

INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA IN THE AGE OF NEO-LIBERALISM

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Abstract: Education is now considered a pre-condition in all societies, particularly in the developing societies, for inclusive development and to fight different inequalities. This can only be possible if access to higher education is based on equity, and a public-funded education system can ensure this. The paper is based on qualitative research and analyses the changes in the higher education system in India from a largely public-funded education system towards a commercial, profit-driven system. The policy shifts are analyzed from comparative and historical perspectives. The neo-liberal approach to education facilitates commercialization, leading to the exclusion of the poor from the higher education system and defeating the constitutional goals of building an inclusive democratic society. The functioning of democracy is also dependent on education as it creates citizens and empowers the marginalized to enter into the democratic system, thus legitimizing the state. The paper concludes that the neo-liberal paradigm of development is contradictory to inclusive education and inclusive development as it commoditizes education.

Keywords: *inclusive education; neo-liberalism; SDGs; quality education*

INTRODUCTION

There is a need for inclusive development for building an inclusive society, and for inclusive development, an inclusive system of education, including higher education, is a pre-condition. Everybody across the ideological divide agrees that this may not be in practice, at least in commitments.

Higher education has become more relevant in a society like that of India with multiple forms of inequalities (like class, caste, gender, region, language, etc.) to achieve inclusive development. This is because education, particularly higher education, can challenge the inequalities in society and helps in building an inclusive society by empowering the people, particularly the marginalized.

The socially and economically deprived find a ladder in higher education for its upward mobility. When higher education becomes inclusive, it can create and sustain conditions for radical transformations of society. Higher education acts as a liberating force, particularly for the oppressed, the exploited, and the excluded. Denial access to higher education in this age of information and communication technology amounts to the denial of basic

freedoms.

Education, particularly higher education, is crucial in creating consciousness among the people on their constitutionally guaranteed rights and creating as well as sustaining the space for democratic debate and empowering people in defending their rights.

Excluded categories in terms of caste, class, gender etc., find a way through higher education to enter into the system of governance. This, in turn, democratizes and legitimizes the system of governance and makes them inclusive. Again, the secular and pluralist values of the constitution are inculcated to future generations through higher education. It is more relevant in India as its pluralist culture, and the secular fabric is vital to its survival as a united nation. Thus, any kind of dilution in the social function of higher education will jeopardize not only the socio-economic development of the country but also the freedom of its people and of the nation itself. Therefore, higher education in India is undoubtedly beyond the classroom teaching and is linked to the process of building an inclusive

society.

However, the system of higher education is not autonomous of the socio-economic system in which it operates. Rather, hegemonic structures and interests in a given period of time want higher education to serve their interests and perpetuate inequalities advantageous to their hegemony. They try to project the higher education system as independent and autonomous of the socio-economic system so that the contradictions and struggles in the system will remain obscure. The people who control and manage the system use the language of inclusiveness to confuse those who are victims of the system.

This leads to a de-historicized understanding of education. The educational discourse is linked to the stages of development in a society. 'There is a rough correspondence in any given historical period between the social relations of production and the social relations of education. Viewed from this general political-economic standpoint, the conditions leading to the neo-liberal assault on the schools can be attributed to the current historical period of economic stagnation, financialization, and economic restructuring, characteristic of the monopoly-finance capital (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

In recent times, the capital-driven discourse in education has occupied a hegemonic position; even many progressive forces see education as independent of the system in which it operates and independent of the class struggle and class relations. This creates confusion in the struggle to establish an inclusive, secular, and scientific education system. Unless the political economy of current reforms in education is correctly understood, the alternative based on inclusion cannot be developed.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on qualitative research using historical, comparative, and analytical methods. It makes a historical and comparative analysis of the role of the state in the higher education sector in India. The constitutional values and the values of the freedom struggle that shaped

the goals of education in India have been taken as benchmarks in the analysis here. Neo-liberalism has been analyzed as a tool to use the education sector as an area of capital investment. Different policies of the government in different times have been analyzed from a comparative perspective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education, State, and Society

Education plays a crucial role in society as well as in the modern state. As there is a phenomenal growth in the urges of the common people to have education, there is a continuous engagement of education with the state and society and vice-versa.

Education, particularly the higher education sector, has become an arena of contestation of conflicting ideas and ideologies. Those in control of the state apparatus always want to use higher education as a tool to sustain their inherited or acquired dominant position. Those who are deprived and marginalized want to acquire knowledge and skills through higher education and challenge the existing inequalities.

