Chapter III

3.0 Reading Reforms in General Education

Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and very
different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness.


In keeping with Freire, if we are to *read the world in the word*, then there is
every need to historicize the texts we have located for purposes of dialogue.
Echoing Nancy Fraser (*Justice Interruptus* 1997:11-39) "it is impossible to
fully understand educational reforms...without situating them within say, the
long struggles by multiple communities of colour and women." As
provocatively observed by Swati Joshi, *Rethinking English*, 'Education, of
course, remains the most powerful apparatus through which the state
organizes *centralization* and *homogenization* of culture and
knowledge...They have created an enormous gap between one's education
and one's immediate reality and they also indicate the extent of the state's

Historically, larger power structures, like colonialism at home, deflected
socio-political equations of post-independent education. The colonial legacy
had blazed a trail of mindsets predominantly monologic. For 'no one
colonizes innocently and not without impunity...' (Aime Cesaire:1990).
Consequently, a concept of *tabula rasa* came to be centrally located in the learning process as justification for a far superior 'English' colonial education. The colonial masters had already written the genesis of the 'grand narrative'. Now the present masters are giving currency to its neutrality and justifying its pre-eminence. Within the post-independent context, reducing English language to an 'empty set' has a special salience. How this political decision was knocking English Education around needs to be considered in context.

**Crafting English Education**

With the lens of the two major reform documents, the Radhakrishnan Commission 1948-49 (preliminarily), and the Kothari Commission 1964-66(a little more closely), I will scrutinize the claims being made about language within subject area and schooling. This will be studied with English as its chief actor, how the role of language in India enters a new terrain of contest. For this has influenced what is going to happen in what we call education and also determined some very crucial issues like *how knowledge is being organized*. These in turn impinge/impact on larger curricular question of how language education becomes a tool in the hands of the ruling elite, eventually defining *who is who in education*. It is for us to examine how this is going to change or affect the language of debate, democratization and universalization of education. Reading some of these policy documents, this chapter will historicize the political project of education.
In the following sections will be introduced the text documents to be scrutinized for the purpose of re-considering the role education is being made to play in post-independent India.

3.1 The Reform Documents

3.1.1. The Radhakrishnan Commission/The University Education Commission 1948-49

On the advice of the Inter-University Board and the Central Advisory Board of Education, under the chairmanship of Prof. S. Radhakrishnan, this Commission was appointed by the Government of India to ‘report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit present and future requirements of the country’. Simultaneously, there was a proposal to reconstitute the University Grants Committee on the model of that in the United Kingdom in order to enable it to make enquiries and recommendations. The Radhakrishnan Commission, chaired by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan, a teacher himself, conducted a comprehensive study of the financial and academic problems of the Indian University. The chief contributions of this document were to provide leadership to politics and administration, the professions, industry and commerce. Teachers and teaching were restored a respectful place in society. The standard of University teaching was made continuous with secondary teaching. University education was introduced in the concurrent...
list. There was also stress on the need for India's cultural heritage to be critically reassessed. The need for establishing rural Universities was also indirectly responsible for the spread of the Hindi language.

3.1.2 The Kothari Commission 1964-66

Kothari Commission 1964-66, was also known as the Indian Education Commission. Kothari Commission rightly stressed the role of education in the process of development. Three aspects identified for change were (a) internal transformation so as to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the nation, (b) qualitative improvement so that the standards produced are adequate, keep continually rising and at least in a few sectors, become internally inseparable, and (c) expansion based on the equalization of education. The function of education was stated in clear terms - as socialization, facilitation of social mobility and bringing about social change. Productivity, national integrity, modernization and character building were being directly related to education.

Syllabus Reform in English 1976:

"Syllabus reform in English" was the theme of a series of workshops held during the academic year 1976-77 under the auspices of the UGC. Five zonal workshops were held between September, 1976 and March, 1977, followed by a national workshop held at the Central Institute of English & Foreign Languages (CIEFL) during 24-26 March, 1977.
These workshops were organized with the following aims in view:

(a) to stimulate fresh thinking on the objectives of English language and literature courses at the University level, and

(b) to involve a cross section of college and university teachers of English in the process of evolving a set of guidelines to achieve these objectives. The guidelines were to include the content as well as the teaching method and examination procedures for the various courses in English.

The recommendations made by these workshops reflect the thinking of a fairly representative body of college and university teachers of English in the country on a wide range of topics related to the teaching of English at the University level.

Reading history: The birthing of a nation

The Narrative of the post-independence chapter: the agenda of the national schemes

1949 was a critical year where education assumed a fairly important role. Not only was power being handed over but also the birthing of a nation was being conceded under an entire administrative and technical surveillance. At this juncture, it is curious to note that consolidation of power is being equated to the notion of democratic access primarily through overarching
state intervention. State managed forces were being earmarked for such purposes of power. Within is ambit, schemes of educational planning was being institutionalized. The entire state apparatus was being mobilized to deploy the modern.

