks less to emphasise any comparative elements between the two countries, and more to emphasise the opportunities that dialogue and sharing between two countries grappling with similar forms of education exclusion can offer in terms of finding ways forward. Race and caste are historically, contextually and culturally distinct forms of social differentiation,<sup>3</sup> although the political uses of these categories and the outcomes of exclusion that obtain are not dissimilar in both

countries. While the institutionalisation of race as a principle of difference was explicitly entrenched in the governance structures of apartheid South Africa, caste as a social category has been an implicit and explicit rule of social differentiation in India. Although processes of change have triggered the dismantling of such differentiation in both countries, not least through impressive constitutional projects, legislative mandates around civil rights, political mobilisation and active social protest movements, these categories remain to some degree relevant starting points for exploring substantively the statistical picture of inequality that obtains in both countries.

As the contributions to this *Bulletin* uncover, despite contextual differences, there are striking similarities that emerge from the study of exclusion and inclusion evident in South African and Indian education. Some of these themes include the embeddedness of the education experiences of marginalised groups in changing trajectories of social and economic mobility and aspiration; the ways in which policies of inclusion do or do not filter down from constitutional projects to the level of individual schools; and the ways in which the 'ethos' of individual schools is constructed by the interplay between more complex social relations of the societies within which they function as well as the bureaucratic rules within which they comprehend their mandates.

Despite the stated focus on caste and race, other forms of exclusion that compound these chosen categories also remain central to the concerns of this project. Gender and class-based exclusion intersect with race and caste to produce exclusionary outcomes, necessitating the reframing of our understandings of the ways in which educational policies, practices and institutions (re)produce complex and intersecting forms of social differentiation. As Sayed and Soudien, and Carrim note in their contributions to this collection, schools are simultaneously sites of exclusion and inclusion, and this inherent contradiction in the nature of education, overlooked in the current policy discourse that views education as a 'public' good, is rarely addressed or tackled in policy reform initiatives. Instead, the focus on achieving equity seems to be driven by 'top-down' interpretations of why exclusions result, implying that the failure to

reach schools and function effectively within them rests somehow on the 'deficits' inherent within different social groups, be they economic, social or cultural. Re-assessing the nature of the school as an institutional space that is underwritten by dynamics of power, authority and hierarchy receives barely any policy attention. While constitutional discourses in both countries recognise the comparative disadvantage of historically marginalised groups, these discourses are as yet to trickle down to the everyday practices and procedures of individual schools, as the contributions by Soudien and Sayed, Samuel and Sayed, and Balagopalan and Subrahmanian demonstrate. This leads to the disjunctures between policy and practice that are evident in both countries, particularly in South Africa, where recent reform initiatives have produced sophisticated discourses of inclusivity for a wide range of recognised social inequalities (Carrim, this volume).

Five broad themes thus shape the approach and empirical studies in this project, elements of which are reflected in the contributions to this *Bulletin*:

- First, effective access to education, particularly at the lower levels crucially depends on how policies are implemented and received at the institutional/community/individual levels. Much attention has been devoted to the formulation of education policy, but limited attention has been paid to how policies are implemented and received. The extent of the 'policy gap' between intention and practice is now acknowledged (Sayed and Jansen 2000) as a crucial factor in explaining why people do, or do not, take up educational opportunities. This gap requires scrutiny.
- Second, there is much educational research about what factors can explain lack of participation and retention in schooling, particularly focused on school and classroom-based processes of differentiation and reproduction of social structures (Kumar 1989; Anitha 2000). However, studying how excluded groups experience specific inclusion policies could complement existing research in both countries.
- Third, while factors relating to income and livelihoods have been identified as the primary

*economic* causes of exclusion, the cultural and social factors that lead different groups to place value on education differently require deeper empirical investigation. Studying the inter-connections between cultural and economic processes of exclusion becomes essential in both countries, where ethnicity, gender and race identity overlap with poverty and deprivation, intensifying experiences of marginalisation.

