Policy Paper No. 2: Measuring Exclusion, Discrimination and understanding the sociology of education through Citizen led Assessments.

Introduction

South Asian societies and polities are characterised by severe stratification and discrimination, which leads to widespread exclusion within the mosaic of overlapping identities. The history of South Asian education illustrates that for large parts, South Asia provided education, almost exclusively, to an elite. Numerous laws related to universalising primary education across South Asia has made education accessible to many learners. However, access and inclusion in a single domain, can be offset in another.

Therefore, the norms, entitlements and rights which exist in society, differentiate access to other resources, questioning, whether the paradigm of education as a tool for upward mobility is axiomatic (Nambissan & Rao, 2013). Additionally, within society, beliefs about inter-group relationships enable non-inclusive social organisation, as well as 'othering' those who do not share the beliefs, values and interests and symbols of the dominant social group. This also happens in the education sector. As Hart succinctly puts it, " *the nature and causes of present injustices and their relationship to educational processes … (suggest) that educational processes are far from benign, leading to oppression as well as liberation"*(Hart, 2019, p. 593).

Within such a context, understanding accountability in education extends beyond measuring the success of pedagogical features of an education system. Understanding accountability in education, requires understanding the sociology of education (Hevia & Vergara-Lope, 2019). Countries in South Asia have social and institutional problems of discrimination, marginalisation and can be non-inclusive in nature (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008; Johnston et al., 2019; Molina et al., 2018; Nambissan & Rao, 2013; Sayed et al., 2007; South Asians for Human Rights, 2010). Education is embedded in the structures of power and domination. The mainstream education system manifests these same tendencies of these structures. Differentiated and hierarchical structures, content, and processes within the school system mediate and make unequal futures, serving caste, class and gender reproduction and hegemony (Nambissan & Rao, 2013).

The EOL project, has a focus on capacitating community-based organisations to assess, analyse, engage, and advocate with data based on communities. This paper argues that an understanding of the non-neutral nature of assessment, the effects of exclusion on emotion and cognition, the dimensions of exclusion and discrimination in the schooling system at a relational and structural level is important to understand access and attainment, especially for the most marginalised communities.

Based on this, the limitations of CLA as a tool for assessment, measuring exclusion and accountability is understood. The imperative for accountability in education, to capture discrimination and exclusion, and it's causal link to access and attainment will emerge. Some methodological implications are briefly considered.

Conceptual Framework of Discrimination and Exclusion in Schools

We outline some of the concepts we use to understand discrimination and exclusion in schools.

Institutional Practices and Exclusion

Kabir (2000) uses a social policy analysis framework to outline discrimination within institutions. Exclusion analysis, it can be argued is a form of institutional analysis. Institutions are "rules of the game". Institutions distribute resources, symbolic and material, so that institutional

rules are about “membership and access”. They also determine, access to what, on what terms, with what degree of certainty. Often, this can be a zero-sum scenario, where allocation of resource to one group is at the expense of others. In the classroom, this can manifest as teacher giving more time to children who s/he deems to be ‘educable’.

Credentialism, creates barriers to entry, by requiring qualifications that are redundant for job responsibilities and may be more difficult to overcome for some than other. This works to exclude teachers and other institutional actors who have backgrounds with less socio-cultural and economic capital as they may find it harder to overcome barriers.

Unruly practices occurs when beyond the rhetoric of inclusion, in practice, other norms shape actual provision. It is another mechanism through which institutions can exclude (Kabeer, 2000).

Within institutions, Kabir (2000) refers to a hierarchy of differentiated privilege. Ranging from the privileged insiders at one extreme, who collectively influence norms and decisions regarding allocation and valuation, to the hard-core disadvantaged, for whom unequal access from different domains reinforce one another, exacerbating disadvantage (Kabeer, 2000). Within this range also lie secondary insiders, and those who are adversely included on terms which can be a risk to their identity, such as schooling offered to indigenous communities but not in their mother tongue. There are also those who prefer self-exclusion – where rather than occupy a devalued status within the mainstream, they prefer to be excluded and define their own values.

Kabir argues that rather than a simplistic viewing of inclusion and exclusion, with people populating both sides of the line, disadvantage and advantage should be understood in terms of clusters because of the intersection between exclusion and inclusion. For example, an ‘upper-caste’ woman is still at disadvantage from a gender perspective, within a wider cluster of social advantage from a caste perspective. This disadvantage translates into social exclusion when various institutional mechanisms allocates resources, makes rules and norms to systematically deny groups the resources and recognition that would allow them to participate in the life of the society (Kabeer, 2000).

Socio-cultural contexts and social cognition

From a sociologist’s perspective, Nambissan (2013) argues that socio-cultural contexts have an influence on cognition. The sociology of education must be studied by using the classroom and school as a unit of analysis. Excluded or disadvantaged students ought to be studied in caste-class continuums to understand how caste and class positions and social experiences within the school context are interlinked (Nambissan & Rao, 2012). Stratification studies, within the sociology of education, previously, had reduced a complex dynamic to fragmented and decontextualised reality which did not capture the link between these different variables. Capturing this dynamic would have methodological implications when measuring exclusion and discrimination.

Social cognition focuses on cognitive processes that involve other people and include the domains of social knowledge, structures, biases, attribution for motives, social influences, stereotypes and so on. Learner’s co-construct knowledge through culture of the school and their interactions with others (Lave, 1991) (J. S. Brown et al., 2005). Their disposition towards learning, their control of their learning process and the opportunities and risks they take to engage are key to construct knowledge. The role of peers and teachers in the construction of the self and identity is important, as per the constructivist paradigm (Windschitl, 2002) (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004). We analysed the effect of emotion and cognition and vice versa above from a cognitive science perspective in the section ‘Emotion and Cognition’.

Bourdieu’s theory of Reproduction of social inequality

Bourdieu, in his sociological analysis of school systems, draws on a wider conception of capital, than merely the economic one, which can be converted into capabilities. First, it must be considered that

not all children will be able to draw on family capital. Second, some may have negative family capital, when due to their family circumstances, they are compelled to earn a living or assist a family member who is not well. The process of conversion is influenced by conversion factors, emerging from an individual's *habitus* and interaction with the *field.*

Habitus was used to describe the conditions of familial environment, manifesting in social milieu and culture through the student's preferences and practices and crystallising towards a disposition. Bourdieu argues that by aligning their preferences with norms in an environment, they improve their social relations. An inclusive framework in education would redefine success and ways of being to accommodate a variety of knowledge. For example, the intricate knowledge indigenous communities possess of their natural environment, if given space within the curriculum and classroom, would redefine cultural capital in the classroom(Nambissan, 1994). Within curricula and classrooms that accommodate and value this kind of knowledge, a 'field' will have been created which operates in favour of these students and can draw upon their cultural capital. A status quoist *field*, on the other hand, is where they may find the school environment and curriculum alienating, and the inherited capital of botanical knowledge unable to be converted into *cultural* or academic capital.

We must bear in mind that *habitus* changes, particularly in the contexts that the EOL project works in, due to conflict, climate change, distress migration, geo-politics. Therefore, the potential capital a child may have may vary. However, an institution which is conscious of this bias may make it easier for some pupils to fit in and reflection may lead to transfer of resources and change of *rules* to value diverse capital. But this would only be the case if there is acknowledgement, socially and institutionally, that such a bias is prevalent, and that it must be countered. Dominant narratives often posit non-dominant cultures, such as the 'tribal' cultures as backward, uncivilised, and barbaric (Nambissan, 1994; Nambissan & Rao, 2012). Therefore, there may be some awareness of institutional biases, and social biases, but these may be seen as legitimate, and the institutional agents may view the imperative of school is to socialise children into more 'civilised' and 'advanced' states of being.

As per the New Sociology in Education Inequalities perspectives it is necessary to study the power relations and excesses and reproduction within schools to assess the constructed social reality (Hart, 2019). Teachers can often be the agents of reproduction, not necessarily intentionally.

The Hidden Curriculum

The curriculum, both **official and hidden** must be analysed in the context of the hierarchical social structure and graded inequalities. The official curriculum is the one prescribed by national or provincial level authorities. The curriculum often depicts a selective view of the world and of the very structures that have led to marginalisation of these groups (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008; Nambissan, 2015).

Two sets of skills / qualities are identified according to Bernstein (1975) which are valued in school. One is instrumental, which is to do with behaviour needed to acquire new skills, and the expressive, which is to do with conduct and manner. Children from marginalised backgrounds are at a disadvantage. This is because, children from middle class backgrounds possess a cultural capital that places them at a relative advantage with respect to the expressive order of the school(Hart, 2019). That middle class students' homes offers a substantial pedagogic site, offers a relative advantage in terms of the instrumental order at school (Nambissan & Rao, 2012).

These norms are linked to the *hidden* curriculum, which is not officially documented, but which values certain instrumental and expressive orders. Related to this is the concept of *educability* – that is the capacity to learn in the formal context of schools. The teachers often come from the dominant milieu of society and have perceptions about their students, their abilities and therefore their

'educability' (Nambissan & Rao, 2012; Sayed et al., 2007). This also influences the teacher's pedagogical priorities for the children who are not considered to be 'educable.'

Linking the concepts

What is the impact of the inequality and discrimination widely prevalent in South Asia on mediating a child's construction of the self, their orientation towards learning, and the support they receive?

Linking the above-mentioned concepts in the diverse set of students, polities and education systems in South Asia is key to understanding the paradigm of exclusion of a child.

The presence of dominant culture embedded in institutions, such as the education system establishes the rules and the differentiation in privilege(Kabeer, 2000). To a large extent, they are enforced, knowingly and unknowingly by the institution's agents, which here would consist of teachers, school management and local education authorities, as well as curriculum designers and M&E experts.

The wider socio-cultural context that influences institutions, as well as institutional agents, also influences the learning environment(Nambissan & Rao, 2013). Within this field, a student from a *habitus*, which is normatively undervalued, is being educated(Hart, 2019). Non-institutional agents, influenced by the wider socio-cultural context and institutional agents, influenced by the rules of the institution, such as curriculum, as well as wider socio-cultural contexts are helping a student socially construct knowledge (Windschitl, 2002). Apart from the cognitive function of the student, the affective function is determined by the interaction with other agents. Overt discriminatory practices, are debilitating for the marginalised pupil's self-worth and affect their standing with their peers and the relationship with teachers (Nambissan & Rao, 2012). Additionally, the *habitus* of the student disadvantages her/him, which itself is the outcome of wider structural exclusion prevalent in unequal societies (Hart, 2019; Nambissan & Rao, 2013).

This model is simplified. The vast diversity of student backgrounds suggest they bring different values to school where they engage with diverse institutionalised learning environments. The *field* is dynamic, affected by socio-political movements, conflict, peace building mechanisms, migration, and climate change at a structural level, and by changing personnel, demographic factors, cultural consciousness, and norms at a relational level. The dimensions of exclusion and discrimination will help us better understand this *flux* accurately if the methodological approach can account for this negotiation of power between agents and broader socio-political and structural shifts.

Before we consider the dimensions of exclusion and the methodological implications of measuring that, we shall critically analyse the typical of the citizen-led tool

How do Citizen led assessments currently measure sociology of education?

In a household survey sheet, ASER records data which can be used as indicators or proxies for socio-economic status. The following SES related variables are recorded in the ASER tool:

1. Attendance at school / Drop-out
2. After-school tuition
3. Medium of Instruction
4. Family members level of education
5. Type of house
6. Availability of Toilets
7. Electricity availability
8. Ownership of household appliances
9. Ownership of vehicles
10. Computer literacy in the house
11. Availability of reading material

While many of these indicators can be used as imperfect proxies for socio-economic status, the survey keeps distance from marginalisation and exclusion that a child may face in the community or at school. Not capturing the effect of structural, socio-cultural, and relational data, and any possible correlations with attainment, reduces teaching and learning to a student-teacher binary. The sections below argue why measuring exclusion and discrimination is important to understand lack of attainment and implications for child wellbeing.

Citizen-led assessments are not neutral

To analyse whether CLAs are a neutral platform, we need to analyse how, and through which actors and processes are citizen led assessments being institutionalised. The beliefs underpinning CLAs need to be re-examined.

Standardised assessments claim to be culturally neutral. However, this cultural neutrality proceeds on the assumption that the 'typical' student from a country can be easily defined. Even among relatively egalitarian Western European nation-states, this is challenging. Considering South Asian countries are multi-ethnic polities that see unprecedented levels of migration, varied mechanisms of governance, gross socio-economic inequalities, standardisation cannot claim to be value neutral. Polity itself, as various struggles in the modern history of South Asia has shown is, a fiercely contested area, one marked with the paradigm of dominance and discrimination. Therefore, a culturally neutral platform, even within a country, in diverse regions is a myth.

Large organisations and networks that champion citizen-led assessments usually rely on institutional funding. They are involved in partnerships, not only with similar education focused agencies but also with non-education organisations that have tremendous influence on global economic orders. The outlook of these organisations towards public funding of education as well as their perceptions of education as a 'public good' or a market commodity must be keenly considered in any estimate of neutrality. Do CLAs risk becoming a PISA for poorer populations? And within this framework, will education governance be reorganised as per global agendas set by international organisations accountable to none? (Meyer, Heinz-Dieter ; Benavot, 2013). We explore this again later in the paper.

Understanding technology mediated knowledge and learning -

Education technology has been realised by institutions to achieve efficiency. Therefore, the imperatives that developed educational technology mediate education too. Lauzon (1999) argues that a very objectified knowledge, as opposed to constructivist views of knowledge gain precedence, and the culture 'neutral' knowledge presented, is not neutral at all. Instead, it is knowledge valued by market forces that are certified and incorporated within a community of practice. One the one hand, since this article has been written, technology has become cheaper and more widely accessible. And yet, during the Covid-19 pandemic, technology as the medium of education delivery excluded vast populations. Pedagogies in technology mediated education that enable renegotiating relationships will recognise 'alternative knowledge'. However, without overcoming this pedagogical gap, the normative value of knowledge will be mediated non-neutrally.

If knowledge cannot be neutrally mediated, constructed, or certified, it would be tenuous to claim assessment that assesses that knowledge such as PISA, CLAs or National Assessments can be neutral. The dynamic of the marginalised engaging with knowledge must be understood to understand the conditions and processes for exclusion and marginalisation. The culture of online learning communities must be understood to understand attainment.

CLAs can however acknowledge their inherent bias and further understanding of exclusion and discrimination with respect to education and assessment. It will help better understanding of attainment in education, as well as self-reflect on their own limitations. We explore this concept in depth in the latter half of the paper.

Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural variables and assessment scores

Studies on PISA have assessed that test scores are not affected by pedagogical inputs alone. In their book, PISA, Power and Policy, Meyer and Schiller (2013) explore the correlation between non-pedagogical factors and the PISA scores. They argue that in contemporary and non-academic discourse, factors internal to the school, such as curriculum, teaching and governance are given disproportionate focus or blame if the PISA results are good and bad, respectively. Little focus is afforded to socio-economic and cultural factors which, they argue, that have a significant impact on PISA courses. Using two examples, they illustrated how that performance in reading and maths scores in PISA was strongly correlated to a country's GDP, as well as somewhat weakly correlated to per pupil spending (Meyer, Heinz-Dieter ; Benavot, 2013). This showed that government spending apart, economic prosperity has a great impact on results. Along with numerous studies that capture the effects of poverty, these analyses justify current CLA tools and their attempt to understand socio-economic settings.

Meyer and Schiller (2013)in PISA, Power and Policy (Meyer, Heinz-Dieter ; Benavot, 2013) also focus on individualism and 'power-distance'. The latter is a concept which focuses on to what extent a person accepts authority without challenge. The chapter studied its impact on academic achievement. The authors also studied whether the degree of homogeneity and diversity in societies affected attainment in education outcomes. While the author's postulate an eastern and western path to PISA success, the implications for this article were this: Affluence, culture, homogeneity as well as spending on education were predictive of better PISA scores.

Studies and analysis such as these, stipulate the importance of measuring socio-economic and socio-cultural factors when measuring attainment in education. Therefore, understanding CLA outcomes across transnational and intra-country contexts are necessary to see what socio-economic and socio-cultural factors may influence education. Within the context of South Asia, the data generated can be used to design policies not only aimed at educational attainment, but equity and social justice in education too. We explore this in detail in the section titled 'Advantages of broadening the scope of CLAs'

Understanding Communities through CLAs

An effective community level mobilisation, that the SAAA hopes to achieve, can succeed only if the community characteristics and dynamics are understood better. The word community can carry multiple connotations in South Asia. They can be defined through geographical and administrative boundaries, as well as social constructs of religion, caste, sub-caste, tribe, clan, nationality, denomination, ethno-linguistic group, and overlapping identities which also involve shared political spaces. Often, within administrative communities, there will exist various social communities. Therefore, an area served by a school may consist of students who are most likely to be from the same administrative / geographic community without necessarily being from the same social community.

Within such stratified contexts, the effectiveness of the community as a model of social accountability needs to be critically analysed. The study on caste discrimination in Nepal (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008) documents that on the school management committee, the dominant members of the village were largely present, and that until a legal provision mandated the presence of a *Dalit* member, the representation of *Dalit* communities was scarce(Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008). The school management committee usually includes one member who is an elected representative. Free public sector schools often educate the most marginalised in societies. The most marginalised can often also be seasonal and / or circular migrants. Also, the documentation they possess can be minimal. As a result, the likelihood of being registered in the voter lists for that village or urban ward can be minimal. As a result, one effective mechanism of governance, through long route accountability in an electoral democracy is nullified. Personal

circumstances of parents and their own marginalisation also inhibits the effectiveness of the school management committee as a means of social accountability.

Further, sociological analysis of education carried out by James Coleman (1985) focuses on two very different 'functional communities', one in a rural and mountainous region of Virginia, USA and the other, a locality in Chicago where many residents who were University of Chicago staff and faculty. He discusses how both were examples of functional communities. The advantage of such a community was that feedback to teachers was possible, as parents knew teachers from the community, as well as other parents of children from the school (Coleman, 1987). Using these networks, it was possible for communities to engage with school management, sometimes collectively, and at other times with more information, to hold teachers and the school accountable for their children's education. Further, there also was intergenerational closure, and they could hold their own children more accountable, using information from networks in the community (Coleman, 1987). This would not be possible in schools where parents do not know each other or teachers, until they meet as part of school and / or parent-teacher associations.

Within the South Asian context, while functional communities do exist, the degree to which they can be an effective means of accountability will vary widely. In Afghanistan, the SABER report documents that the *Shura* or council for a local area also holds the teacher and school management accountable, in addition to the government staff of the Education department(Molina et al., 2018). Therefore, there exists through representatives of the community, some form of accountability.

To what extent would the discussions between the *Shura* and school management may include specific pedagogical, or inclusion problems related to some children, or a single child is unknown. Further to what extent the *shura* members may have attitudes towards inclusion that are positive is not known. Considering wider prevailing socio-cultural attitudes and codes such as *Pastunwali* (see below), one can hypothesise that any *shura* member trying to implement inclusive reforms would have to overcome the dominant social codes and norms.

While school management and village development committees do exist and have exist for several decades in some countries of South Asia, the extent to which they are involved in school governance and administration largely varies. The extent to which school management and governance can be held accountable by communities would vary too. Among several marginal communities, the relative lower levels of formal education among many members, as well as less knowledge of pedagogical principles beyond their own experience of education may hinder accountability. As it has been discussed above parents of children may live in deeply stratified communities and therefore collective action would have to overcome other group identities. For this reason, solidarity, and action for accountability in education from the school community cannot be assumed, even if they are aware that the school is not functioning ideally.

There are likely to be schools located in villages with near homogenous identity or a history of unified political action, where solidarity and collective action would be familiar. They would be exceptionally successful in ensuring accountability in education if teachers and school staff also are a part of their own community, as the context and dynamics of a functional community illustrated by Coleman (1985) would be evident. Where the school staff is not a member from that community but living there for the purposes of doing their job, the means of accountability could still emerge through formal processes and mechanisms.

Research on Emotion and Cognition

Scientific evidence has shown that **emotion is a crucial aspect** of learning. Schools are therefore expected to be a place of learning knowledge or skills, but also for developing healthy and positive learning environments. These environments are suitable to acquire cognitive skills as well as emotion regulation strategies (Hinton et al., 2008). The affective network within the brain deals with emotional dimensions that regulate motivation and interest.

A **previously neutral conditioned stimulus** such as reading a text out loud will associate with negative emotions if negative experiences mark that activity (Hinton et al., 2008). Therefore within discriminatory contexts in schools, behaviour by agents of the schooling system or peers, may pair the relatively neutral task of reading a text out loud with fear due to embarrassment and humiliation experienced previously. Eventually, a child may respond with fear at the thought of that activity.

Further, along with the affective function that manifests fear, a slower process which appraises the situation based on previous experience of discrimination emerges ((Hinton et al., 2008). These thoughts combine into a cognitive construct that reading out-loud is a hostile situation. This reinforces initial fears and inhibits the cognitive capacity for reading out-loud / group work.

As a result, emotions too, are **shaped by cognitive processing**. In a read-out loud exercise, a teacher who emphasises fluency over accuracy at that stage and encourages a student, may elicit a better reading response from a nervous reader reading out-loud. Cognitively, a student will appraise thoughts that are reassuring and develop a sense of confidence. It will enable measured and calm thinking. Therefore, a student may conclude that reading out-loud is not threatening. This would inhibit emotionally driven fear, dispelling negative cognitive formations, and free up working memory towards reading the text (Hinton et al., 2008).

Positive emotions enhance learning, enabling motivation and attention, which are intrinsic to learning(Duckworth et al., 2015). However, agents that act on their prejudices, within a schooling system that either does not acknowledge the discrimination faced in wider society or does not pro-actively work to counter these prejudices can do little to create positive emotions about learning and school. In fact as several studies in South Asia document illustrate, the **prejudices of teachers** reflect the dominant prejudices of society which have contributed to the marginalisation and exclusion in the first place (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008; Nambissan & Rao, 2012; Sayed et al., 2007). What emerges therefore, is a toxic escalatory spiral where negative emotions influence cognitive processing and cognitive appraisal of school situations associates negative emotions with them.

A note on Academic resilience

Low stakes environments for schooling and assessment and building skills in **regulating emotions** can develop resilience. It can help tackle obstacles effectively, and ultimately contribute towards academic achievement as well as better social capital. Noddings (1992),as cited in (Hinton et al., 2008) argues that teaching children skills to communicate difficulties is key to developing strategies for coping with negative experiences.

Discrimination and adversity within and beyond the classroom undoubtedly have a negative effect on children. However, it must be seen that some children, do display resilience, to achieve, academically and otherwise, despite the adversity and discrimination. Resilience is the ability to 'bounce-back' after misfortune or stressful event (Song et al., 2013). While some authors choose to describe adapting to chronic problems that lead to stress as adaptation, we shall consider that too, as resilience for simplicity. An adversarial event can occur in an environment of high chronic stress among marginalised communities. For example, outbreaks of inter-ethnic violence amidst seasonal flooding. Or sudden flash floods that affect a temporary settlement near a riverbed which has been created due to protracted civil war.

Resilience is a process or a set of processes, that emerges from an individual interacting with the environment that promotes well-being and protects against risk (p. 257 Song et al., 2013). A study on 83 adolescents living in slums in Nairobi found that compared to a normative group of similar aged children in the US, the children in this study had a lower sense of mastery, lower sense of relatedness and a lower resource index. All of these are factors that help an individual build resiliency (Song et al., 2013). Additionally, compared to the normative group, the score on the vulnerability index was also higher. In such contexts, the role of the school becomes more important

in providing a protective environment, to draw on other sources of resilience from peers and teachers. Finally, through meaningful participation and interaction, the school can enable resilience, and an environment for children to '*bounce-back'*.

The discourse on academic resilience has three implications in understanding exclusion and discrimination. One, that exclusionary and discriminative contexts in schooling lower the social resources and inhibit the factors, such as sense of relatedness, that personal coping mechanisms draw upon to *bounce back*. This can be particularly acute when the family environment itself does not provide social resources or are a cause for risk itself. Two, exclusionary and discriminative contexts in schools can exacerbate the risk, and probabilities of 'adverse' situations by creating enabling conditions for protracted stress. Finally, despite adversity, children can, and do show resilience, including academic resilience. While the paper recognises certain populations as 'marginalised', it also acknowledges the resilience exhibited in daily life, as well as in education.

The argument for measuring exclusion and discrimination does not only base itself on the fact that these processes have adverse academic impacts. Exclusion and discrimination create environments and negative states of mind and lack of wellbeing within students, irrespective of their impact on academic resilience. Therefore, the rationale for measuring exclusion is rooted in a child's wellbeing **and** understanding the failure of ecosystems which are traditionally supposed to support a child to 'bounce back', along with literacy and numeracy skills.

Understanding agentic behaviour in school and its effect on emotions and cognition

Research has indicated that children who like school tend to perform better and are less likely to dropout, remain absent or have behavioural issues (Hallinan, 2008). Within the school, teachers interact most with students, and therefore, it is important to know what the effect of empathy and social dominance on inclusivity is. Lack of inclusivity has been characteristic of deeply stratified societies, as well as the deeply unequal education experiences that are reproduced within the school environment (Hart, 2019). Teachers play a key role in creating the experiences or moderating the experiences a child may face which leads to developing her/his disposition towards school(Hallinan, 2008).

According to the theory of planned behaviour, individual's attitudes represent the best predictor of their behavioural intentions (Navarro-Mateu et al., 2019). This theory helps understanding

A) The teacher's attitude towards her school children and its effect on the school being a positive learning environment.

B) The attitude of the student to the school and its impact on attainment, retention, absenteeism.

An empirical study (Hallinan, 2008) focused on the impact of attitudes towards school having a marked effect of attainment, retention, and a healthy schooling experience. Hallinan argues that how teachers interact with students is key to the latter's feelings about school and themselves.

Respect and regard for the students, fairly dealing with and listening to them, as well as genuine concern is always positively appreciated. These practices need to occur in a stable environment, consistently, and on a formal and informal basis(Hallinan, 2008). Respect of a student's collective identity, within a wider peer group culture or social and ethnic culture also is a basis of trust. Praise, for efforts, is intrinsic, and effective and more holistic than extrinsic praise related to work itself (Hallinan, 2008). The former increases self-confidence and ensures that a student does not judge her / his inherent value based on her / his schoolwork and develops a positive attitude towards learning and the school.

The regression analysis in the study (Hallinan, 2008) found that teachers that use effective praise, respect the students, and support them emotionally and socially had a positive impact on the student's attitude towards school.

This study is very relevant to analyse the pedagogic practices in mainstream education in South Asia where several studies have found respect for students and their collective identities is lacking (Sayed et al., 2007)(Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008). The awareness of the conditions in a *habitus* is lacking when setting homework, the disproportionate share of corporal punishment by marginalised communities and statements on the ineducability of children (Nambissan & Rao, 2012; Sayed et al., 2007) would suggest that crucial barriers exist towards developing a positive attitude towards learning and school.

A study carried out in Spain assessed the impact of empathy and social dominance orientation (SDO) on teacher's attitudes, sentiments, and concerns towards inclusion. Using regression analysis, and qualitative comparative analysis, it was found that SDO is negatively correlated to attitudes on inclusion(Navarro-Mateu et al., 2019). The study utilised SDO to measure the desire within teachers of maintaining the social hierarchy and inequality towards students with disabilities. High levels of SDO promote unequal and hierarchical intergroup relations. Within the study, it was found that SDO significantly negatively predicted attitudes and emotional empathy significantly positively predicted attitudes to inclusion (Navarro-Mateu et al., 2019). Attitude should be analysed broadly, not merely to the individuals or groups excluded but also towards intergroup relationships.

In summary, planned behaviour theory is a useful means to understand the dynamic of potential exclusion in school in addition to non-inclusive social and or institutional norms and the agent's self-evaluation of the capacity to overcome them. It helps us understand the *conversion factors* operating in the *field* as influenced by institutional agents. Therefore, this suggests that the methodological implications of studying exclusion may need to go over and beyond self-reporting scales or survey instruments.

A study (Lee et al., 2018), carried out on immigrant children to the USA assessed to what extent negative structural and relational level factors can predict academic achievement. This study focused on factors that emerged from a immigrant child's interaction with the school environment that led her / him to have a perception of school as an unsafe space, and also, what expectations that could be reasonably held from school for her / him (Lee et al., 2018). It also examined, to what extent this led to academic under-achievement. It found that negative relational and structural factors did lead to lower academic achievement. Specifically, it found harmful social relationships, institutional discrimination, absence of institutional support, school features such as dropout ratio and student-teacher ratio and finally, perceptions of school safety, were all linked directly or indirectly were predictive of educational attainment(Lee et al., 2018).

This is a significant study, as several low-income and state schools in South Asia suffer from some or all these problems as the illustrations below elucidate. All these problems will affect attainment and therefore understanding SES as ASER currently does, while useful, would be inadequate. From a methodological perspective, it vindicates ASER's strategy to collect data from a nearby school to understand structural factors and their relation to attainment. However, it also illustrates that to capture relational level data – a more eclectic mix of methods would be needed.

The link between these agentic factors and educational attainment illustrates how the *field* operates and lends a lot of credence to Bourdieu's theory that schools, as institutions, engage in social reproduction(Hart, 2019). Nambissan too, argues that schools in India recreate the socio-economic and socio-cultural inequalities inherent in society(Nambissan & Rao, 2012). All these studies have helped us understand the 'black-box' within the sociology of education.

Exclusion by Structural and Systemic Dimensions

Education Policy as a Means of Exclusion

South Asia has a history of openly exclusionary policy and laws as well as those that have been ambivalent towards exclusionary practices in society. Myanmar provides an excellent illustration of education policies that led to open exclusion as well as a fractured polity, and more recently of policy initiatives that have tried to reconcile differences brought about by exclusionary policies.

Tollefson and Tsui recognise that despite the widespread research and evidence on the benefit of mother tongue medium of instruction, several policy makers resist implementing it wholeheartedly for political reasons (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014).

Historically, in Myanmar, under a policy of Bamarisation / Burmanisation, the language and culture of the numerically and socially dominant Burmese majority was the official language of the country, and various aspects of Burman culture, such as Buddhism, were given official status (Lall, 2021)(Lall, 2020). National unity demanded assimilation of all ethnic groups within this identity, and education policy related to language was a key mechanism for this assimilation. Therefore, the only language in which education was officially imparted was Burmese(Johnston et al., 2019). Although in rural, remote areas, usage of local languages in schools was still common, as it was harder to impose language due to lack of geographical proximity.

This policy had led to ethnic consciousness amongst the various non-Burmese communities and language-based rights was a key pillar on which a political and armed struggle was waged in Myanmar by dominant non-Bamar ethnic groups. The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), adopted by the democratically elected NLD government in 2016 has made attempts to reconcile decades of exclusionary education policy. It strives to ensure education for all, and includes the words ‘access, inclusion and equity’ within it’s objectives (Ministry of Education, 2016).

The education reforms included teaching ethnic languages in limited ways for the first 3 years of schooling(Lall, 2020). It allowed the local curriculum to be taught for one academic session (period) a day. This included the local ethnic language. It also allowed supplementary use of the local language to explain complicated concepts within the Burmese language curriculum.

However, this is distant from the mother tongue based multi lingual education (MTB-MLE) which, as per research (Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education working Group, 2013; Malone, 2016) would have been ideal for pedagogical reasons, as well as pragmatic reasons such as inter group communication. Civil society and international collaboration, such as Myanmar Indigenous Network for Education (MINE) set in place a variety of processes and forums which ultimately culminated in multiple conferences that set the agenda for MTB-MLE. It was rejected by the Education department(Lall, 2021).

The bifurcation of education reform and the peace process unfortunately led to secondary emphasis on ethnic language education (Lall, 2020). This would lead to continued issues of access and quality of education. A study in 2011, carried out in Kachin state had shown that ethnic children were poorly performing in reading compared to their Burmese peers (Lall, 2021). While the Language of Instruction (LoI) remains Burmese, it has implications for children who live in remote communities who do not speak Burmese and have little contact with it outside school(Johnston et al., 2019).

As an illustration towards a considerably inclusive policy, the Language Commission of Nepal, a constitutional body has recommended, in September 2021 that every province, in addition to Nepali, adopt one or more widely spoken languages in that province for official use (Radio Nepal, 2021). To what extent will all the provinces take on board these implementations *de facto,* and how successfully will they be able to implement this in practice, remains to be seen. However, this has been a promising start, from an inclusive governance point of view.

India, which has run affirmative action programs for the most marginalised communities since the 1950s and expanded schooling to ensure UPE in the 1990s has seen enabling policies work to ensure access to communities which previously never had access to education. Along with availability of schools, policies that provided free textbooks, uniforms and mid-day meals have enabled access. However, access at a secondary level has been more limited with fees leading to a high dropout rate (ASER Centre, 2019). Sayed identifies, from his primary research, that while communities are appreciative of such policies, they are to a large extent dependant on the government for giving effect to these policies(Sayed et al., 2007).

However, ideology helps set the agenda in the policy cycle (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014), and throughout South Asia, civil war, ethnic strife, self-determination movements have led to greater legal and policy recognition of linguistic rights. Policy formulation and implementation is always problematic, and we explore this in the next section. Decentralised linguistic determination is also crucial, rather than centralised decisions, as per Tollefson and Tsui (2014), but as the case study with Myanmar illustrates, decentralised decision making on it's own is not a silver bullet as an enabler of inclusive policies.

Policy-Practice Gap

Tollefson and Tsui (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014) argue that using the legal framework that empowers mother tongue instruction is key, along with historical precedent, to secure linguistic rights in education. However, it is argued that the disparity between the letter of law and practice, or the large policy gaps in linguistic education, make the legal frameworks, necessary but not sufficient to avoid language-based exclusion.

Within policy cycles, it is often recognised that well formulated policies fail at the implementation stage, when the chasm between formulation and implementation is too wide and monitoring and feedback loops are not as effective. However, beyond the inclusive and plural rhetoric of national policies related to language, effective policy making is one that can anticipate implementation challenges and allocate resources for contingencies for planned challenges as well as unplanned challenges.

When policy planning as well as implementation processes are found wanting, various stop gap, ad-hoc measures, which are usually locally adapted and adopted versions of initial policies, emerge. For example, in Myanmar, when local language curriculum material was not available after LC was permitted by the government, various schools used Sunday school or summer school material (Lall, 2021). While these adaptations need to be applauded at times for their ingenuity, feedback and monitoring mechanisms must measure and analyse their effectiveness vis-à-vis to the original objectives at the policy formulation stage.

Analysing Myanmar's first national policies that took steps to include other ethnic cultures and languages as a part of the curriculum illustrate this. This was initially done in a piecemeal manner, which at first allowed private schools to set up ethnic language instruction, and then after heavy lobbying, permission for ethnic education was granted to Mon State. In 2016, as per the NESP, under the local curriculum (LC) module, up to to 14% of the time at primary level and 10% of the time at secondary level could be given to local content including language. This policy was applicable across Myanmar. In 2018-19, 73 languages were in use in schools, and this dropped to 64 in 2019-20(Lall, 2020). In practice, such a policy faced the following problems:

- Almost 70% of the teachers in government run schools did not speak any local languages. This has been documented by the RISE report in 2018 (Johnston et al., 2019).
- The success of the LCs depended largely on how organised ethnic organisations are and what kind of civil society and external (UNICEF) support they had. This ensured that politically powerful ethnic groups were more successful in developing and implementing a local curriculum (Lall, 2020).

- The remuneration offered for regular 'volunteer' roles to teach classes one period a day was too low. Therefore, most uptake was from in-service teachers, but since it was hard to verify actual classes taking place, the M&E of this policy was limited(Lall, 2020).
- Ethnic language Teaching assistants, who were trained and eventually would be regularised and 'daily-wage' teachers who helped teach the LC as well as explaining concepts in the local language were more common(Lall, 2020). The problem with either of these solutions is related to job-security as well as adequate training.
- Absence of an overarching LC committee in each state and lack of content for each language has resulted in using old textbooks as well as summer / