HIGHER EDUCATION

A Strategy Paper for the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Mumbai

PART ONE

I. Background and Context for Review and Strategy Paper

Following on the CSCS-Bangalore University conference on the Future of Higher Education assisted by the Trust (February 2006), CSCS was asked to prepare a Strategy Paper on higher education with a view to identifying new initiatives in the field. The Trust also requested CSCS to take another look at select past grants (endowment grants, research grants and fellowship grants) and help enlarge the scope of some of the suggestions made in the Krishna Kumar Report on the Education Portfolio commissioned by the Trust (2005). We understand that our Strategy Paper like the Report mentioned above is in preparation for formulating the Trust's Strategy Plan 2011.

Although the SRTT has been making grants since the early twentieth century, the systematization of grantmaking and the professionalization of the Trust was initiated in 1995 with the preparation of a Strategic Plan 2000 (Vijay Mahajan and Girish Godbole, 1995) which suggested **five** thematic areas including Education.

The 2000 Strategy Plan reiterated the need to "do more for education in India" (19), but on the basis of discussions with experts in the field, it was recommended that the Trust focus on "primary education and vocational training…(in) rural areas" (20). The consultants' belief was that Indian universities and professional institutes ought to raise money independently, starting with their alumni. While this recommendation would have led to a suspension of Higher Education grants, it is to the credit of the programme staff and the trustees that this category of grant-making has not only continued but also strengthened its focus.

Part One of this Strategy Paper begins with a survey of the wider field of higher education in historical perspective, indicating the broad trends over the last hundred years

with regard to the kind of Higher Education institutions that have come into being, the structures by which they are funded and regulated, and the numbers of students they are reaching.

This is followed by an overview of the Trust's presence in the field of Higher Education, especially over the last ten years.

The Strategy Paper includes concise analyses of SRTT endowment, programme and fellowship grants made in Higher Education after 1995 to (a) ICSSR institutions such as Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) and Institute of Economic Growth (IEG); (b) independent research centres such as Indian Council for Research in International Economic Relations (ICRIER) and National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER); and (c) training-oriented institutions such as IRMA and Tata-Dhan Academy. We examine both grant objectives and grant design, and assess the effectivity of each grant.
[This section is not included in the present abridged document.]

Part One concludes with recommendations (a) for the areas and institutions covered by earlier grants, and (b) for the Trust's continuing involvement in Higher Education. The recommendations cut across different levels, including the Field, the Discipline, the Institution and the Project.

Part Two of the Strategy Paper presents a report on fieldwork and interviews mapping the field of higher education in Karnataka, with a focus on undergraduate colleges providing 'general education'. This ethnographic component of the Strategy Paper has assisted us in formulating the general recommendations. [This part will be presented during the Consultation.]

II. Higher Education: The Field
The current system of higher education inherits the legacy of colonial proposals and legislations dating back to the early 19th century. Although T.B. Macaulay is credited

with the infamous dismissal of "Eastern" knowledge (all their books would fit on one shelf of an English library) and the advocacy of English-medium education in the Minute of 1835, he drew on earlier proposals such as the one by Charles Grant.

In his 1797 paper on the need for the diffusion of Western knowledge in India, Grant, an official of the East India Company, condemned the cultural practices of the Indians, arguing that only the propagation of Christianity would redeem them. Grant's proposal was not implemented at the time because of the Company's anxiety about tampering with the customs of its subjects. However, decades later, when the Company had emerged as the supreme political power in India, it turned its attention to introducing and strengthening educational initiatives. The complicity between the Evangelicals and the Utilitarians in forming East India Company policy has been incisively analysed by Eric Stokes in *The English Utilitarians and India* (1989 rpt).

Macaulay's Minute of 1835 and William Bentinck's support of its recommendations caused a long drawn out controversy between those wanting the propagation of Oriental education and those arguing for Anglicization. The Company eventually assured the Oriental colleges that they would continue to receive support from the government. From the 1830s on, the government instituted several enquiries into the practicability of introducing and strengthening vernacular language education, but time and again these initiatives failed to take root because of the deep ambivalence of officials about the purpose and mode of instruction. **It is evident that the present-day Indian education system's inability to address the problem of regional language educational resources stems from this complicated history.**

The Education Despatch of 1854: The Court of Directors of the East India Company presented a comprehensive education policy for the British Indian territories through this Despatch. The main recommendations of this Despatch drew on the educational concerns of Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India from 1848 to 1856. The purpose of imparting English education ("the improved arts, sciences, and literature of Europe") to the Indians was to give them access to the "moral and material blessings which flow from

the general diffusion of useful knowledge". Underlying this proposal was a desire to widen the market for English manufactures and increase the supply of raw materials from India to England (Ghosh 2000: 77). The Despatch also emphasized the importance of vernacular languages in the diffusion of European knowledge.