This process has the potential to make the state and society inclusive, but for this, the education system needs to be inclusive. This requires that the system of education should create enough space for the deprived and the marginalized who are excluded so far from its system. The state has to intervene to establish an inclusive system of education through its inclusive policies and their effective implementation. However, the state is not sufficient in itself, and there will be a need for societal interventions in this regard.

Nevertheless, these are ideal positions. The state is not neutral. Again, a society like India having so many forms of inequalities will not automatically support inclusive policies even if the state will formulate them. The education system in a society is not and cannot be autonomous of the socio-economic and political system in which it exists. It reflects the caste and class divisions

existing in the system. Thus, there is a dialectical relationship between state, society, and education. Education is a tool in the hands of the ruling elites to sustain their hegemonic position. At the same time, it is also a tool in the hands of the marginalized to challenge this hegemony and make the system inclusive and equitable. This dialectical struggle is always reflected in the discourses on education, often open and often concealed.

The crisis in education, particularly in higher education, is not autonomous of the global economic crisis of recent times. The neo-liberal agenda has come to occupy the hegemonic position in the developed capitalist world and countries like India. The ideology of neoliberalism is so powerful that even the radical is often trapped by its deceptive language and design. Equity is the first causality in the neo-liberal process in higher education, so also the quality. Aggressive privatization of higher education is transforming higher education into a product to be bought in the market. The struggle in the field of education reflects the structural crisis of the capital. Every means is used to achieve the commoditization of higher education.

The Indian higher education system has seen a paradigmatic shift in its nature and governance since the advent of the neo-liberal ideology. The role of the Indian State is not neutral in this situation. It formally swears in the name of the Public-Funded education system, but it has actually become a facilitator of the privatization of higher education. The stand is no more hidden; it is clear. The state pays the constitutional project of Nation Building through Higher Education lip services, and actually, the state serves the interests of the Neo-liberal capital in the higher education sector. The society in India only reflects the struggle in the education sector.

A huge chunk of the middle class still suffers from the illusion of quality in privatized education, and this illusion is a crafted one. The deliberate killing of the public-funded education system through reduced state funding, ad-hoc approach in the recruitment of teachers, the shifting that entire blame of poor quality in

education to the teachers, over bureaucratization of the governance of higher education, state support to the process of commoditizing higher education, etc., are aimed at diluting its quality and then presenting it as of poor quality.

This is a part of the strategy to win over the middle class to the corporate-controlled, commoditized education as its customer and at the same time destroying its potential for resisting the commodification of education. The state does not intervene in this situation. There has been the growth of desire for education among the marginalized sections of the society, but the state does not take this as an opportunity towards an inclusive system of education.

Instead of providing opportunities for their education, the state expresses its inability to provide finance for the expansion of the public-funded education system. The elites in terms of class and caste are in a hegemonic position in Indian society, and education is one of the tools for the sustenance of their hegemonic positions. They are well entrenched in the state machinery and do not easily allow the smooth transition towards an inclusive education system. This dialectics must be understood to build a powerful democratic movement on issues of building an inclusive education system and strengthening and expanding the public-funded education system. Unfortunately, the discourses of development in its current status do not have education, particularly higher education at the top of its agenda.

Policy Shifts in Education in India

Higher education in India has its own problems and characteristics, but it largely operates in a neo-liberal framework. The new initiatives in higher education taken by the Indian state are essentially neo-liberal and aim at transforming higher education into a commodity in the market. It contradicts access based on equity.

In India, equity, access, and excellence in higher education have multiple

dimensions like caste, region, community, gender, etc. The neo-liberal program in higher education does not address these issues. Rather, it will sustain the existing inequalities in higher education.

The Indian State has become an active facilitator of the process of commodification and commercialization of higher education. The logic of the market is replacing the ideals of the freedom struggle and of the constitution on education. As the Billionaires in America discovered education to be profitable, the capitalists in India also found education to be a profitable sector and to be exploited.

During the last two decades, there have been several initiatives by the central government towards the privatization of higher education in India. There has been a continuous decline in public spending on higher education. The state is retreating, and the space is being left to private capital. In its report on subsidies in 1997, the Finance Ministry redefined education as a non-merit good from a public good. In 2004, education excluding primary education was categorized as a Merit-II good. The Ambani-Birla report on 'policy framework for reforms in education' was submitted in April, 2000. As per the logic of the interests they serve, the report found education sector to be profitable and redefined education to be a marketable commodity. The UGC used terms like corporate culture and commercial culture, in its concept paper in October 2003 for the governance of the universities. These are in the background of Ambani-Birla report, the National Knowledge Commission report, and the Yashpal Committee report.

