abstract

Meenakshi Thapan: Waiting for change: Enduring educational outcomes

Waiting for change: enduring educational outcomes
A key to understanding the relationship between education and transformation lies in perceiving the ways in which it is possible for youth around the world to make sense of their everyday lives in a rapidly changing world. Taking the view that education is not only about what it does but who it addresses, it is imperative to understand the lived experience of young people. This is possible on two registers: that of locality that is central to the lived experience of young people and of social capital as an outcome of the social and cultural resources available to youth. How do young people reflect on themselves and their futures? On what social forces and personal dilemmas are these based? And how are these grounded in the local as much as in the global both in the nature of the experience as well as in the articulation of it? The underlying premise of my article is that the experience of persistent inequalities as a consequence of personal trajectories and social institutions is central to the experience of youth as is their participation in an increasingly changing global scenario. I focus not so much on the promise that education holds out but on the outcome of education for young people in the spaces that they inhabit in diverse societies.

Keywords: Everyday life · youth · educational transformations · globalization · locality · social inequalities

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Waiting for change

Enduring educational outcomes

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Youth and educational outcomes

In writing about education and its outcomes, the focus is nearly always on expectations from education. The emphasis particularly is on the livelihood opportunities and enhanced quality of life that education opens up. Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen (2002, p. 4) argue for example, «School education, thus, not only enhances social and cultural freedoms, it also enhances economic opportunities (for example, to get a job and to earn an income)». Individuals seek out educational certification precisely in order to enhance their credentials for upward mobility.

Educational aspirations of the youth however emerge from their lived experience; from their location as subjects in particular gendered, cultural and social spaces that they inhabit. To illustrate this point, I use the life story of a young student in a secondary school in Delhi to highlight his hopes and expectations in spite of his dull and monotonous schooling experience.

On the one hand, we may take the view that education is not only about what it does but who it addresses; it is imperative to understand the lived experience of young people in the spaces that they inhabit in diverse societies.

On the other hand, however, although their expectations may not often meet with success in the obvious ways that education is intended to, their perspectives and experience not only tell us about the contradictions and cleavages that charac-
terize their lives but also point to their strength as active agents who seek to attain their goals and maximize their gains in multiple ways. This is done through the uses of social capital acquired from education and from the social and cultural resources at their command.

I seek to therefore understand educational outcomes on two registers: that of locality that is central to the lived experience of young people as much as it is to the educational process itself; and secondly, that of social capital which is an outcome of available social and cultural resources that include peer and friendship groups, family, community, and the social networks that emerge from these. It also includes sociability, i.e. «the disposition and skill to sustain and use those networks» (Holland, 2009, p. 333). With these underpinnings, and deliberately moving away from an institutional framework, I seek to investigate what it means to be young, educated and with voice in multiple contexts in a rapidly changing world that is facing the consequences of globalization, economic growth as well as economic slowdowns, increasing consumerism, and a life of mixed opportunities, uncertainty and risk.

There is a greater focus increasingly on the fact that young people need attention on a number of fronts:

They tend to have the highest unemployment rates, experience high rates of violence and abuse, have to contend without much social support in raising young families, confront major health issues such as HIV/AIDS, and have little chance to represent themselves within political structures... There is a record 1.3 billion youth between 12 and 24 in the world, with around 60% (if not more in some countries) of the South Asian and Sub-Saharan African population under 25. [In India alone, there is a population of 1.21 billion people according to the 2011 census, of whom more than 50% are below the age of 25]. Young people make up half the world’s unemployed, some 130 million cannot read or write and some 100 million new jobs are needed to cope with young people seeking work. (Arnot, 2008).

In India, a severe outcome of the enormous pressure exerted by the formal system of education is the increasing number of suicides by young people who either fail to make the grade or who are unable to pass examinations or realise their educational targets. A recent study notes that an overwhelming 187,000 persons committed suicide in India in 2010. Of these, 40 per cent of the men and 56 per cent of the women were in the 15–29 age group, according to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, which conducted the study (Patel, Ramasundarahettige, Vijayakumar, Thakur, Gajalakshmi, Gururaj, Suraweera, & Jha, 2012). The perceived lack of ability to fulfill parental aspirations, succeed at examinations, or early marital problems are the prime motivating factors, among others, in this age cohort. The distressing reality that forces students to end their life rather than face failure and humiliation is a revealing comment on the relevance of a formal system of education that places an undue emphasis on high levels of attainment that are valorized and celebrated in society.

