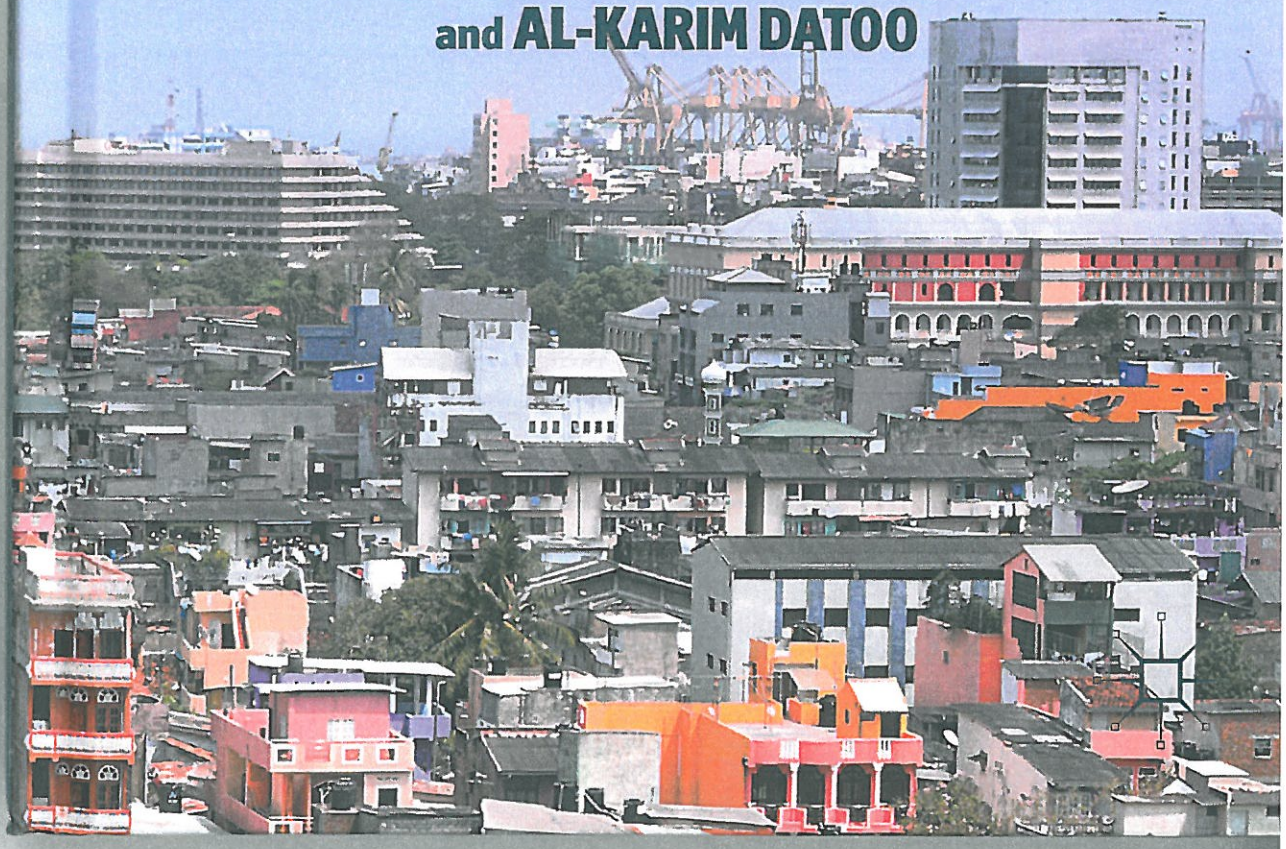
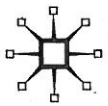
GLOBALIZATION, CULTURE, AND EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA

CRITICAL EXCURSIONS

Edited by DIP KAPOOR, BIJOY P. BARUA, and AL-KARIM DATOO





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We dedicate this collection to our beloved mothers: Aruna, Khati, and Chandrima.