The NEP attacks veiledly on the very idea of the Indian Education System and its values developed out of the ideas of Gandhi, Phule, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Ambedkar, Nehru, Radhakrishnan, Maulana Azad, and many others. This government at least officially abandons the constitutional project of Nation Building through education through its neo-liberal moves.

While attacking Macaulay, these people in the government are actually becoming his disciples because, like him, they also want foot

soldiers of neo-liberal capitalism. The new education policy talks of 'less government and more governance', but actually, it is the reverse. It also uses the concept of 'inspector raj' of the UGC to dismantle it. Thus, it is a clever move by using radical language to implement the hidden agenda and to hoodwink the masses.

The neo-liberal forces decisively invade the domain of education under the garb of the government machinery. Why will there be a replacement of UGC? How will this new body solve the issues unsolved by UGC? How will overlapping Jurisdictions be addressed? How is more authoritarianism justified? Why exclusion of primary stakeholders? How are the teachers in the proposed new body justified? How can this body ensure transparency and quality?; these are some of the questions that remain unanswered. The central universities are asked to enter into tripartite agreements, which are nothing but ways to commoditize higher education.

The New Education Policy needs to be seen in the above broader context to analyze its implications and develop a better alternative. The government asked for public opinion on DNEP (Draft New Education Policy). This creates the impression that government is serious enough to be accommodative and by that democratic in formulating a national education policy that is overdue. However, the very process of the formulation of the Kasturirangan Committee suffers from democratic deficiency.

The committee was constituted with eight members on 27th December 2017. Though education is in the concurrent list, the states were not consulted to develop a framework of the New Education Policy. The same thing happened in the case of its previous committee, the TRS Subramanian committee, which had only four members apart from its chairman. However, the Draft National Education Policy report in 2019 was submitted to MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development) on 31st May 2019. A detailed study of the report

reveals many things, including the grand design of commercialization of education as well as the impracticability of implementation of many of its proposals. Nonetheless, the danger lies in the fact that it nowhere considered education as a public good though it talks of increased public funding of higher education.

There is no analysis of previous policies like that of 1968 and of 1982 and their unfinished project and the reasons for their limitations at least, if not failures. This is unprecedented as it wants to break the continuity in the realm of education in India. National Policy on Education, 1986 referred to education policy, 1968 and its unfinished tasks to be taken up in the new policy. The constitutional project of nation-building is missing as education based on its three pillars, Access, Equity, and Quality, is not the goal here. Allowing huge spaces to the private sector in higher education will only sustain the existing inequalities.

The proposed expansion of GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) to 50% by 2035 is welcome, but it becomes a wish without concrete proposals for its funding. If the budgetary allocations for education in the country are analyzed since independence, then it becomes clear that there will not be a tectonic shift in this regard. The gradation of higher education institutions into categories I, II, and III seems illogical and without practical considerations. Every institution will be autonomous, with degree-granting the power is a step in the direction of privatization of higher education. The proposal to do away with the affiliating system did not consider its necessity; rather, it concentrated on the existing loopholes in the system.

The proposed governance structures in the draft are sweeping in demolishing the existing structures and institutions. All these will be replaced by more authoritarian, exclusive structures like RSA (Rashtriya Sikhya Ayoga), NHERA (National Higher Education Regulation Authority), etc. There will be sufficient scope for manipulations and undemocratic decisions in this kind of governance system in education. The voices of

states are almost negligible or non-existent in the new system, including the National Research Foundation. The federal structure of the constitution and the spirit is the biggest causality in the draft. The idea of five years of probation for a teacher is anti-teacher and pushes him into insecurities. The proposed BOG for higher education institutions is not only exclusive but also marginalizes the teachers and will make them soldiers to implement the management's decisions without questioning them.

The draft has advocated for a kind of bureaucratization of educational administration. The issues of equity and inclusiveness have been left to typical bureaucratic mechanisms without assessing the needs and mechanisms to achieve the goals. The draft is full of contradictions. It uses radical languages just to confuse and trap the masses in desperate need to give their children higher education. But there is no clear design for an inclusive public-funded education system.