In 1857, affiliating universities were established in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay on the model of the University of London, with a Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Fellows who were administrators and people of eminence. Interestingly, *there was very little representation for teachers in this system of governance*. New career opportunities, especially in the government, compelled students to opt for English-medium instruction, so that contrary to the recommendation of the Education Despatch of 1854 vernacular language instruction was not easily available after middle school.

The following discussion on the transformations in colonial education draws extensively on Suresh Chandra Ghosh's *The History of Education in Modern India, 1757-1998*, 2000.

Hunter Commission 1882: This was the first time an Indian Education Commission was constituted by the British government. Indians and Christian missionaries were also represented amongst the members of the commission. The terms of reference for the commission included an investigation into (1) the possibility of introducing an *elementary education* system, and (2) suggesting means by which *indigenous education* could be supported. The commission recommended measures for girls' education, education for Muslims, and adult education. It kept missionary domination of the field at bay by recommending that all colleges have a lecture series on duties and values. It suggested that the government eventually withdraw from secondary and collegiate education. Tacitly, it also supported the dominance of English education.

With the growth of private colleges, larger numbers of university graduates were being turned out. As early as 1877, officials in Bengal commented on the rising unemployment among educated Indians. The attendant concern was that these unemployed youth would

take up political agitation against the government on the basis that they were not allowed access to the highest jobs which were reserved for Europeans and Anglo-Indians.

Subsequent discussions on Indian education pointed out flaws in the formation of the universities that had to do with the quality of education as well as the lack of powerful regulatory bodies. After a series of talks with experts, Lord Curzon, the then Governor-General, suggested the setting up of an Indian Universities Commission and the appointment of a Director-General of Education.

The Indian Universities Act of 1905 appeared to consolidate the dominance of the British government in the field of higher education, and led to widespread disaffection amongst nationalists who had started many educational institutions of their own, and who now started a debate on what might be the content of a **national** education, including primary education.

The Calcutta University Commission 1917: Although the specific mandate of this commission set up by the government was to help streamline the structures of Calcutta University, educationists have argued that the commission "revolutionized the character of university organization in India by creating statutory bodies like the Board of Studies and the Academic Council", by placing emphasis on the selection procedures for appointing Readers and Professors, by suggesting the appointment of a full-time salaried Vice-Chancellor to head the university, and by recommending the introduction of new courses and faculty research (Ghosh 2000). **For better or worse, the present-day system has not deviated much from this model.**

During the years of provincial legislatures and Provincial Autonomy (1912-1939), educational institutions were classified according to the government that was funding them. This was a period when the British government appointed a series of committees to re-organise the education system. The Congress too took the initiative – inspired by Gandhi's ideas on basic education – to request Zakir Husain, then Principal of Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi, to prepare a report on the feasibility of a national education system.

With the declaration of the Second World War and the resignation of the provincial governments, there was a lull in the discussions, and it was only after Independence in 1947 that the idea of a national education policy was taken up again.

Post-Independence

India's education system is massive: it is recognised by UNESCO as the second largest system in the world. This includes over 300 universities including deemed universities, and thousands of colleges. The first three universities, in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, were established in the late 19th century. The colleges, which were often much older, were increasingly drawn into a formal relationship of "affiliation" with the universities, which were endowed with the authority to regulate teaching, set syllabi, conduct examinations, and give degrees. Although the affiliating system originated in England, it now survives only in South Asia. Elsewhere, varying degrees of autonomy for colleges has been necessitated by the enormous growth of the system.

At present, universities sometimes have over a hundred affiliated colleges which do the undergraduate teaching and some of the post-graduate (PG) teaching. The university as a rule does only PG teaching, apart from carrying out its regulatory functions. Although the university departments are supposed to combine research and teaching, with some scattered exceptions they tend to concentrate on teaching (and supervising the research of PhD students) while the research institutes set up in the 1950s and after (to give the example of social sciences, 27 set up from scratch or taken over by the ICSSR, funded partially or wholly by government at state and centre level; the science institutes date from the pre-Independence period) are supposed to concentrate solely on research, although that is now changing.