3.2 Criteria for Interpreting Reform Documents

3.2.1 The Making of English

The vision informing this post independence reform project in education was largely found in the offers of centralization and control. What has been said about the University Education Commission of 1948-49 (Radhakrishnan Commission) is that it limited itself ‘to the study of education at the University level.’ The additional take off was putting into place second language dispositions. But of more concern was the medium of instruction... where the last clause seems to include maintenance of discipline among students. In curriculum terms these ‘discoveries’ can be located in some key issues and notions that came into being at the behest of to Kothari Commission.

- **A working knowledge** of English appropriated and justified for distinct categories of students.
- **Teaching techniques** rendered synonymous with language learning.
- The notion of English as a **library language**.
• Propagating bilingual policies within university education that was treating language as a 'transparent code' subject to no mediation of the cultural or social.

3.2.2 The Formation of the Modern Literate. ‘Giving everyone an equal chance to be unequal’

Posed on the threshold of 'national independence', the three major policy documents of the past couple of decades, such as the Radhakrishnan Commission, the Kothari Commission and in a somewhat more extended sense, the Syllabus Reform in English 1976, manifest the concerns of the 'new masters'- the formation of a 'new middle class':

(1) To consolidate power for governance within which language is recognized as a fairly powerful tool

(2) To identify a machinery to achieve that efficiently and swiftly, and lastly,

(3) To restore stability necessary for integrated growth.

The new ethics inserted is captured in Nehru's convocation address to the University of Allahabad in 1947 which inaugurates Chapter XI of Kothari titled "Higher Education: Objectives and Improvement".

'A University stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of 'truth'. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If
the Universities discharge their duties adequately, then, it is well with the nation and the people.'

Much of this 'lofty idealism' underlines and even regulates the linguistic formulations of these policy statements and 'official policies' in general. The liberal western idea of education as essential for the creation of a democratic state is vigorously being sought by both Radhakrishnan and Kothari. This corroborates the concepts of equality and justice so central to educational theory. However, most of these concepts have become contaminated by contests and struggles for meaning as people of caste, gender and class experience discrimination on a daily basis because almost all issues around the prize notions of merit, success and credentials are highly contested.

Assumptions being made about education and democracy are:

1. That 'good' education determines 'good' governance.

2. That the national goals of 'common citizenship' and 'common culture' are inherently 'good' and obviously 'wise', automatizing security, integration and thereby, 'national identity'.

3. That language lends a spanner to the 'well meaning and good intention' of most of these efforts.

4. That 'the maintenance of discipline among students', which forms the concluding clause of the aims and objectives of the Radhakrishnan document, is a sign of moral health and also a marker of active democratic participation in the learning process.
However, two very different language events determined the scope for the larger goal of democratization. Even if it has been alleged that the Radhakrishnan document was limited in scope as it was mostly concerned with the improvement of University Education, language was being forged as a tool of 'good' governance – but almost as a genetic counterpart of the colonial policy. The problem of 'heterogeneity', albeit 'multiculturity', was considered a governance problem easily met in a consensual link language. And this was generally supposed to rest and best invested in a 'one'-language model. Even against the staggering dimension of the 'Garibi Hatao' problem of the seventies, the Lok Sabha proceedings consistently debated the viability of Hindi as the one alternative link language to English. What was becoming apparent is the strength and mobility of the urban upwardly middle class leaning of the agenda.

As we shall see, that historically Kothari was pressed specific responsibilities for a post-independent language project.

11.20 Of Kothari:

'We are trying to establish a democratic social order in our country and obviously a democracy cannot flourish unless it has at its disposal the services of a highly trained, and powerfully motivated educated class.'
From the subsequent formula being proposed with a proficient English as an entry point, the energetic model of multicultural education becomes heavily biased against the weaker sections of society to perpetuate their silence. These democratic arguments invalidate the continuing violation of minority linguistic rights and their failure to acquire legal help. Even as the proposals for tri-language and bilingual policies suggested a more plural and dynamic language policy, the slide back into an 'assimilationist' model became inevitable, as wryly put somewhere, 'giving everyone an equal chance to be unequal'.

Similarly, the national schemes of education present a facade of 'equality of opportunity' as all students irrespective of class, gender, and ethnicity have to study the same curriculum. This seems to hide the surreptitious nature of the content of education and what kind of national identity it would foster.

Whatever contribution has been made towards educational theory rests in the model of learning that is being promoted in para 11.50 p.523 section titled Experimentation.

'It is by no means clear that a small sized student body necessarily leads to an improvement in standards or that there is some magically correct student-teacher ratio.'
Even where a barrage of dos and don’ts lean heavily against an economically disadvantaged or a linguistically different student it has made an incisive observation generally overlooked or under theorized in the concept of learning in the liberal democratic model of education.

