

Introduction

We also could call this a critical problem of value. If there are competing ways of measuring value or making evaluations - some of which argue explicitly that value cannot be measured, or minimally that not all kind of value can be measured – then how do we begin to adjudicate that situation? The humanities are under pressure to demonstrate their value under historical conditions in which competing schemes of valuation are brought to bear upon the humanities. We can simply conform to the ones that look most lucrative, at which point we may well be able to fund the humanities, until it becomes clear that we do not actually do what we said we were going to do in order to get the funding we need. “We have funding for the humanities! The humanities are lost.

--“Ordinary, Incredulous” by Judith Butler

Introduction

Context

The meaning of this thesis title “Global challenges, national responses, and the question of English and Liberal Studies in Gujarat” is twofold. While the thesis examines the question raised about English and Liberal Studies in Gujarat in the wake of global challenges and national responses, it also raises the question posed to the socio-political ethos by English and Liberal Studies. If the first is the question of legitimization, the second is the question of value. As the epigraph to this introduction indicates, the question of liberal education today is a very important one, posed against an emerging world order with its oppressive economic logic of the ‘obvious’. What is the shape of the society that we want and why? What do we want to train our youth for and how? How the process of education should be designed to bring out, to develop, to understand that which is essentially human in all of us? Is it possible to envision education not as an outcome but as a process leading towards freedom, towards ‘opening up possibilities for living’? What are the material conditions under which such a process can take place within a university campus? These questions of the humanities in this ‘age of anger’ characterized by the ‘savage violence’ of wars -- fought in the name of land, anti-terrorism, religion, nationalism, politics, economies, trade, technologies, information -- still strike us as pertinent. As we engage with these questions we are forced to confront our inescapable humanness and that of others, an encounter that I understand to be at the centre of a liberal education.

In an India divided anew along communal, class and caste lines over the last twenty years the liberal space of the university has been steadily shrinking. These growing tendencies have not left campuses untouched. Violent protests or political censoring of what is said (by academics, journalists, public intellectuals, and poet

Gauhar Raza case of 2016), what is taught (*Three Hundred Ramayanas* in Delhi University's history department), how it is assessed (the assault on Professor Joseph in Kerala, 2010), what is creatively expressed (the censoring of street plays during the festival at Ramjas College, Delhi, 2017), what is resisted (the UoH, and JNU controversies of 2016) --- are issues continuously impinging on safe spaces for deliberation and dialogue in society, but especially on 0 campuses across India. Ironically, however, the popular understanding of social science and liberal arts in India sees these disciplines shrinking, branded as vanishing, outdated bastions of leftist ideologies. Sympathisers with the current trends feel that the main problem faced by these disciplines is not one of resources, but of the lack of intellectual freedom, diversity of thought and opinion, which means that these centres end up producing clones of professors "steeped in the heady ideologies of the '70s incapable or unwilling to notice that the "revolution" has passed them by. JNU is a perfect example" (quoted by Krishnan 2011). The question of the humanities and of liberal education in these times, they feel, is one of the desirability of a different kind of cloning that privatized education spaces engage in. It is a question of the desirability of plurality, however opposed it may be to the dominant 'left' narratives of our times, in the processes of education.

Education, its aims and its effects have been a subject of philosophical treatises, political arguments, sociological debates, and policy discussions since the beginning of civilization. Education for socialization or education for social change has been discussed from the time of Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau, Dewey, Max Weber, Paulo Freire and Pierre Bourdieu. Every age, the Classical, Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Modern, Post-Colonial, and Post-Modern has brought new contexts to bear upon the old debate. In India too, education and its purpose have caught the imagination of

philosophers and leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Dr. Zakir Hussain, and others (Puri 2012). In more recent times this debate has also acquired wider dimensions with the rise of the 'network society' (Castells, 2010). Globalisation has come to be as much a material reality as an ideological one, with a direct bearing on Education.

Globalisation has been impacting and reshaping Indian society for a while now. Higher education (understood in terms of tertiary education) is an important site in this globalising age as the State aspires to become a leader in the knowledge economy. It is precisely from this specific location that the issues discussed in my research emerge. Universities in India have not remained the elitist institutions they once were in the British Era, but have become centres of mass learning. These changing political, ideological, and social contexts form the background against which institutions of higher education and my own research are situated. While an uncritical acceptance of the neo-liberal way of thinking has created different ways of envisioning, financing, and delivering higher education in India, the implications of these for Liberal education have remained largely unexamined.

The term liberal education may have multiple meanings and usages; it is used here in this thesis to mean a philosophy of education that aims to achieve the full human potential of individuals by way of free inquiry. I do, therefore, consider the disciplines of the humanities as closely aligned to the goals of Liberal education and often use the two terms synonymously. The study focuses on the changing structure and nature of humanities departments through an examination of the changing character of the university and aims of education in the present context. It is also curious about the ways in which the idea of a liberal education, which has a history going back to the

Enlightenment in Europe, is being appropriated by the neo-liberal regime (with its gaze trained on markets and profits) that has come to govern higher education today. The ramifications of the changing policies of higher education with particular reference to English departments in universities in Gujarat throw light on their links with the larger phenomenon of globalisation.

Departments of English, being transformed from literature departments into language departments, are emblematic of the plight of the humanities in an age of application-oriented knowledge. A renewed debate about the use of liberal education within management studies adds a new dimension that my study will examine. My position in the English department of a private university gives me a useful entry point into the debate. These issues are examined against a background crisscrossed by politics, economics, and culture in the context of Gujarat.

Significance of the study

The thesis attempts to understand the globalisation/education nexus, the mechanisms through which it produces and reproduces itself—its rhetoric, discourses, and practices. In the words of Foucault, it is the study of the discourse of higher education in India: “What individuals, what groups, or classes have access to a particular kind of discourse [of higher education]? How is the relationship institutionalized between the discourse, speakers, and its destined audience? How is the relationship of discourse to its author[s] identified and defined? How is struggle for the control of discourses conducted between classes,..., linguistic, cultural, and economic collectivities?” (Foucault 1978. 7). While there are many detailed studies on globalisation and also on higher education in India, the significance of my work lies in locating higher education as the site of manifestations of globalisation, as well as the

medium through which globalisation advances. Against that background this thesis aims at making a contribution by examining the somewhat neglected area of education in the humanities and globalisation in India and hopes that its focus will throw light on the changing value of such an education and its implications for the idea of citizenship. In other words, it makes room for the complexities and issues surrounding India's sense of itself as an "emerging global power" in the global "knowledge economy," and asks questions about the role and status of a humanities education within this new, emerging economy.

I believe that the emerging global order, in tandem with the local and national order, has generated new political, cultural, and social contexts within which Liberal education needs to be understood. The new contexts help me understand the changes in the educational policies and structures involved in the production and delivery of education. While changes in the nature of higher education in this country are readily visible, the connections between higher education, globalisation, social, political realities and citizenship are not so obvious. By studying the trajectory of the department of English in a university and the changing value of an education in the humanities in this country my thesis will, broadly speaking, establish the connections between globalisation and higher education in Gujarat. Changes in the status of English and the humanities, in the larger context of current global, national and regional challenges, constitute an inadequately explored area but one that is especially relevant in the light of the growing trend towards skill-based, entrepreneurial, professional education. Gujarat represents a mercantile imagination in the popular perception; for an ordinary outsider, therefore, Liberal education seems to be conspicuous by its absence all through the history of Gujarat, and there has been very little work done on the changing role of English in this state. This thesis attempts to address this lacuna. It also examines

the return of humanities, often in the form of electives in Liberal Arts in management schools within various private universities, their appropriation and transformation across Gujarat, as it addresses larger questions about the role and value of the humanities. The study takes into account the larger debates about the crisis in the humanities across the world, with specific reference to Gujarat.

Aims and Objectives

The Universities in India, characterized by a combination of crisis and status quo have been studied widely from the point of view of their patterns of access, equity, governance, and financing (Altbach 2012). There is, however, a gap that exists when it comes to the changing idea of higher education in contemporary India as understood through state policies and practices. The study addresses this gap as it contextualizes national responses to globalisation through the policy documents of the State and the practices of the universities. The study has five main objectives:

1. To examine the changing discourse of higher education in India by mapping the transformation of higher education policy, the changing character of the stakeholders in the field, and the changes in the mission of education. The shifting agenda of the State as it moves from colonial, to Nehruvian, to neo-liberal, is examined through a detailed analysis of education reports.
2. To understand the role and nature of the 'private' in higher education with special reference to Gujarat, historically and at present.
3. To study the changing state of the English departments in Universities as they accommodate themselves to liberal studies programmes in management schools/ private universities through an instrumental case of University of Western Gujarat (UWG).

