
Tracing Global–Local Transitions within Early Childhood Curriculum and Practice in India

AMITA GUPTA

School of Education, The City College of New York, USA

ABSTRACT Taking the view that curriculum and pedagogy are complex processes related to history, politics, economics, culture and knowledge, and influenced by interactions that occur between students, teachers and the larger communities, this article will discuss how curriculum takes shape and is negotiated in some early childhood classrooms in post-colonial urban India. The article draws on empirical and published research, and includes a discussion on the influence of recent local and global forces on teaching and learning, focusing specifically on issues such as: the deep divide between private and public education in India; the challenge of sustaining local government schools in India in the face of the global emphasis placed on knowledge of the English language; the recent increase in the emergence of private schools in low- as well as high-socio-economic-class neighborhoods in India; the more recent neo-colonial influences of western media on children's lives in their homes and schools; and early childhood teachers' perceptions on the transitions between 'western' and 'Indian' values.

The Global–Local Interplay

School philosophies tend to mirror national cultures and borrow from cultural beliefs, and as local cultures evolve under global influences school systems are transformed and begin to reflect those changes that are encountered in local realities. Historically, this has resulted in various countries attempting to re-form their school cultures as a reaction to global imports (Watson, 1997; Anderson-Levitt, 2003). Taking the current situation of India, some examples of global imports that are creating changes in local realities include various elements from the business world of multinational corporations, from the entertainment world of celebrities, and from the world of education with regard to curricula and pedagogies, elements that are reflective of Euro-American lifestyles. These current imports have not only permeated the fabric of urban metropolises but are gradually and visibly seeping into small-town India as well. The direct impact of these and related changes on school systems has resulted in the Indian government's recent concern over the drawbacks of an educational system that has for centuries been too rigid and academically oriented. Indeed, ever since colonial powers took control of education in India a couple of centuries ago, the nature of mainstream schooling in urban and rural India has almost entirely consisted of the textbook-driven, examination-based approach focused on the honing of academic skills without much regard for nurturing the development of children's imagination or creative thinking skills. Although there have been independent educators over the years in India who have tried to establish schools to implement educational approaches that are less academically rigorous and more holistic, these attempts have been few and far between and without widespread government support.

It was only in 2006 that the Indian government's National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) implemented a fundamental change in the national curriculum framework in India with the goal of making the process of learning more fun and child-friendly at all levels from primary through secondary schools. Examples of these changes include the addition of more

activity-based and child-centered teaching strategies, the elimination of annual examinations in elementary schools, and the elimination of retention policies in favor of social promotion in primary schools. The question remains whether these new goals for transforming the underlying philosophy and pedagogy of education can be achieved by merely mandating the school curriculum to be more child-friendly without addressing the other existing and challenging issues in the socio-cultural context of Indian education, such as inadequate teacher preparation in the new pedagogy, large class sizes, a scarcity of classroom materials, poor infrastructure in schools, high stakes testing, and board examinations in the higher grades that almost exclusively determine admission into the highly competitive colleges. Educational philosophies and teaching practices are a factor of local cultural, social, historical, political and economic forces, and it is important to be mindful of the fact that people's lives in schools and classrooms are actually extensions of their lives in the larger society outside their schools. At the same time it is also fair to acknowledge that although cultural factors do influence many educational issues, the identification and articulation of these precise factors remains an area most researchers do not like to venture into just because of the complexity of isolating those factors (Mason, 2007). Still, it is important to at least make an attempt to understand those larger cultural and philosophical forces that shape existing educational ideas and approaches within particular contexts.

This article presents a brief discussion of the global–local influences on early childhood education in India, and examines the curriculum implemented in some early childhood classrooms of private schools in urban India, providing a description of how various educational influences have become incorporated into early childhood classroom practice and into early childhood teachers' thinking. The article includes discussions on specific issues, such as: the wide variety of early childhood settings; the deep divide between private and public education in India; the challenge of sustaining local government schools in India in the face of the global emphasis placed on knowledge of the English language; the recent increase in the emergence of private schools in low- as well as high-socio-economic-class neighborhoods in India; the challenges confronting the recent national educational initiative for supporting more child-friendly curricular policies in India; the neo-colonial influences of the more industrialized nations of the West on children's lives in their homes and schools; and the negotiations between 'western' and 'Indian' educational values.

An Overview of Early Education in India

Although education in India is primarily a responsibility of the central government, both central and state government agencies play a major role in the development of education, especially at the primary level. When India gained independence from the British in 1947 after almost 300 years of partial or complete colonial occupation, the newly formed Indian government's commitment to the spread of knowledge and freedom of thought was written into Article 45 of the Constitution of India: 'The State shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years' (National Policy on Education, Government of India, 1986). At the time of independence, pre-school education was largely provided by voluntary organizations, and it was only in the 1970s that child welfare services were expanded to education, health and nutrition. In 2001, the Eighty-sixth Constitutional Amendment Act substituted Article 45 to read: 'The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years', but this goal is yet to be achieved. According to the 2007 Annual Report of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, India's elementary education system in government and government-aided schools enrolled almost 182 million children between the ages of 6 and 14 years in the year 2004-05, making it one of the largest elementary education systems in the world (Government of India, 2007). This total represents 93% of all children within that age group.

It was only with the establishment of the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986 and its subsequent modification in 1992 that the urgently needed attention was accorded to early childhood care and education (ECCE), and with this came the formal recognition of early education playing a critical part in the development of human resources. The development of ECCE programs was seen as not only providing the individual child with early care and education, but also as releasing women for other activities besides child-rearing, and facilitating the access to

schools by older girls who would have been otherwise providing sibling care. ECCE in India falls under the purview of various organizations such as the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), District Primary Education Program (DPEP), and the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy (DEEL). Thus, the field of early education in India is multi-tiered and complex, and encompasses a wide variety of schools. There is not only a large system of government schools throughout the country, but also an extensive system of private schools, especially in urbanized areas. The diverse kinds of settings at the early childhood level make it difficult for much data to be available regarding the actual enrollment at the pre-primary level for younger children.

