Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction to the Study

The thesis presents a study on life skills education (LSE), a form of psycho-social skills intervention programme, popularised by supranational agencies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), to keep children and adolescents on a positive trajectory of growth and development. Using an ethnographic approach, the study seeks to unpack the discourse of LSE asking ‘what skills, and whose life does it serve?’, and ‘what skills become central to the conception and development of a positive childhood?’

In the current cultural and economic scenario, ‘life skills’ appears to be a ubiquitous term, appearing everywhere - within casual conversations, employers’ checklists, school and college curricula, clinical interventions, in personality training programmes, health and lifestyle magazines, national and international policies, on websites, in newspapers, and self-help books. Across these various sites, the term seems to refer to a wide range of learning - from literacy, or computer skills, money management, cooking or gardening, to more psychologically-oriented skills of personality development and self-discipline. It appears to function as a ‘strategically deployed shifter’ – that is, as a term that has no context-independent lexical meaning of its own, but that attains its pragmatic value depending on the context of its use (Urciuoli, 2008). Therefore, to specify the use of the term within this thesis, I draw on the definition, and model of LSE as popularised by WHO.
According to the WHO, life skills are a set of “psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (1993, p.1). The WHO lists a set of ten skills (given in table 1) that cover all domains of the individual self - intrapersonal, interpersonal and cognitive.

In approaching LSE as given by the WHO, the attempt has been, mainly, to locate and localise the phenomena and questions on LSE as it applies to the category of childhood. I use the term ‘childhood’, not as a category defined strictly by age, as within psychology, but more as a social category that is different from adulthood, in terms of the agency, autonomy, expectations, duties, rights, perceptions, responsibilities, etc. Thus, I also include the category of ‘adolescence’ (or youth), which is perceived as the ‘waiting’ or transition period before full adulthood.

In examining LSE in relation to childhood, the attempt is to understand its circulation through the processes of education, and how this not only shapes children’s personalities and identities, but also how it shapes our conceptions about positive childhood itself. Yet, as the following chapters will demonstrate, this attempt at delineating the boundaries of the subject under study has been more a strategy of convenience, rather than a successful separation, as within the everyday practices and discourses that contribute to LSE, these boundaries remain blurred.

**Table 1: The ten life skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Classification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>Capacity to assess different options and effects of actions taken in relation to health, and to deal constructively with these decisions about our lives.</td>
<td>Cognitive Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem solving</strong></td>
<td>Dealing constructively with problems in life, without which problems of physical strains arise.</td>
<td>Cognitive Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Creative thinking</strong></td>
<td>Contributes both to decision making and problem solving by enabling one to explore various alternatives and their consequences, even in the absence of a problem. Thus, it is seen as important to remain adaptable and flexible.</td>
<td>Cognitive Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical thinking</strong></td>
<td>Ability to analyse information and experiences in an objective manner such that it helps one recognise the influences on attitudes and behaviours, such as media influences and peer pressure that affect health behaviours.</td>
<td>Cognitive Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effective Communication</strong></td>
<td>Ability to express oneself and one’s desires clearly, in culturally appropriate ways, when asked to engage in particular actions, and to ask for advice.</td>
<td>Interpersonal/Social Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal relationship skills</strong></td>
<td>Ability to maintain positive relationships, such as friendships, and with family members, seen as important for social support. It is also seen as the ability to end relationships constructively.</td>
<td>Interpersonal/Social Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-awareness</strong></td>
<td>Recognition of one’s self, character, strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. It is seen as important for effective communication, interpersonal relationships and empathy, and to recognise when we are under stress.</td>
<td>Self-Management/Coping Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy</strong></td>
<td>The ability to imagine what life is like for the other person, accepting others who may be very different from us, such as ethnically different people, those suffering from AIDS or mental illness, and to be caring and tolerant towards them.</td>
<td>Interpersonal/Social Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping with emotions</strong></td>
<td>Recognising emotions in oneself and others, and their effects on behaviour, and knowing to respond appropriately to emotions.</td>
<td>Self-management/Coping Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping with stress</strong></td>
<td>Recognising the sources of stressors in life, recognising how it affects us and how to control it through strategies such as taking action to reduce the stressor, or learning relaxation techniques.</td>
<td>Self-Management/Coping Skills</td>
</tr>
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*Adapted from WHO (1993), PAHO (2001), and WHO (n.d.)*
LSE has been steadily gaining popularity since the 1990s, when the WHO strongly advocated for its inclusion within school mental health programmes (SMPHs). It also received renewed international attention following the Education for All (EFA) conference,1 where it was included as an essential component of basic education. Yet, there has been little critical examination of these programmes from outside the disciplinary frameworks of psychology. While a large set of sociological, anthropological and educational literature looks at other kinds of skills development programmes, few studies are available on school-based life skills programmes (LSPs). The few that are available only make a passing reference to life skills among other things, or subsume it under other categories of ‘employability skills’ or ‘soft skills’.

However, this absence of critical literature on LSE for children and adolescence is significant since LSE presents a departure from other skills programmes for several reasons. First, unlike other psychologically-based skills interventions for children (e.g., Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning [SEAL] and Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies [PATHS]2), that have been critically discussed within literature, LSE is much broader in scope and reach. Unlike these other psychological interventions, it has grown beyond its initial conceptualisation as a therapeutic intervention to become a part of the popular imagination at large, occupying a place within everyday discourses at schools,

1The World Conference on Education for All was organised by the Inter-Agency Commission of the United Nations (UN) at Jomtien in 1990, which resulted in the World Declaration on Education For All, and a Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs. The conference saw participation from 1500 members, including national governments, multi-national donor agencies, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, and education specialists, who sought to ensure education as a basic right for all the world’s people by 2000. A follow up meeting was held at Dakar in 2000, in order to re-examine the goals adopted at Jomtien and to ensure its realisation, at least by 2015 (Buchert, 1995; Goldstein, 2004).
2This will be further discussed below
workplaces, neighbourhoods, and even within family life. Further, advocated as part of movements such as EFA, it is considered to be an integral component of the goal of achieving the ‘right’ to basic education for all. Additionally, unlike SEAL or PATHS, LSE is also seen as a tool, and hope for educational reform. Thus, it has received attention from national governments and supranational agencies, corporate and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and has become a part of both policy and everyday discourse on childhood.