(2) ...*We should also remember that the students usually learn almost as much from each other as from the faculty.*

However, the ‘political content’ of Kothari cannot be mistaken:

11.60

- A distinction has to be made between the *teachings of English as a skill* and the teaching of English Literature.
- ‘To give *good working knowledge* of English by adoption of *new teaching techniques*’
- Central Institute of English, Hyderabad as a pioneer in the same centralized idiom in which earlier in the document it hoped to institute *‘clusters of advanced centres’* as Columbia/Chicago was to the US, and Oxford and Cambridge was to Britain.

11.60

*Since an adequate command over a library language is indispensable for a university student we recommend that adequate facilities should be provided in universities and colleges for the study of English where necessary or possible, for other library languages as well.*
A new language was being invented for markets opened up by science and technology. English language teaching and not just English language, for these purposes, was to be given a new currency. Under the new imperative of 'acquiring skills', considered a sufficient end in itself, the content could be conveniently white washed of its cultural content. English units were going to adjust teaching to the needs and attainment levels of students. Under the new formula of personalized and individualized attention, progress of learning could now be described as being efficient and automatic or taking place in the head of the learner, endorsing the psychologists' approach.

The entire state apparatus was being mobilized to deploy the modern. The technically enfranchised literate was speculated from platforms of the elite – the newly emerging middle class. Housing the literate body was in force. It seems, that setting the house in order or centralization in planning is almost synonymous/ simultaneous with the birthing of a nation. This is clearly visible in the dilemma posed to the newly independent Indian state with a legacy of almost 500 princely Indian states to handle. What was considered a virtual threat was thought to have been averted by obviating uniformity as its most logical ground principle.

In 1949, Radhakrishnan Commission forged a direct link between education and markets - 'Education was considered essential to meet the demand for scientific, technical and other manpower needed for socio-economic
development of the country.' Ideologically, English was suited for the purpose. Language and the dimensions of this scripted concept of 'development' went uncontested in the rush of nation building with economy having a big say in education. Within the general sharpening of crises, the 80s confronted widespread degradation of political morality. 'In order to retain political power, the Congress adopted disastrous shortcuts.' Henceforth, it would be required to match the laudable objectives articulated in its policy statements.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49), a University Grants Commission was set up in 1953 and passing the UGC Act, a statutory body was set up in the year 1956...since then the pace of government involvement in education process was accelerated. In simultaneity, the Syllabus Reform in English Movement, 1976, seemed to be the cut off year for the purposes of legislating control into the processes of education. This is clearly visible in the West Bengal Act XVII of 1976, which provided an Act for the control of expenditure, which somehow was made to appear compatible and comparable with West Bengal Service Rules (Classification and Control & Appeal Rules 1971). However, the nature of these documents acquire transparency with regard to the unequal attributes, 

'though such rules contribute the contract of the employment they are not the result of agreement between parties.'
The Core (of the) Modernization Project.

Policies are in Foucault's terms 'political technologies' (1991), which by their use of a neutral language serve to depoliticize issues and redefine them in the objective language of science. Within this large image of science is inserted the 'communicative competence' of modernization.

Considered the heftiest document of the sixties in terms of both accent and assertion, The Kothari Commission Report (1966) identified education as a means to engineer modernization. The twin tasks of productivity and national integration were to be crafted on the vocabularies of science and technology. But whether the Radhakrishnan Commission or the Kothari Commission the terms and conditions in which modernisation was to be sought. This could best be seen elsewhere that the intensification of market growths generally set a pointer as to how language programmes were evolving.

European Common Market

For the rest of the privileged world, language education took off from the European Common market, where an increased need for adults to function in these newly opened spaces quickly consolidated so called 'other language' markets - a need invented in the anterooms of power, by far alien, struck root. At home, empowerment in language education was a fairly disputed category and pretty embroiled in the language issue.
3.3 Agendas

Education scenario in the 60s

The early 1960s saw an increase in the institutionalization of training technology. Training was the key word in the modernization project. The Council of Europe had already started playing a key role in language education. Under the project of improving school education NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) was set up in 1961- an autonomous body, subordinate to the Ministry of Education. In 1964, this was quickly followed by a government takeover of publishing school textbooks. In 1969, the National Staff College for Educational Planning and Administration was established. And under both houses of Parliament in January, 1968, the 3-language formula was ratified largely responsible for constituting the Central Institute of Indian Languages. India was set to be perhaps the largest 'language lab.' for hypothesis and theories developed and interventions crafted elsewhere - courtesy British Council.

What was forgotten is that most second language programs and their bilingual varieties were posed in either the migration or immigration encounter in the west. And never was it taken into account that the logistics of a training framed thus would sit unsatisfactorily in multilingual home turf. But it also revealed the ground principles of these programs to be 'assimilationist' into mainstream middle class male settings. Language
designs were aided by the best intentions of 'neutrality', 'objectivity' and 'universality'. Cognitive psychology would provide necessary backups to look into behavioural dysfunctional without having to account for the larger systemic or conceptual misadventures. Structural approach to curriculum development stabilized the language development discourse. In addition, the concept of 'communicative competence' with its 'rule of use' had the functional and psychological perspectives in place.

