



PRIVATIZATION OF EDUCATION- A REFLECTIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Privatisation of education has outlasted several decades in India and abroad. With the insurgence of education, there has been a paradigm shift in regards to ownership. However, 'Education' is such an integral part of a country that Government has to be the stakeholder. There have been various researches and debates on the privatisation of education but the controversy seems perennial. Privatisation of education has often been criticised. In an article by Rathod (2018), he pointed out that as per the article 29 (2) of Indian Constitution, "No citizen shall be denied admission to any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language, or any of them". In spite, India seems to witness various cases of social disparity and injustice. Social coercion due to access to education has much been a controversial topic in itself. This present study targets to throw light on the various findings and observations that have dealt with the pros and cons of privatisation of education. Besides, the study also showcases a retrospective perspective on the various advantages and disadvantages of privatisation of education as per various researchers.

Keywords:Privatisation of Education, Government, Private Sector, Public Sector, Education.

Introduction

Privatization of education has outlasted several years in India. It was found that privatization of formal education was very much prevalent during pre-independent India. Schools like Doon and Mayo College existed as public schools but they had their own board of management and body for administration. However, with time and globalization, education was moulded and modified into various forms. In fact, privatization of education eventually became a global phenomenon. With the ever-growing commercialization of commodities, 'education' was no exception. Education was found to be in the hands of private sectors. The shifting of carrying responsibility from the public to private sector was much criticised in various researches. But privatization of education might not be always connoted negatively. In the opinion of Lubinski (2003), "Education privatization is a process that tends to happen more at the level of service provision (with a higher presence of private schools) and funding (with families and other private actors paying for a larger portion of total educational expenses) than at the level of ownership in a strict sense." But as per as Fitz and Beers (2002), privatization of education as a process involved the handing over or transfer of ".....Public money or assets from the public to private sector".

In context of India, privatization of education happened due to various reasons. As per the research conducted by Monika, A. (2016) the prime objectives behind privatisation of education were as :-Providing Quality Education Promotion of technological advancement; Reducing gap between Industry and Education; Achieving widespread private ownerships in the society and reduce the burden of Government; Providing education in remote area and small urban area; Generating highly skill personnel for development in India; and finally, meet the education for International Standards. The researcher also found that according to Article 45 of the constitution of India which stated free and compulsory education to the children belonging to the age group of 6 to 14 years, more emphasis was given to elementary education. Therefore, there needed to be some care taken about the higher education sector as well. Gradually, with further speculation on privatisation of education was well ushered in India to take over certain sectors of education. Retrospectively, the triad relation among economy, international understanding and education has been one of the most closely knitted one. In the due course of time with the growth of economy and international collaborations it became extremely important to reform and refurbish education in every country, worldwide. Apart from food, clothing, and shelter Education constituted to be one of the most important pillars of any country, and 'Education' was expected to act as the medium and agent of upgrading the relation of one country with the other culturally and economically. Therefore, boosting up of education and expanding education became extremely important at one point of time in India. However, argument on privatization of education had been still quite an issue. Even though private institutions were growing in numbers and earning laurels, privatisation of education remained matter of controversy. A work on the same was conducted by Rizvi (2016) and cited in the UNESCO digital library. The work highlighted on grave aspects of privatisation of education. The research focused on how effects of privatisation proved problematic in matters of social equality. It also laid emphasis on the fact that no matter how much liberty could be provided to the private sector to handle education, the State or the Government should always proctor over. Likewise, Tilak (2009) expounded that, "...In low-income countries such as India, the right to education was inscribed in its constitution- even if this aspiration was not enacted until only recently, mostly, it was argued, due to the state's lack of resources. The postcolonial countries believed the public funding of education to be essential for their national development."



Discussing from the point of ‘neoliberal rationality’ various forms have emerged (Rizvi, 2016). According to the Indian economist of education, Tilak (2009), privatization could be classified into two major forms: - (a) Extreme privatization, where, education is considered as a business and profits are made by private institutions, and (b) Pseudo privatization, where, institutions manage entirely privately, but financially aided mostly by the government.