The deep academic divisions existing today stem from the separation of skill-based learning from 'general education' which was already evident in the medical, architecture and engineering colleges set up in colonial times and which began to grow in numbers post-independence. Even in general education, a separation between the disciplines was

endorsed, as is evident in the report of the University Commission (1948) headed by the philosopher S. Radhakrishnan who later became the President of the country.

The Report, which was presented soon after Independence, proposed a distinction between facts, events and values OR nature, society and spirit (which would be the subject matter of the sciences, social sciences and humanities respectively). The goal of education was training for citizenship, according to the report, providing a definition of 'general education' which was supposed to include *theoretical contemplation, aesthetic enjoyment* and *practical activity*. The disciplines fell into place along this tripartite division.

Radhakrishnan's emphasis on 'general education' was soon replaced by an emphasis on education for 'development' of the nation, especially through the inclusion of 'science and technology' or 'area (regional) studies' which in turn would provide key inputs for state policy. This model of disciplinary compartmentalization still exists more than fifty years after the report's publication. The significance of the Radhakrishnan Commission also lies in its recommendation that Education be placed in the Concurrent List so that both State Governments and the Central Government would be responsible for it.

The Institutions
During the 50s and the early 60s in India, most of the key educational institutions and statutory bodies for regulating higher education were set up, as well as institutions meant for the identification and recognition of artistic practice. The University Grants Commission, an autonomous body to control higher education, was formed through an Act of Parliament in 1956. Shortly thereafter, institutions for training in specific areas were established - the National School of Drama (1959) under the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Film Institute of India (1960), renamed in 1974 as the Film and Television Institute of India, and overseen by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and the National Institute of Design (1961) under the Department of Science and Technology. This diverse set of institutions, along with the Sangeet Natak, Lalit Kala and Sahitya Akademis covered the field of "culture" for the post-colonial state. Training in the fine

arts and performing arts was a form of vocational education that seemed to have encountered no opposition, whereas other kinds of vocational training post-secondary school, such as the acquisition of technical skills, retained a sort of class and caste stigma. We refer here to the still-prevalent prejudices of upper caste-class people in India against some forms of manual work, and the consequent transfer of these prejudices to the educational institutes training people for manual jobs. [See also Amrik Singh's comment on p.8 of this paper.]

Developmental aid from the Soviet Union, the USA and West Germany helped set up the first Indian Institutes of Technology which were granted recognition as "institutions of national importance" through the IITs Act of 1961. The first management institutions or business schools were set up in Ahmedabad and Calcutta in 1961. The setting up of these specialized institutions further reinforced the *separation of skill-based learning from 'general education'*, that was already evident in the medical, architecture and engineering colleges from colonial times which began to grow in numbers post-independence. Even with general education, a separation between the disciplines was perpetuated.

Kothari Commission 1964: Recognising the fact that a truly national system of education had not yet emerged, the Kothari Commission was asked to make recommendations for a large-scale restructuring of the sector. The Commission proposed a common school system with equal access to all, increasing the relevance of education across the board, raising the standards of education and expanding the system to meet growing needs. The Kothari Commission also emphasized the need for vocational courses at all levels, including that of higher education. The **vocationalization** was intended to stem the inflow into arts courses which were still based on the colonial model for creating lower-level government officials, and which thus attempted to provide only a broad 'general education'. Although a resolution on education was passed in Parliament, a national policy was not adequately implemented. Educationists like Amrik Singh among others have attributed this lack of interest in implementing vocationalization to the upper-caste reluctance to engage in 'manual' work. Since it was people from this social background who traditionally gained access to higher education in colonial times and beyond, it was

widely perceived that graduates only strove after white-collar employment. (A.Singh 2006)

Even when there were revisions in education policies, as for example in the New Education Policy (1986), the tripartite division of disciplines based on *facts, events and values* found in the Radhakrishnan report did not change substantially. In hindsight, the NEP's main recommendation was indeed once again **vocationalization**, proposed as the antidote to the colonial emphasis on the liberal arts which were supposed to equip graduates only for the civil services. Another aspect of the NPE relating to higher education was the recommendation to develop **autonomous colleges** and do away with the affiliating system. This was actually a reiteration of one of the Kothari Commission recommendations.

Report on a Policy Framework for Reforms in Education (Special subject group on policy framework for private investment in education, health and rural development), April 2000:
Interestingly, this report, although it was prepared as a subject group report, was influential in guiding the general thinking of government in the field of education. Fifteen years after the NEP, and following on the heels of the Revised Programme for Action 1992 that endorsed the formulations of the NEP, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Birla-Ambani report, as it came to be called, was purportedly authored by the heads of two major industrial houses. The report renewed the plea for **vocationalization**, but now in the context of a rapidly globalizing economy: knowledge in this report came to be redefined as technical knowledge and managerial competence. The assertion was that "Education must shape adaptable, competitive workers" (13). We wonder whether the workers are also seen as producers of knowledge or merely those who implement global agendas. The report declares that India must invest in "Upgrading education content, delivery and processes – we have to change from seeing education as a component of social development to treating it as a means of creating a new information society". Here, however, we have a redefinition of vocationalization to mean professionalization in

both its senses: focus on technical and managerial skills rather than on general education, and focus on "delivery of services" rather than on exploring forms of knowledge.

The Birla-Ambani Committee points to the need to evaluate the utility of current Arts and Science courses, and link them to employment opportunities (41). "Economic value" is proposed as the measure rather than the "intrinsic merit" of education. (13) The Birla-Ambani report is much cited, we suggest, **not so much for its content but because it is symptomatic of shifts in state funding and priorities.** Even now, the amount of government spending on higher education, while it is less than 2% of its total expenditure, still constitutes 80.5% of all funding for higher education (Kapur and Mehta, 2004). The Birla-Ambani report recommended that the government continue to fund disciplines like archaeology, religious studies, and philosophy, while anything that had market value could be taught at private universities or in collaboration with industry.

The **current enrolment in higher education** is as follows:

About 7% of the population in India has access to higher education. The Asian average is 11%. It is worth noting that women are 40% of all students.
Roughly two thirds are enrolled in arts and science programmes (45% in arts, 20% in science); 18% in commerce and management; 7.5% in engineering/technology and 3.25% each in medicine and law.

One-tenth of the students in higher education are doing post-graduate work. 88% are undergraduates in colleges. Interestingly, 50% of PG students are in colleges which also do post-graduate teaching. [All figures are from Kapur and Mehta 2004]

The concern with "useful knowledge"- first expressed in the colonial period, then in the context of a developmentalist state, and now in the context of globalization (presumably with different referents) – resurfaces in the current popular critiques of higher education. While today the science and technology institutes produce what in the language of desire embodied in the many reports and policy documents on higher education is called

"world-class" researchers and technologists, the human sciences have been beset by a range of problems.

Recent evaluations of the social sciences in India [the humanities, reduced to linguistics, literature and philosophy, hardly feature in this discussion] are, on the one hand, presented in reports by expert committees assembled either by the government, the ICSSR, or private funding organizations; on the other hand, they are ongoing and often polemical assessments carried out in newspaper op. ed. pieces and in the highly respected journal of research and opinion, the *Economic and Political Weekly*. We refer to some of these in the following section.

Reviews of Social Science Research and Higher Education

Although there have been several evaluations and reviews of the social science research institutes in India, whether comprehensive South Asia-focussed reviews like the SSRC Report 2001 or shorter reviews or critiques in the pages of the *Economic and Political Weekly* (Vaidyanathan 2001, Patel 2004), or self-assessment exercises carried out usually at the behest of grantmakers who have invested in the institutions, the same kind of attention has not been brought to bear on the university system (again, except for occasional op. ed. pieces in the national newspapers, internal documents of the UGC or the Human Resource Development Ministry). **The enormous proliferation of the affiliated colleges of the 250-plus universities has never been systematically studied for emerging trends and thrust areas.** The newer phenomenon of autonomous colleges, common enough in Tamilnadu since the 1970s but not elsewhere in India until recently, is also likely to be an important feature of the higher education scenario.

All the post-1980 reviews, without exception, present a story of decline and disarray. Higher education institutions are described as having compromised on quality, and as unable to afford the resources for advanced research or even good teaching. Teaching materials, where they exist, are derivative, West-inspired, thoughtlessly assembled. The curriculum is sadly outdated. Students are pressurized to acquire knowledge by rote, and have their proficiency assessed through antiquated methods, according to the reviewers.

The criticism cuts across region, and spares none but a very small handful of elite institutions in a few cities.

Institutional crisis

By the 1990s, we are witnessing a palpable sense of crisis in the developmental initiatives of the state. It is a crisis brought on by the large-scale transformations of the economy due to liberalization, as well as by the sustained political critiques of marginalized groups. **The social and political crises are paralleled by disciplinary crises, which are manifested differently in different locations.**

While in areas such as English literary studies and history there was a re-thinking of the conceptual and methodological foundations of the disciplines, (Joshi 1994, Sunder Rajan 1993, Tharu 1997), in some other instances, **the disciplinary crisis manifested itself as an institutional crisis.** In the 1990s we have the phenomenon of the post-Independence economics-based research centres floundering as the strong link with the developmentalist state gets eroded, and the state begins to withdraw from higher education. The state too is acquiring new functions in the post-GATT period of the 1990s, and appears confused as to where to seek its academic legitimacy or its intellectual resources.

We see in the University too a series of significant new phenomena: the caste composition of the student body is changing, especially in regional universities which have a long history of reservations. Elite students no longer prefer to take up the social sciences or even natural sciences, and the pattern of professional education as the most lucrative career option has only been reinforced. Non-elite students demand that the university function as a source of accreditation. The linguistic problems caused by the discrepancy between the language of instruction and the social background of the students are growing. [As yet, there is only anecdotal evidence for these changes. Initial attempts to reflect on the changes are to be found in Susie Tharu (ed), *Subject to Change* (Tharu 1997)]. Simultaneously, one witnesses an emptying out of faculties, with social

science and humanities teachers choosing to avail of new job opportunities abroad or new economy jobs in India.

This leaves the Undergraduate (UG) colleges, which are a heterogeneous set of institutions of hugely diverse competences, and which might well provide a crucial level of intervention for the Trust. [See the Recommendations Section below.]

Decline in Public Funding

One of the commonly cited reasons for the decline of the institutions is the palpable decline in public funding for the sector. Education policy experts like Jandhyala B.G.Tilak of the National Institute of Educational Policy and Administration (NIEPA) make a strong case against the reduction of education expenditure by the government, saying that such a measure would actually work against economic and social development in the long run. Investment in human resources is something the so-called developed countries as well as countries like South Korea and Taiwan have consistently undertaken, and according to Tilak we should be emulating them rather than listening to the disinvestment advice of international monetary organizations. (Tilak 2004 and 2006). However, the picture is indeed one of declining funding for higher education, as the figures below indicate.

Higher Education Funding: Some Figures

Government Funding:

Amount Spent	% of Gross National Expenditure
1997-98: 4859.1 crores	0.28%
1998-99: 6116.8 crores	0.33%
1999-2000: 8248.4 crores	0.15%
2000-01: 10341.9 crores	0.25%
2001-02: 8577.2 crores	0.30%

J.B.G.Tilak, from whose 2004 essay these figures are quoted, has written at length on the 1990s public disinvestment in education across the elementary, secondary and higher levels. There is an apparent increase in the amounts allocated, but when adjusted for inflation the figure is considerably lower than it seems.

Currently in 2005-06 Higher Education receives 1.3 % of total Government Expenditure.
Even in 1990-91 it was 1.58%

Approach paper to the 11th Plan:
This document, released in July 2006, gives some indication as to the place occupied by funding for education in the next five-year Plan. Emphasizing that education is an essential public service, and that it is a critical factor for the development process, the Approach Paper also says that so as not to lose its competitive advantage in knowledge intensive industries, India needs to make "large investments in public sector institutions of higher learning combined with fundamental reforms of the curriculum and also service conditions to attract high quality faculty". The proposal is to make at least 20 universities centres of excellence in the Plan period. The Approach Paper reiterates the need to vocationalize education, and to maintain quality along with access to underprivileged groups. The paper also mentions the possible role of private investment in education, and the role of NGOs in implementing education policies. Since this paper merely states the broad objectives of the Plan, it still remains to be seen what amounts will be allocated for the different sectors of education.

Knowledge Commission:
The first report of the Commission is expected to be submitted to the Government of India in late 2006. There is as yet no indication of what the recommendations regarding higher education might be. We can speculate that they might be coloured by the recent controversy over reservations and the public criticism of the Knowledge Commission by the Human Resources Development Ministry. We can also only speculate as to whether the Commission's recommendations will have any influence on the planning process.

Private Philanthropy: Very few Indian donors have put money into higher education. There are, of course, the technology institutes started by the Birlas (BITS, now extending to three campuses) and the Ambanis (Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information Technology).

Among the international donors, the Ford Foundation contributed early on to the development of Delhi University and Calcutta University, and to some joint programmes of Indian universities such as the one in Lucknow with American Universities, as well as to rural universities such as the one in Gandhigram. Now in its expanded portfolio on Arts, Culture and Higher Education, Ford Foundation contributes to social science institutions such as the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), to which it has given both programme grants and endowment grants; to the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata, where both research programmes and training workshops receive funding; to the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society (CSCS), Bangalore, for curricular expansion, building an electronic archive and for library fellowships; and to law schools (eg. NLSIU Bangalore, NALSAR Hyderabad). HIVOS, the Dutch Humanist donor has contributed substantially to women's studies through its grants to institutes such as the Centre for Women and Development Studies (CWDS), or to NGOs such as Majlis and Anveshi who have an activist orientation to their research. SIDA, the Swedish donor, has also contributed to women's studies, with a focus on gender and development. Among Indian philanthropists, the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust have made significant contributions to higher education programmes.

[Sections IV, V and VI, which deal with specific SRTT grants and are addressed to the programme staff of the Trust, are not included here.]

VII. Rationale for New Directions in Field Recommendations for Higher Education

There is considerable agreement on both the diagnosis and the solutions amongst senior academics. The key problems seem to be: lack of professionalism [poor research training,

weak assessment structures, derivative frameworks and theories]; lack of resource materials [poor infrastructure, dearth of reading matter that's local, relevant, and current]; and lack of exposure and training [dearth of teacher education especially for UG and university teachers]. The best solutions would obviously be those that seek to address all the three problems together.

New Directions

The recommendations given below have been inspired in part by the Krishna Kumar Report (2005), the SSRC Report [Partha Chatterjee (ed.,), *Social Science Research Capacity in South Asia*, 2002] and the discussions CSCS has been having with senior colleagues in the social sciences and humanities. Some of these conversations took public shape in the February 2006 conference on The Future of Higher Education. We expect further discussion to take place at the proposed consultation in November 2006.

The Undergraduate Institution

Following the UGC Guidelines of 2003, colleges across the country set in motion the process of obtaining academic autonomy. This trend is poised to gain increasing momentum, and is very likely to result in the emergence of hundreds of autonomous colleges in the next five to ten years. While these institutions are keen to generate resources by offering expensive courses in management, catering, tourism or video production, autonomy also opens up new possibilities for the humanities and social sciences.

As the Krishna Kumar Report has suggested: "The Trust can offer to selected institutions the opportunity to change their classroom ethos and evaluation methods, taking advantage of the status of 'autonomous college' that some of them might already have under UGC norms. Institutions like Milind College in Aurangabad, Ewing Christian College in Allahabad, and Deccan College in Pune come to mind. It does not matter if some of these and other institutions of this kind are regarded as 'elite'; the Trust's encouragement to them to set up new models of classroom teaching and examination will have a ripple effect once they succeed in initiating a change".

If the objective is to re-invigorate the disciplines across the higher education spectrum, the Trust would need to promote ways in which the Research Institute, the University, and the College could work together. While we emphasize the necessity to strengthen the links between **Research and Teaching,** to engage in **Inter-institutional Collaborations,** to have **Integrated Course Content and Classrooms** and focus on **Interdisciplinarity**, we also think that to avoid talking about these only at the level of generality we should define a delimited field of intervention. What is meant by the kinds of focus suggested above will become clearer when the proposed initiatives are described.

We recommend a focus on Undergraduate Institutions as the target groups for the activities. Not only are they neglected in most discussions about the quality of higher education, they could also be a significant location for the testing out of new ideas. In addition, we strongly feel that the problems of postgraduate education as well as research often stem from poor undergraduate education, and that a focus on the latter would yield potentially far-reaching results.

What would be the value of focussing on autonomous colleges rather than the megalith university as in other countries? This might seem on the face of it to be a contradictory proposition – why not mega-institutions to deal with an enormous population? Because these are precisely the institutions which are in serious crisis. Administrative problems in third world settings cannot be done away with. Faculty-administrative staff ratios in universities are stunning: sometimes it can be 200 faculty to 750 staff. University jobs are a mode of stable employment and continue to be seen as prized jobs. Existing universities cannot be dismantled, and continue to serve certain functions. But new interventions could focus on other educational institutions which are also already in existence, and more importantly, are *already in the process of transformation*.

UG colleges could function as a significant location for the testing out of new curricular ideas. Exploiting the interest in certain kinds of colleges to "add value" to their courses, a new area like inter-disciplinary Cultural Studies – in experiments carried out by CSCS

for example – has been able to move from the extra-curricular course to the for-credit course.