CHAPTER 7

Neoliberal Globalization and Preprimary Teacher Education Policy and Practice in India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives

Amita Gupta

Introduction

In this chapter, I present current trends in preprimary teacher education in India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives and discuss the implications of neoliberal globalization for these policies and practices. The terms early childhood/preprimary education are used interchangeably, as are teacher education/preparation/training. The critical proposition advanced here is that the commercialization and westernization of educational institutions as a result of neoliberal globalization promote a human capital perspective on child development and educational aims, which often conflicts with the local understanding of these issues. Postcolonial theory frames the argument that neoliberal advances in education and teacher education lead to neocolonialism through the imposition of the dominant western discourse that is influencing educational decisions in South Asia. An overview of preprimary teacher education in India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives is followed by a discussion on ways in which post-neoliberal shifts are evident in these changing landscapes. Critical concerns in two broad areas are raised for discussion: the impact of western neoliberalism on early education and teacher education from a human capital and for-profit perspective; and the resulting cultural incursions that occur due to conflicting pedagogies rooted in different worldviews. Recognizing the pervasive nature of neoliberal globalization,

I recommend a hybrid third space in teacher education theory for South Asia that may be used to empower rather than colonize.

Conceptual Frameworks

Globalization is the idea that there are flows between international, national, regional, and local boundaries with an interconnectivity between cultural and economic lives (Giddens, 1990). Globalization of education refers to the "worldwide discussions, processes, and institutions affecting local educational practices and policies" (Spring, 2009, p. 1). These flows, or global forces, cause rapid shifts empowering some groups while marginalizing others through new forms of exploitation and political and economic domination (Carney, 2009; Kamat, 2002). Neoliberal trends in education evident in the market economies of capitalism in the developed world and now being globalized to regions in the global South, are not very different from classic colonial education, which promulgated a western version of education in the colonies (Kapoor, 2011).

Postcolonial theory not only allows for a discussion of the "colonial" encounter within the context of contemporary globalization, but also draws attention to previously under-researched areas, thus challenging existing theoretical perspectives (Crossley & Tikly, 2004). It focuses on the continuing negotiations and lingering transactions between the ideas and philosophies of the colonized and the colonizing, the modern and the traditional, the center and the margins (Bhabha, 1994; de Alva, 1995; Gandhi, 1998; Pratt, 1992; Trivedi, 1993) resulting in a transcultural mixing and exchange (Tikly, 1999). Bhabha (1994, 2009) suggested that it is helpful to view cultural categories not as binaries opposing each other but as having fluid boundaries that interact with each other: the exchange is essentially a form of cultural translation as ideas from one culture are modified and embedded into another culture, and the process of transformation leads to the creation of a hybrid third space or grey area that holds possibilities for alternative theoretical frameworks. Like postcolonialism, globalization elicits the notion of hybridity as the transactions between global and local foster two-way negotiations in newly created hybrid spaces; and within these spaces a new, more empowering discourse becomes possible.

Current educational dialogue on good teacher quality, which is perceived as being key to high student outcomes, has resulted in a flurry of activity worldwide to reexamine and reevaluate teacher preparation processes. Globalization has led to concerted efforts in several "Third world" countries to improve local education and teacher preparation approaches. Much of the discourse of international educational development is shaped by western

research and debates and this often compels local efforts to be more aligned with global (meaning western) trends in teacher education. Therefore, systems of schooling and teacher training are practices shaped by both western and local discourses.

Since the early 1990s, the work of several governments, private sectors, and NGOs in the field of early education has been impacted by the widespread ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Education for All. The need for a professional, nationally organized field of early childhood education is currently a high priority on the policy agendas of governments and international organizations. Equally important is the need for early childhood teachers to be professionally prepared; governments in India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives are working on creating university-related degree programs to this end. This is a shift from earlier thinking that teachers of young children do not require a university degree in education.

International organizations that fund education in the developing world such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the UN approach the education and development of the young child as part of a larger policy discourse on building human capital. Investing in children is integral to their broader social and economic investment projects. The approach of world organizations that sponsor early childhood care and education in South Asia has been closely defined by a child development discourse rooted in American research on neuroscience, behavioral science, and developmentally appropriate practice (Mahon, 2010). The dominant discourse stresses a future-oriented rationality that views the child as human capital in the making (Dahlberg & Moss, 2008). For example, the World Bank (2011) referenced Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman, whose work has demonstrated the economic returns of investing in early childhood education (ECE). Reports such as those published by Legal Momentum's Family Initiative and the MIT Workplace Center (Calman & Tarr-Whelan, 2005) and by the Institute for a Competitive Workforce (2010) emphasized that the first five years are the most critical in the child's brain development; achievement gaps develop well before children begin kindergarten and high quality preschool programs significantly impact all children, but especially those from low-income families. The reports recommended that good early learning programs for younger children reduce costs later in life while enhancing economic growth; thus high-quality early childhood education can help break the cycle of poverty. These ideas have been shaping ECE policy decisions in the developed world as well; investing in quality ECE is currently a priority in the Obama Administration.