The issues of governance dealt with in the NEP are contradictory between its languages and prescriptions. The NEP says, 'HEIs will have real and complete autonomy –academic, administrative and financial-to unleash their full potential for excellence.' The NHERA is authoritarian in its structure, and the single line accountability of BOG to NHERA is more authoritarian. The concept of a new apex body, the Rashtriya Shiksha Ayog or National Education Commission, envisioned in the NEP is overarching and based on an unscientific understanding that this single authority can manage the complex issues of education. This goes against the spirit of democracy as well as against decentralization. Teachers will be reduced to foot soldiers in the implementation of the decisions and policies of BOG without their autonomy, critical thinking, and expertise.

The NEP has not cared to take care of the spirit of federalism in the constitution. A national system of education can only

develop through meaningful dialogue and partnership between the center and the states. The very process of formulation of the policy excludes the states from a primary position. The proposal for over-centralizing authority as well as the objectives of the policy has no effective space for the states to intervene through education is a concurrent subject. NPE, 1986 says, 'concurrency signifies a partnership, which is at once meaningful and challenging; the national policy will be oriented towards giving effect to it in letter and spirit.' (NPE, 86:Para.3.13) but unfortunately, the states have been marginalized both in the formulation of the NEP and its institutional arrangements for governance. This will have negative implications for federalism and the concurrent status of education.

Despite radical and inclusive languages, the NEP clearly favors the privatization and commercialization of languages. Provisions for multidisciplinary institutions without provisions for funding will lead to privatization. The draft advocates for increased public funding in education, but the recent practices and trends in public funding on education belies this hope. Again, the aggressive implementation of neo-liberal policies by the present government contradicts the hegemony of the public-funded education system in the country. It is already a fact in the country today. Most of the post-1998 deemed universities are private.

In 1998 the number of deemed universities was 38, and in 2017 it was 122. (Agarwal, 2009) in the past four decades, the number of universities has grown more than six times. The number of private institutions grew faster than public institutions (Gupta, 2015). The negative consequences of the uncontrolled growth of profit-seeking private institutions in higher education in terms of exploitation of the students, lack of accountability, capitation fees, access, quality, etc., have not been addressed in the draft.

The public-funded, secular, and scientific education is and will remain the lifeline of our democracy and freedom. There cannot be the realization of freedom without education, and inclusive education is not possible without

freedom. Those who attack this Public-Funded Secular education also attack freedom. They neither address the issue of equity, quality, and access to higher education in the country. The public-funded higher education system will be crippled to the point of no return. Higher education without equity and quality will be exclusive.

Quality in Higher Education and Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism in higher education advances the illusory promise of quality. Quality in higher education cannot be an absolute concept. The neo-liberal experiences in higher education in India in these recent decades have challenged the concept of quality in higher education that has emerged in post-independent India out of a publicly funded education system.

Quality is being redefined in the process. It is seen in a narrow prism of getting jobs, particularly the jobs in the corporate world. The uncontrolled tendencies of the market also condition this ability to be employable. For example, the jobs in the IT sector may get priority at one particular time, accelerating the growth of the IT institutions, or it may be the management institutions on the other. The quality becomes linked to the market. Quality is fundamental because it involves the challenge of human resources management of the society, apart from creating capacity for jobs.

The concerns for quality rises from the fact that there has been a decline in the academic standards in higher education with few exceptions like IITs, IIMs, some other universities. Factors like the growth in the number of institutions and of students and consequent decline in public funding, dilution of post-graduate teaching that produce teachers, diversion of students to professional courses that fetch more income than general post-graduate courses, teaching profession being less attractive than others are responsible for the decline in quality in higher education. The higher education

system is under tremendous pressure as its credibility is on the decline. The strategies developed in recent times to improve the quality of higher education are broadly in terms of neo-liberal ideas. They are incapable of bringing the desired result.

The PPP (public-private-partnership) model has emerged as the dominant model in the governance of higher education, and there is more private and less public in it. Instead of providing quality higher education, it has excluded the poor, and the marginalized from its scope and created a higher education market. With its values and quality management, this market has been successful in buying the minds of its consumers, which is the middle class.

The deliberate neglect of the public-funded higher education by the neo-liberal state to facilitate the commercialization of higher education on one hand and the aggressive marketing strategy of the private players in higher education has successfully created insecurities in the minds of the middle class. These insecurities are exploited for the market of higher education. Then, the middle class becomes its victim and, interestingly, its defender. Quality is reduced from a value-based system to a narrow concept of capacity building for the job market.