We also recommend that the Trust try to partner directly or indirectly autonomous UG Institutions which also have PG-level teaching (keeping in mind the idea of integrated classrooms where senior UG students could sit in on an MA-level course, for different credits). The reason for the emphasis on autonomous colleges is that a longstanding suggestion by educational experts from the time of the Kothari Commission 1964-66 was renewed by the 1986 National Policy on Education and by subsequent Reports. Autonomy of higher education institutions has been emphasized as a "structural solution" to "improve and strengthen the teaching and learning process" (Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions, MHRD, 2005). Decentralization and better resource mobilization are seen as the key outcomes of greater autonomy.

With autonomy, colleges would be allowed to determine their own **courses and syllabi**, and come up with their own methods of **evaluation**. It is our considered opinion that the trend of seeking autonomy will gain increasing momentum, and will result in the emergence of hundreds of autonomous colleges in the next five to ten years. The **indirect impact** of changes in the college's pedagogic and evaluative structures will be felt at the University level and eventually at the Research Institute level as well.

Ironically, this might reverse the trickle-down effect often advocated by educationists, where the University is seen as the standard-setting and syllabus-devising authority. The implications of the General Agreement on Trades and Services (GATS) including the entry of foreign universities will no doubt contribute to creating a context for higher education where the old models of pedagogy and research, already in crisis for some decades, will need to be seriously re-thought. We would like to underscore here a concern expressed by eminent educationist Amrik Singh, who has argued that at the present moment "to neglect undergraduate studies would be to jeopardize higher education as a whole" (A.Singh 2001).

How are the goals to be achieved?

While the immediate field of intervention might be the college, the preparation for this crucially has to be at the research institutes and universities. The idea is to have significant research in different social science and humanities disciplines energise the re-visioning of UG curricula, and in turn to have the products of colleges – with a far richer general education than the older system could provide – be stronger participants in the emerging knowledge economy at all levels, whether it is in journalism and the media, in civil society groups and in NGOs, or in more specialized research locations. **The geographical focus suggested is the southern Indian region.**

The larger challenge for the set of interventions we propose would be to transform the disciplines themselves, making them **relevant** to our social conditions and **responsive** to the changing situation. We see the beginnings of such change in disciplines that have experienced a crisis in the 1990s, but the process needs to be systematized and carried out thoroughly. The process could be as envisaged below.

The first step would be to create **innovative interactions** across the higher education spectrum, between **Research Institute-University-College**. The interactions can be shaped around projects relating to textbooks, curricular change, developing digital library resources, refining assessment criteria, training teachers, producing regional language materials, and engaging in joint research.

A. Textbook projects: The idea would be to work with two or three disciplines to begin with, depending on the resource persons who can be mobilized. Since there is already considerable work in English Studies and History, we could take up two or three disciplines such as Economics, Sociology, Political Science and Women's Studies.

B. Curriculum revision in existing disciplines: There have been long-standing complaints from faculty and students about the staleness and irrelevance of social

science curricula at the UG level. Although a few Universities have been able to innovate and create new courses, the process of syllabus revision at lower levels has been a painful one. This experiment could be tied in with the Textbook Project.

C. Devising new kinds of inter-disciplinary courses at UG level: Examples can be drawn from existing programmes in Women's Studies and Cultural Studies. The idea would be to create a discussion amongst UG faculty and students as to the means by which disciplines can talk to each other. One idea would be to tie this to the Textbook Project and put together an inter-disciplinary social science reader.

D. Innovative PG courses and programmes – mentoring of college-level courses: Since some autonomous colleges have PG centres, it might be possible to support them in course innovation. Research institutes and university departments who work with the relevant disciplines could mentor course-development in the colleges.

E. Availability of quality resources (library problem): developing digital courseware: The problem of access to library resources has been an enormous one at all levels of higher education, becoming worse at the college and university levels. Some experiments have been conducted with assembling digitized courseware for student use. Greater support needs to be extended to such initiatives.

F. Academic assessment criteria and strategies: This would require a whole area of expertise to be brought in. Colleges normally do not have access to such expertise. The Trust could assemble a team of ERPs to counsel colleges interested in developing new criteria for student and faculty assessment.

G. Teacher training for colleges; researcher training courses: One area would involve training teachers who are going to teach the new materials and courses in colleges. Another would involve training college teachers interested in research

and upgrading the competences of young faculty in universities and research institutes.

H. Research collaborations across Research Institute-University-College: One non-standard way in which to conduct researcher training might be to get scholars to engage in research projects across institutions. Another interesting possibility is to get college faculty to conduct research on small projects with their students.