In addition, LSE also differs from other skills training programmes in its positioning for the youngest segments of the population. Unlike many other skills development programmes discussed within sociological and educational literature, that target a young or aging workforce to make them adaptable to the changing nature of the workplace, LSE is, particularly, positioned for a population that is seen as “not-yet-citizens” – that is those who are considered to be developmentally not yet ready for socio-cultural, political, and specifically, economic participation (McLeod, 2012). Yet, it forms a natural extension of these other employability and soft skills programmes into childhood, through its emphasis on skills of self-management, communication and responsibility that are vital to the new workplace.

Thus, the discourse of LSE appears to be, at once, intimate and personal, and also global and related to the larger changes occurring within domains such as education, economy, work places, and culture. As will be discussed later, emerging as a response to conditions of unemployment, social disorganisation, and deteriorating mental health that were attributed to the processes of globalisation, liberalisation and technologisation, LSE has come to be presented as a universal solution to these various problems of living.
Thus, in bringing a focus to LSE, the thesis attempts to bring together literature from different disciplines in order to fully reveal its effects that extend beyond the level of the individual. On the one hand, the thesis draws on psychological literature that underlies its practice, in order to present how this constructs ‘normal’ childhood in particular ways. On the other hand, it draws on a body of literature that critically examines these claims, ranging from critical psychological literature, to sociological and educational literature, in order to demonstrate the linkages between disciplinary knowledges and developmental interventions (such as education or training), and the circulation of power.

In bringing these two aspects together, the study hopes to show how ‘childhood’ becomes a site for new regulations and class formations; and thus, the thesis is located within the interstices of disciplines of Sociology of Childhood, Sociology of Education, and Critical Psychology. Drawing on the different frameworks, tools, and methods offered by these different disciplines, it tries to approach the subject of psychological knowledge through a sociological lens. In bringing this new focus to LSE, it is hoped that the thesis can help reconceptualise some of the taken-for-granted assumptions about such programmes that are uncritically put forward as universal developmental solutions to problems of ‘risky’ and/disadvantaged childhoods, and poverty. In addition, it also attempts to theorise the larger direction and effects of such programmes in relation to social transformations.

But before going into a discussion of the insights that can be drawn from this new way of framing LSE (and its relation with ‘childhood’), the available literature on the topic is, first, briefly reviewed. This includes psychological literature on the theory and pedagogy of LSE, as well as
studies from critical sociological and educational perspectives that consider the linkages between skill development programmes, and the larger socio-economic and political changes within society, economy and education.

1.2. Life Skills Education as ‘Evidence-based Practice’: A Review of Psychological Literature

The psychological literature on LSE can broadly be divided into two sets– one that sees LSE as a preventive approach to bring about specific behavioural changes in children and youth, in relation to a number of ‘risk behaviours’ (e.g., substance use, alcohol abuse [e.g., Botvin, Griffin, Paul & Macaulay, 2003; Botvin & Kantor, 2000; Botvin, Schinke, Epstein & Diaz, 1994]; smoking and tobacco use [e.g., Botvin, Eng & Williams, 1980; Botvin et al., 2003; Botvin & Kantor, 2000]; drug abuse [e.g., Botvin & Griffin, 2002; Botvin et al., 1994]; adolescent pregnancy [e.g., Schinke, 1984; Zabin, Hirsch, Smith, Streett & Hardy, 1986]; HIV/AIDS [e.g., Delva et al., 2010; Givuadan, Van De Vijver, Poortinga, Leenen & Pick, 2007; Visser, 2005]; bullying [e.g., Olweus, 1990]; violence [e.g., Botvin, Griffins and Nichols, 2006; Fagan & Mihalic, 2003; Skara & Sussman, 2003; Tobler et al., 2000]; and suicide [e.g., LaFramboise & Howard-Pitney, 1995]).

A second set of literature presents LSE as an ‘approach’ to, and an ‘outcome’ of, learning (Hoffman, van Ravens, & Bakshi, 2004), and generally, associates it with the positive socialisation of children and youth (WHO, 1999). In terms of its role in ensuring a healthy socialisation of the young, it has been included as a part of health education (e.g., Srikala & Kishore, 2010), peace education (e.g., Prutzman, Stern, Burger, & Bodenhamer, 1988), and in programmes for the promotion of ‘intelligence’ (e.g., Gonzalez, 1990), self-confidence and self-esteem.
In countries such as South Africa and Columbia, LSE has been applied to prepare students for life itself, through programmes called ‘Life Orientation Education’, and ‘Integral Education’, respectively (WHO, 1999).

However, it is the former aspect of LSE concerned with preventing risk that has mostly gained attention within psychological literature. With risk behaviours becoming national concerns, as a result of the economic costs they pose for governments, LSE has been advocated and adopted to address some of these special concerns. For example, in Zimbabwe, Thailand and South Africa, LSE has been adopted for the prevention of HIV/AIDS (James, 2002; WHO, 1999). In Mexico, it has been used to prevent adolescent pregnancy; in United Kingdom (UK), it has developed as part of an important initiative to prevent child abuse; and, in the United States of America (USA), there have been several initiatives using LSE for preventing substance abuse (WHO, 1999).

Most of the available literature on LSE, comes from within the disciplines of psychology and prevention studies, and from developmental organisations such as the WHO, and focuses on the rationale, methods and efficacy of LSPs in relation to specific behaviours. In fact, post-1980s, Life Skills Training (LST) has also come to be

3 ‘Economic costs’ refer to, both, the actual cost incurred by the public health system in treating illness, as well as the cost incurred in terms of a loss of future manpower. (Refer Keating & Hertzman 1999; Murray 2012).

4 These can be divided into position papers (e.g., Gould & Carson, 2008; Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005; Theokas, Danish, Hodge, Heke, & Forneris, 2007), programme reviews (e.g., Danish & Forneris, 2008; Hodge & Danish, 1999), and descriptions of specific LSPs (e.g., Danish, 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Danish & Forneris, 2008; Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius, & Presbrey, 2004; as cited in Hodge, Danish & Martin, 2012).

5 LST is one model of LSE developed and patented by Gilbert Botvin, and is the most widely applied training programme for substance use in the USA, also receiving federal funding (Gorman, 2005). I use the abbreviation ‘LST’ only to refer to Botvin’s programmes, and not to the other forms of life skills training mentioned in the thesis.
recognised as one of the “most extensively evaluated school based prevention approach”, with over two decades of ‘systematic’ research (Botvin & Kantor, 2000), which has contributed to its status as ‘science-based practice’ (Gorman, 2003). In addition, there have also been several status reports and guidelines published by organisations such as the WHO, UNICEF and by the Inter-Agency Commission of the UN, which has further contributed to its ‘evidence base’.