- Fourth, the meanings ascribed to 'caste' and 'race' in relation to policies of educational inclusion and exclusion need to be analysed, to ascertain how issues relating to 'caste' and 'race' are framed within policy. Historical perspectives on the categories of caste and race indicate that these social categories are continuously evolving (McCarthy 1997; Quigley 1993; Gupta 2000). Policy approaches that treat these categories as static are likely to misinterpret the challenges of inclusion. Thus, both a historical context and an understanding of what excluded groups view as the best route to greater inclusion into education, are policy lessons to be desired.
- Fifth, there is a need in current development research to voice the concerns of marginalised groups in policy. Strengthening the voice of the poor and marginalised in education is crucial, not just for effective policy formulation, but is essential to close the gap between intention and practice. While research highlights the interplay of factors that contribute to exclusion from education, there is less focus on linking policy processes and outcomes to the ways in which people locate their experience and relationship with institutions of policy delivery within their multiple and overlapping identities.

## 2 Reframing 'inclusion' and 'exclusion': the conceptual challenge

The challenges of using terms like 'inclusion and exclusion', which have generated a significant amount of debate already (Betts, de Haan, Kabeer, etc.) is that they are already infused with meanings that are contested and hence potentially obfuscating for the purposes of empirical study. Such loaded terms run the further risk of imposing fashionable discourse in contexts where they may have little

local resonance and prevent the emergence of localised ways of expressing the interlocking ways in which inequalities are experienced and perpetuated. As Carrim, and Sayed and Soudien, note in their contributions, many of the intersecting inequalities that are attempted to be identified while understanding 'exclusion' can and already are made apparent through applying concepts of class, gender, race and so on. Other concepts that have a bearing on the types of concerns foregrounded in the use of these terms include those of (in)justice, (dis)empowerment, (in)equity and (in)equality. Each of these concepts in turn has rich definitional histories and present dynamic yet complex insights into social structures as they evolve and morph to reflect wider changes.

Concepts of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' allow us to explore the interlocking nature of education deprivations, highlighting ways in which differential resource entitlements intersect with group identities to produce diverse and often inequitable outcomes for individuals. From a public policy perspective, these terms enable engagement with the diverse arenas through which educational deprivation is produced and perpetuated, and facilitate demonstration of the importance of 'joined up' policy making that pushes the limits of 'sectoral' planning and management, as the contributions by Vasavi and Govinda make explicit. At another level, they also flag the importance of capturing processes and dynamics of change when trying to analyse why and how people are locked out of active participation in the spaces they inhabit, and are prevented from being able to frame the terms of their inclusion. These concepts provide evocative reminders that social goods are often produced and provided in non-solidaristic ways with limited participation by some groups. Even where there is participation this could be in 'adverse' ways – reinforcing negative stereotypes or promoting the internalisation of feelings of powerlessness that uphold the status quo, as contributions by Balagopalan and Subrahmanian, and Samuel and Sayed show. This is particularly important in contexts where the groups in question have not 'conformed' to the idea of 'citizen' that has historically been imprinted in these institutions. Both South Africa and India provide powerful examples of this. At a time when policy making is obsessed with measuring 'access', the use of these

terms alerts us to the multi-dimensionality of the education experience, and emphasises the importance of analysing the institutions into which access is being promoted within more nuanced historical and cultural perspectives.

Efforts to integrate different racial groups into schools that were once designated for specific racial groups, and the mobilisation of *dalits* and *adivasis* in large numbers into schools where they were once considered unwelcome if not barred outright, provide appropriate settings for assessing on what terms 'inclusion' into schools is taking place. The concern with 'exclusion' thus goes beyond a preoccupation merely with the conditions necessary to ensure entry into schools, and extend to an interest in the experiences that mark this entry. Inclusion and exclusion form part of a dynamic continuum in which people are located over time and space, and where multiple identity positions are engaged and addressed. Thus, although the progression that *appears* to be sought is from a state of exclusion to one of inclusion, the terrain is complicated by often conflicting and paradoxical relations, practices and outcomes. Thus, the remit of exclusion extends to understanding how people encounter processes of inclusion, and how these experiences may serve to reinforce exclusion or promote new forms of inclusive engagement. This places emphasis on the experiential dimensions of inclusion and exclusion, and provides the rationale for the project's empirical research in diverse rural and urban settings where schools intersect with different communities.

The challenge of using these terms arises from the difficulty of defining what constitutes inclusion and what constitutes exclusion. In seeking to move away from deterministic and quantifiable or measurable approaches to these experiences, it is important to acknowledge that these concepts are highly normative. Much depends on who is defining these terms and what experiences they refer to. At some level, the use of these terms in policy discourses indicates a concern with *outcomes*, such as low participation, or poor achievements. The patterns produced by these outcomes are what alert us to a systemic pattern of exclusion, which at heart reflects a concern with persistent inequalities. However, as many commentators including Sayed and Soudien (this volume) warn, the concern with outcomes can give

rise to instrumentalist arguments for promoting inclusion, and a disregard for the *processes* by which people shape their inclusion, into environments that have hitherto been closed to them.

A further challenge that confronts research that seeks to use particular 'identities' such as caste and race as starting points is the difficulty of attribution. By seeking to understand how people respond to identities that have been long labelled 'excluded', we run the risk of using these categories in ways that 'fix' these as somehow unchanging and static. In particular, the diverse ways in which these categories are framed in different discourses needs to be borne in mind. The disjunctures between (a) policy/bureaucratic notions of caste/race, (b) sociological/historical evolutions of these concepts, and (c) the ways in which these identities are played out for individuals and members of these identified groupings, need to be kept in mind. The politics of 'labelling' is thus a significant challenge that research of this nature has to address.

### **3 Opportunity, mobility, identity and the dynamics of inclusion**

As Sayed and Soudien point out in their contribution, the complexity of understanding processes of exclusion and inclusion requires localised study and analysis. Furthermore, much of the study has to be done at the interfaces of different institutional spaces, such as the school and the community; the home and the school; and in the encounters between the actors who inhabit these different spaces. In seeking to understand the relationships and processes that shape these encounters and interfaces, certain themes resurface in the different contributions from the field research.

A striking theme is the way in which educational inclusion is nested within wider trends relating to economic and social mobility. In the Indian case, many of the social groups that are part of the wider bureaucratic category of 'Scheduled Castes' and 'Scheduled Tribes' have not experienced the same levels of impact of the inclusive policies that the state has put in place, particularly with respect to employment (see Balagopalan and Subrahmanian, this volume). The extent to which these historically disadvantaged social groups have been able to

leverage their access to education is determined, to a significant extent, by wider networks of opportunity. In particular, opportunities for economic mobility appear to have an impact on the way in which education is seen as meriting investment; similarly, some evidence shows that political mobilisation is also a factor that determines the ways in which different groups frame access to education as entitlement. The link between economic and political opportunity is also evident. Economic opportunities provided to these groups are largely associated with the public sector, and the decline in fortunes of some public sector enterprises has had a negative impact on the material conditions of some groups. Yet, given the competition even for these public sector reserved jobs, some amount of political mobilisation has accompanied the processes by which some groups have inserted themselves into the formal economy. Thus even where gains made through the efforts of the state have been short-lived or detrimental in the medium to long term, processes of mobility set in motion a wide range of aspirational strategies which have different impacts on educational access and participation.

In South Africa, as Soudien's contribution shows, mobility for young Africans is still imprinted with the legacy of apartheid and its discriminatory structures. Post-apartheid research shows that the material situation of African youth continues to be relatively poor, as young people struggle to come to terms with opportunities offered under processes of reconstruction and transformation. The 'shift towards individualised identities within what remain heavily encoded group racialised spaces' (Soudien), is a feature of communities studied in both countries. Youth identities in this changing context therefore reflect the interplay between economic disadvantage, traditional racialised identities as well as radicalising and individualising identities under globalisation. New opportunities in both countries still bear the imprints of older discriminatory regimes and structures, however. In South Africa, young Africans view affirmative action as part of the landscape of new opportunity, whereas for young whites, it is entrepreneurship that holds aspirational promise.