Interestingly the assertions of this modernization rhetoric were critically pitched at scoring highest international standards. The presence of UNESCO in an advisory capacity in educational planning after 1951 cannot be completely denied in some of these articulations. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) had most of its personnel trained in the United States who were finally concerned with institutionalization of technology. In 1963, the document of New Methods and Techniques in Education, a UNESCO paper had already identified 'education as global problem' and the need to 'turning human resource to best account'. In 1960 the XXIII International Conference of Public Education (UNESCO) was intensely engaged conducting international surveys for the preparation of general secondary school curriculum. Aids came in different outfits. Under international pressure this need for 'education and better education to more people in shorter time' came to be imported and soon markets were discerned. Communities in need of this technical literacy
are ‘discovered' as it were. With the training complete, institutes of training were to be housed. Who would it cater to? To those with English obviously.

3.3.1 Third Worldism en route Diagnostic Tests

It is even more interesting to observe how research got oriented with newly invented diagnostic devices. Tests were devised to capture and measure this deficit - confirming hypothesis made regarding ‘them'. Theories about who was *just not fit* emerged while it hyped the efficacy of these devices as objective measurement tools. Outcomes that would, it was assumed, be closer to truth values, specific locations were sited and ‘third world'-ism naturalized. In inventing this ‘other', the agenda of education was getting redefined. Both in linguistic theory and educational practice the culture of the other was the order of the day.

Post Independent India found the English speaking elites as ready available resources ‘with its small but influential English educated elites India was authentically placed to receive American influence in different spheres. Inventing a language of modernity was under way. The accents were clearly marked. ‘Accuracy', ‘assimilation', ‘efficiency' and ‘objectivity' seemed to be the informing principles. Under these broad restructuring pressures what would be the social and political space articulated through these projects? Consulting more present history, the context under which the New Education Policy 1986 emerged serves as an important reference point for the study of
the concept of change that was being planned for education. In several ways, National Education Policy, 1986 was born amid contravention. National Education Policy was hurriedly aborted in order to hike the flagging image of 'reconstruction' of the Congress Government. As a consequence, large scale need for education had to be assumed and conjured up to cloak the political intent, even when no such demand was visible. Once again the corridors of Education was tainted by power. Rajiv Gandhi, then in power, was parodied for his reconstruction rhetoric as fathering the 'Banana Republic'. 'Banana' in Hindi means 'to make'.

Language fell out again. Language games are never free from the socio-political history. Debate and discussion, considered powerful tools of democratic governance suddenly were conveniently cast aside. For the first time, in the history of free India, the education recommendations were framed in the anterooms of what came to be popularly known as the Committee of the Member of Parliament. Education as a concurrent subject was thrown to the wind. Within the framing of National Education Policy, 1986, 'policy' and the 'political' became blurred or easily interchangeable.

Recounting education within the vocabulary of science persuades a notion of growth along the lines of capital - a stockpiling effect. At about the same time as the Kothari Commission even in the industrial west there were renewed pressure for schools to be brought in line with economic needs. The newly liberated nations were simply trying to assert international dispositions. And
in this assertion the agenda of development was bathed in a glorious light. By this logic 'more and more' automatically signified better and better. By this inflection, the Kothari Commission in its recommendations to technologize education does invoke a seemingly energetic model of reform.

To what kind of literate populace was this being made more and more amenable and what were the social forces enacting this make up? Kothari was a much-publicized document in its time. And the implications for education of the future powerful. 'Because in the metanarrative of progress it is always in the direction of a still to be realized perfection...but the very idea of change is for the better is illustrated on a daily basis to be utterly mistaken' (Felix Guattari: 1997).

One fallout of this is that consumption ideology accompanies the declared/enunciated language education praxis. The theories of learning well corroborated within western developmental psychology inserted behaviourism in the instructional procedures. The stress on building competency skills, as human resource development in a preset sequential manner would end up by being reductive in understanding difference as these could only be interpreted in terms of deficit.
The ethics of 'more and more' 'quicker and faster' so central to the modernization project assumes a world order well in place and therefore presumably good. The curriculum to be mobilized under this scheme holds promise of secure employment, abundant consumer goods and access to the latest scientific technology. This so called nationalist education was quick to see that if science is to be sought as culture, then a socially determined technology has to be put into place. Educational planning during the 60s was generally concerned with the institutionalization of science. But as the next decade showed, the narrative of technology failed to provide a coherent purpose for the use of this technological information.

The Kothari Commission Report seems to corroborate some of the assertions about the role of education in the field of science and technology.