An important question stems from the potential role of education in improving the welfare of the five billion people living in developing countries. While education may undoubtedly pave the way for opportunities and success, inequalities persist, and educational outcomes are unequal and complex in their impact on individuals and society. The relationship between education and change is therefore not linear and fixed; it is in fact complicated by various factors that influence both its practice as well as its possible out-
comes. Willis’s important work from the 1970s highlights the complex processes at work in the transformation and reproduction of working class lives as an outcome of education. Schools espouse values and educational institutions often use the captive audience at their command to perpetrate values that curtail freedoms of one kind or another. This may also result in an outcome that is unfavourable to the development of a democratic and secular society.

None the less, there is also a great effort in viewing education as an agent of change and at the same time, as an instrument of society’s condition. This apparent contradiction results in not only the conditions that facilitate the reproduction of the inequalities and structures as pointed out by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) but also in enabling the possibilities of a negotiation or struggle, thus in a sense allowing for the prospect of the transformatory moment to capture the future as it were. This dual mode is not new to educational practice or to its outcomes but it does help us to understand how education both denies freedom and has the potential to liberate.

The underlying premise of this article therefore is that the experience of persistent inequalities as a consequence of personal trajectories and social institutions is central to the experience of youth as is their participation in an increasingly changing global scenario. I focus not so much on the promise that education holds out but on the outcome of education for young people in the spaces that they inhabit in diverse societies. I therefore seek to understand the relationship between educational outcomes and transformation in terms of what it means to the human subject and the youth culture in which he or she is embedded.

I do not, however, lament the fact that education fails to provide sufficient opportunities for employment as a result of the lack of resources in several societies, or that youth remain embedded in poverty and are unable to use their education in any meaningful way. Instead, I point to the uses of social capital that are consequences of the education young people receive in societies around the world but especially in the global south where employment and resources are scarce. How then do young people reflect on themselves and their futures? What forms do these reflections take? On what social forces and personal dilemmas are these based? And how are these grounded in the local as much as in the global both in the nature of the experience as well as in the articulation of it?

In response to some of these questions, I turn to a case study of a young student in a government (public) secondary school in Delhi. Although I seek to examine educational outcomes from a non-institutional framework in this essay, I deliberately choose Varun, a young boy in school, as an illustration of the expectations, aspirations and desires of a young person for purposes of bringing out the significance of lived experience. Despite the poverty that defines Varun’s life, his enthusiasm for school and participation in all school activities remains central to his experience. Varun’s widowed mother and Varun himself view educational outcomes clearly in terms of the possibilities for higher education, a government job, and movement out of a life of poverty into a successful future. In other words, it is expected that education will offer the potential to transform a life.

The predicament of youth: Varun’s story

Schooling in India is set in vastly different contexts that are dependent on a particular school’s history and setting, institutional goals, location, available infrastructure, lin-
guistic medium of instruction, the relevant school board to which a school may be affiliated, the social class of students and the teachers, caste identities and a host of other influencing factors. There are three types of schools in India: government, aided, and private (recognized and unrecognized). Those that are run by central, state or local governments are referred to as government schools; aided schools are those that are run by private managements but funded by government grant-in-aid; and private schools that receive no aid are referred to as private schools although there is an important subdivision among those that are recognized by the government (i.e. they fulfill certain criteria) or are unrecognized (Kingdon, 2005). The most significant distinction between schools is that between the government and private schools.

There has been a substantial increase in private schools in recent years as well as a massive growth in the government school system (De, Reetika, Samson & Kumar, 2011). Official statistics include only private recognised schools, ignoring all those schools that are unrecognized but none the less flourish with the promise of wholesome, English medium education. This has resulted in a huge heterogeneity in the schooling system in the country as there are vast differences amongst private schools and government schools depending on location, fees charged, availability of resources and infrastructure, teacher qualifications and several other factors. These contexts are further shaped by the characteristics of schools that place them in the category of secular schools, or those that are identified with a particular religious or cultural identity, or schools that are based on a non-conformist stance that set them apart as alternative schools. All these factors influence what goes on in schools and shape schooling processes in different ways.