Diverse Socio-Cultural-Economic Contexts of Early Childhood Settings in India

The socio-cultural-economic context of early childhood programs can range from being affluent to being poor; from remote rural to urban metropolitan; from deeply religious to secular; from one-room schoolhouses to simple groups of young children gathered in courtyards; from westernized nursery classrooms housed in large comprehensive private schools to independent nursery schools and day-care centers, to mobile crèches that serve as temporary classrooms in vans/buses at labor sites for the care of children of migrant construction workers; and from government/private or non-profit sponsored centers in affluent neighborhoods to small, crowded, one-room schools in urban slum settlements (Gupta, 2006). The following are examples of the specific kinds of pre-primary or early childhood settings found in India.

The two most common and extensive kind of early childhood care and education system consists of the *Anganwadi Centers* which are run by the centrally sponsored Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) which falls under the umbrella of the DWCD, and the *Balwadi Centers* run by state government or local bodies. The goal of these centers is to empower underprivileged children younger than the age of six, and ensure that they are physically healthy, emotionally secure, socially competent and intellectually ready to learn when they reach primary school age. Although in many states, such as Bihar, there is a provision to open an *Anganwadi Center* in every village, only a few villages actually have one (Karan & Pushpendra, 2006). At a national level, almost 69% of all four-year-olds are enrolled in an *Anganwadi* or *Balwadi*, with some states having higher or lower percentages (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2007).

A report by NCERT in 1999 revealed that more than seventy percent of *Anganwadis* had activities for children that were geared towards rote learning and were teaching the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic). In exemplar *Balwadis*, a member of the community is selected and trained for the teacher's job, indigenous materials that are easily available are utilized, and extensive community participation is encouraged, which helps compensate for the lack of funding, resources and teacher training (Gokhale, 2005). According to the ICDS Scheme presentation of 12 April 2006 (ICDS Scheme presentation, 2006), the objectives of ICDS proposed for the future include the following: improve nutritional and health status of children aged 0-6 years; reduce incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school drop-outs; enhance the capability of the mother and family to look after the health, nutritional and development needs of the child; achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation among various departments to promote child development; and lay the foundation for proper psychological development of the child. Of the 15-16 objectives discussed, only one directly addresses the issues of curriculum and pedagogy, and was described as: improving the quality of early learning; nurturing joyful learning environments at *Anganwadi* centers; regular availability and supply of pre-school kits; upgrading of *Anganwadi* centers to nursery schools. The other goals address issues such as infrastructure, health and nutrition, safe drinking water, infant mortality, and so forth. Thus it is clear that from the government's perspective the area of ECE (0-6 years) rests more within the domain of human resources than the domain of education.

Another kind of early childhood setting in India is the non-governmental organization (NGO)-sponsored early childhood center. NGOs have played a critical role in advancing childcare services in India, in being able to mobilize local communities to help bridge the gap between the government and the people. NGO-sponsored education centers may be found primarily in low socio-economic urban settlements and in rural districts.

The independent private nursery school is usually found in urban residential neighborhoods. Usually these nursery schools are established as a home business by stay-at-home, middle-class wives and mothers, either in a portion of their own homes or in a separate residential building. Such schools are small and most often offer a curriculum to prepare children to be admitted to larger ongoing private schools.

Yet another type of early education program consists of the nursery/kindergarten grades within comprehensive private schools in large urban centers and metropolitan cities. Traditionally, these coveted private schools have held parent interviews and admissions tests for the children, and getting admission into some of the more elite schools has been very difficult. Such early childhood centers are highly competitive, keeping high standards with regard to curricular and pedagogical issues, abundant classroom materials, and excellent teacher qualifications.

A unique kind of early childhood setting is the mobile crèche, which is usually a temporary structure set up at a construction site to care for the children of migrant construction workers and is run by the Central Social Welfare Board. The children cared for are usually under three years of age, and the primary objective of the crèche is attending to the infant/toddler's biological rhythm, alternating sleep, feeding, play and rest.

The urban day-care centre is a setting that is usually run by voluntary and governmental organizations such as the Central Social Welfare Board for disadvantaged families.

In rural India one can even see a school under a tree with a young adult/adult member of the village taking on the teacher's role, and instructing a group of children in the outdoors with a portable chalkboard, chalk and slates as the only available equipment.

The Deep Divide between Public and Private Centers/Schools

Among the diverse early childhood settings listed above, those run by the ICDS (including the *Anganwadis* and *Balwadis*) form the largest group for children in the age range zero to six years. ICDS is considered to be the world's largest integrated early childhood education and care program (Saini, 2000). The goal of ICDS is to not only empower young children, but also empower women aged 15 to 45 years, thus promoting school readiness in children and basic education skills in mothers. The 2002 National Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education organized by the Department of Elementary Education at NCERT reports that in 1999 there were 22.9 million children in the zero to six years age group receiving the Supplemental Nutrition Program services.

However, there are serious concerns regarding the quality of pre-school education offered by *Anganwadis* and *Balwadis* – specifically: lack of resources; lack of awareness of quality indicators; distortions in curriculum; poor training; lack of institutional capacity; and inadequate advocacy about the need and significance of early care and education programs (NCERT, 2002). Although the purpose and philosophy of these educational initiatives is well intentioned, the resources are scarce and the training of staff is inadequate. On the other hand, most of the private nursery schools and kindergartens are financially well-off, supported by high tuitions and/or other private funds, and definitely have the resources to offer better facilities and services and higher academic standards, and hire teachers who are better qualified and more experienced. But this can have negative and positive consequences. The competition and reliance on private tuitions may well lead to higher academic standards but at the same time it also results in overcrowding of classrooms as more and more families turn to private schools, and in greater social inequity as this 'better' educational experience comes with high out-of-pocket costs.

The predominant system of education in India within most government-sponsored and many private schools even at the early childhood level has followed, until recently, the pre-independence traditional colonial model characterized by a structured approach with a tightly prescribed content-based curriculum, including: a strong focus on reading, writing, and arithmetic dominated by rote learning; children seated most of the time at individual desks placed in rows; and a large amount of homework assignments required to be completed by the children every day. The National Policy on Education in 1986 did strongly recommend a more play-based approach for both primary and pre-primary classes, but a follow-up study in 1992 revealed that only fifteen percent of early childhood centers were practicing this philosophy (SCERT, 1994). Consequently, several change initiatives were proposed since then in early childhood and elementary education within both the

private and government sectors, in an attempt to make the approach less rigid, more child-centered, more activity-based, more experiential and creative, and less structured and formal (Thapa, 1994; Kaul, 1998; Gupta, 2001). But systemic change in this direction, and for all grade levels, has been written into the National Curriculum Framework only recently as of 2006, and now textbooks for schools across the country have been revised to reflect a more learner-oriented approach.