However, it must be noted that much of this literature focuses on the efficacy of LSE for ‘risk behaviours’ (than to the general development or socialisation of children). Positioned, thus, as a primary prevention approach, LSPs target the youngest populations in order to reduce the prevalence of risk behaviours, developmentally, as children grow up (Botvin & Kantor, 2000).

As a preventive approach, LSPs have been conceived to influence an individual’s knowledge of risk behaviours (e.g., short-term and long-term consequences of substance use, their actual levels of use among adults and adolescents), attitudes, normative expectations about such behaviours, and actual skills of personal and self-management (e.g., decision making, problem solving, identifying and resisting media and peer pressure, coping with anxiety, anger and frustration, self-monitoring, goal setting, and self-reinforcement). In addition, LSPs also aim to develop skills for social competence (such as communication, initiating social interactions, complimenting, skills related to male-female relationships, and nonverbal assertive skills [refer Botvin & Kantor, 2000; UNICEF, 2005; Wenzel, Weichold, & Silbereisen, 2009]).

Most LSPs are structured as a set of around 15 sessions or class periods (of about 45 minutes duration each), beginning during early adolescence (i.e., 11-12 year olds) and repeated over 2-3 years (Botvin &
Programmes may follow any of the following models (UNICEF, 2005): Stand-alone (as a subject on its own); Integrated (e.g., into a subject area such as social sciences); Extracurricular (mostly conducted by external agencies); or Blended (using a combination of the earlier listed approaches). Classes maybe delivered, either, by regular classroom teachers, peer leaders, or by external health providers (with research suggesting that models using peer leaders may have better effects [Botvin & Kantor, 2000]).

What appears to set LSE apart from other forms of adolescent, mental health and prevention programmes is its interactive pedagogy (Cuijpers, 2002). LSPs seek to engage learners in experiential moments of learning through which they may gain insight over their own behaviours, and bring about self-directed changes (Pan American Health Organisation [PAHO], 2000). While traditional and didactic methods may be relevant to some components of the training, LSPs mainly use techniques such as group discussions, classroom demonstrations, and cognitive-behavioural skills training to bring about change. Thus, classroom sessions consist of instructions (i.e., explaining to students how and when to use the skills), demonstrations, and opportunities for application of skills using methods such as role-play (called behavioural rehearsal). These are followed by feedback on performance, social reinforcement and extension of practice into everyday life through ‘homework’ (Botvin & Kantor, 2000). (A slightly different process was observed within the LSPs on field. Here, games, theatre activities, art, free writing exercises, stories, etc., were used as anchors upon which a closed group discussion could be undertaken about aspects of the self that emerged in the process of the activity. Further, the application of these behaviours and skills within real contexts was also discussed).
With respect to the outcomes or effects of these programmes, literature on the efficacy of LSPs appears to be divided. For example, a study by the International Centre for Alcohol Policies (ICAP, 2011) has argued that the impact of LSPs has been debated. This is because, while there have been several studies that have reported definitive positive effects, others have raised questions about how these results were obtained.

For example, Botvin and Kantor (2000) have reported that the positive effects of LSPs have typically been large, with most studies demonstrating initial reductions of risk behaviours by 50 percent or more, relative to the control groups. Others such as Cuijpers (2002) have also noted that the ‘social influence approach’ (on which LSE is modelled) presents the best prevention programme available so far, noting that adding life skills to these programmes may strengthen its effects.

However, other studies (e.g., (Givaudan et al., 2007), have raised questions about these findings noting that such studies have, mainly, shown positive effects for knowledge and intentions that are related ‘precursors’ to behaviour change, rather than behaviour change itself.6 Thus, few studies have been able to present evidence for long-term behavioural change. Hodge et al. (2012), also explain how studies on LSE mainly evaluate incidental changes, stating

... it is assumed that improvements in intra- and interpersonal competencies contribute to the effectiveness of these LS prevention programs (Cuijpers, 2002). However, this LS research has not fully examined, or in some cases identified, the underlying psychological development that may have occurred as an outcome of an LS intervention. (p.6)

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6 For studies on positive effects of LSE, see Botvin, Schinke, et al. (1994); Botvin, Griffin et al. (2003); Liao, Jiang, Yang, Zeng and Liao (2010); Shamagonam, Reddy, Ruiter, McCauley, and van den Borne (2006); Visser (2005).
In fact, even Botvin et al. (1994), who have argued about the efficacy of LSPs, have noted that programmes have not been able to provide evidence for the efficacy of teaching particular skills itself, such as ‘decision making’ and its linkage to the problem behaviour. This observation is significant, since many of the argued changes in behaviour may not be attributable to life skills training alone, and may also emerge in the course of everyday learning, influences and interactions (Visser, 2005). Further, Botvin and Kantor (2000) have also recognised the limitations of these measurement methods, noting that they do not take into account the dynamic and recursive mechanisms through which risk and protective factors may act.

In the light of the incidental changes reported by a large number of evaluation studies of LSPs, it is significant to note that there have, actually, been less than 30 published empirical studies evaluating the effectiveness of LSPs, specifically examining the causal effects of life skills interventions (Hodge et al., 2012). Those critically examining these claims have been even fewer (Gorman, 2005). Gorman (1996), in his review of 12 published evaluation studies (of social and life skills 7) has noted that while a majority of these programmes have no detrimental effects, they also showed little or no effect on behaviours such as alcohol use. Further, he has also pointed out to the methodological weaknesses of the evaluation studies (e.g., use of small sample size; reporting effects for sub-sets of samples; lack of mention of baseline measurements, etc.) that have led to the consequent over-estimation of beneficial effects (refer Gorman, 1996; 2003; 2005).

7The distinction between social and life skills is not made clearly in literature. For e.g., some such as Singh (n.d.) subsume social skills (e.g., communication, interaction) under the category of life skills, which also additionally includes skills for personal management.
Other questions have emerged around programme goals and methods, with the UNICEF (2005) pointing out that many of these programmes are unable to answer the question, "Life skills for what?", or articulate behavioural outcomes that are sought to be developed through these programmes (UNICEF 2005). Especially, when seen in the context of India, this UNICEF report, on *Life Skills Based Education in South Asia*, provides the most recent account of the developments and challenges of LSE within this geographical and cultural context. The report notes that while there has been a rapid growth in LSPs in the South Asian context, this is also plagued by several challenges, since most stakeholders of these programmes have never experienced skills-based learning themselves.

