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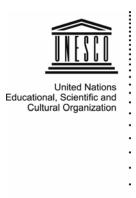
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The Quality Imperative

History of the quality debate

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Preamble and structure

The word 'quality' has two meanings. The first is the particular or essential character, an inherent feature, property or attribute by which a thing may be identified or described. The second refers to the superiority or rank of particular merchandise (cf. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary). The idea of quality in education involves both these meanings, and the account of the history of the term presented in this paper traces both these meanings and the inter-connections.

The discourse of educational thinkers is a discourse of the 'quality' in the sense of 'essential characteristic' of the activities and processes that could be described as 'education'. To the extent that the discourse of education is itself normative and purposeful, linked to a framework of aims that extend from the individual learner to society, thinkers have contributed to both refinement and reformulation of the concept of education itself; and, also, by implication the concept of 'quality' associated with it. An important branch of mainstream educationists, which includes individuals involved in curriculum making and teacher preparation, has drawn the form and expression of concern for quality from this philosophical orientation, where the discussion of quality is an implicit and integral part of the critical discourse of education itself. Concepts and terms such as 'reform', 'relevance', 'mastery learning', 'teaching to objectives', 'improvement', 'effectiveness' and 'innovation', have been used to convey the search for better practices and outcomes both within predefined and accepted boundaries and concerns with questions regarding what qualifies as a worthwhile educational aim or experience. It is interesting that none of the encyclopaedia or dictionaries of education had an entry for "quality" until the 1990s. In this brief account of the history of the idea of quality in education, we begin by tracing some of the important changes in the concept of education which defines the 'quality' or 'essential character' of education.

The usage of the term 'quality' in the discourse of education became significant from the 1950s, and more visibly from the 1960s onwards. This post-war period marked important changes in the political framework of the world, with the formation of new nation states that chose democracy as the form of governance. Awareness and contestation of racial, class and gender discrimination in public and civic life lead to a reformulation of policy in many of the older democracies. The same period also saw the rise of the human capital theory in economics (Schultz, 1960) which propounded that education was an important ingredient of economic wellbeing, and made the proposal that education could be one way of reducing poverty and enhancing social mobility in the newly independent countries facing the challenge of speedy economic development. With the provisioning of education for all becoming an important commitment of many states, ensuring a parity in quality became a facet of equality itself. Theories of scientific management, aimed at ensuring basic and competitive standards in a variety of products and services, informed the discussion of quality in education from the 1970s onwards. This was a period marking the involvement of international aid and lending agencies such as the World Bank in economic adjustments and planning in many third world countries, thus an interest in identifying parameters that would maximize returns to inputs. 'Quality' also became a shorthand way of parents and other stakeholders for expressing their right to

influence policy matters concerning what the education of their children must achieve, both in the short and long terms. In contemporary discussions, a stress on ensuring the achievement of 'basic skills', 'minimum levels' and 'standards' is dominant in both industrialised and developing countries, although, interestingly, in developing countries, the basket of 'minimums" now also includes life skills, health and citizenship. Our account examines these more recent historical developments in the definition of "quality of education", its relationship to society, and ways to ensure its efficient delivery.   We end with a section on implications and lessons.

Twentieth Century: An Overview

Two features that mark the growth of educational ideas and practices on a global scape are, firstly, the definitiveness of sources of dominant conceptions and, secondly, the rapid diffusion of these ideas. Jean Jacques Rousseau is one such name featuring in the intellectual biographies of early twentieth century thinkers from a wide geographic spread. The social climate of this period was shaped by three key ideas—science, humanism, and democracy—all of which had their roots in the European experience of industrialization and role as colonial master over most of the world. There was an interest in universalising schooling to ensure the spread of basic literacy, numeracy and moral development, as a way of 'controlling the masses'. This was a popular view of the need to educate the poor, whether in one's own country or in colonies. Thus in Durkheim's (1979) sociological reflection on education we find an emphasis on education as an ordering instrument of the State. Authoritarian teachers, the textbook and examinations, and passive, frightened children were the images dominating this period, and which continue to form the backdrop against which reform and change and the search for quality were articulated and continue to be rearticulated.