At the time of field work, there were a total of 1.022 students in the government secondary school for boys under study, although some government schools in Delhi (there are a total of 1040 govt. schools in Delhi alone) have 4,000 students in one school with very large numbers of students in each class. The Govt. Boys Senior Secondary School (GBSSS) is located in one of the two zones in the north district, in a crowded part of north Delhi, close to the inter-state bus stand, in the vicinity of a cinema hall, narrow alleys and petty shops. A series of classroom observations were conducted in Class 9, interviews were conducted with teachers and the Principal, 45 students responded to a questionnaire, group discussions were held, and one case study was developed with Varun in school and at his home.

In the description I provide, I rely on personal voice, thick description and pay serious attention to Varun’s nuanced telling of his educational experience. Varun is in Class 9 and travels to his school by public bus every day from across the Yamuna river, a distance of at least 25 kilometers. He is 14 years old, very thin and small built. He needs to wear prescription glasses but has not worn them for several months as they broke, and there is no money to buy a new pair. His hair is well-combed, and he says he always puts mustard oil on his hair at night before sleeping and takes a bath before coming to school when it is not a cold morning. He has no shoe brush but makes sure that he rubs his shoes with a piece of cloth before coming to the school. He does not wear the regulation school tie with his school uniform as his mother cannot afford to buy a tie for him.

In school, Varun always stands in the first row during assembly, with hands always folded tightly when the song «Ai Malik Tere Bande Hum» (oh Lord, we are your people) is being sung. He rarely misses class and nev-
er bunks school. Deprived of his father’s presence, living alone with a sister and his mother, who happens to be the only working mother in the school, Varun’s sincerity, perseverance and commitment to his school life come through.

Varun and his mother live in a small, two-roomed hutment, with no electricity, very little space and almost no income. Varun’s home is located on a street made of bricks and difficult to walk upon. A dirty drain flows on the either side. Inside, there are two rooms, a verandah, a kitchen and a bathroom. The water tank contains no water, is covered with a cloth and is used for storing grain. The refrigerator is dead and is kept just for show. There is a table clock kept on the refrigerator but the hands of the clock do not move. This is the room used by Varun to keep his books; it is his «study» and it is also used as a guest room. Varun’s mother has a very difficult time managing the household expenses and there is no television or radio in Varun’s home. There is no electricity connection either as the bills could not be paid.

Varun has two sisters, one of whom has eloped and is not in contact with the family. The other sister is in high school and his mother is waiting for her to finish school, study through long distance learning and start earning by teaching in a local school. All her hopes are clearly pinned on Varun, as not only growing up to be the main bread winner but also providing solace to her and to the poor in society. The value of education in her mind is linked to his future success which clearly means a government job that is unbeatable for the security and success it brings.

«Varun is my last prop», she says. «I want him to study and study hard. I repeatedly tell him to study. He cannot study in the evening because there is no electricity but I wake him up very early in the mornings to study. If he continues to study and pass, I will sell myself to keep his study in continuity». She adds: «School is everything because it decides the future of a man. One cannot do anything in this world if he is an illiterate. It is by studying in the school that you can get a good job and I am sending Varun to school so that he gets a good job by studying hard. You know when I see any man doing a government job, I dream that my son will also get a government job and pray to God for him».

Varun’s ambition however is to become a MBBS doctor. He asserts: «Because it is in my mind, I want to improve the condition of my family. My mother’s health is not conducive to work, she suffers from a painful backache and she cannot work anymore…. My mother trusts me a lot and she repeatedly says that I am her only son and I should study and become a great man».