In financially supporting NGOs, community-based schools, vouchers, and public-private partnerships to benefit the very poor, the World Bank

maintains a neoliberal discourse on social policy (Mahon, 2010). Under this influence, education and teacher education in general are becoming positioned as regulated markets governed by neoliberal policies where test scores are a measure of student performance and good teaching. Educators are measured by their students' performance on academic tests rather than by their professional knowledge of how children learn and develop (Brown, 2009). This follows trends in the United States where teacher education programs are being increasingly shaped by standards-based accountability reforms in which teacher candidates are taught how to deliver curricula specific to a local district and how to comply with specific assessment systems (Mayer et al., 2008). In increasingly globalizing world systems of schooling, economic considerations have led to a push to impose neoliberalism and conservative reforms in the form of both global and local standards (Apple, 2001; Green, 2005; Ross & Gibson, 2007). In this chapter, I address some of the resulting tensions and challenges in practice that emerge from neoliberal and culturally diverse sources that are both global and local.

Overview of PrePrimary Teacher Education Policies and Practices in the Region

This chapter draws on the findings of a qualitative inquiry of issues in preprimary teacher education in India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Methodology included a bibliographic investigation, a document investigation and review of institutional and policy, and an empirical investigation (interviews and classroom observations). Data were collected from policymaking organizations, research institutions, colleges/departments of education, teacher-training centers, NGOs, and preprimary schools.

Although the size, demographics, political orientations, and dominant spiritual influences in India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives are vastly different, the existing structural and organizational nature of teacher education systems is similar. In all three countries there were clear goals and efforts in place for the preparation and development of preprimary teachers, which has not so far existed in any organized form. Policy trends are commonly characterized by increase in privatization, competition and choice; and viewing citizens as consumers of fee-paying services in privatized sectors, reflecting neoliberal ideology. These trends were evident in the field of teacher education as well, such as increased privatization of schools, stricter entry requirements for teachers, more stringent measures for teacher assessment, and decreased teacher autonomy. In the sections below, I discuss each country separately.

India

This predominantly Hindu country with a population of almost 1.2 billion has been undergoing huge shifts in its economic-political agenda, directly impacting its educational reforms from preprimary to higher education. After the restructuring of the National Curriculum Framework in 2005, which aimed to move the educational system in India from being traditionally teacher directed to being a progressive learner-oriented one, the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2007) and the NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education, 2009) proposed massive parallel changes in the domain of teacher education as well.

Public (government) education starts with Class 1 (age five years), although recently some government schools have started preprimary classrooms for 4-year-olds. A range of preprimary education settings in India include private nursery schools; private day cares; mobile crèches; and the government-sponsored Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) *Anganwadis,* although the last is focused more on health and nutrition (Gupta, 2007). Since preprimary education has not been a government mandate no government universities offer a degree in preprimary teaching. Centers for the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) have so far provided only primary and secondary teacher training, and early childhood/preprimary teacher education in India has been limited to certificate and diploma awarding bodies. Preprimary teacher training programs fall within government, NGO, or private sectors (Datta, 2001). Some ECE Diploma/Certificate courses are offered by distance learning institutions like Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). India's eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012) urged the development of early childhood care and education, and ministries are still scrambling to put into place formal degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels to prepare teachers to work effectively with young children. Private training centers have mushroomed all over the country in response to this need, but many of these centers lack quality pedagogical standards and are being run like substandard shops and businesses.

The NCTE was established in 1995 as a licensing body to "achieve planned and coordinated development of teacher education throughout the country and for the regulation and proper maintenance of Norms and Standards" (NCTE, 2011). Four regional committees of the Council approved the recognition of teacher-training institutes throughout the country, permitting them to run teacher-training courses. In 2010, NCTE accepted sweeping changes in teacher-training curriculum for all grade levels. Although not necessarily within the area of preprimary education, some of these reforms

included raising the minimum eligibility criteria; raising the minimum qualifications for faculty and lecturers; a national level entrance examination for candidates who wish to qualify for university teaching jobs; strict checks to curb the growth of private substandard teacher training centers around the country; and more stringent criteria for recognizing and licensing a private school by mandating that it hire teachers with a degree from an NCTE-recognized teacher education institution.

