

Neo Liberalism, Social Exclusion, Education Policy and KISS Odisha

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Abstract

Neo liberal ideas have permeated the Indian society during the last decade by unleashing market mechanism in various sectors including education. This has improved the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) significantly in the higher education segment. Initiatives like Right to Education (RTE) Act and Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan (SSA) have ensured high universal access in primary education. However social exclusion remains unacceptably high for marginalized segments like scheduled tribe. Private sector initiatives, even after initiation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the field of education remain significantly unsatisfactory unlike the experience in the USA. The paper brings out the inadequate impact of state initiatives on equity and quality and brings out different facets of multi dimensional deprivation like Social Deprivation Index (SDI) and Policy Effectiveness Index (PEI) in different states. The unique experiment of KISS Odisha, a private sector initiative to minimize gender disparity, bolster employment opportunity and empowerment has been highlighted as a potential template for replication.

Keywords: GER, RTE Act, SSA, CSR, SDI, PEI

Introduction

The new liberal wave took firm roots globally with the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and disintegration of USSR. The Washington Consensus (1988) and Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" celebrated the victory of liberal democracy. The ideological underpinning of neo liberalism was articulated by Fredric Von Heyek who called for "freedom from constraints of the state, promotion of competition, extensive privatization and disinvestment". Milton Freidman called for competitive capitalism and looked upon the state as an enabling institution with a sound regulatory framework. The neo liberal economists thus took Smith's free market dictum as the

private pursuit of self interest leading by an invisible hand to the wellbeing of all several yard forward. India started its neo liberal policy in a half hearted manner in the 1990s. However in the last decade it has eschewed hesitancy of the past and has lately dismantled of the Planning Commission- an emblem of socialistic legacy. Under the neo liberal regime the growth indicators show significant improvement, while the human development parameters are seem to be carpeted under the growth story, despite a number of affirmative actions like Right to Education, Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan, Right to Food, Mid Day Meal, MGNREGA, CSR etc.

This paper attempts to analyze

- a) Policy Initiatives in Education
- b) Impact on Equity, Development and Quality after Liberalization
- c) Private Sector Initiatives in Education
- d) Significant Social Inclusion Initiatives in KISS, Odisha
- e) Lessons Learnt and Way Forward

(A) Policy Initiatives In Education

After the Kothari Commission (1966) and National Policy on Education (1986 & 1992), three Commissions have addressed the issue of quality upgradation in higher education. The Ambani Birla Committee (2000) has strongly pitched for privatization of universities, liberal FDI with government playing the role of a facilitator. The Knowledge Commission (2009) differed from the approach from UGC which emphasizes the need for greater proliferation of colleges and universities. It has instead pitched for improvement in quality. While recommending expansion in the number of universities to 1500 in the country it has emphasized the need for improving quality through global partnership with foreign universities and has made a strong case for independent regulatory authority for higher education (IRAHE). The Commission has also recommended an additional allocation of 1.5% of GDP to higher education. The Narayan Murthy Report (2012) has recommended for upgradation of 75 top of the class universities, with investment ranging from Rs.175 to Rs.200 crore per university; creation of 20 world class universities with an investment of Rs.500crore per university, and creation of 20 new National Knowledge clusters through the public private partnership. The estimated investment for the 5 year plan estimated as Rs.40000 crore with 50:50 government corporate partnership and creation of a council for industry and higher education collaboration as a nodal agency. All these commissions, in line with neo liberal ideology, have recommended privatization in the higher education segment, easier FDI inflow and collaboration with foreign universities in the area of science of technology and management.

However, these Commissions neglect liberal arts from the purview of global partnership. Also how the state universities which constitute 50% of the universities will improve in terms of their infrastructure, quality of teachers and research has been left unaddressed. The other emerging concern is to offer only IT related and management course by various universities resulting in an unbalanced development of higher education.