Varun’s earliest memory of his childhood is in fact linked to a patriotic song that he sang on behalf of his school in another school where he received the first prize. It goes like this (in rough translation from Hindi):

Counting began when India gave the world the concept of zero
If my India had not helped, it would have been difficult to go to the moon
It would have been difficult to understand the distance between the earth and the moon...
Civilisation came first to that place where Art took birth first,
My India is that India that has the world behind her,
the world moved, and moved ahead
Dear Lord, help us to go forward, keep moving and flowering…

The detailed and explicit manner in which Varun is able to articulate the words of the song, his singing of it at a special event, and the meanings it holds for him is very clearly linked to the content of the song which in
Varun’s view represents his own love for his country, and all that it stands for. Varun is one of those few students who love the morning assembly, enjoy the songs, the national anthem, the symbols and meanings these represent, and above all, perceives his future in relation to the destiny of the nation.

As a doctor, he recognizes that he will be in service to mankind, to society, to the nation. He keeps his body neat and clean, despite the family’s meagre income, having an early morning cold both, using hair oil, polishing his shoes. Presenting himself in the appropriate manner is part of the repertoire of being a good student internalized so well by him. He is committed to school work and when he falls short of his own goals, he admits that his mother punishes him by beating him, «when I play a lot», he says, for example. It is not surprising then that for Varun the idea of educational outcomes is linked very closely to hard work:

I can become a good citizen only by studying hard. I want to become a doctor; I want to help my mother get rid of poverty. One should help others, should follow the rules of the country; we should keep the drains, roads of our locality clean, we should respect our elders and not speak a lie.

In this manner, Varun ties himself to all that he has heard and learnt in school as well as imbibed from his home, from television and cinema. His world at home and in school reaffirms that which is known, unassailable, and true, in his eyes, to his self-respect and to the vitality and life of the nation. His identity is similarly marked by the religious and patriotic singing he has absorbed, and so well voiced in his desire to «serve» society through the vocation of a good doctor. He is the model good citizen with a goal and attitude that reflects social expectations and norms.

Varun accords a special place to his nation, to which his identity is so closely linked, as that territory which has provided leadership to the rest of the world, where art and civilization have taken birth, where scientific symbols and concepts have originated. In his imagination, he ties his own future in a very real sense to this world to which he also belongs, despite his physical location in a landscape that in mired in poverty and deprivation. He sees his future therefore lying in his aspirations which will somehow find fulfillment through his hard work, commitment and perseverance and the important fact that his identity is apparently rooted in a territory of which he is proud precisely because of its position in the world as a cultural and symbolic leader and which he thinks will redeem him in some senses from his own predicament.

This vignette highlights the significance of locality in the everyday lives of young people. The importance of locality in shaping not just aspirations and experience but also outcomes in an inextricable manner is understood through the juxtaposition of space, territory and place in Varun’s story. I define locality not merely as a geographical space though this too has its meaning as Varun’s home and its physical location are important markers of his desire for education that will help him to realize his goals.

Love and loyalty for the nation are clearly inscribed in Varun’s vision of the world; this articulates locality in terms of not only a territorial space but also an emotional bond with the nation-state communicated through deep emotions, the senses and feelings of insurmountable affection, pride, sacrifice and service, expressed through words in the poem and encapsulated in the spirit that defines Varun’s vision: service to the nation and a government job. However, the impossible task of realizing goals bestows a certain edge to the experience of locality in
rapidly changing societies of the south. It is probably unlikely that Varun will attain his objectives of higher education in his quest for a medical career as competition for admission to medical school is competitive and requires financial resources which Varun clearly does not have access to.

The sense of place as locality is thus experienced anew by youth who struggle to acquire cultural capital against all odds through changing their goals, modifying aspirations, and always relying on hope for a future that is viewed as being clearly marked by an educational experience. Social capital opens up the possibility of transforming educational outcomes into meaningful experiences expressing triumph rather than despair and exclusion. The uses of social capital depends however in the context of locality and its enabling characteristics. Varun’s story highlights the significance of locality in both shaping aspirations in a particular direction as well as the unrealizable goals that Varun has set for himself. On completion of schooling, his mobil- ity will depend on his ability or ‘sociability’ to use the social and cultural resources at his command to his benefit.

The experience and understanding of locality is no doubt animated by temporality: the passing of society from colonialism to a post colony, inspired by the legacies of colonialism and importantly, by traditional sources but at the cusp of a modernity, and widespread economic, social and cultural transformations that alter the lives of young people and disadvantage them in many ways; simultaneously, there is a movement from one stage of being a student to another stage, progressively moving up (or down) the ladder of continuous success and upward mobility or down the spiral of exclusion and despair. At the same time, this movement is complicated by the points of contact when there is partial success in the educational trajectory or there is complete failure. The specific outcomes engendered by education may be traced in different contexts as explicit characteristics of being educated, young and part of a global society in a changing world.

**The specificity of individual and social experience in the context of educational outcomes**

The significance of specificity brings out the particularity of experience both at individual and social levels that help us understand educational outcomes in diverse contexts. Waiting for change, enduring educational outcomes is the nature of everyday life globally where young people wait for education to deliver its promise of freedom, opportunity, dignity and above all, change. The experience of being in a liminal stage exemplified by the metaphor of waiting for something to happen: a job, an event, a cause, i.e. waiting (expressing the feeling of boredom, hanging about, with nothing to do) is most evocatively captured by Jeffrey (2010) in his nuanced work on educated young men from struggling lower middle class backgrounds in rural north India.

He comments on the particular disadvantage experienced by young men who literally have no future as a consequence of the experience of acute joblessness and the social expectations associated with this condition which labels them as wayward, dangerous and apathetic. Jeffrey also examines the case of young men who are unemployed or waiting to be unemployed and the impact of this condition on, among other things, their everyday state of existence wherein the youth experience a sense of being ‘lost in time and space’, of having too much time and being in many ways totally without direction. The fact that this is partly a result of the poor quality of the higher education curriculum and the accumulation of degrees by the youth adds to their un-employability.\(^6\)
Jeffrey’s coinage of timepass⁷ as an existential dilemma shows us how youth cultures are constituted in particular ways as a result of educational failures. In other words, although the youth are qualified, the education they have received has failed them as they do not benefit from its outcome in any significant way. Their participation in political activities is a consequence of such an outcome and their social capital helps them to engage in providing their «services» to the local community over a variety of issues and thereby renegotiate their masculinity that is lost through their condition of unemployment.

They do this through their involvement in a variety of activities including local level politics, directing younger students towards educational goals, helping them achieve results, and continuing to reinvest in the acquisition of educational certification in the last hope that at some point, they would be able to gain from their additional qualifications. Their education has however inadequately prepared them for gainful employment in a market that is increasingly reflecting and catering to global demands. Jeffrey’s (2010, p. 81) revealing conclusion therefore that the young men used timepass to signal their removal from spaces of relative «modernity» is an important comment on the inability of educational qualifications to lend themselves to modernising trends in a changing society. The only way out for these young men is to develop novel means of exercising themselves, as educated and qualified, and that carry social weight among younger peers and in the community.

Other studies from the field report a startling range of disadvantages that accrue in spite of receiving an education. A recent study by Lange (2012) points to the connections between education, unemployment, growing frustration and ethnic violence in societies as diverse as Canada, Germany, Sri Lanka, sub-Saharan Africa and India. Lange argues that education provides self-esteem and confidence that results in high levels of assertiveness among educated youth to address their problems and seek justice: Unemployment adds the element of frustration-aggression to this goal. Moreover, ethnic identities are strong, and ethnic markers help people to assert ethnic discrimination and inequalities, leading to «ethnic scapegoating and violence» (Lange, 2012, p. 22).

In spite of the growing evidence cited by Lange pointing to this turn, we need to however seriously consider the different ways in which youth seek to use their education to mobilise themselves for goals that are meaningful for themselves in their everyday life.

The mobilization of youth for cultural and political purposes is well documented and an understanding of such mobilization is essential to combat the view that education leads to unemployment, to frustration and therefore to violence.⁸ We need to understand how educated, unemployed youth use the medium of protest, collective identity and action, for social and political ends as a means of self-expression and social good.⁹ While this may also result in youth engagement with activities that foster violence, young people also use their education to further the education of others or seek to fulfill their search for employment through the use of strategies for upward mobility. This is one way youth seek to transform the cultural capital they have acquired through education into different forms of social capital.¹⁰

Cultural capital stems from the value, prestige and status accorded to education. As a result of such an invaluable rendering of education as the most prestigious goal whether or not it brings in tangible results, young people are able to convert this form of capital into social capital in more than one way. The English language is one aspect of acquired cultural capital and it is an inescapable tool in the
search for upward mobility in countries of the
global south. This has resulted in the estab-
lishment of particular kinds of educational in-
stitutions that offer to create «global» citizens
through their focus on developing English
language skills, and related «modern» techni-
cal education, and «job-oriented» courses for
upward mobility in a globalizing world.