Sri Lanka

This predominantly Buddhist country of almost 20 million people is poised to bring back stability and security to a society marked by years of violence and tension between the Hindu Tamils and the Buddhist Sinhalese. Undoubtedly, with the end of the civil war, educational reform and teacher education are important goals in Sri Lanka. A brief overview of the history of education and schooling in Sri Lanka can be found in Jayaweera (2007).

For the period of 2005–2009 primary school enrollment was at about 99 percent and the national average of early childhood/preschool enrollment at about 90 percent (UNESCO, 2011; UNICEF, 2010). While the Ministry of Education oversees primary education, preschool education is overseen by the Children's Secretariat (CS) under the umbrella of the Ministry for Child Development and Women's Empowerment. Even though certified teachers now staff many preschools, this does not always imply high quality teaching practices, as the standards of many institutions awarding ECE certificates are questionable.

Sri Lanka's thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution positioned preschool education as a devolved subject placing it within the jurisdiction of the provinces (Ministry of Social Welfare, 2003). Though the provinces have authority over the registration and functions of preschools, careful coordination between committees at the national, provincial, district, divisional, and village authorities is provided by the National Co-ordination Committee on ECCD within CS. The latter, however, provides the funding. Some provinces offer preschool teacher-training programs managed by the provincial education ministry or department, or sometimes by an independent authority. Curriculum development falls within the jurisdiction of the National Committee. Currently, there are only guidelines, as there is not yet a comprehensive national curriculum.

The central government does not run preschools, but local government authorities may offer preschool programs, run by urban or village councils. Generally, preschools are in the private sector with a large number being Montessori schools, and many of the private preschools tend to be merely moneymaking enterprises. As in India, there is a grave need for

quality preprimary teacher education programs and the gap is being filled by the mushrooming of private enterprises. The conundrum in both cases is that there is a dearth of experienced and qualified early childhood teacher educators to teach in these teacher education programs.

A recent policy change now requires teacher-training institutions in Sri Lanka to be registered with the CS in order to be approved by the provinces. At the time of this inquiry, about 22 teacher-training programs had been registered with the CS. Provinces to not recognize preschools that employ teachers who have been trained at nonregistered institutions. During this transition period, teachers will be given time to complete their credentials, but new teachers will not be recruited unless they are appropriately qualified. The definition of appropriately qualified raises another issue in the formal training of teachers. Currently, students can be admitted if they have completed their A-level. However, research participants noted that teaching requires certain dispositions in addition to a formal college degree, thus entry criteria to identify preferred dispositions in teacher candidates need to be used. This is a current concern in global teacher preparation debates as well.

The Maldives

This Islamic archipelago of 1,192 islands and about 400,000 people is also experiencing the growing pains of a new democracy. With the threats of global warming inducing rising sea levels, Maldivians are concerned about educating a generation of children who will be faced with these environmental issues. Other important developments in the Maldives are the new constitution written in 2008 and a president who came to power in 2008 after democratic elections were held for the first time in 30 years. This, and subsequent political changes, considerably influenced current educational policies. Another issue is distance education as some islands are very remote.

In Malè, the capital island-city of the Maldives, most preschools are nongovernmental institutions (Latheef & Gupta, 2007). As in India and Sri Lanka there has been no preprimary teacher training at the college level so far. The Faculty of Education at the Maldives College of Higher Education has offered teacher training programs for primary and secondary levels only. Preschool teachers in Malè are largely untrained at the moment, or if they are they have been trained in another country. However, schools do offer procedures to support the ongoing professional development and assessment of their teachers.

The country's first 4-year undergraduate degree program in early childhood education started in 2009–2010 by the Faculty of Education. This was catalyzed by two events. First, the government elected in 2008, closely aligned

with UNICEF's strong thrust on ECE, proclaimed an educational mandate to support early childhood education to ensure that all children were enrolled in preschool by the end of 2010 and that all preschool teachers would be certified professionals. These policies have created a high need for preprimary teacher training. The second impetus came from the Faculty of Education's decision in 2009 that courses on early childhood development and education should be a part of all teacher education based on the belief that optimal early development of children fosters more successful primary school experiences. Consequently, there have been sustained government efforts toward offering early childhood/preprimary teacher training. However, there is not yet a formal educational guiding policy or curriculum for the early years. Like all reforms, this will be a slow process and curriculum guidelines will need to be designed thoughtfully and in detail before an effective program can be offered at the college.

Clearly, preprimary teacher education is in flux in the three countries discussed above. New policies and practices are being implemented in all of them, many of which are directly linked to effects of neoliberal globalization.

Neoliberal Globalization: Current Shifts in Teacher Education Policy and Practice in the Region

The influence of neoliberal globalization in India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives is apparent in three processes: visions of and implementation of preprimary teacher education reforms in South Asia; pedagogical shifts from traditional teacher directed toward progressive learner oriented; and the borrowing of concepts from the western discourse of early education. I highlight these neoliberal shifts in the following sections.

Privatization and Commercialization

Privatization and commercialization of education are strong offshoots of neoliberal globalization, which has promoted open markets, changing economic reforms, corporatization, and advances in information and communication technology (Anjali & Archana, 2003). In light of an acute teacher shortage, educational agencies in South Asia are actively inviting foreign collaborations with the United Kingdom and the United States, especially with regard to curriculum development and teacher training. To fill the gap, private and nongovernmental institutions for early education and teacher preparation are mushrooming in South Asia. These are usually shaped by the agendas of their funding agencies, such as the World Bank, whose human capital conceptualization of child development and the economic reframing

of childcare (Prentice, 2009) feed into the increasingly neoliberal ethos of the emerging economies.

With the Right to Education Act of 2009, which promises free and compulsory elementary education in India, there has been a surge of student enrollment and the shortage of teachers in schools has become even more acute. The establishment of more private schools only adds to this crisis by increasing the number of schools but worsening the backlog of teachers. A corresponding increase in private teacher education institutes helps to meet the demand for trained teachers, but unfortunately, many of these institutes are substandard. Thus the privatization and commercialization of teacher training raises serious questions of access and quality.

One of the research participants, the head of the department of education at an established university in India, observed that education has shifted from being a philanthropic enterprise to a service that charges and people pay for, "and by way of market intervention anyone who is able to invest can provide education." This intervention is facilitated by the emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and other vocational areas like fashion design and event management, which keep candidates away from the teaching profession.

Recent policy initiatives in India, such as the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill 2010 and the Universities for Innovation Bill 2010, have serious implications for teacher education, specifically with regard to stronger private-public partnerships, industry-academia collaboration, and the possible wide-ranging freedoms available to these universities, like differential salaries to faculty. This will only help private promoters and corporations seeking to take advantage of the provisions of this draft bill. More educational institutions will be established by commercial companies whose ulterior motives often conflict with the philosophical aims of education and who view education as a venture to ensure attractive profits.

An example from the Maldives serves as another illustration of the neoliberal shift in education. A formerly public primary school in Malè that received financial help from the Japanese government was recently bought by a private citizen from India. Newly admitted children now must pay a monthly fee of about US$250 whereas the 1,500 children already enrolled before it became private will have the difference in their monthly fee bridged by the Maldivian government, paid for by taxpayers' money.

Westernization

The impact of western education is clear in India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Educational reforms in all three countries are couched in the core

ideas of the discourse of early childhood education in the west: child-centered, developmentally appropriate practices, cooperative learning, constructivism, Multiple Intelligences, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning, play-based pedagogy, performance assessment, choice-time, and circle-time.

In Sri Lanka, early education is influenced by educational trends and policies in the United Kingdom. Some schools have been established and named after the Gateway preschools in the United Kingdom, and many schools are using texts and curricula directly from the United Kingdom. In the Maldives, the Center for Open Learning (COL) received input and guidance from UNICEF, which has been concerned with the global development of early education and care since 1997. UNICEF has been involved in the development of an early childhood curriculum for the Maldives and plans to fund training for implementing it in schools. The Faculty of Education and COL are partnering in this initiative and working together to develop the four-year program. The courses in the first two years will be offered by COL in their distance education program as an online diploma.