More than colonial rule or European cultural dominance, it seems that Rousseau's (1762) reflections on the innate goodness of the child and the need for adult restraint rather than active shaping influence in the child's education inspired people such as Marti (1979) in Cuba and Tagore (1931) in India. They were among philosophers in other parts of the world who proposed that education should aim at wider societal and personal goals, and experimented to evolve *scientific* pedagogic techniques and curriculum components to educate children. Prominent and influential European educators included Pestalozzi, Froebel and, later, Montessori; their systems evolved from careful observation of and work with children, recognising their innate interest and ability to learn, and aiming at the development of the whole personality. Pestalozzi's banishment of physical punishment, and Froebel's focus on the role of play are examples of the kind of qualitative shifts these educators promoted in the learning environment. Montessori developed an elaborate programme whose pedagogy was based on providing children with individual graded work with specially designed materials, aiming at cognitive development with a sense of discipline and perfection (Montessori, 1974). This continues to exercise an influence in many developing countries, which she visited during her lifetime. The resource rich and specialised character of the learning environment, the ability of the curriculum to address individual differences among children (in pace and to some extent in interest), and the elaborate pedagogic preparation entailed, acqured the status of key dimensions of 'quality', making the term 'Montessori school' synonymous with 'good education' for young children. This association continues to this day in many countries which she visited.

Taking cue from Rousseau's positive focus on the child, and his own scientific experimentalism in the spirit of democracy, Dewey's philosophical views on educational aims, curriculum and pedagogy exercised an influence on the educational imagination of pedagogues and several national systems of education from the late nineteenth century and into the early half of the twentieth century. In his pedagogic creed (Dewey,1916), the teacher assumes the functions of an enquirer in order to set a model for the child. Dewey's yardstick for judging authentic or meaningful education is that it must provide experiential learning for each child by introducing real-life problems in the classroom. For many, the 'project method' became synonymous with Dewey. Opportunities for individual growth is the only parameter for assessing how effective a school is, for Dewey's educational ideal is the problem-solving, self-reliant, articulate individual. A community of such individuals is Dewey's democratic utopia in which communication and participation are the measure of efficiency of all public enterprises, including education. Through his prolific writing and work in his experimental school, Dewey was able to raise several questions regarding the '*educational* quality' of the contents of curriculum, and pedagogic practices that placed children in the position of being passive recipients, and disconnected school learning from the community of the child. He saw no contradiction between individual growth and social efficiency as aims of education and proposed that their convergence constituted the quality of education.

The influence of psychology

The growth and influence of these thinkers was paralleled in the development of the institution of teacher training which included studying philosophy. The curriculum for teacher preparation moved away from apprenticeship and tried to providing the basis for reform in teaching practice by promoting the study of psychology of children and introducing the herbartian idea of scientific planning as essential for a scientific pedagogy and for defining and maintaining professional standards. Along with these, psychology also contributed the ideas of intelligence and testing, brought to a fruition by the psychologist Alfred Binet in France where elementary education had been made compulsory and free in 1895. Binet (1911) was concerned that teachers should be able to identify individual differences in the mental make-up of children, so that they could be taught more efficiently. This test had unpredicted effects--it narrowed attention on cognitive abilities relating to literacy and numeracy as the focus of schooling. It promoted implicitly the assumption that these abilities are universal and general, culture and context do not influence their acquisition, they are predictive of learning and capabilities, and they are unevenly and 'normally' distributed in any given population of children. These ideas have challenged the idea of equality among learners and democratisation of knowledge included for study in schools—both of which are important in current conceptions of quality. Their world wide popularity and persistence in commonsensical thinking about schooling and learning, hints to their continuity with dominant groups and 'folk' pedagogy, and the sources of 'scientific' resistance among education planners and teachers to the inclusion of equality in quality of learning. The continued significance of testing draws attention to two key ideas of modern education systems. Firstly, that the quality of a system of education or school depends on its capacity to respond to individual differences among learners, and secondly, that it is possible to 'scientifically' plan and monitor educational programmes.

The mid twentieth century was the period of groundwork for a 'cognitive revolution' in psychology, but its influence on education was delayed till later 1960s, by the emergence and influence of behaviourism as a the science of learning and as an ideology (Blackman, 1995). B. F. Skinner's

(1966) scientific work provided education psychologists with a definition of learning as observable changes in behaviour, and focused attention on pedagogy as progressively shaping the behaviours of learners, to reach pre-set objectives or goals, through a series of appropriate reinforcements. This fitted well with the Herbartian elements of planning that had guided teachers preparation and classroom activity since the late nineteenth century. It offered the possibility of a much closer targeting of educational goals, and of ensuring 'mastery' for all learners with testing as a way of monitoring learner behaviours. It promised quality in systems of education with greater reliability than any earlier idea or philosophy had done. This did not disturb conventional assumptions about the centrality of the teacher's pedagogic authority or the 'received' nature of knowledge and learning.