The privatization of education seriously denting the quality of education and thereby denting the prospect of fast advances in sciences, technology, and real income (Bagchi, 2010). The problem lies in the fact that most of the discussions on quality higher education confine themselves to issues devoid of context. This will hardly help in improving the quality of higher education. The issue of quality in higher education has to be seen in this context because the process of commoditization of higher education under a neo-liberal system not only affects quality, access, and equity but also redefines quality. The neo-liberal process in higher education takes the value system out of the existing system of education and links it to the market and market values. The question of nation-building and modernization through education which is vital for a developing nation like India, takes a back seat. Education as a tool

of socio-economic change loses its significance in a neo-liberal, market-driven system of higher education.

Role of the Teachers

Teachers are central to any education system for shaping the minds of the learners to empower them to face the new challenges and opportunities of our times. Quality of education is affected by an acute shortage of teachers in many parts of the world, including India. Effective teachers are decisive in facilitating knowledge construction rather than simply transmitting information, promoting students' ability for analysis rather than just memorization, and providing learner-centered processes (UNESCO, 2012).

Another factor is the poor service conditions of the teachers that have a discouraging effect on attracting the young talent to the teaching profession and thereby weakening the quality of education. Again quality teaching depends on teachers with basic rights like academic freedom, teaching friendly environment, right to association, etc. In UNESCO's own words, teachers are an investment for the future. (UNESCO, 2014). Unfortunately, in most South Asian countries, including India, teacher quality is not recognized as a key factor in improving learning outcomes and so not addressed in key strategies for education (UNESCO, 2011).

The status of the teaching profession is the decisive factor in attracting and retaining talented people in the profession. Those countries that pay lip service to the contributions of the teachers in building the society but actually doing the reverse in their actions and policies cannot achieve quality in education. In India, the status of teachers in society is on the decline in these years that demotivating teachers. Without a combination of job security, attractive salary, academic freedom, and social prestige, teaching cannot be made a preferable career choice. With globalization and information and communication

technology, the roles and responsibilities of teachers have changed. Teachers have more responsibilities now than in the past. They have to act as facilitators of learning rather than transmitters of knowledge only, imparting non-cognitive skills and values in addition to academic knowledge, teaching students from diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Again the workload is multiplied with administrative duties, extra-curricular assignments, parent and community engagements, etc.

In such a situation, inefficient teacher management has a significant negative impact on the work and life of teachers, which directly affects their motivation and can provoke absenteeism, frequent strikes, and declining attractiveness of the profession. (Tournier, 2011). Instead of preparing them to deal with these challenges, government policies in India are weakening the service conditions of the teachers that they have earlier. The corporate world is leading the attack on the public-funded education system, on teachers and their unions, and on the students with the aim to recreate the privileges for the elites. 'Without the strong social commitment of teachers, the overstrained public education system would surely have succumbed to its own contradictions long ago.' (Foster, 2011).

The teachers and their associations are organized strength in resisting the neoliberal moves and pressuring the state to defend the public-funded education system. They are the second most important stakeholders of the education system, but the state does not take them into confidence while formulating policies on education. This is undemocratic and a move aimed at dismantling the most reliable and committed force to advance towards an inclusive education system.

The growing non-formalization of the teaching profession by the Neo-liberal State. On the one hand, the weakening of the Public-Funded Education System is part of the same strategy, promoting capital in the education sector, particularly the higher education sector. Thus, commoditization and privatization of education will not achieve the desired goals of

quality education and access and equity. The voices of the teachers will be excluded in the process of privatization of education as the market will decide everything in privatization and it does not allow organized democratic voices in its functioning. It will be undemocratic as the teachers are the most important stakeholders after the students in the education sector. This will seriously affect the quality of education.

The Alternative

There is an attempt to provide a workable alternative to the exclusive Neo-liberal Policies in Education. It is not that there is no alternative to the present neo-liberal paradigm in Higher Education. India has a long tradition of education and discourses in education based on humanism, inquiry, and equality.

During the freedom struggle, the ideas on education by Gandhi, Aurobindo, Tagore, and many others believed in the expansion of education through state and state funding. Any discourses have not questioned the centrality of the state in the education sector in education in India. Despite their limitations, the post-independent initiatives until the onset of neo-liberal policies in the forms of different policies, commissions, despite their limitations, talked of the public-funded education system and its strengthening. Thus, one will not have to search for alternatives elsewhere.