The discourse of child-centered, activity-based, joyful pedagogy has been positioned as a national policy discourse to address issues of student retention and achievement in South Asia. However, western concepts cannot be readily and easily implemented in practice and are often given mere lip service. A study of child-centered teaching in rural India demonstrated that using the democratic language of child-centered discourse did not necessarily equate with handing over control to children; in addition, teachers were influenced by institutional systems, and the hierarchy and social inequalities remained prevalent in rural India (Sriprakash, 2010). My current study in all three countries showed that several preprimary classrooms exhibited a noticeable shift toward a progressive learner-centered pedagogy, but the shift was manifest mostly in the physical environment of classrooms displaying colorful children's work. The teaching strategies, adult-child interactions, roles and responsibility of teacher, large class sizes, and curriculum content still reflected a distinct teacher-centeredness.

The limited success of creating learner-centered classrooms in South Asia stems from the cultural contexts of preprimary classrooms. The core tenets of a progressive learner-centered pedagogy, which is built on the assumptions that children are free to engage with activities related to their interests; are able to make choices with regard to their engagement with classroom life; and will start school equipped with the decision-making skills essential to successfully navigating a choice-based classroom (Gupta, 2011), challenge the nature of the child-adult relationship in Asian society. South Asian childrearing is based on a group-oriented worldview. The imposition of individualism on a collectivist mind-set is certainly a cultural incursion.

Another example of a cultural divide emerges as a result of surging primary school enrolment in India due to the Right to Education Act. On the one hand, the surge in school enrolment has enabled India in moving toward its Constitutional goal of providing free and compulsory education for all children till 14 years of age. On the other hand, a large number of the children in classrooms represent formerly marginalized sections of Indian society. Teachers are not only inadequately prepared to teach these children but many teachers exhibit strong prejudices against the children's cultural backgrounds. This reflects cultural conflicts between socioeconomic classes at the local level in addition to conflicts between the local and western worldviews.

Internationalization

Internationalization can result in a form of neocolonialism. Viewing English as a global language can lead to linguistic imperialism; the compulsion to learn and teach English, and to adopt a western discourse of ECE can be seen as forms of colonization leading to handing over control of local forms of knowledge production and research. The perception of English as a global/international language and its spread was very apparent in India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Private classes and tutoring agencies claiming to teach spoken English were advertised widely in large urban centers, small hill towns, rural villages, and along narrow roads. The most striking occurrence across all three countries was the visible mushrooming of schools being described as international, world-class, or global. English classes and the rapidly growing international schools are marketed as being necessary for leveling the playing field by preparing South Asian children in the language and skills prioritized in the global job market.

In India the language of instruction in private schools is English and in government schools it is the language of the region where the school is located; in the Maldives the language of instruction is English. In Sri Lanka, the educational reforms of the 1940s replaced English with either Tamil or Sinhala as the instructional language. This Sri Lankan reform facilitated educational access at many levels: it allowed rural children to attend schools, increased the student enrollment in schools, increased the number of students who appeared for public examinations, and increased the number of total universities in the country. However, the reform also led to a decrease in English-language speakers in the country. In the current socio-political-economic climate, this is perceived as a disadvantage in the global job market and there is a demand to reintroduce English as the language of instruction in schools and for teacher training.

One of the consequences of globalization is widespread parental desire among rich and poor to send their children abroad to study. To this end, many South Asian families want their children to begin their English education at the preprimary level, even if it means the preschool teaches only English nursery rhymes. A popular demand is thus placed on preschools to teach English; poor families view this as a way out of poverty for their children. But the implications of teaching all children in a foreign language need to be carefully considered.

Preprimary institutional quality is measured against international standards and currently the quality of many preschools does not meet the expected standards. In efforts to improve this, Children's Secretariat in Sri Lanka is identifying substandard centers and helping upgrade them by providing classroom materials, outdoor play equipment, books, and other resources. The national goal in Sri Lanka is to ultimately transform all preschools into child-friendly institutions prescribing minimum standards for basic administrative and physical facilities, furniture/equipment, learning and psychosocial environment, and teachers' qualifications and professional development (Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment, 2006). The National Committee determined these standards after several discussions and a careful study of curricula of other countries. The policy was finalized and consolidated with UNICEF support. These parameters have been shaped largely by the ECE standards in the west and are now being articulated in the most recent ECE policy handbook in Sri Lanka.

Efforts toward creating "world-class" institutions are occurring in the Maldives as well. The first grade supervisor of a primary government school in Malè explained that the school had recently changed its mission statement and was now positioning itself as a "world class school," defined by an extended school day, a single shift system (most of the schools in the Maldives have at least two to three shifts to accommodate all children due to an acute paucity of land), provision of meals to children during school hours, and more activity-based teaching. This last parameter would seem a challenging goal as all the classrooms observed had 28–30 children.