While higher education has witnessed reasonable growth in enrolment i.e. around 17%, primary education has witnessed significant universalization (97%) after the RTE Act 2009. On the other hand, secondary education, which provides huge employment opportunity in the semi organized sector and is the path way to higher education, remains mired in poor allocation and enrolment of only 50%.

The budgetary allocation remains a serious concern area as it has stagnated around 3% as against an allocation of more than 5% by most of the developed countries and 6% recommended by various commissions in the past as Table-1 below will highlight the aspects.

Table 1: Trends in Central Spending on Education (Rs. Cr.)

Parameter	1990-1991	2000-2001	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Elementary Education	7955	31522	35928	35668	42696
Secondary Education	5531	19514	9703	14468	12419
Higher Education	3064	11994	20423	24483	27656
Total	16550	63030	66054	74619	82771
% of GDP	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4

Source: India's Budget Document 2014-2015

Inadequate allocation to education has significantly affected the Human Development Index of India which remains at around 0.58% with India ranking 137 of 167 countries as per HDR of 2014. The other disquieting area is the Gender Disparity in terms of **Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), employment opportunity for women and their representation in parliament**. The following table provides a comparative picture of the per capita income, HDI, GII and allocation to education in Emerging Economies like China and India compared to the development countries.

Table 2: HDI, GII & Public Expenditure % on Education

Country	GNI at PPP (\$)	HDI	GI	Public Expenditure as % of GDP
USA	52308	0.914	0.262	5.6
UK	35002	0.892	0.193	5.6
Germany	43409	0.91	0.046	5.1
Japan	36747	0.89	0.138	5.6
France	36629	0.88	0.08	3.8
Russia	22617	0.778	0.314	5.9
Korea	30345	0.89	0.101	4.1
China	4477	0.79	0.202	3.7
India	5150	0.586	0.563	3.3

Source: Human Development Report -2014

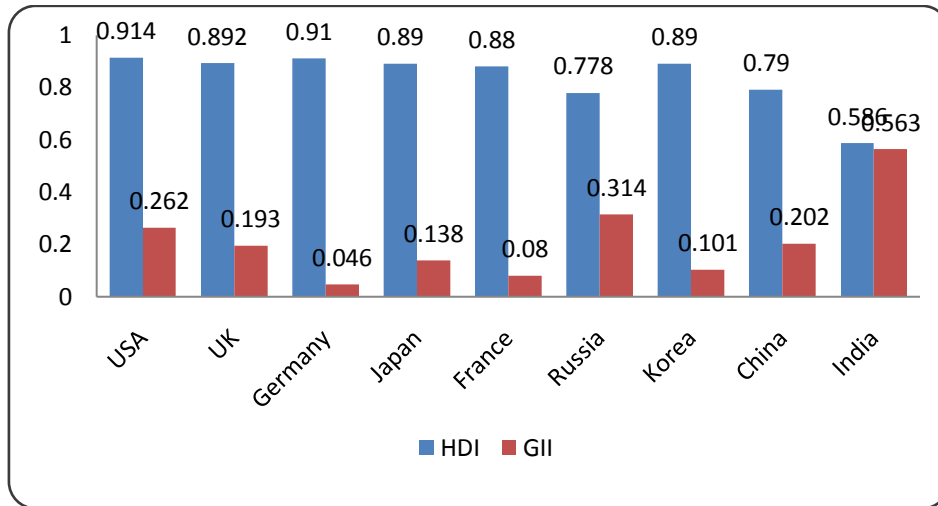


Figure 1: HDI, GII & Public Spending on Education

India thus needs to address the HDI and GII concern seriously through a mix of greater commitment to public spending (atleast 6% of GDP) and gender budgeting sensitivity.

(B) Impact On Equity, Development And Quality After Liberalization

Impact On Equity

Beyond enrolment, the other concern is in asymmetry of access to different sections of the society. Despite liberalization, the disadvantaged groups like SC/ST remain largely deprived of the fruits of human development. Table-3 brings out the picture.