The mark that behaviourism made on educational ideas in the inter-war years can be linked to several other developments, particularly the growth of industrial psychology and the application of managerial practices in education. Lawton (1984) has traced the heritage of the objectives approach to the work of Franklin Bobbit who started to apply the ideas of industrialist F.W. Taylor (1856-1915) on curriculum in 1918. Limited resources and the need to maximize results were apparent attractions, but the pervasive effect of the behaviourist model of human nature on education cannot be fully explained in terms of fiscal rationality alone. The post war years saw a rapid growth and establishment of behaviourist ideas in curriculum development with the publication of Tyler's *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949) and in assessment, when Bloom (1956) led a team that laid out a 'taxonomy' of educational objectives against which finer testing instruments could be developed. Translated into many languages, Bloom's book is recognised as being among the most influential writings in education (Anderson and Karthwohl, 2001). Quality in education now became centered around the idea of 'learner achievement', which was now treated as predictable, with pedagogic efforts being directed at making this more efficient. This was contrary to the Deweyan attitude, that the best consequences of education were the ones that could not be predicted, for they showed the inventive capacities of the learner (Stenhouse, 1975). More than a generation of curriculum theorists and designers saw the need to set out behavioural objectives and to measure their achievement through tests, as the core of their task. This tradition continues in many parts of the world and has aroused special attraction in developing countries whose systems of education function with considerable bureaucratic control. In the developed world also behaviouristic curriculum planning encouraged bureaucratic management in response to the demand for accountability as an aspect of quality (see next section).

Perhaps in response to the rising bureaucratic control of education of the provisioning of education, the period of the 1060s saw the rise of a strong statement of humanism as a voice of protest. This movement appears to have had a considerable influence on popular perceptions of qualityand the growth of dissatisfaction with state-centered definitions of education. The influence continues to grow in the proliferation of non-government organisations (NGOs) working for expansion and reform of systems of education. Roger (1969), Bettleheim (1952) and Kozol (1968) wrote pursuasively for the need of a more person-oriented framework in educational activities, which would reaffirm the growth of a positive identity building. Small groups in Britain, the US and parts of Europe, drawing on the philosophical inheritance of Rousseau and Dewey, set up their own small schools. These were spaces where they could define the contents and processes of schooling of their children on their own terms, free from bureaucratic control. Frequently, ideas of pacifism, freedom from competition, nurturance of creativity, tolerance towards differences, sustainable life-styles and increased individualised definitions of curriculum and pace of learning were significant ideological components in such establishments (Graubard, 1974). Holt (1967) and Neill (1959) were

in the vangaurd of this movement. Although these movements have always remained on the fringes of the 'mainstream', they paved the way for systemic reform in Britain (Archer, 1984). Several such institutions continue to grow and keep alive the imagination of alternative ideas of quality in many parts of the world utilising whatever spaces are available to overcome or, at least, expand the norms of quality laid down by the state.

Piaget

Within the academic 'mainstream', the humanistic approach found an influential ally in Piaget's constructivism (Piaget, 1971). From the 1950s onwards in Europe, and from the mid-1960s in the English-speaking developed world, this theory prompted educationists to admit a more 'active', 'participatory' and 'meaningful' role for children in their learning. This theory recognised the child's own agency in learning and proposed that cognition and intelligence are aspects of adaptation. This biological basis for human learning brought into focus the general and universalistic nature of human intelligence, highlighting its meaningful and purposeful character.   In education, this perspective gave progressivists a new yardstick for establishing the relevance and quality of educational experiences in the here and the now of the child, rather than in being a process of preparation for the future. Piaget's theory influenced curriculum and pedagogy in several different ways. In Europe his ideas on the epistemological dimension of cognition prompted curriculum revisions. In the US of the 1960s his theory was mistakenly seen as a way of 'accelerating' learning through more scientific planning (Bruner, 1960). In Britain it was assimilated into parallel developments in child-centered practices and ideas, towards a greater role for children in classroom activities and the reorganisation of curriculum. These formed the backdrop to the Plowden report an influential critique of pedagogic practices(Peaker, 1971). When Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) wrote about development as an aim of education, they were emphasising the need for education to enhance the potential of every child for cognitive development. In education this perspective has guided research into children's acquisition of knowledge, including literacy and numeracy, extending into the development of the affective and social learning domains, the idea of multiple intelligence (Gardner, 1986) and cultural contexts of learning (Vygotsky, 1978, Rogoff, 1990). Significantly relavent areas of testing have also developed, permitting skilled researchers to capture more nuances of not only individual, but also group changes, in both static and dynamic settings (Swanson and Lussier, 2001). It is more commonplace now to speak of 'learner portfolios' rather than simply 'achievement'.