Democratization

Recent political shifts in Sri Lanka and the Maldives have moved these societies toward democracy, as defined by the west. In Sri Lanka, after the end of a civil war that lasted 26 years, the first post – civil war presidential elections were held in January 2010, and in the Maldives the new President was democratically elected after thirty years in 2008.

Several research participants in the Maldives felt that changes in society came too quickly after democracy was announced. The democratic elections resulted in the formation of a coalition government under which conservatism has been gaining strength. For example, in 2010, it was ruled that women must wear thigh-length tunics over their trousers, which troubled the more moderate Maldivian women. The shift toward democracy has not been easy and people are struggling with many aspects of a new political system based on a culturally different worldview. Maldivians have been recently introduced to the democratic principle of the rights of the individual and seem to enjoy exercising this principle in their day-to-day lives. But they are also encountering the tension between individualism and collectivism and are beginning the process of resolving this tension and finding a balance between the two. One early childhood educator explained that school parents now had the right to contact their child's teachers anytime and school administrators were requiring teachers to provide their mobile numbers to families. This, she felt would make children less responsible for their own tasks as they would increasingly rely on their parents to contact teachers directly to inquire about school assignments.

Child-centered pedagogy is based on the principles of progressive education, which emerged within the context of a middle-class, democratic, capitalist west. It is based on the notion of individual rights, choice, assertiveness, confident self-expression, and advocacy. These raise questions when juxtaposed with, say, the Buddhist worldview of Sri Lankans, which promotes qualities such as loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Implementing a true democratic child-centered pedagogy in these countries can only happen if existing cultural worldviews are transformed, which in itself is a colonial consideration.

Neoliberal Globalization in Preprimary Education Policy and Practice: Critical Concerns in the Region

There are critical concerns relating to neoliberal shifts/ influences in preprimary teacher education with regard to the implications of approaching early childhood education from a human capital perspective; and what is lost when economic profit determines how we teach young children and what we teach them. The skill set required to succeed in capitalist knowledge economies is different from that required to flourish in a well-being-based community. These are grave questions that have to be grappled with.

Neoliberalism frames education within the discourse of consumerism; consequently, the learning experiences of young children are increasingly quantified and evaluated in terms of economic profit. Quality of early

education centers is measured in terms of the academic performance of its students. This is used as a selling point for its consumers. An emphasis on academic achievement often results in teaching to the test, which dominates children's learning experiences in the classroom, sometimes to the detriment of their social-emotional well-being.

The measure of good teaching is another issue. The head of the early childhood and primary education program at a Sri Lankan university perceived teaching to be

> a born talent... all cannot be teachers. They must love their profession. They must love the children... So maybe teacher training programs are not so effective... They are getting the certificate but I think we have failed somewhere.

This line of thought questions the increasing emphasis on professionalization requirements such as certifications in the making of a teacher, recognizing that preprimary teaching requires a stronger emphasis on children's socio-emotional skills rather than academic skills. A neoliberal approach views schools as businesses and favors an assessment system, which evaluates teachers based on the academic success of their students. This form of evaluation cannot be used for teachers whose success should be marked by the happiness and well being of the very youngest.

Teacher training should also address the fact that globalization leads to local events being closely shaped by global happenings. The local cultural context and worldviews in South Asia will not necessarily support the core ideas of child-centered teaching. Here is another example of the inevitable tension between conflicting worldviews that is embedded within this global-local transaction. In the collectivist communities of much of Asia, parents and children live together for an extended period resulting in a longer adult-child continuity and this interdependent worldview shapes local ideas on child development (Gupta, 2006; Viruru, 2001). What parents in collectivist well-being based cultures want their children to develop in terms of skills and attitudes may be different from the western skills of independence and self-reliance. One of the research participants, a Sri Lankan early childhood specialist, described a study she had conducted across urban, rural, and plantation communities in the country to survey how parents perceived their child. Parents commonly expected their child

> to be obedient and to be educated... and when the child grows up, to look after them... It has something to do with our own tradition... even the present generation depends so much on parents.... With all the ladies employed they leave their children with parents... even with all the day care centers and everything, we prefer to keep our children with our parents [grandparents].

Interdependence between generations and the vital role that grandparents play in raising grandchildren and helping their own children is commonplace in Asia (Gupta, 2006).