Privatisation of education was also described well by Levin (2001) as, “Privatization is the transfer of activities, assets and responsibilities from government/public institutions and organizations to private individuals and agencies. Also, privatization is often thought of as ‘liberalization’ – where agents are freed from government regulations, or as ‘marketisation’ – where new markets are created as alternatives to government services or state allocation systems”. According to the described above it could be said that government was also trying indirectly to allow ‘Education ‘for becoming commercialised. Keeping the same thought in view three forms of privatisation of education gradually came into existence such as: -1. Private provision; 2. Private funding; 3. Private regulation, decision-making and accountability. So as to delineate the three kinds or forms ‘Private Provision’ form explained that education could be provided by the private agencies and organisations. There was no need to offer education t the learners through Government run institutions. Instead, religious organisations or centres, charitable organisations and entrepreneurs could provide education.

Private Funding was another form of privatised education system. Here, privatisation meant that the parents paid for their children’s schooling and education. The government was no longer responsible for paying any kind of subsidies to the institutions that provided education. The maintenance and support of these institutions s mainly came from the fees paid by the parents or families of the students. But the best part of this kind of form of privatisation was that, when need occurred in terms of funding, the private as well the government worked hand in hand, financially.

The third form was Private Regulation, Decision-making and Accountability. Under this, education services could be monitored by the ones who received the education and were connected directly to the service at the receivers’ end.e. the students and their families. Quality of education could be best maintained under this kind of form. This is because if the standard of education was satisfactory, the parents hardly willed to enrol their children to that particular school. In order to keep a tab on the quality of education, the government intervened as monitoring body. The government would set up inspection system and audit team and other accountability strategies.

In words of Miller (2000), ‘Privatization of education is often evoked in debates by politicians, commentators, and pundits. It refers to a very specific transfer of organizational and industrial power from the government to the Private Sector’. Talking from the standpoint of democracy and social equality, privatization of education was well observed by Hursh(2015). Hursh argued that private education was pushed shifted from an ‘expansive ideological’ entity to ‘neo-liberal, corporate dominated, policy-making’ identify. This would eventually, make some proprietors or private companies would make education only affordable to certain section of the society i.e., only the upper class. This would eventually, create disparity among the people of the nation and harm the ideals of democracy and social equality.

Therefore, the study would further review on the various aspects of privatisation of education. The previous conducted studies on reasons and criticism on the same would be reviewed. Also, there have been various speculations on negative and positive aspects of education being privatised. The present study would try to focus on all those grounds.

The reasons for education getting privatised: review

Abrol (2016) stated that there could be several reasons for why education was privatised in India. The researcher pointed out that with the effect of market liberalisation, global economic change and social change was inevitable. The India government was more or less bound to work more efficiently, flexibly. Expansion of education was extremely important to keep to the level of competing with other countries across the globe. It was essential to give rights and liberty to private sectors to look after education and work in tandem with the public sector in the production of educated and lucrative individuals for the benefit of the country and global society at large. Likewise, Kaur (2016) again reviewed that a point of time came in India where the Government found it difficult to meet the demands of people. Since education is a fundamental right to all democratic being in the country, the Government needed to expand education system. Hence, private sectors were inducted and ushered to shoulder responsibilities of providing education. Financing education was also found to be a problem henceforth education both it became as government and well as a private concern. Kaur (2016) also spoke on certain factors that triggered privatization of education which the Indian government transformed into policies. Certain tenets were such as, Mass approach to Higher Education; Increased demand for enlightened work force; Economic compulsion; Giving employment to number of trainees: Providing Technical and Engineering education; Subsidies and assistance grant to private school; Tuition Tax Credits and deductions for Parents and Private Contracting specific services.



In the case of higher education, there have been several controversies around the privatisation of education. A speculation provided by Stanley Wolpert cleared that middle class parents were ready to pay for or purchase good education of their children. In his words, "This realization, coupled with the severe limitations of publicly funded higher education institutions and the greater purchasing power of the middle class, means that Indians are prepared to pay rather than be denied". Kapu and Mehta (2004) also noticed that students, who enrolled in public colleges and universities, hardly attended classes. Their attendance was found to be considerably low than those students who paid much higher fees to the private sector firms, i.e., the vocational training firms or the NIITs.

Another observation by Ravi (2015) stated that the government of any country always targeted and would target to introduce new economic policies, support and stand by globalization, liberalisation and privatisation in order to increase income opportunity and compete economically internationally. With the inception of privatisation of education in India it encouraged individual entrepreneurs and religious institutions to cater to the need and demand for higher education. This further aided and promoted higher education and quenched the need for pursuing certain courses like engineering and medicine.