Review of the policy literature relates the accents to be on:

\[ i. \quad \text{Reform as socio economic development} \]

\[ ii. \quad \text{The role of education as human resource development} \]

Assertions within these debates see

\[ i. \quad \text{Restructuring of education and training as essential for industrial planning} \]

\[ ii. \quad \text{Training as a key to economic success} \]

What is worth noting is that how the vocationalization rhetoric is being mobilized under the dominance of English as a school subject. Democratic access as automatic is being assumed. Also the currency of work conflated
with earnability gives a new dimension to the commodification of education, which simultaneously contradicts the reach of the document. In this context then, those with linguistic capital seem to be the ones with culture capital and the kind of 'work experience' or 'practical training' proposed for the post secondary curriculum as incentive for employment is being rendered redundant. Gandhi’s concept of ‘basic education’ was quickly traded for what came to be coined by the document as ‘work experience'. This so-called ‘work experience’ was available for those with English. The large elite class clientele then is almost a repeat of the situation of the bhadroloks¹ of early twentieth century Bengal (1918-19) where vocational education as alternative to cultural or liberal education was so vociferously resisted' (Poromesh Acharya:178). The general aversion to manual labour so typical of our graduates. What is frightful is the divisive discourse that is being institutionalized. A crucial point raised here is the *stimulus to teaching so pervasive in education rhetoric* perhaps holds good for Kothari Commission and reduces the scope of learning.

Conceiving of difference in a peculiarly 'helpless' binary oppositional terms and leaving the question "On Women" towards the end of the document presents some of the difficulties encountered by the framers themselves thereby revealing the limitations of the recommendations. Ironically, no woman can be identified in any of the relevant pages of the document, at least not in adult literate workspaces. The Report of Literacy among
Industrial Workers, Committee as Plan Projects, Govt. of India, 1964, makes it quite clear the status of 'adult education' and the intentions of their projects and who was being targeted. Kothari thinks '...national security and integration, productivity and population control, health and general welfare of the people would improve through widespread adult education and training."

In this context what is work and who is the literate?

3.3.2 The features of Adult participation in the learning process

And yet, the way the Central Education Advisory Council set standards for adult education is hardly desirable:

(i) recognition of 350 words
(ii) ability to write numerals to 100
(iii) ability to write simple charts
(iv) knowledge of objects of daily utility
(v) ability to write simple sentences and names

In principle and philosophy this agenda bears resemblances to what was being recommended for a 'library language' or 'working knowledge of English'.

A skilled workforce was identified for the purpose of servicing the nation. Ways and means of achieving this quickly was the prime focus. The technicist or 'methods revolution' indicated in the instructional measures to
be adopted undertaken is consolidated. In fact the commission looks at instruction as teaching and learning process designed to bring about behavioural changes in the learner. And with theories of learning borrowed from Psychological and Cognitive perspectives, one very important aspect was formally instituted – age stage model of learning. This model found ready acceptance chiefly because the learning outcomes are easily observable and measurable.

The translation of this method to adult education has caused several dissonances. Certain communities of people used as trials could be faulted as deficient on errors of behaviour because the test measurement is designed to detect this.

Critiques of adult literacy projects have questioned the myth generated with the functional and psychological perspectives. Literacy was connected with the 'modernization syndrome', 'cognitive skills', intellectual competence', 'the development of empathy', 'flexibility'. And the appetite for 'adaptability' and 'the willingness to accept change' were modeled after the educated upper classes.

The 'technical' nature of how the trainings were conducted hid an ideological bias. Freire questions the hidden agenda of these UNESCO-oriented literacy programmes of acquiring values and 'forming mentalities'. Raising of consciousness cannot remain simply with 'problem-solving' but
problematising the total social reality within which the 'problems' occur and within which the training itself is offered. This asserts the centrality of the person's own position in the wider society.

The concept of 'earnable competence' hinging on a core notion of trainability and educability powerfully reflects the peculiar emphasis on individual growth and development. The heights are open to all who will work hard and apply self-discipline. In a sense, 'training' becomes 'natural' here, and like the nature of anything, this different basis for inequality does not seem arbitrary, artificial to us but rather seems based on good sense, progress, or the fruits of knowledge. Indirectly it is being mented that to survive, this mobility is to be desired and cherished.

3.3.3 Modernization Education and Indiscipline

The twin tasks of productivity and national integration were to be crafted on the vocabularies of science and technology. But a decade later walking into a classroom revealed the futility of some of these assertions. Ironically, in 1976, a 'radical change' was proposed in education with the 10+2+3 formula almost on the heel of June 1975 – Emergency. By now the modernization rhetoric had almost withered away. Food crisis, crop failure, foreign interventions, uneven land reforms and corruption bounded as waves of student unrest seized the seventies. An overall crises prevailed. The education promised in the 60s had not happened. Rather than looking
squarely into what went wrong at a more pragmatic level, student unrest was categorically treated as student indiscipline.

In the context of Kothari's 'reconstruction' agenda it would be worthwhile to see how the general student unrest is being defined and what is being defined as a 'problem', will determine to a large measure the search for solutions. At this juncture, remaining with pedagogical explanations alone would be a soft option in education.