4. To study the value assigned to the humanities in the emerging environment of skill-based higher education as reflected in the policy documents, institutional documents, as well as practices of universities.
5. To understand the implications of India's new commitment to entrepreneurship, innovation, and skills in higher education, and the resultant marginalization of the humanities in society at large.

These objectives of the study are achieved by engaging in the instrumental case study of a state private university established in 2009. (The term 'state private' derives from the fact that private universities are established on the basis of an Act passed in the state legislature). The state private university of my case study in this thesis is the part of Gujarat Education Society (GES). Established in 1935, GES is a pre-independence trust that has been a major presence in the field of education in the state of Gujarat. The study relies on examples close to the researcher's context at the state private university so as to identify and understand the transformation taking place both in the university and outside it.

Research Methods

I begin by situating myself in the field. As a lecturer in English and Communication at a private university with globalizing aspirations, I am part of the field that I examine -- an object of study as well as a subject that studies. While I am aware of the number of stakeholders that give meaning to any university, I choose to focus only on one set of these within the limited scope of this thesis -- the institution itself, comprising its founders, governing body members, administrators, and faculty members. Situated within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm based on a relativist ontology, I shall try to analyze the institution's actions and its understanding of the

world of higher education as it negotiates its identity through a complex legacy and an aspirational future. I engage in a simultaneous process of empirical material- gathering and analysis to frame and reframe my inquiries as I proceed in the study. As with much subjective, interpretative, qualitative research, my study also draws on theoretical developments in the field of inquiry in both the social sciences and the humanities. Many of the debates in the field of critical theory inform my perspective in this work. Respecting the scope of a dissertation I have chosen to undertake a case study strategy.

My primary focus in the study is on the single case of The University of Western Gujarat (UWG) as an upcoming state private university in Gujarat with global ambitions. Robert E. Stake (2008) distinguishes between three kinds of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and multiple/collective, where each differs from the others in terms of its focus and methodological orientation. Using Stake's classification, I would call what I undertake here an instrumental case study. The case of UWG allows me insights into the workings of a university as it juggles the pressures of national demands and global economies. The case plays an essential role in facilitating my understanding of the changing nature of higher education in India. UWG came up as a state private university in 2009 along with many other private universities across India with similar global ambitions, targeting a particular segment of society and addressing a particular need for the skill-based education of the time. What makes it of special interest to me is its rich legacy in terms of its parent body, Gujarat Education Society (GES), established in the pre-independence era. The growth, nature, and degree of transformation to be witnessed here is striking, covering as it does a period of more than seventy years. By examining the historical, social, economic, and political context that surrounds the case, by scrutinizing the ordinary activities of the institution, and its efforts at self-representation, I hope to connect the complex forces and challenges that

shape an evolving institution. I try here to understand the meaning of university education, globalisation, and citizenship in contemporary India as articulated and performed across the various sites of the university. The aim of the study is to attempt a comprehensive understanding of UWG's responses as an institution to both global challenges and changing national contexts in higher education, the way it navigates the legacy and the aspirations. My own identity as a Gujarati, having been born, brought up, and educated largely in Gujarat, as well as my association with the institution under examination, allows me a greater opportunity to learn from this particular case. These are the reasons for my choosing the case of UWG.

The methodology relies largely on open-ended interviews with administrators and founding members, as well as with a few faculty members at UWG, and the people associated with GES. It also includes an analytical study of the historical documents related to the founding of the Gujarat Education Society, analysis of policy documents from governments, photographs, brochures, corporate documentaries and other forms of self-representation used by the institution, and my own observations.

The research methods followed in writing this dissertation were: a study of primary material in the form of Reports on Educational Policy published by the Government; reading of secondary material; and personal interviews. The study began with my keen interest in the dramatically changing landscape of higher education in Gujarat, to which I was returning in 2013 after a prolonged absence. I re-joined the self-financed institute where I had been teaching before I left Ahmedabad. These universities that were being established by private players, legitimized by the state were very different, in their structure and nature, from the older public universities.

In studying the relationship between globalisation and education and the way in which each affected the other, I narrowed my scope to one set of stakeholders (in this

case institutions/ departments). The study involved analysis of secondary sources on the subject, as well as a first-hand study of the reports commissioned by the Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD). I analyzed the State policy documents, reports on higher education published in the 1990s commissioned by various ministries (the Birla Ambani report, the Narayan Murthy report, the National Knowledge Commission and the Yashpal committee report), reports published in the 1950s as well as reports of international organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank (WB). I also studied policy initiatives that were specific to the state of Gujarat. As the study uses the case of a private university in Ahmedabad as an instrumental case study to discuss the state of the humanities in private universities, I also studied documents of the university and the Trust of which it has been a part. I conducted several interviews with people in administrative capacities to understand the changing institutional responses, philosophy, vision, and future plans of the institution. The issues facing English departments are at the heart of the changes that are the subject of this thesis. English looks back towards the time when its literature formed the staple of an education in the humanities; on the other hand, at this moment it looks forward to its functional aspect at a time when mastery of the language is an important requirement in the world economy and markets. English faces the challenge of having to reinvent itself; or prepare itself, when literature is re-introduced as an elective, to play the role of a handmaid to management.

A theoretical framework drawn from globalisation and neoliberalism guides this study. Economic, political and cultural aspects of globalisation theory are integrated in order to provide an understanding of how certain challenges operate in the field of higher education. Human capital theory suggests that the global economy and an increasing demand for international expertise or understanding of the knowledge

economy often motivates universities to realign themselves with their external context, which may often involve the marginalization of the humanities. Set against this is a theoretical framework of education that rests on human potential and the development of reason and imagination to produce responsible citizens.

Chapterisation

The objectives discussed above are addressed in five chapters. A brief outline of each follows:

The first chapter “Global Challenges to Higher Education and India: a literature review” takes a comprehensive view of the existing debates in the field of globalisation, and higher education in India. It examines the complex and multiple connotations of this most contested phenomenon of globalisation that has transformed the space of higher education in every nation-state. It does this by analyzing the theories of globalisation promulgated by globalists, skeptics and transformationalists or post-skeptics (Held et al 1999; Holton 2005). The chapter also contextualizes the thesis in the existing debates around higher education in India from the colonial and Nehruvian eras to the present time. The question of liberal education is understood then in the light of both, the global debates around globalization, and national debates on higher education.

The second chapter “Expansion, Governance, and Privatization of Higher Education” takes a closer look at privatization which is one of the direct effects of globalisation in the field of higher education. It studies the historic shift towards greater privatization and decentralization, and the corresponding withdrawal of the State from financing education, which began with the structural adjustment programmes of the 90s. The neo-liberal policy turn in the state policy documents in higher education in

India gets special attention in this chapter. The chapter ends by looking closely through a case study at the recent transformations of a public educational trust in Ahmedabad, with its roots in a pre-independence era, to understand the local and global contexts that facilitated this moment of change.

The most apparent consequence of privatization has been seen in vocationalising and instrumentalising of knowledge. The third chapter “English Studies in India: Skilling or Imagination” shows how English departments illustrate the marginalization of the humanities most clearly as literature gives way to the privileging of the linguistic skills offered by these departments in India. It sets the departments of English with their continuing crises in their historical and geographical contexts to arrive at a better understanding of their current plight and dilemmas in India. English departments survive today by repositioning themselves as a teacher of language skills or offering transferable soft skills to future leaders and business managers. The future of English department as a discipline within the humanities, with a distinctive critical edge is being quickly forgotten (and often seen as an impediment) in a society largely governed by global indices and GDP growth.

The fourth chapter “The Liberal in Humanities” extends the focus a little further to the larger area of the humanities. Many studies in recent years have addressed the problem of the desirable education for a global citizen from a “Liberal Studies” perspective. In her seminal study titled *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha Nussbaum raises the same issue as she laments the ‘silent crisis’ of the humanities, where the humanistic aspects of science and the social sciences are falling out of favour as nations, competing for short-term profits, desire more applied skills (Nussbaum 2010). This chapter situates the present crisis of the humanities in the

history of debates around science v/s humanities in order to show how the present crisis is unique in as much as the humanities have to defend their very existence.

The final chapter of the study “Conclusion” tries to articulate the implications of the challenges, discussed in the earlier chapters, on the idea of university education as it emerges in Gujarat today. It also looks searchingly at the space of the humanities in the emerging universities. Do the humanities not perform more of a social function within a university than some of the more professionally oriented disciplines in terms of cultivating the sensibility of a nation’s future generation? And if that is the case, do we really need to reorient discourses of higher education and citizenship? These are some of the important questions that are reflected upon in the final chapter of this thesis.