Usually the overall picture of primary education in India has been presented as a dismal one, but it is important to keep in mind the great diversity in the context of primary schooling. In general, India's average educational indicators are consistently kept down by about five states out of a total of 28 states and 7 union territories. These five states (Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa) are the largest and most populous and account for almost three-quarters of the children out of school in India, with the first four accounting for almost half the population in India by 2016 (Mehrotra, 2006). In these states and across the nation, most elementary schools in rural areas are government schools. The percentage of government schools in urban areas is lower due to the existence of more private schools in those areas. Although improvements have been seen in the quality of public primary education in various states, in general, the two main constraints that challenge elementary school reform in most Indian states are fiscal deficits at the state government level, and low accountability of teachers to the community. Other widespread challenges also include access and enrollment (drop-out rates, retention rates and schooling facilities within a reasonable distance); overcrowded classrooms and a short supply of teachers; high rates of teacher absenteeism (sometimes as high as 25%); and high out-of-pocket costs even for families of children attending government schools (Mehrotra, 2006). The impact of poor primary schooling systems directly results in low rates of literacy; low quality in health and nutrition services; high levels of infant mortality and high fertility rates; and higher incidence of poverty. This under-funding and underperforming of the state education system consequently provides an opportunity for the private educational sector to offer what is lacking.

The private sector has expanded exponentially in India, particularly in those states where the government school system has been most dysfunctional. Historically, these private schools have held high academic standards and have been accessible primarily to the Indian elite and upper-middle class. More recently there has been a prolific establishment of a large number of private schools in India that are not restricted to the elite. Even within India's private school system today there is great diversity in socio-cultural-economic contexts: private schools may be small or large; they may be aided or unaided by the government; teaching and academic standards may be above average or way below average; they may be located in small towns, in large metropolises, in rural villages as well as in urban centers; private schools may be sponsored by religious groups or private foundations or be individually managed; they may vary between charging very high to moderately low tuition fees; they may be recognized or unrecognized by the central government; some private schools are affordable to those who live on \$2 a day whereas other private schools may cater to the very affluent families; and so forth (Gupta, 2007). The two main reasons for the emergence and growth of private schools in India are the deterioration of government schools and the increasing ability of parents to pay for their children's education; and further, private schools are perceived to be better in being more accountable and thus offering higher quality teaching (Karan & Pushpendra, 2006). In Bihar, possibly India's poorest state, one small town of 300,000 people had 100 private schools in 2003 (Waldman, 2003). In a study conducted in one specific slum of Hyderabad (in the state of Andhra Pradesh), about 918 schools were identified within an area having a population of 800,000 people, and out of these, two-thirds were private schools; 76% of all school children in that slum attended either recognized or unrecognized private schools (Tooley, 2005). In one slum locality of Shahadra, one of the poorest and most densely populated sections of Delhi, the capital of India, researchers have recently surveyed schools that included 71 government schools, 121 private schools, and 72 private unrecognized schools (Tooley & Dixon, 2003). According to data, about 30-57% of all the children in the eight states of Uttar Pradesh (30.25%), Punjab (37.25%), Haryana (40.35%), Goa (44.65%), Meghalya (44.6%), Kerala (45.2%), Nagaland (46.1%), and Manipur (56.7%) attend private schools (Govinda & Bandhopadhyay, 2007). According to another report, 36 percent of school children in Utttar Pradesh, India's largest state and one of her poorest, attend private schools (Kazmin, 2000). All over the country, people such as

former teachers, landowners, and entrepreneurs in rural and urban areas are rapidly establishing private nursery and primary schools which are less bureaucratic, have better facilities, and offer an English-medium curriculum. The objective of most private schools in India is to utilize English as the primary language of instruction, which is what essentially distinguishes them from the government schools, and which is the main reason why families from all socio-economic classes are opting to have their children start their education in private institutions (Mehrotra, 2006; Gupta, 2007). In the climate of increasing globalization and India's booming economy, the hope of poorer parents is to equip their young children with the skills of the English language, which is being increasingly viewed as the language of power and success in Indian society.

Consequently, there is a widening gap that separates public education and private education in India at the early childhood level as well. Because the primary purpose of government early childhood settings in India is more related to issues such as health, nutrition, infant mortality, supporting mothers and so forth, my research, which was related to specific issues of early childhood curriculum and pedagogy, took me into the domain of classrooms within private schools.

The Culture–Curriculum Connection in Classrooms

Before launching into a description of how cultural influences shape and define classroom curriculum and pedagogies, I would like to clarify the multiple understandings of the words 'culture' and 'curriculum'. For the purpose of this article, I have engaged with the following definitions of culture: the values of particular groups of people regarding relationships of human beings to one another, to nature, to their work (Kluckhohn, 1961); the interaction between people and their social environment, each shaping the other in a dialectical process (Wagner, 1981); a particular way of life of a people or of a period of time (Williams, 1985); a set of practices by which meaning is produced (Bocock, 1992); all aspects of life such as ideas, relationships, languages, technology and value systems (Masemann, 2007). Although, admittedly, a country is not synonymous with culture, and cultural characteristics cannot be generalized across entire populations of a society, there are, however, certain features that are defined by overarching cultural, spiritual and philosophical beliefs that do lend common characteristics to groups of people who live within that context. Further, because cultural factors do indeed influence education and it may be difficult to isolate these specific factors, it would be valid and relevant to engage with larger sociological frameworks in order to understand the complexities of a culture and the curriculum it would support (Mason, 2007).