Table 3: Trends of Literacy- General Category & SC/ST

Literacy	1981	1991	2001	2011
All India Rural	36.01	44.69	58.74	68.91
All India Urban	67.23	73.08	79.92	84.98
SC	21.38	37.41	54.69	56.49
ST	16.35	29.60	47.10	49.52

Source: Registrar General of India, MHA

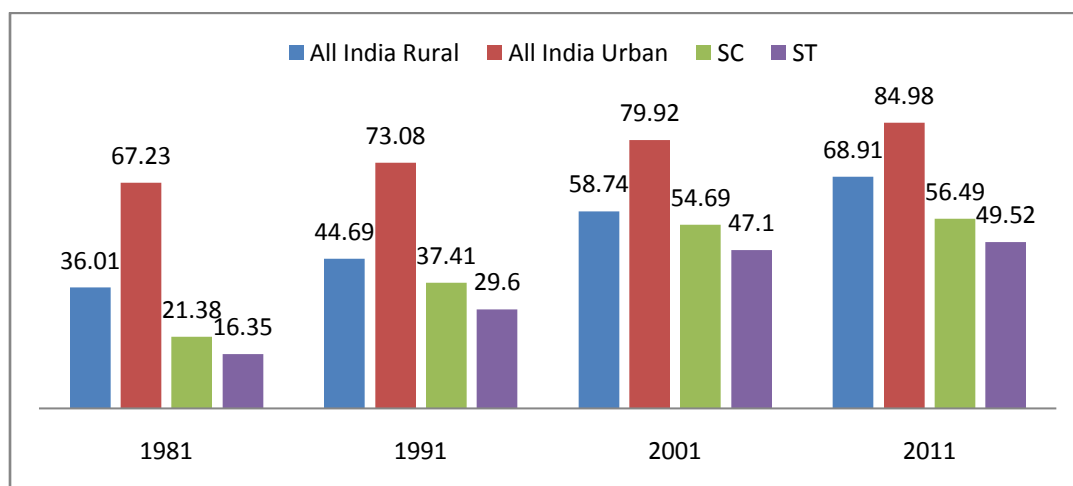


Figure 2: Trends of Literacy- General Category & SC/ST

Impact On Development

The position of India in terms of development indicators, post liberalization is brought at Table-4 below

Table 4: Development Indicators: India

PARAMETER	1988-1989	2012-2013	Global Standard
Literacy Rate	51	67	99%
Gross Enrolment Ratio (Higher Education)	7	16.7	>75%
Dropout in Primary Education	44%	36%	<5%
Life Expectancy	51	66	80
IMR (1000)	53	44	<10
MMR (1 lakh)	260	212	<10
% of Under Nourished Children	42.7	48.0	-
Total Fertility Rate	2.5	2.4	1.5%

Source: Human Development Report -2014

It would thus be shown that while there has been improvement in literacy, GER in higher education and life expectancy in India, the other development parameters for children and women fall far short of expectation and well below the global standards. The multi dimensional deprivations are brought out by indices like Social Development Index (SDI) & Policy Effectiveness Index (PEI).

The socially disadvantaged sections suffer from multi dimensional deprivation like health, education, basic amenities, economic & social. Besides the policy initiatives by government fall far short of expectation due to ineffective implementation of Rule of Law, inadequate physical infrastructure thereby affecting livelihood opportunity. The following table brings out these concerns for different states in India.