Although developmental expectations are quite different in diverse cultural contexts with respect to developmental milestones, education and teacher education in Asia continue to be held to western standards as evident in an assessment of early education in Sri Lanka: "Pre-school education in Sri Lanka has developed a style of its own that is uniquely out of step with the more widely accepted Early Childhood Education theories and practice valued in most developed countries" (King, 2010). Clearly, published research is an important source of knowledge and creates a particular discourse. The knowledge that shapes early childhood teacher education policy decisions in South Asia mostly draws on research conducted on children, issues, and concepts that are situated in the west. Educational reforms that infuse an educational system with dominant ideologies and neoliberal knowledge and values work toward colonizing that educational system (Loomba, 2005). A globalized teacher education system as a function of power and privilege is also a form of colonialism dictated by neoliberal forces (Adams et al., 2008; Canella, 2004; Gupta, 2006; Loomba, 2005; Viruru, 2001).

The roles that world organizations have played in influencing the imposition of neoliberal policies on developing countries cannot be denied and the continuing dominance of neoliberal policies indicates that those who benefit from these policies have gained control over public debates and policymaking (Hursh & Henderson, 2011). The soft loans offered by organizations, such as the World Bank and its networks, come "wrapped in policy advice that admonishes dependent countries of the South to follow "best practices" of the advanced capitalist countries" (Mahon, 2010, p. 188). The resulting increase in privatization of educational institutions increases economic inequality, thus widening the gap between those on the socioeconomic continuum. The central mission of neoliberal states to create a good business climate (Harvey, 2006) turns the focus of educational reforms toward efficiency and accountability and this has come at a cost to improving learning (Ravitch, 2010). The individualism of capitalist countries is evident in curricular reforms and this is what gets imposed onto the collectivism of many developing countries, despite the research that documents the varied bodies of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that children are expected to learn in different sociocultural contexts.

Concluding Reflections

Two things are apparent: first, the current state of teacher education in South Asia is outdated and needs to be reconceptualized and reenergized by drawing on local as well as global research on children's learning and development, and second, the powerful forces of neoliberal globalization seem all-pervasive. Thus, there is a need to build a body of scholarship that will allow for efforts to be made that will "go beyond what common discourse describes as "appropriate" early childhood education and look for other possibilities and ways of knowing" (Viruru & Cannella, 2001, p. 145).

Findings from my earlier research (Gupta, 2006) indicated gaps in teacher education in India that were largely due to the fact that it has been is a colonial construct based on Euro-American design and discourse with primarily imported theories of education; and it has been much too didactic and technical, failing to offer teachers experiences in sociocultural learning. Teacher education in South Asia has not evolved through the same stages as it has in the west, where it moved from the technical training model to models based on stage theory, constructivism, reflective teaching, multicultural and social reconstructionism, and teacher socialization (Gupta, 2006). Recognizing the inevitable western and Indian cultural transactions continuing in Indian society and schools, my recommendation is to work toward a postcolonial model of teacher education that draws from both local and global educational philosophies and psychologies.

> Not only is it important for teachers in India to know about current educational research and discourse in the west, but it is also essential to equip them with an educational discourse that will validate the underlying strengths of their own culture . . . An enlarged frame of relevance in teacher education that takes into account existing connections between historical, social, and cultural perspectives will lead to a deeper understanding between knowledge and power. This model of teacher education in India will not only enable teachers to better understand and name their own and their students' world views and help them recognize their own cultural values and biases but also ease the tensions that the teachers face in their struggles to balance Indian and western worldviews in their classrooms.
>
> (Gupta, 2006, pp. 221–22)

To address the challenges of globalization and neoliberalism, it seems critical to move forward with an approach to teacher education that would prepare teacher candidates in a theory and practice that is informed by diverse pedagogical ideas; engage teacher candidates with the ideas of social justice; create an awareness in teacher candidates of the implications of neoliberalism;

emphasize diversity training in teacher preparation; and prepare teacher candidates to recognize the space and moment when a dominant discourse of education begins to encroach upon a marginalized voice. A third form of formal educational discourse supported by a postcolonial perspective will emerge from this hybrid space in teacher education. It is an alternative to current teacher education theories and actively acknowledges the many imbrications of South Asian and western knowledge flows. This, then, has the potential to provide the basis for teaching that is empowering rather than colonized.

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