The small scenarios enacted within elite institutions under the belief that they can operate as satellite stations or protected areas or game sanctuaries within a sea of trouble and call that education is getting to be highly debatable. Exercising or claiming patent rights over the gift of specific languages superseding others, almost seems to contradict the bilingual policies of Kothari. Most of the time, monolingual instruction has been more practised ritually within English medium classrooms. Deliberately practising monolingualism as a virtue because that is how we have been brought up so that dialoguing in another tongue amounts to fall of standards is nothing less than prejudice. In the examination hall failing or refusing to decode a public question paper that has overlooked the need to give regional versions as 'helping' students in a very negative sense, is generally not being very useful. Refusing help because they are not our students is a specious kind of parochialism. And yet we have nurtured an identity within our institutes of
being 'helpful' teachers of a charitable brand. We do not hesitate to quickly gloss over these larger realities knocking all around us as amenable subjects for the classroom. Deciding without discussing issues like examinations and particularly the present code of conduct prevailing in examination halls is overlooking an important facet in the learning process. However, most teachers without realising the larger issues involved don't hesitate to moralize largely on the political. In our distinctions of the 'they' and 'us', as if these locales exist except in the minds which generate them, reveal the small ways in which individual teacher prejudice can create havoc in spreading attitudinal bias. They are made to exist in our perception of reality and governed by our criteria of the literate.

Value judgments on general category of continuing casual (CC) students or any other such category, whom we label external candidates, generally coming from regional mediums – the mofussils as it were, seem to consolidate the reigning 'political arithmetic'. Unwittingly perhaps on the backs of many of these students we have built our reputation as teachers. But when 'our' students display misdemeanours, we extend protection, wash over the facts, as if they were cloned communities. To a certain extent they are. We admit those whom 'we' consider fit predicting and predicing the future. But by refusing what they are into our classrooms we have reduced our classes into beauty parlours. This new scientism articulated in policy documents in fairly neutral terms is precisely what we must be wary about.
This has settled into the taken-for-granted and the everyday. But the ideology at work we cannot or should not hide.

However, at the ground level, the ‘lived curriculum’ of the students were much more hazardous. This can be seen in a small incident that happened in 1979. In front of the teashop just around chowk bazaar they accosted me. I was returning home after exam invigilation duty, Part I BSc exam. There were four of them. Big and rowdy to look at. Please ma’am do not report us they pleaded. Two said this is our third try. We will be suspended from the University. And in the twilight of that July evening I was trying to understand what stories they could be telling. These stories became more frequent and assumed unmanageable proportions. Tricky questions were to be raised. For the chinks were showing everywhere in society. Soon general unrest in the hills would bring the entire education system to a halt. Resistance on a massive scale after the eighties would change the entire feudal history of Darjeeling.

Interestingly, Studies in Educational Reform in India – IV (1989) devotes an entire chapter to A Critical Study of Malpractices in School Examination. Basically a technical document that goes into the ways and means ‘controlling’ the malpractices, the document not only has a veiled address but a moral tilt that cannot conceal its intention.
In 1970, a committee on examinations was set up under the Central Advisory Board of Education 'to examine malpractices and to give protection to invigilators and other concerned with examinations' (NCERT, 1971). Throughout the document there is strained effort to retrieve the meaning of achievement and hard work per se. Both achievement and hard work then is quickly being exchanged for a moral attribute like honesty. As if honesty and hard work fall from the sky for the virtuous. Divesting both achievement and hard work from the context of power politics and structural inequities in society is not a very comprehensive description of education. Whose idea of honesty and hard work is being identified will determine whose curriculum it has been all along. Who is to define what achievement and honesty is? These notions are being treated as if it is known what these categories denote. The study is being justified on the grounds 'only when the means adopted for the purpose deviate from the standard and accepted social norms of behaviour, they become unfair' making it obvious whose notion of 'fairness' is in force. And fairness is valid if it has the sanction of legality.

The Bibliography footage of this chapter in the Studies in Educational Reform in India seems to corroborate the theme of this document except for three articles where the titles are very revealing,

1. Amlan Dutta: Coping with the Crises in Education,

   *The Statesman*, 30 Aug 70 :1-3;
2. A.S. Ojha: Use of Unfair Means in University Examinations is a Form of Protest, *Searchlight*, 16 April 72:4;


The title themselves focus on an interesting aspect that is often ignored. As the titles show some attempt is made to address the issue in the larger structural framework. It certainly provides a pointer to enhancing the scope of the present discussion that can larger policies be made accountable for the disruptions on the ground? To gain insight we would have to re-look at Kothari Commission Report a little more closely.

Kothari Commission reform recommendations read:

**One Nation One Language**

Post-independent India demonstrates a fairly long history of a strangely diabolical language policy. One outstanding outcome has been defining the language debate around the dual system of education. The three-language policy while notionally favouring a bi/trilingual framework has consistently pointed to a monolingual discourse. Not only in the strictly linguistic sense, for it has also done that, produced a school of aliens best described as 'semilinguals' and in more battering terms 'disadvantaged', in a discourse
seething with political and social biases/shifts. But also cultural, where the notion of participation has been carefully depoliticised for this purpose.