The consequence has been the mush-
rooming of business processing outsourced
(BPO) centres in south Asia that cater mainly
to western operations of multi-national or-
ganisations. Young people with a high school
or undergraduate degree, with adequate
training in the English language and the art of
speaking English as an American or British
speaker, (a large number of schools exist for
developing this skill) work in these BPO’s for
relatively low wages and long working hours.
The American and/or global work culture
and ethos that is sought to be promoted
through such organisations perhaps enable
youth to imagine they are an integral part of
an imaginary global work force.

Nothing could however be further from
the truth as the incomparable wage structure
ensures that the encounter with modernity
remains embedded in the local. Women
working in these organisations come across
several occupational hazards of late working
hours, sexual harassment and safety issues.
Although this is a cause for anxiety and con-
cern among the young working women at
these centres, the perception that they are
somehow on the exciting path to westerniza-
tion and globalization is far too tempting to
abandon. Youth thus seek to maximise their
gains by moving rather swiftly through these
organisations, taking their experience and
skills into more profitable avenues of return.
It is the flexibility of youth cultures based on
peer interaction and influence, and their use
of the social capital at their command, that
enables this rapid and profitable movement.

In relating to others, young people engage
in forms of interaction that enable them to
reach out to others whether these are
friends, younger peers, other members of
the community, outsiders, thereby bonding
and bridging social capital (Holland 2009).
Youth often seek out networks across differ-
ent kinds of boundaries in order to access
other social and cultural resources through
an almost instrumental approach in order to
enrich their own networks of social capital.

Ultimately, if education does not deliver
its promise, youth are in one way severely in-
capacitated and devastated by the reality of
unemployment, or poorly paid jobs with
few avenues for upward mobility. The ability
to transform forms of capital for purposeful
interaction and change is one of the ways out
of the conundrum of having acquired an ed-
ucation without necessarily having a job or
seeing the possibility of one in the distant fu-
ture. As Bourdieu (1986) points out, social
capital is an outcome of cultural capital or
the gains of the acquisition of formal creden-
tials whether these are realized in a formal
sense or obliquely through the status, hon-
our and privilege they confer.

The experience of locality in diverse socie-
ties is based on competing interests, marked by
access to educational institutions, or alterna-
tively, the inadequacy of educational qualifica-
tions for occupational mobility, inflected by
caste, race, class and gender, and influenced by
media imagery and consumption patterns.
Expectations and failure stand opposed in lived
experience and in the midst are youth, both
young women and men, who are perhaps be-
wildered, and appear to be without purpose.
They do however find novel ways and means
to develop a sense of who they are in contem-
porary society. This sense of finding them-
selves in a condition, that does not in fact en-
able «success» as it has been anticipated, is the
failed outcome of an educational practice that
has not delivered the projected results.
Concluding remarks

This article has tried to show the duality present in educational outcomes. On the one hand, students’ aspirations for employment and upward mobility do not always meet with success. Varun’s story shows us the incredible commitment and strength of purpose on the part of an individual student, and his family, to seek gains through education. The life story illustrates, with poignancy, Varun’s sincerity and motivation to be educated and «serve» his nation and society. His individual goals are interwoven with social goals for the collective good of society.

The specificity of educational outcomes however brings out the stages in young people’s lives when they are unable to sufficiently use the education they have received to their advantage. They are trapped in a liminal phase of waiting, passing time, enduring educational outcomes. This is one aspect of the outcome of an education that does not provide any practical gains. At the same time, youth use their cultural and social capital to accomplish their individual and social objectives. They overcome their experience of liminality, marginalization and exclusion through engagement with local level politics, the education of others, social movements of different kinds, and by seeking new forms of employment in a changing India.

There has been no disenchantment with education in India where the Right To Education (RTE) Act (2009) has recently been approved. This not only reiterates education for all but has also compulsorily ensures 25 per cent reservation for children from deprived sections in all private schools in an effort to represent democracy through inclusion. The privatization of schooling and increasingly, higher education as well, has however reduced the responsibility of the state in India for ensuring a certain minimum quality in education in all educational institutions across the board.

Private interests more and more dominate educational curricula, evaluation and certification. Social inequalities are further strengthened as a result of unequal access to formal education. At the same time, education produces disequilibrium in large sections of the population in terms of expectations and outcomes. Moving out of an institutional framework enables us to understand some of these processes in everyday life settings. We need to simultaneously seek accountability from the state to take note of these processes, the possibilities of dangerous outcomes, and aim to provide varied educational and livelihood opportunities to the educated. An understanding of the resilience of youth as cultural agents of change, based not only on an understanding of youth in terms of social class, but taking ethnicity, gender, caste and religion, into account, may offer a way out of this obvious impasse of what formal education aspires to provide and the consequences it gives rise to.

Notes
1 See Willis (1977) for an understanding of the ways in which working class «lads», despite their resistance to school culture, reproduce aspects of the dominant culture through for example their sexist attitude towards young girls.
2 See the work for example of Sarkar (1996), Sundar (2005) for an understanding of how educational institutions run by right-wing institutions in India celebrate «Hindu» culture and promote distrust and hatred towards other communities.
3 To provide the social class background of the students: of the 45 students who took part in this study, the fathers of 32 are engaged in some kind of skilled or semi-skilled occupations and private business.
These include that of telephone mechanic, fitter in railways, jewellery shopkeeper, bus driver, policemen, artist, property dealer, clerk, guest house manager, messenger with a government agency, and the like. The rest include those who earn their livelihood from setting up a small movable stall selling towels, barber, gardener, labourers, cook, milkman, and other such occupations. All the mothers are «housewives» except one, a widow, who works at home by cutting out and preparing stickers for sale.

4 MBBS is an abbreviation for Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, the degree given to doctors in countries following the British educational system.

5 Veronique Benei (2009) refers to this as a «visceral» bond.

6 Swaminathan (2007) has noted that the regional disaggregation of unemployment data in India indicates that «the unemployment rate (on the CDS basis) is higher in high literacy states, almost 21 per cent in Kerala; next is West Bengal with 15 per cent, followed by Tamil Nadu at 12 per cent of their respective labour force» (p. 329). She further notes that unemployment in these regions is higher among youth and more for female youth, thus clearly indicating the link between education and unemployment. She clarifies that she is referring to general education which is not the same as «marketable skills» which she records at extremely low levels in rural India. See Swaminathan (2007).

7 «Timepass» is an Indian expression for time to be «passed» or «killed» (Jeffrey, 2010, p. 75) and for young Indian people it includes not only their hanging out but also their academic study (Jeffrey, 2010, p 81).

8 In 1972, Dalit youth formed an organization, the Dalit Panthers that organized a powerful protest against their poverty and upper caste Hindu society. They were mostly first generation educated youth who continued to experience unemployment, hunger and exclusion due to their marginalization and low caste status. By the late 1970s however, the movement had lost momentum, was split due to leadership differences and was unable to take any initiative other than cultural activism (Guru & Chakravarty, 2005).

9 I am aware that this might also be viewed as an argument in support of youth mobilisation for violence linked to inciting terror as discussed by Lange (2012). This however is not the thrust of my argument.

10 See Bourdieu (1986) for a discussion of the different forms of capital.

11 In addition, youth experience a hierarchical and often unpleasant work place as a recent study of the BPO sector in six metropolitan locations in India shows us. See D’Cruz and Rayner (2012).

12 See Turner (2012) for an analysis of the gender anxiety that prevails in such organisations through her engagement with two works of fiction on this theme, i.e. Bhagat (2005) and Saxena (2010).

13 See Nambissan and Ball (2010) for a critique of transnational advocacy networks and their role in advocating private schooling as a solution to achieving universal, high quality primary education in India.

**Literature**