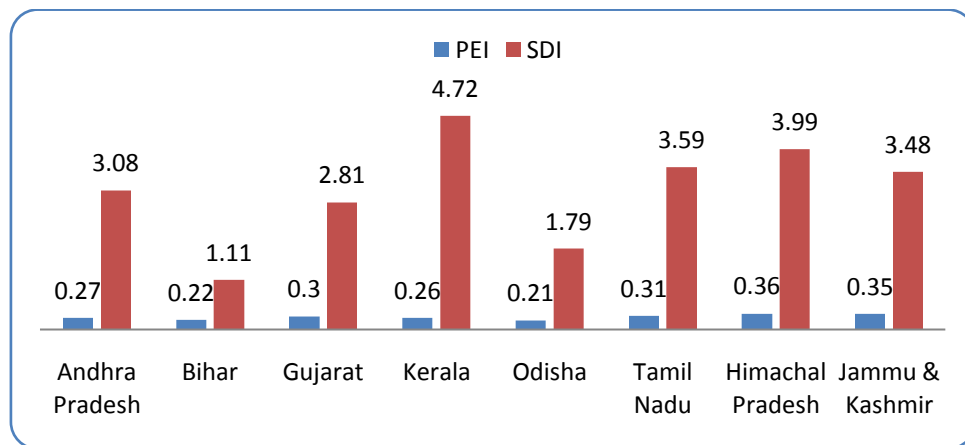
Table 5: Public Effectiveness Index (PEI), Social Development Index (SDI), Interstate Comparison

State	PEI*	SDI**
Andhra Pradesh	0.27	3.08
Bihar	0.22	1.11
Gujarat	0.3	2.81
Kerala	0.26	4.72
Odisha	0.21	1.79
Tamil Nadu	0.31	3.59
Himachal Pradesh	0.36	3.99
Jammu & Kashmir	0.35	3.48

Source: India Social Development Report 2012 & India Public Policy Report 2014

*Composite of Rule of Law Index, Physical Infrastructure Development Index, Livelihood Opportunity Index and Social Opportunity Index

** Demographic Indicators, Health Indicators, Educational Attainment Indicators, Basic Amenities Indicators and Economic & Social Deprivation Indicators

**Figure 3:** PEI, SDI, Interstate Comparison

Impact On Quality

Despite the significant numerical increase in college enrolment through private sector interventions since 2001, the quality of research, patents granted and highly cited articles remain very poor compared to the global standards as the following tables will bring out.

Table 6: Quality Concerns

Country	Quality of Research Institutions	Industry Collaboration	PCT Patents Granted/(Million)
USA	5.8	5.6	137.9
Brazil	4.1	4.1	2.8

South Korea	4.9	4.7	161.1
China	4.2	4.4	6.5
India	4.4	3.8	1.2

Table 7: Education Sector: Publication Trends

Year	India		China		USA	
	Publication	Highly Cited Article	Publication	Highly Cited Article	Publication	Highly Cited Article
2001	15522	103	25730	174	150817	2894
2011	36456	191	122672	980	184253	3137

Source: YuXie Chunni Zhang et al at National Academy of Sciences, 2014

It ought to be mentioned that in India emphasis is laid either on quantity or equity (UGC) or quality (IITs, IIMS) but not all the three concurrently. And we end up with a scalene; a triangle of three unequal sides.

The elitism in budget allocation by centre to central universities as compared to the state universities is brought out in the following table.

Table 8: government Subsidy and Fee Recovery

University	Government Subsidy	Fee Recovery	Others
Delhi University	92.2	6.2	1.6
Mumbai University	30	58	16
SNDT University	56	38	6

Source: Tilak and Rani (2000)

(C) Private Sector Initiatives In Education

Corporate sector involvement in the educational sector has contributing significant growth of universities like Harvard, MIT & Yale which hold the benchmark of excellence in to the research, teaching and innovation. In India, barring sporadic efforts by the Aziz Premji Foundation, Tata’s, Birla’s such initiatives have been few and far between by the private sector despite contributing 72% of India’s GDP. Besides, the CSR initiatives for deprived and alienated segments likes STs has been rather non-existent. In this backdrop the KISS experiment to minimize social exclusion and empower STs through education holds an important template for public policy.