In such contexts, schools and teachers could play an important role in helping children and youth navigate these vulnerable identities, particularly in

contexts where students are first-generation learners, as in India (see Balagopalan, Vasavi, and Balagopalan and Subrahmanian, this volume). However, as this research has uncovered, there is evidence that teachers and schools are failing children in this regard. In particular, discourses of 'educability' reveal the low extent to which perceptions and views of the 'other' have changed, despite greater formal 'inclusion'. In a situation where teachers tend to be mostly drawn from relatively higher castes, the relationships between teachers and students in the process of challenging the long history of exclusion particularly in terms of its impact on constructions of the 'self' among these students are important to study. Ways in which teachers deploy ideas of 'educability' reflect the intolerance on their part to accepting that there are disjunctures between the home life and the life that the school constructs for many of these children. Rather than transacting these disjunctures through their everyday classroom practices, teachers frame their duties as imposing a modernised new identity on these children, berating them for their appearance, their language, and their manners. Individual children are hauled up for their behaviour, but are chastised in terms of the moral weaknesses that are presented as dominant characteristics of their caste groups – such as proclivities to 'gambling, drinking and the eating of meat'.

Identities are constantly remade and reshaped. Texts, curriculum transactions, community and home life, teachers' attitudes and behaviours all contribute to reshaping the identity of the learner. As the impacts of affirmative and compensatory policies continue to ensure that more children from excluded groups find their ways into new institutions and new spaces, issues of identity remain of central importance to the world of the school. Teachers in both countries reveal awareness of the unacceptability of outright discrimination, particularly so in South Africa, where the mandate of inclusion is firmly embedded in the framing of citizenship (Carrim, this volume). However, new discourses around 'educability' are starting to surface, which displace the basis of discriminatory thought and action from race on to other forms of differentiation, such as class, family values [read 'single parents'] or occupation. The fragmentation of the solidity of previous categories

of differentiation surfaces new languages within which exclusionary treatment is justified or explained (Soudien and Sayed, this volume). It also points to the difficulty of separating out class and race/caste disadvantage in contexts where both interlock so firmly to produce particular outcomes for particular children (Kabeer 2001).

This theme is discussed by Samuel and Sayed in a different form – where they note the increasing class divide in schooling provision, and the impact this has on the quality of opportunity offered to poor African children. They argue that current policies generate a two-tier schooling system with former black schools offering a 'second rate' system for those who cannot enter other schools or who have insufficient resources to counter these patterns of mobility. Similar patterns are evident in India, where poor *dalit* and *adivasi* children enter schools which are being abdicated by relatively higher caste and better-off children (including a small minority of better-off *dalit* children) as Govinda, Vasavi, and Balagopalan and Subrahmanian all discuss. Teachers' resentment of these changes and the impact this has on the social composition of the classroom surfaces in the contributions of Soudien and Sayed, and Balagopalan and Subrahmanian.

An important theme as part of these negotiations, which receives less attention in this volume though is considered very important in this project, is the ways in which these groups are also navigating and contesting identities through their interfaces with the schools. Balagopalan and Subrahmanian touch on this briefly, but it is an aspect that deserves greater elaboration. An important part of the encounter between newly included children and the formal authority structures of the school is the ways in which discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour is understood and dealt with. From the Indian material, it suggests that formal constitutive bodies such as School Committees offer little space for parents to express their discontentment with the ways in which their children are treated. Informal interactions with teachers, and moments of confrontation are the chosen avenues. To what extent this leads to a pressure to change behaviour in a systematic way is doubtful. This is one area in which dialogue between researchers, policy makers and practitioners may yield useful insight.

## policy

Returning to the starting point of this project – the challenge for policy – requires revisiting some of the issues relating to 'reframing inclusion'. A broad policy approach is required to focus on equal opportunity, as well as equal outcome. Sayed and Soudien argue there is a need to focus more widely on social justice, which involves challenging dominant normative concepts such as the definition of the 'formal', the 'regular', and the 'mainstream', and involves analysing the different sites into which policies seek to include those who are considered 'excluded', in terms of their rules and procedures. Given the inherent exclusionary potential of educational institutions and processes, a policy approach that seeks to be inclusive needs to be mindful of all the ways in which education excludes and ask if the proposed reform is structural enough to ensure inclusion.

In South Africa, as Soudien and Sayed point out, there is an awareness at school level that there are 'rules' and 'procedures' laid out for redress and non-discrimination. Yet there is little awareness in many schools of the importance of understanding the 'cultures' of exclusion that permeate these institutions. In the South African case, this is to a large extent explained by the fact that most schools, particularly given their racialised histories, have distinct identities and cultures, which provide the dominant frames within which they negotiate their daily business. In India, the lack of a professionalised system for teachers (who are incorporated into the government hierarchy and to a great extent are treated as the foot soldiers of the state) creates the difficulty of finding a 'system' within which to insert these concerns. Teachers regulate their own behaviours at an individual level, and see the performance of authority as a significant part of their duties as educators. How principles of non-discrimination can be institutionalised is a central policy challenge.

Many of the contributions provide suggestions for policy approaches that are more broadly inclusive. Based on the experience of South Asia, Govinda argues for a multi-pronged approach that emphasises most centrally 'fairness of provision'. A central feature of persistent inequality in education is the paucity of resources provided to those schools that absorb the

largest share of newly included students. The importance of economic support is also emphasised by him, based on the recognition of the interlocking nature of economic and cultural forms of exclusion. Most importantly though, he argues for the importance of recognising political empowerment as a crucial component of inclusive strategies, based on the recognition that 'the excluded are those who have no scope to participate in the political and social life at their will and freedom as a result of their birth and ascriptive identity' (this volume). Vasavi's contribution underlines this, arguing for the importance of rethinking teacher-training on the basis of recognising the schooling–community interrelationship, and reinserting teachers into the social worlds that they inhabit.

Even where rules and procedures do exist, these may need to be rethought. Samuel and Sayed's contribution also highlights the ways in which language, admissions policies and fees policies are continuing to exert exclusionary impacts. These are partly due to the fact that existing policies are under-developed and do not fully meet the mandate of inclusion laid out in the wider 'meta' policy terrain. Policies of decentralisation, which allow schools to set their own fee levels and frame their own inclusive policies, may result in inequities that need much firmer state involvement if they are to be redressed. This is particularly the case in South Africa. Making the links between centralised policy, decentralised systems of provision and communities of school users are important in order to ensure that in the guise of 'rules', hidden forms of exclusion do not persist.

A challenging question implicitly and explicitly posed by some of the contributions is: what are the limits of policy in tackling exclusion, especially when it is embedded in complex social and political processes? As Vasavi notes, policy processes are embedded in wider political changes and discourses, which can have significant impacts on the framing of citizenship. Current contestations over the content of curriculum in India, Vasavi argues, indicate the ongoing tussle over the framing of 'national identity', where dominant cultural values are sought to be defined and disseminated through the education system. In this context, the politics of knowledge already embedded within the education system, is likely to

get further intensified and place greater distance between newly included children and their lifeworlds. Reform in this instance would need to go way beyond merely ensuring that the teachers share the same backgrounds as their children. As both Vasavi and Balagopalan argue, the politics of knowledge creates normative frames that make all actors measure themselves, and members of their

communities, against the 'standards' that are reinforced on a daily basis, which may bear little resemblance to the lifeworlds of newly included children. The development of standards and guidelines would itself need to have awareness of the implicit privileging of dominant social identities that may reinforce exclusion, in the name of inclusion.

#### Notes

1. This is a 20-month project with empirical research carried out focusing on a total of 32 cohorts of students in primary, middle and high school in the two countries. This research is supported by the Department of International Development (DFID), UK. The material presented in this *Bulletin* remains the responsibility of the individual authors and does not in any way reflect the views of the funding agency, or of IDS and the partner institutions.
2. In the contributions to this *Bulletin*, these official categories are not used; rather the indigenous terms

*dalit* and *adivasi* are used for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively.

3. At the time that this project was formulated, the debates on 'caste as race' had not developed to the extent reflected in the discussions relating to the World Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, held in Durban in September 2001. For some insights into the debates that developed and continue on this theme, see the special edition of Seminar (2001).

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