The influence of the Piagetian revolution on conceptions of quality can be seen in increased inclusion of Piaget's ideas in courses of education psychology studied by teachers, in curricular design, in testing and assessment, and also on classroom practices which give children a more active role. The influence is uneven, but it does now serve as a paradigm which covers policies, approaches and enquiries arising out of the other most influential paradigm of the 20th century: behaviourism. The main differences between behaviourist and constructivist paradigms in education have been represented in Table 1 below. As Macedo (2001) and Kato and Kamii (2001) have pointed out in the case of, respectively, Brazil and Japan, the Piagetian revolution is still unfolding.

Table 1
Key features and differences of behaviourism and contructivism

	Behaviourism	**Constructivism**
Assumptions about the child's nature.	Responsive to the environment	Interacts with the environment
Antecedents	Conventional pedagogies; notion of knowledge as something received and to be transmitted.	Ideas and innovations associated with Rousseau, Dewey, and Montessori. Knowledge created by action and in the course of relating to reality.
Emphasis	Making outcomes predictable.	Individual development
Implication	Teacher looks for proof of learning.	Teacher observes and responds to the child's progress.

Building national systems of education

The foregoing discussion brings out the dominance of a 'western' definition of what constitutes good education on the rest of the world. Although there have been shifts in approaches to education, inclusion of societal goals, and broadening of curricular concerns, it would be correct to conclude that they have by and large been based on 'discipline' -oriented academic activity. The system of school education brought by Britain and Europe to colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America drew on this tradition, and institutionalised close regulation through inspections and examinations. Passing examinations for certification and employment allowed for the proliferation of rote-based pedagogies and a textbook culture (Kumar, 1988). These features have remained the visible symbols of poor quality. There were some important attempts to dissent from this colonial legacy, and to articulate and effect alternative aims in education. Gandhi (1937) and later Nyeyere (1968), proposed creating a new education system with an emphasis on self-reliance, equity and rural employment. What would be taught in the new schools included 'local' traditional, non- book-based learning of heritage crafts and the skills required for other manual, productive work. 'Education with production' was pursued as a policy for improvement in the quality of education in countries like Ghana and Botswana. In the Soviet Union—and also in other communist countries like Cuba and Vietnam—schooling for defining the new nation promoted a new concept of quality, supplementing the scientific planning of curriculum with an emphasis on habits and values (Malkova, 1989). However, it was only in China, as Dore (1980) has noted, that a break with the legacies of rote-learning and bias against manual work was achieved. There, the upheaval of Mao's revolutionary strategy permitted a radical restructuring of social and economic relations even though old ideas concerning the role and meaning of education did not die out (Thogeroon, 1990; Cleverly, 1985). The delayed popularity of the works of Freire (1970) in south Asia and Africa permits us to guess that it had to wait for a certain degree of tension to arise between the goals of national development

and the universalistic, ethical concerns of education. Used as criteria, the symptoms listed by Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to characterize 'banking education' indicated that the quality of education in most parts of the Third World was extremely poor. The activist perspective inspired by this book drew attention to the deeper political changes and reforms necessary for improvement in the quality of education. Freire's discourse encouraged a new set of players— the NGOs—to mobilize community awareness and pressure for improvement in primary education. These were attempts to reformulate educational aims and the idea of quality. *Their failure* is instructive at this juncture as we turn from looking at philosophical concerns that have informed the idea of quality, to policies and systems through which education is provided and the socio-political context in which they operate.