Besides an article provided by Samudranil (2014) projected his view on public sector education. In his word, "The government schools are not known to provide the standard of education and facilities for the students that are available at the ones that are aided by them as well as the private schools. In addition, these schools also see the wards dropping out a few years after starting with their education".

There are various other views for and against the privatisation of education. For some it is a boon for some it is not. Therefore, in the next section, review on various significant studies is discussed that spoke in support as well as in disapproval of privatisation of education.

Pros and cons of privatization of education reviewed

A study held few decades back Coleman (1982) stated that "...Private schools provide better education than public schools". Mondol, P. (2017) also pointed out the reasons for parents preferring private educational institutions over public institutions. The various reasons were as: - 1. Private schools give parents greater freedom and opportunity of choice to get their children admitted. 2. Many of the private schools have centuries of old traditions as well as name of fame attached to them and so they are a precious part of our national heritage and culture. 3. These premier institutions often have excellent academic and sporting achievements. 4. These schools benefit from establishing social contacts across several countries especially with the developed ones which will help the students in their later life. 5. These schools have the freedom to use novel, evolved and experimental methods of schooling and disbursing education. As cited in previous studies, privatization has helped the Government to lessen their burden of expense and responsibility, but at the same time, a lot more factors have become compromised. In a report of 2017 entitled, "The effects of privatisation on girls' access to free, quality public education in Malawi, Mozambique, Liberia, Tanzania and Nepal", a clear view was obtained. The report promulgated the real scenario of educational status. As long as gender disparity was concerned girls were found to get lesser access to private schools than the boys. Many parents preferred their boy child to receive education in private and well set up schools.

According to Rathod (2018), negative effects of privatisation of education could be more than one. According to him, lack of standardization and insufficient proctoring by the government tended to degrade the standard of education. Sometimes teachers were not appointed on the basis of good and qualification. Appointment of teachers could be on the basis of biasness. It might be that private institution offered better facilities and teaching techniques to students. Whereas, the students studying in the government schools were often deprived of good infrastructure, courses, techniques of learning. Private institutions could also exert more workload burden on teachers as well as students. The quality assurance and the market competition among private educational institutions often taxed the physiological as well as psychological well-being of the teachers, students and the parents. All the factors that revolved around privatisation of education tended to compromise on quality somewhere or the other. Education in the hands of the private sector meant nothing but 'businesses. Education privatised was nothing but an object of business.

However, privatisation of education was well defended in a study conducted by Nijs(2017). According to the researcher, "... Privatized supply side is the best form of educational provision, because it entails efficiency and equality of opportunity." Privatisation of education enhanced higher degree of efficiency. In this big world of competition and economic struggle, privatisation was no sin. In his words,

".... On the other hand, if the state finances a wide variation of types of education people will still be able to choose from quite many types of education. Only if the type of education they prefer is not provided for by the state, they will not be free to enjoy it. In the end it is only this form of freedom that is lost in order to achieve higher efficiency,



no inequality of opportunity, efficiency of potential and a well-representative democracy. Therefore, I must conclude that some form of privatization in education is desirable and that the best way in which education could be provided to society is through a privatized supply side”.

There, the researcher supported the idea of privatisation of education. He strongly opined that if people willed to opt for different kinds and varieties of educational courses that the private sector could cater, it would be beneficial for the individual, for the country and the world at large.

Conclusion

The stark reality or the blunt truth can never be averted. Great philosophers like John Rawls argued that education is one of the most important inalienable rights to mankind. Education must be free from any kind of social injustice and monopoly as well as financial disparity must not stand as an impediment in receiving education. Government support has to be there in order to regulate education for all (Rawls,2009) In spite of several debates revolving around the privatisation of education, it is needless to mention once more that students are the nation builders and education is the most robust tool which can promote horizontal social mobility. Even if education goes to the hands of private sector, Government must keep a tab on the activities going within the private institutions. Alongside, the public sector must also upgrade the standards of education and infrastructure of their educational institutions in order to provide good facilities to the students who cannot access or afford private institutions, especially the amenities or recourses. Even though, government of India and other countries are putting in relentless effort in promoting the standards of public educational centres to be at par with the private concerns, more empathic approach is expected. This would help in eradicating the social inequality as well as social injustice.

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