The report further notes that there is a diversity of programmes and a lack of replicability in the South Asian context, with programmes having taken one of two routes – as general in-school programmes for children, or as specific programmes targeted at vulnerable populations with a specific behavioural focus. Further, more serious concerns around these programmes include a reluctance to recognise and address issues such as adolescent sexuality, and societal roots of vulnerability as part of the programmes, and the lack of ‘child friendly’ services within the programmes.

Other specific concerns raised by the report pertain to the large-scale development of ‘extracurricular’ programmes, run by NGOs that remain outside the official system of education, and thus raise questions of long term sustainability, replicability and ownership. It has also noted that “many programmes made no provisions to support learners in the use of their new life skills outside of the classroom, with their families or in their communities” (ibid, p.ii), and that training, monitoring and support
of facilitators was also inadequate. (Many of these findings, such as lack of trainers’ personal experiences with LSE, reluctance to address social questions of gender, sexuality, inequity, and the large presence of non-governmental agencies within this space, in fact, resonate with my own observations and experiences on field.)

While these observations about aspects of equity, access, and translation of programmes in practice, have been raised as concerns (more specifically, as problems of geographical differences in programme development [UNICEF, 2005]), academic and psychological literature on LSE has continued to, largely, view it uncritically. Except for the few critiques that have focused on certain methodological problems, there appears to be hardly any literature that examines its sociological implications, politico-historical trajectories, or philosophical foundations.8

However, a large body of other sociological and educational literature, on skills development, is available, that examines the recent growth in various forms of skills-based education in relation to the changing conditions of work and life. In the next section, I review this briefly in order to provide a context for how skills-based education has been critically understood. Presenting this literature as a background to the discussion I undertake further, I also attempt to show the break that the thesis makes from the psychological framework within which LSE has mostly been studied.

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8 An earlier attempt to identify and document some of these concerns, during the initial stages of my PhD has appeared as a co-authored book chapter titled ‘Life Skills Education: Current Challenges and Conceptual Directions for a Programme for Resilience’ (Maithreyi & Seshadri, 2013), in Students’ Mental Health, edited by Sibnath Deb et al., Pondicherry University. One other paper by Lau (2012), examines life skills in the context of therapisation of everyday life, and the diminution of individual agency and reliance on expertise to manage life.
1.3. A Political Economy of Skills-Based Education

Research on ‘skills-based education’, from the sociological and educational perspectives, has sought to link the ‘skills turn’ in education to certain broader socio-economic and political changes (refer Ashton, Green, James & Sung, 2005; Brown, Green & Lauder, 2001; Thelen, 2004). For example, Brown (1999, p.234) has pointed out that “The study of ‘high skills’ offers an invaluable insight into the way macro social and economic change is ‘played-out’ in different national contexts”. Further, explaining this, he has added that

The study of skills at the end of the twentieth century is essentially a study of post-industrial changes in our understanding of the global, national, local and personal (Ball, 1998). These changes can be described in various ways as a shift from industrial to post-industrial society; from Fordism to post-Fordism; from a low-skill to high-skill economy; or as a shift to an informational economy. (p.234)

These changes within society and economy were accompanied by new assumptions about the nature of work and productivity that had to respond to the changes brought about by the rapid developments in information technology (IT) and communication. Within this context, workers were seen as needing to be flexible and adaptive in order to keep pace with the rapidly changing, globalised context of work, and therefore workers’ ‘skills’ came to be the salient feature of ‘success’ within the new economy and workplace (Gibb & Walker, 2011).

Innovation and productivity were seen to rest upon the dissolution of boundaries between learning and work (thereby, ushering in an era of ‘lifelong learning’), through which workers could remain responsive to the changing nature and conditions of work. Further, with the heavy costs incurred in training and re-training workers, they came to be seen as individually responsible for updating their own skills, and for marketing
these skills in order to remain competitive and employable (Brown, 1999; Brown & Lauder, 2003; Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2008a,b; Kirpal & Brown, 2007; Gibb & Walker, 2001).

These shifts, in the conceptualisation of work and workers, have led several scholars to note that the new socio-economic conditions are ones in which ‘skills security’ has replaced the idea of job security (Butterwick & Benjamin, 2006; Gibb & Walker, 2011); there has been a shift in discourse from that of ‘providing employment’, to the ‘employability’ of workers (Butterwick & Benjamin, 2006; Gibb & Walker, 2011; Taylor, 1998); and in which, individuals have come to be conceptualised as a ‘bundle of skills’ (Urciuoli, 2008).

Others have also noted how these shifts have coincided with the “retreat [of the state] from structural interventions in the market”, beginning since the 1970s-1980s, leaving workers to individually negotiate their conditions of employment (Butterwick & Benjamin, 2006, p.79; also see Ainley & Corbett, 1994; Cohen 1984; Gaskell, 1986; Griffith, 1988; Darrah, 1994; Taylor, 1998; Hyslop-Margison, 2000). These conditions that came to mark everyday life within the advanced liberal contexts of Western Europe and North America have been recognised as ‘neoliberalism’ – a political ideology that emerged as a corrective measure to address the shortcomings of ‘liberalism’9 (Flew, 2008).

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9Liberalism, as a political philosophy, emphasised freedom and autonomy of individuals, and rejected any plan for how society must be governed. Based on assumptions about man as a ‘self-maximising’ individual, liberals argued that social structures and relations should be an outcome of the processes of participation of members within a society. Further, ‘free markets’ were seen as the ideal sites within which individuals could competitively participate, in order to maximise their potentials. However, unlike with the recent development of neoliberalism, liberalism advocated for the state as a regulator in ensuring the overall functioning of the market (J.Dean, 2008; Flew, 2010; Treanor 2005).
2010; Foucault, 2008; Lemke, 2001; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Peters, 2001).

Under neoliberalism, as Olssen and Peters (2005) note, there was a ‘positive conception of the state’ – that is, it was seen as responsible for artificially contriving and producing the situations under which markets could be extended into all domains of life, including individual and social (Foucault, 2008). Critiquing the limitations placed by the developmental state on market intervention into social life, it was argued that this had impeded the development of personal initiative and enterprise required for economic competition and growth. Thus, under these conditions education came to be seen as a key tool by which the state could ensure reform, by preparing individuals with the right set of skills and attitudes to participate in the market (Craig & Porter, 2003; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Tikly, 2009). Thus, as scholars such as Ainley and Corbett (1994), and James et al. (2010) point out, education, and particularly, skills-based education come to be, problematically, equated with measures of economic competitiveness, and social inclusion.