Education of the poor

So far we have traced some influential thinkers who have shaped the scope of the discourse on educational aims and methods and the ideas of quality implicit in it. We now turn our attention to specific developments in the efforts to achieve educational equality, or education for all, in the context of which the idea of 'quality' has gained currency and developed. As has already been noted, since the 1960s onwards, we find specific references to the term 'quality', or rather the lack of it and the need to ensure it, in schools. The wider ethos was one in which the economic discourse of quality was acquiring precision and appeal in areas such as industrial production and marketing (Dooley, 2000). Ideas of quality control, assurance through statistics based monitoring laid the foundation for testing-based production with W. Edwards Deming's ideas of 'total quality management', 'quality control' and 'assurance' to ensure maximum efficiency and standards in manufactured goods. From the 1960s, the school boards of several states across the United States of America began to employ these concepts in examining the status of the state system of education (e.g. The Quality Measurement Project, 1970). Testing designed around teaching objectives (of the behaviouristic school) lent itself well to a planning model of education in terms of inputs and outputs. Scores of children were used to judge school characteristics, teacher efficiency, and school effectiveness. This model has informed the production-function approach to school quality adopted by education economists and planners.

Around this time the human capital theory proposed by Schultz (1960) emphasised the need for education to the poor as a way of addressing the effects of poverty. This was also seen as an investment to ensure economic development. The production-function approach to studying school quality effects was used to closely monitor and strategies of compensatory education for the poor. Not all studies in this tradition have focussed on cost effectiveness. Coleman's (1968) report made it possible to distinguish school quality (seen in terms of facilities and teachers) from quality as an aspect of the education received by the child. By highlighting the advantages of a school where social and ethnic backgrounds were mixed, the Coleman report argued that quality is an attribute of the classroom ethos, and a reflection of the social vision embedded in educational policy. The influence of this wider perspective, which combined an emphasis on imaginative teaching with interest in the child's social reality, was felt across the Atlantic. Already, in the planners' discourse, the school was emerging as a point of focus for its autonomy, decentralised location and transformatory capabilities

Other challenges to dominant ways of addressing the educational needs of the poor came from the 'new sociology' of schooling. Unlike the older, conventional sociology of education, which focused on children's social backgrounds and the socio-economic roles in which they end up after their education, the research writings of sociologists like Bernstein (1971), Bourdieu (1970), and Apple (1980) opened the blackbox of the school, to look into the classroom, at pedagogic relations, the symbolic character of school knowledge, and the deeper effects of institutional culture. These enquiries reiterated the social foundations of education and enabled school debates in many developed countries to retain the relevance of the ethical defensibility, or the politics of education, as a criterion for judging its quality. Data regarding the widening gap between the rich and the poor in educational attainment, and the extent to which parental background is a predictor of school achievement have underscored the fact that even within the developed world equality of educational opportunity remains a question (Connell, 1994, Reimers, 1999). This has prompted researchers to challenge the tradition of technocratic, 'evidence based' strategies proposed by experts, and to build on reform ideas which take into account the socio-economic and political context of education, directing policy attention to systemic reconstruction for the improvement of quality. An impressive case, understandably, is that of post-apartheid South Africa where a national level 'Qualifications Authority' has attempted to reform the examination system as a means to assure quality (Smith and Ngoma-Maema, 2003)

Developing countries

As already mentioned, in spite of some efforts to wrest the aims of education from colonial formulations that favoured elites, virtually all national education systems have 'succumbed' to the universalistic western model of school. The western neo-humanist writings of the late 1960s and the early 1970s made rather limited impact on educational discourses in the developing countries. There, the popularity of behaviourist methods of teaching, teacher training and assessing remained largely undisturbed, and continue to be in use even now.

Since the 1960s and 70s, both donor and lending agencies have been involved with supporting, first, the spread and, subsequently, the quality of schooling, both in the form of aid and also as a part of structural adjustments (Stephens, 1991). In the case of Africa, where structural adjustment programmes led to the significant depletion in the financial resources available for children's education in the countries of Sub-Saharan region (UNICEF, 1989, Chawla, 1995), the quality debate seems to have taken a minimalist character. Community participation is a commonly recommended remedy for improvement of school quality in the context of declining state funds. In many countries in East Asia, pragmatic policies focused on increasing the productivity of the newly laid infrastructure of industrialization using methods such as 'total quality management'. The focus of the education system was also to improve efficiency and ensue provision of basic skills to all. In most parts of South Asia, primary education and adult literacy remained low priority sectors of state policy. Also, social pressure to expand higher education grew in response to economic conditions (Dore,1976). Dore has argued that liberal, imaginative pedagogic practices failed to develop in the late-industrializing countries because state policy could not take a systemic view of education and the economy.