KISS was established in 1993 with a view to empowering the disadvantaged through holistic education, gender equality and sustainable livelihood. Odisha is home to 22% of tribal population as against a national average. Their literacy per centage is 47% which is nearly 17% behind the national average. Besides gender disparity is quite pronounced. Home to 22,000 tribal children KISS has excellent infrastructure for the students like computer lab for 600 students, well stocked library with 20,000

books, 100 bedded hospital, solar power, and WIFI campus imparts vocational training and believes in the philosophy of earning while the students learnt. The position on enrolment and educational performance is as under

Table 9: Composition of Students

Grade	Total	Boys	Girls	(%)
School	16721	10153	6568	39
+2	1405	545	860	61
+3	1709	904	805	47
PG	311	224	87	29
Professional Course	754	539	215	29
Total	20900	12365	8535	41

It would be seen that the gender disparities is rather wafer thin. The education performance is also highly edifying with almost 95% pass per centage.

Table 10: Educational Performance of KISS Students

	11-12	12-13	13-14
+2 Arts			
(a) (% Passed) (No)	111	272	284
(b) 2 nd Division (No)	18	54	60
(C)1 st Division (No)	59	129	94
+2 Commerce			
(a) (% Passed) (No)	93	112	115
(b) 2 nd Division (No)	36	17	33
(C)1 st Division (No)	35	49	34
+2 Science			
(a) (% Passed) (No)	148	199	206
(b) 2 nd Division (No)	17	38	16
(C)1 st Division (No)	78	94	111
+3 Arts			
(a) (% Passed) (No)	24	116	156
+3 Science			
(a) (% Passed) (No)	35	51	78
+3 Commerce			
(a) (% Passed) (No)	16	47	57
Post Graduates (No)	83	57	45

Besides performance of students of KISS is far better than their counterparts in the state board as the following table will bringout.

Table 11: Academic Achievement : KISS Vs. State School

Examination	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	State School
HSE	90%	100%	90%	90%	60-70%
CGSE	84%	100%	97%	95%	60-70%
Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship	-	-	13	22	-

Considering the phenomenon growth of students, the expenditure incurred is rather insignificant. What makes KISS experiment even more striking is the absence of state funding support.

Table 12- Trend of Students & Expenditure

Year	No. of student	Expenditure	Expenditure per Student Per Month
2009	10000	11.3	941.61
2011	15000	24.3	1340
2012	20000	33.2	1383
2013	20900	44.3	2119

The above expenditure per student in KISS i.e. around Rs.2000/- is way below the expenditure incurred by students in private universities which is around Rs.30,000 per month.

(D) Significant Social Inclusion Initiatives In KISS, Odisha

Quality Education with a Special Focus on Girl Child Education

KISS has been able to address many of the social and health issues like child marriage, infant mortality and maternal mortality etc. Girls in the indigenous communities are generally married off at an early age. They have little or no knowledge about their bodies and healthy sexual and reproductive practices, leading to high maternal mortality and infant mortality in these communities. Since the girls pursue education at KISS they free from the societal pressure of marrying at an early age. The girls are also provided counseling and education on their sexual reproductive health and rights which enables the girls to have a better understanding of their own bodies and healthy sexual and reproductive practices. This in turn has led to reduction of maternal mortality and infant mortality among them, which is very high on an all India basis as brought out at Table 4 above.

Life Skills Education

KISS has been implementing 'Life Skills Education' institution with the support of United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA). The objective behind it is to build the capacity of the tribal adolescents so that they can deal with different issues in their lives effectively. KISS has also been implementing this programme in all the 30

districts of the state reaching out directly to 80,000 children in the age group of 10-14 years.