Further, while the rhetoric was on ‘high skills’ (of individual expertise, knowledge and creativity) required for a ‘knowledge economy’,10 in which older jobs, low-skilled work, and means of production had become irrelevant (Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2008a,b), several scholars point out to how the reality is very different. That is, they argue that policy discourses hide the real distinction between ‘high skills’ and ‘low skills’, ‘soft skills’ and ‘technical skills’; and in a context where

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10The knowledge economy refers to the new thinking about economic productivity, witnessed since the 1970s, wherein ‘knowledge’, rather than ‘capital’ came to be seen as what generates wealth (Drucker, 1993). Therefore education, particularly higher education, was seen as the prime ingredient for personal and national success (refer Brown and Lauder, 2003; Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2008a,b).
the large majority of people sought to be ‘skilled’ are third world, unemployed or lower-end factory or shop-floor workers, the particular skills sought to be given are, actually, the low/soft skills of ‘social decorum’, communication and teamwork, punctuality and responsibility, and presentability (Ainley & Corbett, 1994; Apple, 2006; Butterwick & Benjamin, 2006; Gibb & Walker, 2011; Jackson & Jordan, 1999; Taylor, 1998; Tikly, 2005).

These ‘soft skills’ are the ones considered important to make workers more amenable to the workplace. However, these offer little chance of mobility to this group, as they are skills unrelated to the higher level tasks of knowledge production and generation. Thus, scholars such as Ainley and Corbett (1994), and Jackson and Jordan (1999) argue that skill development programmes, in fact, ‘de-skill’ workers in many ways. First, in shifting the emphasis within education away from the vocational and technical skills with which workers can attain jobs (Ainley & Corbett, 1994), skills programmes leave workers bereft of any skills required for the real context of work. Second, as Jackson and Jordan (1994) note, they mostly serve to render workers docile, and work upon their selves, in order to convince them to put the interests of employers before their own. Presenting a vision of the common interests as serving the both of them, they, in fact, contribute towards the reconstitution of a terrain (i.e., management-labour relations) that has been historically marked by conflicts (Jackson & Jordan, 1994).

Ainley and Corbett (1994) further argue that what these various social and ‘life skills’ training programmes serve to achieve is to establish an unsentimental approach to individual potential, combined with the social standards of respectability and niceties of a ‘bourgeoisie drawing
...'to make good use of their time', 'to get on with other people', 'to present themselves well', 'to be responsible', 'to stay solvent' and 'to cope in most normal circumstances'... [when] 'normal circumstances' are those of poverty, homelessness, domestic instability and high local youth unemployment. (p. 367)

In essence, a large number of studies on the political economy of skills education have tried to show how the skills discourse (including the ‘life skills’ discourse) embed an underlying principle of class-based reproduction, in which the poor, unemployed, and marginalised are evaluated against a Western, capitalist, middle class norm, and are found to be wanting (Ainley & Corbett, 1994; Butterwick & Benjamin, 2007). Within such programmes, it is argued, that their identities are seen as ‘broken’, and needing ‘fixing’ (Butterwick & Benjamin, 2007).

Further, scholars such as Butterwick and Benjamin (2007) point to the deceptiveness of the language of skills, arguing that this “…employs a discursive move or language error”, as “in reality, what is listed for the most part [in these programmes] is not a set of skills, but rather a map of attitudes, values, dispositions and beliefs” (p.79). Thus, they draw attention to how, through ‘public policies’, such as education, what is increasingly being sought to be shaped is the ‘inner life’, private and domestic sphere of workers.

In the next section, I look at how this ‘inner regulation’ is achieved through pedagogic practices such as skills-based, experiential programmes and education, drawing on a body of critical sociological and psychological literature on ‘subjectification’.
1.4. Education, Skills and Subjectification

While the set of studies reviewed above has focused on the idea of ‘skills education’ as located within the political-economic shifts accompanying neoliberalism, and has outlined its socially reproductive nature, in this section I consider its linkages to subject formation (or ‘subjectification’).

In using the term subjectification, I refer to Foucault’s concept by which he describes the manner in which individuals are, at once, the subjects and objects of power. That is, it refers to how individuals are not only ‘subjected’ to specific identities and positions through the discursive practices and language of institutions of power; but also, to how individuals’ work upon their own selves, recognising and upholding these identities (Foucault, 1977; 1982).

Foucault’s notion of subjectification is closely linked with the project of ‘government’ – that is, the ways in which power, acting at a distance, operates upon individuals’ conduct and actions, in order to align it with its own ends (Foucault, 1982). The important distinction that Foucault made through this conceptualisation is how power is productive, rather than repressive or negative, in that it produces the individual, and the social conditions under which s/he can think and operate.

Extending Foucault’s work on subjectification, other scholars such as M. Dean (1999), Parker (2007), and Rose (1999), have attempted to show how this is made possible through disciplinary discourses, such as that of the ‘psy complex’. Producing knowledge about the individual, the psy-sciences function as technologies of discipline and power, in that

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11 Disciplines of psychology, psychiatry, psychiatric social work and allied disciplines that work together in producing knowledge about the individual.
they set the norms and conditions for freedom, desire and self-realisation, by which we come to identify ourselves (Rose, 1999).

This has, in fact, been extended even further in the current context through the linkages that have been established between ‘positive psychology’ and self-regulation in everyday life. Calling this the ‘therapeutic culture’, several scholars, such as Ecclestone and Hayes (2009), Furedi (2004), Lau (2012), Nolan (1998), Rose (1999), have drawn attention to how within the advanced liberal contexts of Western Europe and North America, a new understanding has been established in which greater freedom is linked to individuals’ own efforts at self-control. Calling this the ‘therapeutic ethos’, these scholars argue that this ethos is premised upon the notion ‘I feel therefore I am’ (Nolan, 1996, p. 6; as cited in Lau, 2012, p.8) – that is it shifts the understanding of personal knowledge as premised upon one’s cognitive experiences to that based on one’s self-reflexive, emotional experiences.