To develop the alternative, the weaknesses and limitations of the present system have to be identified, and the threats from the neo-liberal paradigm need to be mapped. There is a two-pronged strategy by the present establishment to advance the neo-liberal interests in higher education. The first is to weaken the Public-funded education system through fund cuts, attack on the service conditions of the teachers, contractualisation of the teachers, squeezing of the autonomy of the universities, and so on. Second is pursuing policies to promote privatization, commercialization, and commoditization of higher education in a

systematic manner. The development of an alternative will be out of the resistance to these policies. Along with that, the basis of the alternative should be the constitutional values. The goals of higher education cannot be different from that of the constitution. The policies required to develop an alternative are not exhaustive but can be broad as follows.

1. The public-funded education system should be strengthened through higher budgetary allocations and governance measures;
2. The autonomy of institutions of higher education needs to be restored in real terms;
3. Commercial institutions in higher education must not be allowed to occupy a hegemonic position in the system;
4. The governance of the higher education system should be based on the broad principles of democracy and federalism;
5. The teachers' service conditions should be considered an essential component of the higher education system and should be improved;
6. Bureaucratization in higher education should be discouraged as it kills creativity and innovation;
7. Quality is a multi-dimensional concept, and it should not be reduced to employability alone under neo-liberal thought;
8. Continuous dialogue with the stakeholders, particularly with the students' and teachers' bodies, should be there in improving the system consistently ;
9. Policies in the education sector should aim at increasing access on the basis of equity;
10. The course structure should be based on liberal scientific and constitutional values, and fundamentalist ideas should not be encouraged in the education sector
11. National bodies in higher education should have representation from states and teacher's organizations apart from experts and central government representatives.

CONCLUSION

An inclusive higher education system with equity and quality is directly linked to the development of an inclusive society. It is more

relevant to a society with multiple forms of inequalities and exclusions like that of India. Higher education without quality is a skeleton without flesh and blood. Further, quality cannot be delinked from equity and access. The combination of these three makes education relevant to the majority of the population without any exclusion.

Quality higher education under a set of neoliberal policies is self-contradictory because the commercialization of higher education transforms quality into a commodity in the market and excludes those who are unable to afford it. In the process, it reinforces the existing inequalities and exclusions in the society as their empowerment through higher education will not be possible through the commercialization of higher education.

There must be social control of the commercial institutions of higher education, which should include the fees collected from the students, admission process with reservation, course content, examination process, service conditions of the faculty and others, their recruitment, infrastructure, mechanism to upgrade the knowledge of the faculty, etc. On the other hand, the public-funded higher education system must be revived and put to a dominant position.

The three basic components of quality higher education, quality of content and technique, quality of teachers, and quality of infrastructure, should be prioritized. Apart from producing and preparing human resources for development, higher education has the constitutional responsibility of nation-building.

In a word, instead of being imbued with the task of nation-building, the educational system now gets charged with the responsibility of producing commodities for the international market; instead of being cognized as having a social role, education is now seen as producing self-obsessed individuals, it's worth assessed in terms of the exchange value commanded by these individuals in the market. This phenomenon is what the researcher subsume under the

term ‘commodification of education’.

Commoditisation has the advantage that it meets the economic needs of international finance capital while also effecting an Ideological State Apparatus of a neo-liberal state that meets the needs of the corporate-financial elite. (Pattnaik, 2013).

Education should help prepare citizens for defending and developing liberal and secular democracy, national integration, scientific temper, humanism, civilisation values, etc. The values created and nurtured during the freedom struggle and reflected in the constitution can be passed to future generations through a public-funded education system committed to the principles and values of the constitution.

The observation of Ayers regarding the neo-liberal attack on public education in America has much relevance here. In the schools we need, education would be constructed as a fundamental human right geared towards the fullest development of the human personality and the reconstruction of society around basic principles of equality, justice, and recognition. These are not the schools we have. But that does not mean that we can simply abandon the schools we have. In the face of the relentless privatization directed at public education, we must struggle both to defend truly public education and make these schools of emancipation geared to the free development of infinitely valuable individuals (Ayers & Ayers, 2011).

The public-funded higher education system should be defended at any cost in the larger interests of equitable, egalitarian, democratic social order and for establishing an inclusive, scientific, and secular system of education. Further, everybody who believes in such an order has a stake in it.

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