The colonial discourse inserted itself in ways where the classical route to nation formation conflated with the destiny of the educated modern along the legacy of one nation-one language formula. The modernization project could invoke the muscular mono male model as the goal of 'linguistic competence'. It was important for mobilizing and consolidating the nation that is Bharat. Conjuring Bharat, education, it was thought, would be the proper training ground for a civil society. The national discourse of education and the question of language got inserted in very specific ways that was to colour the way we would be made to view language. Language that was tool. Language that was science. Language that was code only. The political agenda was very apparent.

The status of English as a school subject and as a medium of instruction is fielding meaning on to civic space that is going to have profound inflections for constructing and understanding the relationship of schooling and citizenship. The dual system of education thus evolved is an active part of the powered modernization discourse. The nationalist agenda is markedly visible in marketing the 3-language formula on to the Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV) School concept. Language the way it is being constructed in schools,
is largely responsible for mobilizing identities that do not remain strictly within schools. Ruefully, a politically imagined community is in the making.

It was a paradoxical situation. Even a tri-language formula as the link language did have its shortcomings. A strictly tri-language policy somehow skews the whole issue of diversity and difference.

'Hindi the projected language is the mother tongue of 30% of Indians. [The Radhakrishnan Commission on University Education]: Unfortunately, it (Hindi) does not possess any advantage literary or historical, over other modern language.'

Routine 'streaming' in schools along closely linguistic identities is largely taken for granted and so made to appear as a 'natural' phenomenon. The dimension of this socialization articulates persuasively in the 'classification' and 'framing' of curriculum (Basil Bernstein: 1974) where language translates as 'restricted' and 'elaborated' codes.

In policy terms, redistributing the meaning of the codes made language functionalism of a wide variety appropriate the discourse with its referential value. This referentiality had far reaching implications for the 'schooled' discourse with its overt commitment to grammaticality and correctness. For a good while now, English has also defined the terms of the debate. Notably dichotomous thinking predominate, English vs. Vernacular, National vs.
Regional, Metropolitan vs. Moffussil. English as of today is littered with the discourse of dominance. Perhaps the lack already felt is that language of democracy and participation should have so many places to hide.

**Grammar of the lived English**

*Invocations to English/ The English Empire*

The call to English from an English medium setting provides a useful means of studying how language is understood and practised within subject disciplines.

I proceed from two strong positions held about language:

1. Language as a functional/neutral tool to be acquired as the currency of a composite modern literate.
2. The Language problematic - being tainted by power.

It would be worthwhile to look at a commonly held view as to what goes as English, both linguistically and culturally. Some current reforms have unfolded some deep-seated understanding and assumptions regarding the learning of languages, and particularly how it is to be taught, to whom, acquiring the force of truth-values.

I cite an example of a response of the English Department, St. Joseph’s College, Darjeeling, to a recent reform in the allocation of marks to a General English Paper from 100 to 50. And since a copy was forwarded to Loreto
College, being a representative member for the Hill Colleges in the Board of Undergraduate Studies in North Bengal University, the issue could not be ignored so easily.

The body text:

May 13, 1998

"We are writing this letter with regard to English in the new Degree Course, to be introduced in the new 1998 session. Our entire college, dept. of English and the students are very concerned by the change in the reduction of marks from 100 to 50. We would like to know why this change in policy took place. We feel very strongly that as English is not only the medium of instruction in our colleges in Darjeeling and also an essential language for the students in any kind of competitive system on a local, regional, national and international level, this change will only affect the students adversely and cause irrevocable damage. So, before further harm takes place we would like to place before the university our suggestion that the pass marks for this English paper is 40%. Our reason for this being that as it is this lowering of the marks will encourage a definite lowering of the students desire to perform in English, which will result in an overall lowering of standards in English Honours in particular, and on all the subjects in general. It is a fact that students will not apply themselves if the marks are as low as 50 and if the qualifying marks being suggested are as low as ten. Hence, we sincerely request you, in the name of Higher
education, not to propose a policy that will have such serious consequences in the lives of young people, more so as they have to compete in a highly competitive and unequal world where unemployment is rife. "(All the italics and bold are mine)

I read the above letter, not only as a written document of intersecting texts but the play of discourses, which in producing the letter writing 'native' produces the English departments 'natural'. This model of education outlines the general 'crises' afflicting education as it gets situated within the language problem and the problem that is language only.

What do we have to do as educators to create a discourse that is neither seductive nor reductive?

'Are we not faced with an explosion or release of overly saturated or overly entropic theoretical models, with considerable risks to human bodies and minds.' (Luce Iregaray, pp.28)

Marks, as addressed in that letter, make one-to-one meaning claims and here 'transparent', is to be faulted because it makes language function a priori according to principles which are those, or which are like those of the phenomenal world. This resists reading. By conflating standards/performance with marks contradicts itself. Linkages between the view is
neither direct nor does it exist. By themselves marks are value-free, empty signifiers, until we give them meaning.