As Rose (1999) notes, in perpetuating the idea of greater freedom through self-control, and of enhancing one’s subjectivity through techniques of self-inspection and rectification, the therapeutic ethos connects individuals more firmly with networks of power. Others such as Lau (2012) draw attention to how within this culture, ‘positive therapy’ gains significance as a means to enhance well-being, and engulfs even those who are ‘non-users’ of therapy. Within this culture, he argues that the qualitative aspects of life, such as development of self-esteem and emotional management come to be presented as formalistic processes of ‘skills acquisition’ that can be gained through education and training, linking up a non-clinical population more firmly with ‘expertise’ that determines their responses and reactions.
Further, these scholars have also noted how these sentiments have penetrated down to the level of the child, with the effect that “childhood” has come to be one of “…the most intensely governed sector of personal existence”, (Rose, 1999, p.123). Pointing out to how ‘childhood’ emerged as a category under the ‘gaze of the psychologist’, and the calculations of various authorities, Rose (1999) argues that

The modern child has become the focus of innumerable projects that purport to safeguard it from physical, sexual, or moral danger, to ensure its 'normal' development, to actively promote certain capacities of attributes such as intelligence, educability, and emotional stability. (ibid, p.123)

Caught up in these various projects of socialisation and education, scholars such as Rose (1999) and Coppock (2011) point to how ‘childhood’ itself gets constituted in particular ways that present it as universal. Such projects are both educational and regulative, in that Rose (1999) argues that “…schools are implicated in the ways that social behaviour is reconceptualised along economic lines” (as cited in James et al., 2010, p.9). Under these circumstances schooling has a particular role to play. As Rose argues,

...universal and compulsory schooling catches up the lives of all young citizens into a pedagogic machine that operates not only to impart knowledge but to instruct in conduct and to supervise, evaluate, and rectify childhood pathologies. (1999, p. 123-124)

Fendler (1998) has further elaborated on this understanding of how education comes to produce particular kinds of subjects. Analysing the developments within present day schooling and the emphasis on ‘skills’, she has pointed out that ‘skills’ become a euphemism for bringing much broader aspects of the child’s self under classroom management. Comparing this to the education of the nineteenth century (that focused
on aspects of intellect and moral behaviour), she has pointed out to how
the current trend within education is fundamentally different, arguing that

> The current substance to be educated is constituted by fears, wishes, aspirations, attitudes, inclinations, and pleasures. Educational goals now require that students be "motivated" and have a "positive attitude". (ibid; Responsive Desire as Substance to be Educated, para. 2)

Such a training, she argues, is undertaken through the confluence of three strategies - epistemological (through the discourse of the ‘whole child’, which includes bringing into consideration his/her attitudes, desires, and emotions within the educational set-up); curricular, (drawing on developmental psychology in establishing behaviouristic educational objectives); and pedagogic (through the emphasis on the role of the ‘active’, ‘constructivist’ learner, and the pedagogy of interaction). The confluence of these strategies make the ‘subject’ to be educated the individual child’s self through a regulation of these attitudes and desires (Coe & Natasi, 2006; Fendler, 1998).

Establishing an interactive pedagogy for learning, where the learner participates along with the teacher in achieving prescribed behavioural goals for the self, what is sought to be formed is the ‘adaptable self’ (Vassallo, 2012) - a term that also recurs, both, in life skills literature, as well as in larger educational policies and roadmaps for development. Within these various policy discourses of global organisations such as the WHO and UNICEF, and national governments (particularly, in advanced liberal countries), such pedagogies have been justified as compensating for the deterioration in the mental health, well-being and motivation of the child and adolescent populations, and the high rates of ‘risk behaviours’ (that are seen to be the result of the postmodern conditions of life [Coppock, 2011; Ecclestone & Lewis, 2013]).
As Ecclestone and Lewis (2013) have noted, these rationales of national and international bodies have led to the rapid rise of state-funded (as well as privately-funded) universal programmes (two notable ones being SEAL in the UK, and PAThS in the USA). Schools have been identified as

...key sites for a range of activities that [are] aimed to combat a vicious circle of emotional and psychological barriers to participation and success, and the social and emotional needs that ensue (e.g. Coleman op. cit.; Ecclestone and Hayes op. cit.; Gillies op. cit.; Williams 2009). (Ecclestone & Lewis, 2013, p.4)

What is important to note about these approaches, however, is that while drawing their claims of effectiveness from diverse strands of mental health, counselling and educational psychology that vouch for its effectiveness, these programmes adopt a simple ‘rules-based’ understanding of resilience informed by behavioural psychology, both in policy and interventions (Ecclestone & Lewis, 2013).

Thus, as scholars such as Ecclestone and Lewis (2013) have pointed out, these unchallenged, powerful discourses on psychological vulnerabilities and ‘risky childhoods’ have allowed knowledge of the behavioural sciences to be appropriated (and have contributed to) various ideological ends. They argue that while there have been some attempts within sociology to challenge these “powerful discourse of trainable, transferable dispositions”, objecting to the “individualisation of resilience and the marginalisation of social and welfare responses” (Ecclestone & Lewis, 2013, p.17), psychology, and currently education, have largely celebrated these trends. Attempting to fill the lacunae in critical voices that question the taken-for-granted assumptions of psychological knowledge, and the nature of power it exerts, the current project also borrows from these critical studies in reconceptualising the field of LSE.
Drawing on sociological and critical psychological literature, I attempt to raise questions about its purposes and outcomes. This point, I discuss further, below.

1.5. The Current Project and Theoretical Framework

In bringing the two bodies of critical literature (from sociology and psychology) together, in examining LSE, the project attempted in the thesis is somewhat different, in that, it is neither, simply, to present an account of the global and hegemonic proportions that institutional approaches to education and development have attained; nor is it to just present the calculated rationalities of ‘scientific thinking’ around childhood, put forth by disciplines such as psychology and education, to regulate childhood in particular ways. Rather, it is to explore how children’s everyday life and policies and programmes on childhood get co-constituted through practices and material conditions. This being the objective, the thesis mainly seeks to highlight the following points:

a. How and when did ‘life skills’ emerge as an important form of governmentality? (By ‘governmentality’, I refer to Foucault’s [1991] idea about the “conduct of conduct”, or the regulation of conduct in line with the ends of power. This will be further explained below).

b. How has LSE become central to policies and practices surrounding education and childhood?

c. What forms of ‘expertise’ and structures of power/knowledge inform its practice and how does it contribute to practices of regulation and government?

d. How do these strategies and practices of government at the individual level come to be received, understood, appropriated
and modified by the various actors on field, and how does this affect projects of ‘government’?