There has been a growing need of lending agencies to direct investments in elementary education to focus areas that are good predictors of 'results' that can be correlated with the countries economic

development. Since the 1985s there have been compelling arguments from economists to evolve and include indicators of school quality in Mincerian modeling of human capital stock (Behrman and Birdsall, 1985). Finer modeling of provisioning of schooling seems to be essential to distinguish significant variables in comparative study especially between developing and developed countries, e.g. the suggestion that in low-income countriesof Africa and Latin America, school infrastructure and teacher qualification (as measures of quality) have an influence on student academic achievement (see e.g. Heyneman and Loxley, 1983), or the need for a culturally situated model of school effectivenss (Fuller and Clarke, 1994). Since the late 1980s, new elements have been introduced into the discourse of education, including the ideas of regulation, accountability (through output measurement), cost efficiency, international comparisons, and stake-holder rights. With the exception of 'stakeholder rights', these terms have already been a part of bureaucratic planning and management of state provided education. The new dimension is with regard the growing dependence on funded programmes to meet basic requirements and hence a closer monitoring by external agencies. Supported by studies based on the production-function approach, we see waves of 'reform programmes being implemented' and the list of indicators of 'quality' growing, from simple numbers such as infrastructure provisioning, cost per child the number of years spent in school, to attempts to include teacher and classroom interaction characteristics. Learning achievement has also shifted from language and numeracy to scores in science. The effort has been to identify 'robust' indicators to serve strategic planning (Hanushek, 1994, Verspoor, nd and Fuller, 1985).

These ideas were incorporated by several Third World states in an attempt to reformulate educational policies in the decade of the 1980s when the demands of international donor agencies persuaded them to apply, belatedly, the teachings of human capital theory. Several models of quality have arisen from this osmosis. Fuller (1994) has classified them into three broad categories: (a) allocating resources to the most effective mix of school inputs; (b) improving pedagogical practices and curricula; and (c) altering school management by mobilizing local actors. Lockheed (nd) includes centralisation, teacher quality control through accreditation, curriculum reform, community ownership and national testing. At the same time they also admit that there is a fair degree of variability, in what results tell us (Scheerens,2000, Hanushek, 2002). Riddell (1997) observes that a 'third wave' of school effectiveness studies in the developing world is likely to be lost without ever having been explored—i.e. integrated school-effectiveness studies, comprising resource inputs, organisational factors, and instructional characteristics, in which multi-level modelling is a vital methodological requirement (Scheerens, 2000). Recognising the parallel approach to 'quality questions' which make the teacher's professionalism more central, Scheerens (2000) and Fuller (1987) have suggested that there may be more understood if the two branches of research were to come together. There is reason to believe that equally if not more significant answers lie within the 'black box' of the school and classroom, in the resources that teachers draw upon to organise their practice and in cultural factors beliefs of teachers and community.

During the last two decades of the 20th century, the debate on quality has become centre-stage for reasons associated with the discourse of globalisation in both developed and developing worlds. In the new environment of national economic insecurity, and increased mobility of capital and professional manpower, pupil achievement has gained prominence among indicators of quality. The PISA studies undertaken in Europe indicate this trend. In the underdeveloped and developing countries, post-Jomtien programmes of quality enhancement indicate that quality has been recognized as a condition for the expansion of access. Concern for quality is also central to the

debates on privatisation. In these debates, numerous new models of reform have been proposed, some of which invoke classic issues of liberal political theory, such as freedom of choice and competition, in an extreme form. These are elements of the neo-liberal discourse which also finds resonance in certain kinds of post-modern theory (Brown, 1997).

Implications and Lessons

This brief historical narrative of the idea of quality and its application to education has several implications for the current debates and concerns, especially in the context of educational reform in developing countries. We have broadly classified these implications, and the lessons that can be learnt at the present juncture, into six items which are discussed below.

One
Concern for quality has a rhetorical value in that it permits us to focus on certain long-neglected aspects and issues in educational planning in several Third World countries. These are issues like teacher's self-identity as professionals, their training, working conditions, relation with administrators and functionaries of state institutions in charge of curriculum and textbook designing. The debate on quality has created space for lobbying with ministries and bureaucracies for greater attention being devoted to institutional culture. If the debate on quality is pursued with intellectual rigour and popular support, it might help reposition the school as a major social institution which deserves to be treated as a unit of reform. Decentralisation as a political and adminisrative priority had the potential to treat the school in this manner, but little change has occurred in either official or donor agencies' perception that schools, especially rural schools, are but statistics of a national system. That each school has its own ethos, constituted by several different kinds of factors, and that the ethos of a school is a determinant of the quality of children's educational experience at the school, needs recognition (Sarangapani, 2003).