Turning next to curriculum, since there is an intimate connection between a society's overarching cultural philosophy and what gets taught in its schools as well as how it gets taught, curriculum can be said to be a dynamic experience closely shaped by interactions that occur in the contexts of communities, schools and classrooms. Thus curriculum, both the prescribed as well as the hidden curriculum, are complex processes that are related to history, politics, economics, cultural values both traditional and contemporary, funds of knowledge, and the biographies and skills of teachers as well as those of the communities in which they work (Kessler & Bloch, 2005). Having said that, in a prior study which included an examination of the sociology of early childhood curriculum and its relationship to factors that existed within the larger Indian society, I found a unique kind of early childhood curriculum being enacted: the goals of academic instruction and developing academic proficiency in young children worked hand in hand with the aim of teaching values and developing good character, along with the intention for some child-friendly practices (Gupta, 2006). Additionally, this curriculum occurred within school environments that had large class sizes but which reflected a high level of energy and engagement on the part of the students (Gupta, 2004).

The study of this curriculum presented several instances of contrasting elements and there was ever present the awareness of the 'other' in this 'post-colonial' model. I define post-colonial as a juxtaposition, a continuing and complex interplay of ideas and practices between the colonizer and the colonized, between the West and the Non-west, between the traditional and the modern, between the dominant and the marginalized. In this socially and culturally constructed early childhood curriculum as seen in some private schools in New Delhi, there was a constant

hybridization of diverse elements: of the ancient and the modern, the Indian and the western, the teacher-directed and the child-centered, the humanistic and the experiential. Yet the curriculum was also discrete to the discerning eye. In the process of analyzing the data the closely intertwined strands from distinct discourses crystallized as different dimensions of the curriculum. The image that emerged did not fit into the commonly known approaches and models of early childhood education that have been typically included in published early childhood research and scholarship commonly prescribed in academia, such as the Froebellian, Montessorian, Progressive, High/Scope, and Reggio Emilia approaches. This comes as no surprise because early childhood educational research and scholarship have traditionally highlighted ideas, practices and recommendations set almost exclusively in industrialized Euro-American contexts. Theoretical contributions and research from Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East have remained marginal and unrecognized mainly because they were not articulated in, or translated into, English, the language of dominance and heard knowledge (Rui, 2007). In my study I tried to answer questions related to the socio-cultural *how*, *what* and *why* of this early childhood curriculum in Indian schools – how had the current curriculum evolved? What specific early childhood educational objectives did teachers work toward by way of this curriculum that appeared to be very different from one that is held to be ‘appropriate’ as defined by the dominant western early childhood discourse? And why had these objectives been selected/included?

It was quite apparent that one dimension of this curriculum was the overt, highly structured, content-based, and formal academic aspect that was prescribed and mandated by the Indian government at the national level, and that had its roots in the colonizing influences of the British colonial administrators on Indian education. Another dimension was the ongoing, parallel values-based curriculum inspired by the teachers’ tacit knowledge and implicit beliefs resulting from their socio-cultural-historical constructivist learning influenced by an all-pervasive Indian philosophy, and supported by the school administrators (Gupta, 2003). There was also a third dimension which was related to the school administrators’ urging of and the early childhood teachers’ making sense of the ideals of progressive early childhood pedagogy, especially in schools that were financially well-off and that had been exposed to western ideas in education by way of workshops and teacher exchange programs.

It was clear to see the interplay between local and external influences, as ideas transitioned back and forth, shaping classroom practice and also the thinking of teachers and children. I will discuss the social-cultural-historical nature of this ‘post-colonial’ curriculum by briefly exploring each of the three dimensions.

The Influence of Prevailing Indian Cultural Beliefs

Although a detailed discussion on Indian spiritual philosophy may not be possible here, it is enough to say for the purpose of this discussion that the Hindu concepts of *dharma* and *karma* were seen to be central to teaching objectives, and appeared as being fundamental to concepts such as social development, emotional development, and moral development (Gupta, 2006). Progressive early childhood education in America promotes a concern for the ‘whole child’, viewing the development of social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills as overlapping yet individual domains within the child, with specific stage theories defining the nature of development within each of the domains. However, in the Indian world view, the concept of *dharma* and *karma* implies the overall growth and learning of individuals in relation to each other, and in the context of their duties and responsibilities to each other in order to maintain harmony in society. The child is considered both as a social being and as a unique individual (Viruru, 2001). The concept of *karma* emphasizes the individual in terms of the choices one makes, one’s actions, and the consequences of those actions, whereas the concept of *dharma* emphasizes the relationships the individual has with family and society. This approach understands a child’s growth and development to be a complex, three-dimensional whole without different theories governing individual developmental domains. This view was supported by the findings of the study that indicated that developing an overall, balanced, well-rounded social, emotional and intellectual personality in the children was an important objective for the early childhood teachers who were interviewed. According to one teacher in Gupta (2006):

education is just not learning A-B-C-D and 1-2-3-4. That, I think, comes later on. But initially what the foundation has to be laid on is good values, and for the child to adjust very well to the school routine, to mix around with other children and interact in the best way ... And then the best values should be inculcated. That I think is of the utmost importance ... all the values should be inculcated, the child should have an all-round personality development, not just academic ... Honesty, truthfulness, you know, all these good qualities, these moral things we learnt as part of our growing up.

From a theoretical standpoint, this can be supported by the Vygotskian approach. Unlike Piaget and others who saw human development as proceeding in maturational stages, Vygotsky viewed development as proceeding through a social process without stages, where learning was mediated through the social phenomenon of language (Williams, 1999).

The values and attitudes that the teachers aimed to reinforce with their students were also a way of life in India and were reflected in their everyday behaviors – for example, in the importance given to hospitality and respect. Hindus believe that there is a part of the ‘Divine Energy’ in every human being and being respectful to the ‘other’ is important in order for one to be of good character. In this world view, the ‘other’ comes first, and then the ‘self’. A good illustration of this fact is that the daily common greeting between any two individuals is *namaste*, which literally means, ‘I respect the Divine in you.’ A visit by another is considered a privilege rather than an inconvenience, because the ‘other’ is a guest, a form of the Divine to be welcomed and honored. Children are taught to be respectful to elders by their families and their teachers through the use of daily language. As Vygotsky maintained, construction of knowledge is not only cognitive but also social in nature (Forman, 1992). Higher psychological development occurs on a social level and is internalized at the individual cognitive level (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978), so that language has a powerful influence on children’s construction of meaning and subsequent influence on social attitudes and behaviors.

Another phenomenon that is closely related to both the concepts of *dharma* and the usage of language is the existence of kinship patterns. In India, people live multiple realities from the many kinship roles into which they are born or married. Each position in the kinship web has a specific title, and comes with a different identity, and a different set of privileges and responsibilities. In short, children grow up within a multilingual context, and learn to negotiate multiple realities early in life, knowing which language to use in a specific context. This occurrence may be supported by Vygotsky’s emphasis on the role of representation as individual thought progresses toward culturally accepted notions. As individuals, we attempt to reflect upon and thus generalize meaning across our experiences, and the ability to represent allows us to consider multiple perspectives simultaneously (Fosnot, 1996). Meanings and world views of individuals are partially the result of ‘taken-as-shared’ meanings by a community and are inextricably linked to culture (Fosnot, 1996).

More than eighty percent of India’s population is Hindu, and the discourse of Hindu philosophy and culture was seen clearly to influence both the content of curriculum and the methodology of teaching, and could be seen as the ‘hidden curriculum’ in the informal approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom, and in the more deliberately implemented values curriculum (Gupta, 2006). Specific elements from this discourse included: the teaching of values central to Indian philosophy; the importance given to the concepts of duty, respect and the observation of customs, traditions and religious holidays; prioritizing intellectual development; the occurrence of multilingualism; the personal philosophies of teachers, children and their families; the implicit beliefs of teachers; and the image of the teacher and child.

It was interesting to note that these elements transitioned into teachers’ classroom practice from the world outside of school, including home and community. It would seem as though this was a local influence and children received similar teachings about social expectations and responsibilities from their teachers as they did from their families. However, more recently, teachers have been facing the impact of globalization and the invasion of another wave of western culture as evident in the following observation that a second-grade teacher made recently:

Children are being exposed to a lot of animated media (games) which is making them more aggressive and their interest in reading books is being affected. With the western culture being brought to India, the value system of respect and thoughtfulness is gradually disappearing ... They try to copy that culture and parents are pressurized in this whole process.

In the following section I will examine briefly the deep and lasting influence that another external western force, this time in the past, had on classroom curriculum and the educational system in India as a whole.

The Colonizing Influence of British Educational Policies

The increasing presence of European traders and travelers (Dutch, Portuguese, French and British) in India began to be felt more than 400 years ago, and by the seventeenth century their presence had grown into forms of colonization in various parts of India. The 1600s saw the emergence of missionary schools in India with their predominantly Roman Catholic beliefs and Christianity's focus on individual salvation. Later, as the British gained supremacy and control over all of India, Protestant forms of Christianity and education in the scientific and progressive methods of modern Europe were implemented. Generally speaking, educational institutions established under the colonial rule reflected attempts to reproduce all aspects of education in European institutions, including curriculum, pedagogy, hierarchical organization, architecture and even codes of conduct for students (Samoff, 2007). The teaching of academics, along with 'teaching to the test', became prioritized due to the exam-oriented nature of the system of education implemented by the British colonial administrators in India. The colonization of education in India and the erosion of Indian thought and language in schools really started with the passing of Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education* in 1835, when English was declared the language of instruction in all schools founded by the British government in India. Another legacy of the British colonial era is the textbook-centered pedagogy that began to, and continues to, dominate education in India. In the mid-nineteenth century, the colonial administrators implemented a new bureaucratic format for the educational system in India. The new system would be governed by a bureaucracy controlling all aspects of schooling with the purpose of: acculturating Indian children and youth in European attitudes and preparing them to work at the lower and middle levels of colonial administrative services; insisting on English as the medium of instruction; having indigenous schools conform to the syllabus and textbooks prescribed by the colonial government if they wanted to seek government aid; and using centralized examinations as assessment tools to determine eligibility of students for promotions (Kumar, 1992). The creation of a class of native elites in its own image was another lasting legacy of British colonialism. This was articulated by Lord Macaulay also as he pressed the urgency of forming this middle class, members of which would serve as brokers between the British rulers and the millions that they ruled, a class of persons who would be Indian in blood and color but English in taste and intellect (Varma, 1999), thus beginning a formal transaction of ideas, colonizing and colonized, in the mind of the Indian middle-class person. According to Masemann (2007), colonial powers not only desired to produce citizens who resembled their colonial masters, but colonial schools also offered experiences that were far removed from the 'metropolitan experience' (Cremin, 1988), intentionally subjugating and producing a group of people who could not function in society.

India's current educational system continues to be driven by a strong focus on the assessment of students through a rigid testing system even at the early elementary level. Government organizations, such as the Central Board of Secondary Education, promote a national curriculum that becomes translated into a prescribed syllabus and corresponding textbooks for each grade level. Students are individually tested each academic year for the content of the textbooks they have studied. As each year's academic content is built on the previous year's syllabus, the pressure to develop proficiency in academic skills filters down into the early childhood classrooms also. Even in the early childhood grades (Grades K-2), the curriculum has been organized into content areas such as social studies (history and geography), mathematics, English, Hindi, and so forth. One result of this, as indicated by the study, is that many textbooks were used and a great amount of homework had to be done by the students each day as a means to ensure success in the academic tests and examinations. This certainly led to a high degree of pressure, as articulated by one first-grade teacher:

the children will be tested on each topic to know how much they have learnt. Every Tuesday we have a test ... they've got math test, they've got dictation, they've got everything. That means twice or thrice a week they're tested which is ... I don't think it's right. Too much testing.

Thus the discourse of British colonial education was dominant in its influence on content and methodology, and was manifested in the rigidly structured tests and workbook curriculum. Specific elements included the nationally prescribed curriculum; an exam system driven by prescribed texts and work books; a system conducive to rote memorization; teachers who were regarded as technical workers; limited evidence of opportunities for creativity for both teachers and children; and the adoption of English, the language of the colonial rulers, as the language of instruction.

The third influence of the curriculum was also an external one, and this time the inspiration came from contemporary early childhood practices in the progressive early childhood classrooms of Europe and the United States.

The Influence of Progressive Educational Ideas of the West

Most educational historians agree that progressive education can be characterized by a core of ideas such as a belief in active, individualized, democratic, child-centered education that is aimed at the ‘whole child’; and a curriculum that goes beyond being bookish and based on rote learning to meeting children’s social, emotional, psychological and biological needs (Davies, 2002). In many American early childhood classrooms, these core ideas may take the form of such techniques as circle time, multiple learning centers, small class sizes, individualized and differentiated instruction, whole language approach, thematic units based on children’s interests, experiential and project-based learning, authentic assessment, activities such as block building, strong social studies focus on neighborhood and community, and so forth.

Under the influence of modern western pedagogical approaches accessed through the media, Internet, educational exchange programs, and professional development workshops, private school administrators in India are able to exercise some control over the early childhood curriculum to prevent the domination by an academic syllabus. It is important to mention that the school administrators seemed to want to expose the teachers to the early childhood techniques of Euro-American classrooms by offering these various workshops. The influence of progressive education was somewhat apparent, among other examples, in the manner in which the teachers described their activity-oriented approach in the teaching of academic content and concepts (Gupta, 2006):

Like this month’s topic is Plants and we’ll take them out in the garden and have a nature walk, they’ll observe the plants, grow their own seeds. They’ll sow their seeds and they’ll look after their plants ... But when they come up [back to the classroom] there’ll be a follow up activity. Like today we did parts of a plant. They went and observed a plant. They took out the plant, they observed the root and all. And then we did [reviewed] all the parts of the plant [points to a piece of art work that is pinned on the bulletin board]. This is the pasting activity related to the topic of the month. But I don’t think this should be included in academics.

However, this may not be the case in less affluent private schools or in most government schools in India where there may be a minimum of, or no exposure to, the Euro-American discourse of early childhood education, and where rote learning of basic reading and writing skills is still the dominant practice. The discourse of progressive education was seen, in a limited way, in teachers’ attempts in creating an activity room with learning centers that would allow children ‘choice time’; incorporating ‘circle time’ into the daily schedule; in their desire to work toward ‘child-centered’ practices based on the needs and interests of the individual child; providing opportunities in the classroom for children to voice their thoughts and experiences; providing abundant classroom materials; and the desire for small class sizes as per the recommendations of early educators in the United States. However, it can be safely said that these influences would be restricted mostly to financially well-off private schools in metropolitan cities of India.

British colonization in India, to a partial or total extent, stretched over a period of almost 300 years, resulting in an intimate juxtaposition of Indian and western ideas and world views, and a continuing transaction between the two. Just as the daily lifestyles of people in India are based upon the all-pervasive phenomenon of co-existence, and reflect elements that are clearly Indian and western, so also teachers’ practice and school curricula drew upon the multiple co-existing realities of Indian philosophy and Euro-American pedagogies, allowing teachers to ground their classroom practice in their realities and their own practical knowledge. It was clearly apparent from their interviews as well as from classroom observations that teachers were interweaving elements of an

ancient cultural philosophy that was still actively practiced with elements of British colonial and American progressive educational perspectives. For the purpose of analysis, I have categorized these elements into distinct philosophical influences, but in the 'enacted curriculum' the elements were integrated into one socially constructed curriculum. What was striking to me in my study was not the evidence of three different ideological influences in the early childhood curriculum, but the easy and constant transitioning that occurred between the different approaches, and the underlying recognition by the teachers that certain aspects of each approach had a place in their classrooms and in the overall success of the child's educational experience. 'There seemed to exist a porous membrane around the concept of early childhood curriculum whereby ideas transcending diverse times and cultures would be selectively assimilated, and amoeba-like, the shape of the curriculum could shift to adapt to specific educational goals' (Gupta, 2006). The curriculum was neither purely academic nor child-centered but clearly had, as Canella (1997) would describe, been socially constructed within a specific historical, political and value context.

Perceptions on Recent Neo-colonial Influences

The influence of western ideas and practices is certainly not a thing of the past. Globalization, which has been defined as the 'intensification of worldwide social relations which link localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events happening many miles away and vice versa' (Giddens, 1990, as cited in Arnove, 2007), with economic and cultural globalization being the most prominent aspects of this process, acts as the current channel for continuing to bring 'western' ideas into countries of the 'Non-west' such as India. As societies become increasingly connected, the impact of globalization is increasingly felt on educational systems. Enculturation through processes such as McDonaldization, the rapid spread of television and movie offerings from the United States and Europe, and the increasing use of English as the language of international business and technology, have a definite impact on schools in countries around the world, especially those in the emerging economies of Asia, South America and Africa. However, global imports such as these media and commerce-related influences, although incorporated into the lifestyles of local populations, also get transformed in the process into versions that are more suitably assimilated by local minds and palates (Arnove, 2007).

Private, urban schools in India have been constructed within a specific middle-class cultural context that includes a strong interaction between Indian and Euro-American ideas. This middle class in India is growing exponentially with India's booming economy which is itself the result of globalization forces acting on an educated population, and is projected to reach a population of 550 million by the year 2025 (Varma, 1999). Today, there is an even more powerful influence of the American media and toy industry, and urban children in India are rapidly becoming exposed to a different world view through the western occupation of cyberspace, media, entertainment and business in the name of globalization. Instead of the imperialistic colonization of the past, technologically advanced nations are now engaged in establishing economic and commercial conquests in a different form of colonialism. This is clearly evident in the countless McDonalds and Pizza Huts dotting Indian cities; the increasing presence of the off-shore offices of scores of American and European corporations and banks; the incessant development and construction of malls and cineplexes to replace the older bazaars and cinema halls; market places accommodating Euro-American luxury brand items closely juxtaposed with the Indian clothing and jewelry stores; and children gaining easy access to channels such as MTV and the Cartoon Network on cable television. Reminiscent of colonialism, this neo-colonialism could work to facilitate in the Indian mind the creation of a world view which will take on the mentality and meaning-making processes more in consonance with that of the western colonizer of today.

The tensions resulting from the global and local interplay were more palpable in the voices of early childhood teachers in a recent focus-group interview than they had been in my research a few years ago. A group of 12 private school teachers in New Delhi, who taught in early childhood classrooms ranging from Nursery through Grade 2, were asked to reflect on their perceptions of young children's behaviors and lifestyles in urban India. Many of these teachers, themselves parents of young children, shared some of their frustrations at the habits and lifestyles young children had begun to develop in recent years, and their comments are presented below. Most frequently voiced

were the influencing factors of junk food, television shows, brand consciousness, and sedentary habits.

A direct impact of these tensions was to be seen in the sphere of values education. The affluence that has seeped into Indian society as a result of the economic and commercial effects of globalization has also resulted in a new importance being given to the values of individualism, capitalism, material success and luxury brands which contradicts the traditional values of moderation, modesty, group-orientation, age veneration and inner virtue. This tension has crept into teachers' beliefs and thinking because the teaching of values had been one of the primary goals of education for young children in India, as evident in my past research (Gupta, 2006). In this manner, policy makers and teachers are caught between existing educational legacies in their own countries and the increasing demands of rapid globalization (Crossley & Tikly, 2004). According to one teacher:

The most negative impact has been that we are becoming too brand and money/status conscious much more than [of] values like respect, sharing, etc. Capitalist view of the west has overpowered our Indian minds. Let's hope we can strike a balance.

Another teacher observed:

It is true that we as teachers are facing the problem of children getting carried away by bombardment of information that makes them brand conscious and influenced by whatever the media projects as [being] 'cool' or the 'in thing' ... In the classroom there is a comparison amongst students and language that they pick up and values that are different from what is taught in Indian homes. For example, Valentine's day, Friendship day, etc. have started only recently. We do our best to incorporate all the positive aspects [of these influences] and integrate it in our system, and try to balance other things by [teaching] them values such as differences between needs and wants, meditation, yoga, etc.

A third teacher explained:

They [children] want to wear branded shoes and apparel like Nike, Reeboks and Adidas. Girls are very influenced by Barbie to the extent that they want to grow up and become one. The challenge is to, despite all this, put our Indian value system in place.

Another tension has emerged prominently within the domain of languages. Globalization has been accompanied by an increasing importance given to English as the international business language and the language of power and success. This is one of the main reasons for the rapid mushrooming of private schools, because private schools are apt to use English as the language of instruction as opposed to government schools, which is why even the very poor in India are opting to send their children to private schools even if it means they have to work longer hours and incur heavy debts. This predicament is also calling into question the sustainability of government schools. The tensions around the use of language were certainly felt by the teachers:

The western influence on children in India is visible primarily due to the audio-visual media. Children are exposed to various brands which they demand and it's not always possible for the middle-class parents to afford. Children find it embarrassing to speak in their native tongue. They rather speak slang. They do not want to follow healthy eating habits and rather have a burger and french fries. They want to dress in a certain way – in Cargoes with spiked hair and rarely in *kurta pyjama* [traditional loose pants with long loose overshirt].

Another major tension is being felt in the domain of health and nutrition, with American fast foods rapidly infiltrating the restaurant business and enticing young palates. It was interesting to note that from the teachers' perspective it was western fast food that was viewed as being unhealthy (burgers, pizza) and not the local fast food such as *samosas*, *choley bature*, and *chaat* (all examples of popular Indian savory snacks), although both kinds fit the definition of fast food as being food that is bought on the run, easily accessible, cheap and not necessarily home-cooked. Another interesting point was that from the children's perspectives the McDonalds and Pizza Huts in India stood as status symbols of affluence, as fancy restaurants, affordable only to rich families, whereas the same franchises in the United States were viewed as being providers of unhealthy food for the poorer

families. In fact, several teachers seemed to feel that junk food was one of the most pervasive and challenging consequences of globalization:

Fast food is definitely a craze for the kids. McDonald's, Pizza Hut are the places to eat when they [children] go out. They don't want to eat at Indian restaurants ...

There has been an onslaught of the west in our country in more ways than we actually realize. Children are influenced into eating junk food because it looks so tasty and yummy when shown in the advertisements. This is just one example. They feel they are part of the 'happening' crowd if they ape the west. This feeling is creeping into every aspect of our lives.

Mainly our kids' eating habits have changed drastically, thanks to the media, example all fast food and pizza joints that are so unhealthy for them ... Language has changed drastically as they are listening to all western TV all the time.

... Children are in love with 'junk food' or 'fast food'. Their food habits are changing, leading to various health problems like obesity.

The deep influences of the industrially advanced countries of the western world on Indian society are not new and were seen to occur most prominently during colonial times as Indians learned how to speak, dress, eat and live like the British. But during the process there was also a reverse flow of language, cuisines and philosophies as India, through a post-colonial transaction, also made a mark on the British. The influences on Indian children mentioned by teachers above are the result of the more recent neo-colonial forces of global market economies. As evident from their comments, the tensions of this reality are already challenging the Indian teacher to balance the values underlying Indian philosophy and the values promoted by western media; to balance the transitions between tradition and so-called progressivism, and between the Indian, colonial, post-colonial, and neo-colonial influences on children through her classroom practice. In doing so, the voice of the 'other,' of the so-called marginalized, the non-western, the old-fashioned, the unscientific, would be seen as negotiating with the voice of western dominant discourse that is appealingly rational, scientific, psychological and modern (Gupta, 2006). But as before, for the Indian teacher this may not end up to be a battle between a right and a wrong pedagogy. After colonial rule ended in India, a hybrid classroom practice seemed to have emerged that was the result of the mix of different discourses. This cultural hybridity offered a new space in pedagogy, one that could be used for the negotiation of meaning and representation (Bhabha, 1994). The same process will likely occur again as today's neo-colonial influences transition into and become selectively absorbed into the psyche and lifestyles of children and teachers in India. As another cultural hybridization gradually gets put into motion, it is likely that pedagogies will transition to reflect another mix of ideas and practices in the early childhood curriculum. Certainly, the language of the hybrid discourse of urban Indian early childhood education and the nature of such complex curricula cannot be understood or defined from a western perspective which is the perspective of dominance and power, and can only be experienced within the intersection of values and beliefs that is constantly shifting, and profoundly influencing daily life inside and outside the Indian classroom.

References

- Anderson-Levitt, K. (2003) A World Culture of Schooling? in K. Anderson-Levitt (Ed.) *Local Meanings, Global Schooling*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Arnove, R.F. (2007) Introduction: reframing comparative education: the dialectic of the global and the local, in R.F. Arnove & C.A. Torres (Eds) *Comparative Education: the dialectic of the global and the local*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bhabha, H. (1994) *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bocock, R. (1992) The Cultural Formations of Modern Society, in S. Hall & B. Gieben (Eds) *Formations of Modernity*. Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, Basil Blackwell and The Open University.
- Canella, G.S. (1997) *Deconstructing Early Childhood Education: social justice and revolution*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Cremin, L.A. (1988) *American Education: the metropolitan experience 1876-1980*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Crossley, M. & Tikly, L. (2004) Postcolonial Perspectives and Comparative and International Research in Education: a critical introduction, *Comparative Education*, 40(2), 147-156.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0305006042000231329>
- Davies, S. (2002) The Paradox of Progressive Education: a frame analysis, *Sociology of Education*, 75(4), 269-286. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3090279>
- Forman, E.A. (1992) Discourse, Intersubjectivity, and the Development of Peer Collaboration: a Vygotskian approach, in L.T. Winegar & J. Valsiner (Eds) *Children's Development within Social Contexts*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Fosnot, C.T. (1996) Constructivism: a psychological theory of learning, in C. Fosnot (Ed.) *Constructivism: theory, perspectives, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Gokhale, N. (2005) Educating a Community to Educate Their Young, *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 37(2), 21-28.
- Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development (2007)
<http://www.educationforallindia.com/SES2004-05.pdf>
<http://vertexcareer.com/annual-report-2007-08-on-education>
- Govinda, R. & Bandhopadhyay, M. (2007) Access to Elementary Education in India. Country analytical review by Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity.
- Gupta, A. (2001) Implementing Change at the Pre-Primary Level in a School in India, *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 33(1), 34-42.
- Gupta, A. (2003) Socio-Cultural-Historical Constructivism in the Preparation and Practice of Early Childhood Teachers in New Delhi, India, *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 24(3), 163-170.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1090102030240305>
- Gupta, A. (2004) The Challenge of Working with Large Class Size: dispositions of early childhood teachers in India, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 5(3), 361-377. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2004.5.3.8>
- Gupta, A. (2006) *Early Childhood Education, Postcolonial Theory and Teaching Practices in India: balancing Vygotsky and the Veda*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gupta, A. (2007) Schooling in India, in A. Gupta (Ed.) *Going to School in South Asia*. Westport: Greenwood.
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme presentation (2006, 12 April)
<http://www.wcd.nic.in/.../National-Advisory-Council-10-4-2006-FINAL.ppt>
- Karan, A.K. & Pushpendra (2006) Bihar: including the excluded and addressing the failures of public provision in elementary education, in S. Mehrotra (Ed.) *The Economics of Elementary Education in India: the challenge of public finance, private provision, and household costs*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Kaul, V. (1998) Minimum Standards for Quality in Early Childhood Education. Paper presented at a meeting on The National Consultation Meet on Streamlining of Early Childhood Education Services, March, in New Delhi, India.
- Kazmin, A.L. (2000). Why India's poor pay for private schools.
http://businessweek.com/2000/00_16/c3677155.
- Kessler, S. & Bloch, M. (2005) Reconceptualizing the Early Childhood Curriculum: contextualizing critical and postcolonial perspectives. Symposium presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, in Montreal, Canada.
- Kluckhohn, F. (1961) Dominant and Variant Value Orientations, in F. Kluckhohn & F.L. Strodtbeck (Eds) *Variations in Value Orientations*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Kumar, K. (1992) *What is Worth Teaching?* New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Masemann, V.L. (2007) Culture and Education, in R.F. Arnove & C.A. Torres (Eds) *Comparative Education: the dialectic of the global and the local*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Mason, M. (2007) Comparing Cultures, in M. Bray, B. Adamson & M. Mason (Eds) *Comparative Education Research: approaches and methods*. Comparative Education Research Center, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong: Springer.
- Mehrotra, S. (2006) *The Economics of Elementary Education in India: the challenge of public finance, private provision, and household costs*. New Delhi: Sage.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) (2002) Report on the national conference on early childhood care and education in the context of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, August.
- National Policy on Education (1986) Government of India. <http://education.nic.in/NatPol.asp>
- Press Information Bureau, Government of India (2007) <http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=23947>.

- Rui, Y. (2007) Comparing Policies, in M. Bray, B. Adamson & M. Mason (Eds) *Comparative Education Research: approaches and methods*. Comparative Education Research Center, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong: Springer.
- Saini, A. (2000) Literacy and Empowerment: an Indian scenario, *Childhood Education*, International Focus Issue, 381-384.
- Samoff, J. (2007) Institutionalizing International Influence. In R.F. Arnove & C.A. Torres (Eds) *Comparative Education: the dialectic of the global and the local*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) (1994) *Early Schooling: problems and perspectives*. New Delhi: SCERT.
- Thapa, V.J. (1994) Hop, Skip, Sing and Learn. *India Today*, 15 June.
- Tooley, J. (2005) *Private Schools for the Poor*. Stanford: Hoover Institution.
<http://www.educationnext.org/20054/22.html>
- Tooley, J. & Dixon, P. (2003) Providing Education for the World's Poor: a case study of the private sector in India, in B. Davies and J. West-Burnham (Eds) *Handbook of Educational Leadership and Management*. London: Pearson Education.
- Varma, P.K. (1999) *The Great Indian Middle Class*. New Delhi: Penguin.
- Viruru, R. (2001) *Early Childhood Education: postcolonial perspectives from India*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1962) *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind in Society: the development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wagner, R. (1981) *The Invention of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Waldman, A. (2003) India's Poor Bet Precious Sums on Private Schools. *New York Times*, 15 November.
- Watson, J.L. (1997) *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Williams, L.R. (1999) Determining the Early Childhood Curriculum: the evolution of goals and strategies through consonance and controversy, in C. Seefeldt (Ed.) *The Early Childhood Curriculum: current findings in theory and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Williams, R. (1985) *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society*. New York: Oxford University Press.
-

AMITA GUPTA is Associate Professor in the School of Education at The City College of New York, as well as being on the Doctoral Faculty at the CUNY Graduate Center. Her research interests include post-colonial theory, and international and comparative issues within the areas of teacher education, curriculum development and early childhood education, specifically with regard to the South Asian context. She has published extensively on these topics with two books and several peer-reviewed articles. *Correspondence:* Amita Gupta, School of Education, The City College of New York – CUNY, Convent Avenue at 138th Street, New York, NY 10031, USA (agupta@ccny.cuny.edu).