The framework adopted for the thesis is, thus, largely, a Foucauldian one, aiming at re-examining and reconceptualising certain taken-for-granted assumptions about LSE and the structures of power/knowledge that sustain its practice. Thus, the thesis draws from the kinds of understanding offered by Foucault, and Foucauldian scholars such as Ian Hunter (1996), who have presented a genealogical account of modern institutions such as schools, and shown how they emerge as “…contingent assemblages put together under ‘blind’ circumstances” (p. 147), rather than as ideological apparatuses of states, or institutions such as capitalism. Drawing on others such as Rose (1991), who argues that phenomena such as schools, and psychological knowledge that govern them, are neither the products of laborious scientific enquiry, nor ‘mysterious’ realisations of developmentally-oriented laws or democracy, it also tries to undertake a similar kind of analysis of programmes such as LSE. While, an interest in their relations to these various projects remain paramount, they are also not seen as simply constituted by forms of capitalist control. Thus, it tries to show how ‘life skills’ develops into a catch-all phrase based on the actions of different actors seeking to achieve different ends.

Explaining the difference in such an approach (compared to Marxist approaches) in examining institutions such as schools and education, Foucauldian scholars such as Olssen (2007, p.34) explain that

... Foucault’s conception … is a new version of superstructural sociology which provides a means of understanding how educational and economic practices mutually condition and adapt to each other while avoiding the excesses that plagued Marxist analyses in the later
twentieth century which represented such processes as the outcome of a necessary determination. Further explaining this theoretical aim, Hunter (1996) argues that the goal is to go beyond certain taken-for-granted assumptions about processes such as schooling as spaces for ‘self-development’ or ‘Bildung’, and how schools ‘fail’ this (thus, questioning one’s own taken-for-granted ethical, political and principled positions as researchers). This is not to say that it does not seek alternatives to the fundamentally inequitable or oppressive actions on the part of schools (or the larger education system). But, rather, it is to bring into focus the missed opportunity to see ‘schools’ and ‘education’ as a social construct that might be put to several different uses, including to the ‘disciplining’ of subjects. Such a project is thus, essentially ‘constructionist’ - it seeks clarity rather than emancipation.

Examining the lack of space given to Foucault's later works on power, within education, Hunter (1996) notes how the discipline of education has largely been saturated by two ideological poles - first, educational psychology that has sought to ‘functionally integrate the school system’ to other domains of life; and second, by educational sociology that has disavowed the system as a whole. He further notes that while there has been a critical analysis of educational psychology, using Foucault’s approach and methods (e.g., Donzelot 1979; Rose, 1985), a similar attempt has not so far been made for educational sociology. Instead, disapproving of the trends within education, he argues that educational sociologists (e.g., Ball, 1990; Donald, 1992; Giroux & McLaren, 1989; 1994; McLaren, 1989; Kincheloe, 1993) have taken up Foucault’s works on power/knowledge that expose the capitalist, patriarchal and racist projects, and applied it to for critical pedagogic projects of ‘emancipation’. This, for Hunter (ibid), represents a
fundamental misunderstanding of Foucault’s works which held no hope for emancipation, since it ignores

.... Foucault's stress on the ‘productivity’ of disciplinary power in augmenting human attributes; and his account of the "technical" character of government, as an ensemble of technologies and aims irreducible to the "logic" of capital or the "will" of the state. (p.143)

The starting point of such an analysis then, as Olssen (2007), also notes is to examine how power is exercised, not in the sense of how it manifests itself, but in terms of the mechanisms by which it is put into effect. The chief question being asked here is “What happens when individuals exert (as they say) power over others?” (Foucault 1982: 217; as cited in Olssen, 2007, p. 36). Central to this notion of power is an understanding of its relational quality, as a freely flowing, diffuse and uninterrupted ‘set of actions upon other actions’ of ‘free subjects’. Both these points within Foucault’s account of power are important, for the first point draws attention to how power is not a concrete entity congealed in one body (such as the state), or in the hands of one set of actors (such as the bourgeoisie), which can ultimately be redistributed.

The second point establishes the idea of power as something that operates only upon ‘free subjects’, since unlike an account of domination, which crushes subjectivity, it actively elicits subjects’ own participation in the process of subjectification. It is, therefore, seen as ‘productive’ rather than as ‘repressive’. Such operations essentially call upon the authority of ‘knowledge’, which (through its language, and through disciplinary apparatuses, such as that of psychology, economics and education) give to us our very understanding of ourselves and the world. Thus, reversing the traditional understanding of ‘knowledge as power’,

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Foucault seeks to show how power brings into existence various forms of knowledge itself.

The relation between knowledge and techniques of governance (or ‘governmentality’) are explained by Foucault as technologies of power and technologies of self. Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’, according to Lemke (2001) makes a semantic linkage between the art of governing (‘gouverner’) and the modes of thought (‘mentalité’), and implies that the technologies of power cannot be studied without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them. Thus, he argues that it “defines a discursive field in which exercising power is ‘rationalized’” (p.191), while it also implies the specific forms of interventions through which this is achieved. According to Olssen (2007, p.36), ‘governmentality’ refers “to the structures of power by which conduct is organised, and by which governance is aligned with the self-organising capacities of individual subjects”. This, therefore, entails mechanisms by which the conduct of individuals is ‘objectivised’ and rendered meaningful, and put to certain ends (i.e., technologies of power), as well as techniques by which individuals are brought to act upon their own selves, in order to attain discursively constructed states (i.e., those constructed by the technologies of power), as states of happiness, purity, wisdom, etc. (Foucault, 1988). It is both these ‘constitutive’, and ‘constituting’ elements, the rationalities, as well as how they are received that make Foucault’s account of power a non-deterministic one. For, ‘subjects’, within the Foucauldian framework, enter “…with a field of possibilities in which, several ways of behaving, several reaction and diverse comportments, may be realised” (Foucault, 1982, p. 792).

This essentially brings to fore Foucault’s (1982) idea of ‘resistance’, which is nothing but the “antagonism of strategies” through
which the economy of power relations may be described. They are, according to Foucault, struggles against a determination of ‘who we are’ (i.e., against totalising strategies and practices of governmental actions that render us into categories [e.g., ‘children’, ‘workers’, ‘poor’] or calculations, as well as the ‘individualising’ strategies of power that seek to mark us, pin down our identities [e.g., as ‘responsible’, ‘enterprising’, ‘rationale’]), rather than against particular institutions or class.