Two
The history of the idea of quality in education points out the indispensability of philosophical resources for educational planning and reform. Thinkers like Dewey, Marti, Piaget, Gandhi, Iqbal (1930) and Freire remind us that education has value for human beings because of certain characteristics which are intrinsic to it. By refining our understanding of the aims of education, thinkers equip us with yardsticks to judge the worth of an educational provision. Philosophical considerations, thus, deepen the discourse of quality (Winch, 1996). It is unfortunate that the discussion of philosophical aims of education has all but disappeared from the discourse of education in most Third World countries, who seem to be afflicted by the compulsion to 'catch up' (e.g. NCERT, 1993), and also from the discourse of several developed countries. A technocratic perspective has taken charge of policy, taking advantage of the ascendance of neo-liberal economics and a populist discourse of market fundamentalism. In this environment, it may be difficult, but is all the more necessary, for international aid agencies to realise that, beyond a point, it does not help to treat the school as a black box. What is going on inside the blackbox, and what all is shaping its inner world, should interest educational planners, economists and aid consultants if they wish to address the state of stagnation into which many Third World systems of education have fallen. In the challenge of looking inside the black box, they can find philosophical and sociological studies of education to be great help. Philosophical analysis of education can also address the problems of

mismatch between aims and methods which are chronic to Third World systems of education (Dhankar, 2003).

Three

Historically, the concept of quality has permitted the enriching of the classic concern of democratic theorists for equality of educational opportunity. In the case of psychologists as well as that of sociologists, concern for the quality of children's educational experience has enabled an objective understanding of equalization of the opportunity to enroll at a school. This important legacy of the quality debate stands in some danger of being lost today in the context of neo-liberal policies and rhetoric which associate quality with privatization. Notions of accountability to the customer and free choice, implicit in proposals like a voucher system, have reinforced the impression that only private provisioning of education can ensure quality. This kind of argument thretens to distort state policies in many countries. Winch (1996) has analysed this argument in great detail and concluded that 'there are overwhelming reasons for not damaging public education.'

Four

Planners and donor agencies need to become aware of the effects on the ability of systems of education to receive further reform, in a constantly unfolding missionary agenda of deepening the nature of efforts—even as they discover the number and complexity of variables that influences educational systems, and ultimately the education of children. The scope of the 'production-function' approach to the study and monitoring of quality becomes more and more complex, deepening understanding of the arenas into which a planner must now 'intervene'—including those of 'culture' and 'beliefs'. But there is also now a donor and donee fatigue. An added dimension of this programmatic aid-driven reform is the tendency of both donors and donees to exaggerate 'success' (Bloom and Cohen, 2002), making it difficult then to tackle the lack of transformation on the ground.

Five

'Accountability' has brought in an added dimension in the new professionalism of teachers. From a position where parents were regarded as silent partners, "maintaining a polite distance from the teacher" and providing the necessary support at home (Hargreaves and Lo, 2000), they are now compelled act as a constituency in more mutual and active partnership roles. The area of testing and standards too have had their influence on teachers—on the one side there has been a creative response of teachers who have been able to work standards into their own reflective, ethical practice. Simultaneously there has also been the effect of deprofessionalisation, with the expectation that they will 'teach to tests'. "The push for 'standards' and 'basic skills' has fostered a rigid, teacher-centred pedagogy in compensatory and special programmes" (Connell, 1994). In the developing world, there is also a tendency to see teachers as 'implementing policy', and researches have noted a reluctance among teaches to embrace those efforts that aim to improve their quality. (Hargreaves and Lo, 2000)

Six

Finally there is the question of whether problems with regards education of the poor arise from 'relevance or quality' (Avalos, 1992). This along with the question of cultural variations in both aims in education and pedagogical practice (Little, 1999) continue to need substantial engagement by countries involved with universalisation to include communities such as indigenous groups. In parts

of the world with strong alternative traditions. we need to ask how Islamic or Confusian ideals of education, which continue to scaffold popular thinking in societies associated with these religious traditions, might serve as resources for modernising the systems of education in these societies.

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