Saussurian linguistics makes important formulations about language:

1. 'The bond between the signifier (word) and the signified (definition or concept) is arbitrary.

2. Social conventions assign words to definitions or concepts.

3. Signs do not exist outside a linguistic system.

4. Its relation to other signs determines the value of a sign.

5. The linguistic value of a sign is not contained in an isolated presence but in a series of differences between a sign and sign.

'Everything ...boils down to this in language there are only differences...Proof of this is that a value of a term may be modified without either its meaning or its sound being affected solely because a neighbouring term is modified.'

Saussure, (1966: 120) The issues relevant for our discussion on what language is, what language can do:

1. Language does not have isolated presence

2. It is a socio-cultural artifact

3. Meaning potential exists in a play of potential differences
The concept of 'polysemy' in linguistics provides a useful tool for several interpretations of texts simultaneously. Working together with the concept of 'play' in post-structuralism undermines any attempt to assign any determinate meaning to a text at a given point of time. The concept of difference so central to this thought is best seen when we look up a definition in a dictionary. Words are defined according to what they are not, that is, and how they differ from one another, which helps to delimit the possibilities of meaning. Derrida argues that nothing is simply present, but depends for its meaning on its relation to things absent. In this negative logic, a pen is a pen mainly because it is not a pipe.

This is the 'logocentric' tradition of Western Metaphysics. A central tenet of logocentrism is the notion that writing is a secondary representation of speech. This logocentric notion was supported by Aristotle, who believed that the voice in producing the first symbols, stands in immediate relation to the mind, and that first signs represent mental experiences, in which the signifier (or sound image), the signified (or concept). And the thing itself is united by a 'natural bond'. Thus the word 'tree' consists of a unity of sound and meaning, signifier and signified, and this bears a natural relation to its reference, the tree itself. In deconstructing this logocentric, Derrida speaks against the speaking subject as an immediate presence who can stand in direct relation to the unified presence of a word or thing. Any unified presence, he claims is 'always already divided within itself'. These
understandings within language, the value given to certain ‘standards’ and ‘marks’ belong to traditions that are governed by mainstream dominant discourse that is also the discourse of dominance.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter observes, that language and language education has been identified to fulfill the vision of Kothari at modernization, democracy and integration. This has lent visibility to large scale importation of techniques and methods. In turn, this has a special saliency within the parameters of universal effort at industrialization. In order to achieve this purpose quickly and on a grand scale, the functionalities of language education, particularly with a non-English speaking workforce readily available in the ‘developing’ countries, was being targeted and perhaps provide new insights into the proliferation of techniques and methods in education. Henceforth, post-independent India was going to find it intensely difficult to ignore the presence of US in the fields of science and technology.

In this chapter, a close look at the narrative address of the policy documents was found to take the ideal reader into confidence, and make the responses almost automatic. By implication, a response was at best ‘autonomously’ produced, in the head of the individual as it were. Supposedly ready decoding easily provides the ‘good’ intentions of these documents. The question at issue seems to be the history of always reading unitary
meanings of policy documents as being intentionally good. What has been the history and purpose of the 'fixed official voice'? Perhaps what is interesting is that these intentions have been assumed by the framers themselves as being fairly transparent categories. In the next chapter, we will examine some of the conditions that might have been responsible for arriving at these observations of 'obvious' monological political commitment.

This understanding, that language was transparent, and therefore, easily decodable, was also going to strengthen the genetic theory of ability that was being propagated by the psychologists and gaining force in the new testing measures introduced in schools. Perhaps it is in this argument that the location of 'merit' came to be traced as solely individual intelligence without any cultural history of class, gender, race or caste so clearly evident in the whole history of the rise of schooling, particularly during the industrial revolution in the west, but more specifically, colonial India. It must also be kept in mind that IQ tests evolved at a time when America felt threatened by large scale immigration sweeping the country. Ironically, the presence of 'other' people was necessary to build the new Americas. But this was also viewed as a racial threat and the need to purify its native stock intensified.

It is interesting to note, that the sheer march of the manifesto and the rush of agendas themselves cast an air of official ness to the documents. As a result of which, first reading communicates power and authority accorded
Hence, it is not difficult to understand why power games determine ready readings. And ready decoding easily provides the ‘good’ intentions of these documents.

Notes

1 In Nineteenth century Bengal the ‘bhadrolok’ belonged to the middle class upwardly aspiring English educated middle class. Bhadroloks were respectable folk akin to the petit bourgeoisie

2 Navodyaya Vidyalayas modelled along Kendra Vidyalayas or Central School pattern, that were being established during 1986 were mainly to facilitate the education of government employees and implement the three-language formula. These schools were given special attention during Rajiv Gandhi’s New Education Policy ‘86