I. Materials in regional languages: This is a crucial and worrisome area where too little work has been done. Creating resource bases in local languages would be central to re-vitalizing research. One idea would be to begin by translating or adapting the textbooks from the Textbook Project. Our study of Karnataka colleges has underlined the importance of making regional language materials available without further delay.

J. Institutions like the Centre for Research and Education for Social Transformation (CREST), Kozhikode, which are facilitating socially deprived groups in higher education: Faculty from these institutions could be included in rethinking the curriculum, since they would be seriously invested in the question of relevance from a perspective increasingly important for the kind of change it might bring about in the higher education scenario in relation to issues of equity and access.

Listed above are a few ideas for the possible re-energizing of the interactions across the higher education spectrum. They would need to be tested against the actual situations in different kinds of institutions at all three levels, and would require the input of eminent academics and institution-builders. Greater elaboration of the ideas can only happen after a consultation with the key people who can be persuaded to take an interest in the project.

Grant-making

Kinds of grants: We recommend a focus on SGP and Programme grants, with Endowment only for institutions which have built up a relationship with the Trust and

have a consistent track-record. While we urge the Trust to continue with its broader efforts in *building institutions* as well as *creating resources*, at this stage it might be more prudent to use the lower and middle levels of grantmaking to support new programmes. If the focus for the first 3 years, for example, is textbook production and faculty training, we envisage three to four SGP grants and two programme grants in the new areas suggested in this Strategy Paper.

The grant-making strategy could involve a series of separate grants (including SGP grants for pilot studies) for the purposes suggested above, or a larger grant to one group/institution which combines two or more objectives (eg. Textbook production combined with curriculum revision; curriculum revision combined with new assessment or evaluation procedures; assembling of digital resources and courseware combined with textbook production, etc.).

Grant Locations

There could be a variety of locations for the initiatives: for example, textbook production could be undertaken in a university department or a research institute, but with participation from teachers at the relevant UG level. Once a textbook draft is ready, it could be tried out – even if it is as a supplementary text - for one year in a volunteer college (one among the autonomous colleges). One example would be St.Joseph's College in Bangalore, which has a new PG Centre. The possible collaborating institutions here could be Bangalore University or Kuvempu University, and among the research centres CSCS and ISEC depending on the nature of the textbook and the disciplinary resources required for it. If it is a Hyderabad-based initiative, it could include University of Hyderabad, CIEFL, and Nizam's College or Women's College, Koti. There are several interesting colleges in non-metropolitan areas in Karnataka (Sahyadri College, Shimoga; Karnatak College, Dharwad) with which relationships could be built. These would not necessarily be autonomous colleges but could pose interesting challenges for that very reason. We could generate a more comprehensive list once a project idea actually emerges.

The plan would also be to tie in the textbook initiative with new evaluative methods, and include Teacher Manuals with the textbooks as a resource for the creation of new pedagogies.

Short-term teacher training programmes could be conducted at CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, ISEC, Bangalore, University of Hyderabad, and MIDS Chennai. The teacher training could be tied into the textbook production effort.

Stakeholders

University Grants Commission

ICSSR

NAAC

Directorates of Collegiate Education

University decision-makers in charge of UG education

Board of Studies for different disciplines

National and regional research institutes

College managements and boards of trustees

Alumni of various institutions across the spectrum

Senior faculty in all the institutions

Publishers

Impact indicators

We strongly recommend frequent interim reviews which could be both self-evaluations as well as external assessments, instead of a review at the end of the programme. The advantage of the interim reviews would be to allow self-correcting mechanisms to be evolved, and to discard strategies that are not working in favour of strengthening those which are more effective.

If the larger Field is that of Higher Education, these new initiatives that we urge the Trust to consider funding should have a significant impact on that field. In the case of textbooks, their success would be measured not just in quantifiable terms (how many

colleges are using them, how many students are benefitting from them, etc.) but in terms of what sort of impact they are having in re-presenting the discipline. Eventually, the measuring of this success will be long-drawn-out, if the changes in UG education are finally going to impact futures, academic and otherwise, beyond that level. In any case, the impact will be not only on the Field seen as whole, but also felt most immediately in the institutions and the disciplines.

It may be somewhat premature to put down the impact indicators for these new initiatives until they have been discussed thoroughly by a peer group. Once the projects begin to take shape, we should be able to propose more fine-tuned indicators.

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