Thus, investigating these rationalities, their constitution through diverse organising practices then becomes the prime project for Foucault, and other Foucauldian scholars, who note how “a variety of historically situated rationalities, including pastoral power, raison d’etat, Polizei, liberal, and neoliberal reason, which together span the period from ancient times until the present, [have] all compris[ed] specific arts of government or forms of governmentality” (Olssen, n.d., p.5). While the state has been recognised as a historical form of governmental body, these scholars also note the importance of examining its modifications and proliferation through a whole host of new entities such as corporations, international organisations, media and NGOs.

In trying to similarly unpack the set of relations of power through which school knowledge, its practices, and subjects get organised and formed, the thesis starts with a genealogical examination of LSE and the rationalities that inform it, examining its role within the context of Indian education (that has, historically, remained content-driven and rote-based [Anitha, 2000; N. Kumar, 2001; Sarangapani, 2003; Seth, 2007]), and society, that is still largely based on authoritarian and hierarchical relationships [Clarke, 2003; Sarangapani, 2003; Saraswathi & Pai, 2000]).
Starting from this point, the chapters attempt to highlight the ‘disconnects’ and ‘dissonances’ that emerge in practice as new rationalities of governance seek to redo ideas of schooling and childhood. Thus, along with other scholars (e.g., Clarke, 2003; K. Kumar, 2005a, b; N. Kumar, 2001; 2011; Sriprakash, 2010), the thesis seeks to show the inappropriateness of modern, ‘progressive’ forms of learning and pedagogy, which are imbued with values of autonomy and active direction and participation on the part of the learner (Fendler, 1998; N. Kumar, 2011; Popkewitz, 2008), to the cultural context of the Indian school, and how this ‘fails’ to resonate with traditional ethno-theories about children’s development that still sees children as requiring external ‘disciplining’ and guidance (Saraswathi & Pai, 2000).

Similar findings have also been demonstrated by Sriprakash (2010), in her study of an activity-based learning approach in Karnataka, *Nali Kali*, where she has noted how the “‘invisible pedagogy’ of learner freedom is embedded in a strong regulative structure” (p.634), regulated by the social knowledge of the teacher. Thus, the activity through which the learner must construct his/her own knowledge and develop control over the learning process is delinked from the process of learning, and becomes just a routine. Even with the introduction of a constructivist educational philosophy and pedagogy in the NCF 2005, as others such as N. Kumar (2011) note, these progressive pedagogies fail to be understood by ‘provincial’ teachers (who have lacked adequate training and orientation), students and schools that are imbued with a sense of the child as inherently chaotic and requiring external disciplining. Such disconnects between the social knowledge and lived experiences of teachers and children, and pedagogic control located elsewhere
(Sarangapani, 2011; Sriprakash, 2010), results in what N. Kumar (2007) terms as ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. According to N. Kumar (ibid, p.46)

Provincial schools have not succeeded as little theatres of the nation to play out, or little workshops to create, the spokesmen, the elite and the intelligentsia (Srivastava 1998). Their discipline has been sufficient to cause pain at the micro level of everyday life for the children. But the discipline has been insufficient to produce the inwardly directed citizen subject of the modern nation state...for children and for the historian of children, a source of a doubled pain resides in their subjecting children to an inadequate disciplining and not even giving them a share in the spoils of modernity and citizenship.

Much educational literature has paid attention to these conditions of ‘failure’ historically present since the colonial times. For example, scholars such as Krishna Kumar (2005a, b) and Sanjay Seth (2007) have noted how ‘modern education’ has come to be synonymous with English education, but its epistemological premises were never realised. While the foundations of this system of thought was very much embedded in a post-Enlightenment rationality, and a belief in the individual powers of reason, in practice this manifests as a ‘culture of cram’, and rote-memorisation, since it served only an instrumental value to both the colonial government and its people (Seth, 2007). Scholars have also noted its continuing impacts on the present education system, along with the reproductive aspects of this very forms of knowledge itself (K. Kumar, 1988; 2001; 2004; N. Kumar, 2000; 2011).

While, there has been much literature on the introduction of modern education and its effects in the Indian context, its ‘failures’, and inequities, the focus here is to go beyond an examination of the failure of education itself, in examining the particular forms of subjects that are
produced through the inter-mingling of these ‘technologies of power’, youth aspirations, and new, culturally-different knowledges within the provincial context of the government or aided schools.

Thus, the chapters in the thesis are as follows: chapter 2 explains the methodology of ethnography and discourse analysis adopted in critically examining the LSPs. Chapter 3 presents a descriptive account of the field, presenting the contrast between the life skills organisations and the government schools within which they operate, as a background to the observations made in the following chapters. Chapter 4 presents a genealogical and discursive analysis of LSE, examining its linkages to neoliberalism and various other programmes of governance that seek to discipline the ‘responsibilised’ citizen and worker.

Chapter 5 takes up this theme of ‘discipline’, and describes the multiple ways of ‘disciplining’ that are afforded in the conceptual design, curricular goals, and actual practice of LSPs. These ends of discipline, as I will show, are not ones that all converge. Thus, I show how a curious situation arises on field – wherein traditional goals of schooling (e.g., respect for authority, obedience, marks) compete with modern ends of forming the self-reflexive and responsible subject. I carry this discussion forward in chapter 6, examining what emerges from this.

Chapter 6, particularly, tries to present how the ‘field’ is a dynamic space that, rather than being ‘reproduced’, gets constituted by and is constitutive of social actors’ actions. Drawing on the different meanings that actors make of the programmes, and the different ends they apply it to, I try to show how actors strategically respond to these forms of

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12 By ‘technologies of power’, here, I refer to the powerful national and international, psychological and developmental discourses about ‘life skillling’, as well as the agencies and practices through which the space of education is being reconstituted.
government that leads to neither a straightforward reproduction nor failure of the neo-liberal project. Instead, I try to show how new identities and social positions are formed through this interaction between governmental pedagogies and provincial contexts that, however, feed into the neoliberal project.

The final chapter tries to summarise the findings of the research by drawing attention to what kinds of ‘skills’ are emphasised within the life skills project, and whose lives do they serve? It concludes by trying to point to the particular kinds of lives that children from government schools and other marginalised contexts are being shaped for. It compares the resources made available through the process of ‘government schooling’ and ‘life skilling’ with the cultural aspirations among these groups for a better life, status and identity.