Hunger & Health Alleviation

The greatest achievement has been the ability to provide three nutritious meals each day to all students. Indigenous communities also have lower levels of awareness on health issues which is a major reason why children are subjected to many serious diseases and illnesses such as Kwashiorkor, Marasmus, Tuberculosis, hookworm and ringworm infestation. Malnutrition and under nutrition is highly prevalent among the children in these communities. Conditions like Kwashiorkor and Marasmus arise due to vitamin and protein deficiencies in the body. KISS ensures that the diet provided is enriched with vitamins, proteins, minerals and carbohydrates.

Unemployment Mitigation

KISS has, to a certain extent, been able to address the issue of unemployment. The students at KISS have been able to find a source of livelihood after completion of their education. Many students have been placed in the public and private sector jobs and those students who have acquired degrees in medicine, engineering etc are now at par with the general population. The students are also provided with vocational trainings in different trades; the most popular being food preservation, fish cultivation, mushroom cultivation and agricultural practices. KISS in collaboration with the British Council has taken up a unique Self Employment Programme with focus on young girls, imparting them prerequisite skill-sets to establish social enterprises (food preservation) in their villages.

Extra Curricular Activities

The tribal students are extremely proficient in the field of athletics. They are also making their presence in international forum. Shri B. Barik was selected for Women Rugby World Cup and Shri L. Hembram: UN Youth Assembly at Malala. Of late they have been joining banks, railways and the IT sector some of the students are also receiving excellent academic exposure to compete in the civil services under the guidance of the School of Leadership.

Important international collaborative arrangements.

English Access Micro Scholarship Program

This program is an initiative of the Department of State, United States of America. 450 tribal students have been enrolled in this program and are being trained in English language so that they can be empowered to compete at a national and international level.

Bernard Van Leer Foundation

Bernard Van Leer Foundation, is instituting the first Early Childhood Development Program through Mother Tongue based multilingual learning in the state within its premises. This program not only aims to improve the quality of education of children

getting enrolled into KISS, but also aims to be the first Centre of Excellence on mother tongue based early childhood education in the state.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

KISS in partnership with United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) is implementing a project on “Empowering young people with life skills through building institutional capacity, imparting life skills education and broadening research base for Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) and Life Skill Education (LSE)” for about 5000 adolescents in the institute and extend support for promotion of LSE & ARSH in the region from October 2009.

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF in association with KISS has established a Children Development Resource Centre (CDRC) as part of the larger UNICEF-KIIT University joint initiative for the Centre for Children Studies (CCS). The goal is to promote evidence-based policy making by building a knowledge base through action research and other development programmes on children’s issues focusing on the state of Odisha.

(E) Lessons Learnt And Way Forward

It would be thus be seen that a sense of compassion and un-wavering commitment by its redoubtable founder Dr. Achyuta Samanta, KISS has ensured that real relief is provided to tribal children from the quagmire of poverty and students are empowered to earn a decent livelihood and even aspire to excel in public life. With zero dropout and a high degree of gender symmetry KISS holds an ideal template for replication. However, it requires serious hand holding by public authorities who are chary of providing allocation to such private initiatives. The governmental initiatives through the tribal sub plans and Ashrams Schools etc. have not benefitted the disadvantaged section in any significant manner.



Add to this is the general perception is that the MNCs find the tribal areas to be ideal platform to subvert PESA Act and deprive the local population of forest rights. The approach of the government, instead of mainstreaming the alienated population through developmental initiatives, has been one of repression and victimization. Prof. J.K. Galbraith had observed that in neo-liberal India there is “privatization of profit and nationalization of loss”. It is, therefore, refreshing to observe that KISS Odisha without the tag of crony capitalism and state funding is making significant impact on livelihood of the alienated tribal population in Odisha. Dr. Samanta in as sense is fulfilling the vision of Verrier Elwin who wanted inclusion of the tribals into the mainstream through compassion, commitment and credibility. KISS Odisha has also excellent potential for replication in other parts of Odisha with sizable tribal population. The festering Maoist problem is not one of law and order but of

mainstreaming through education. Margret Sanger had rightly observed “development is the best contraceptive” for the poor and the marginalized.

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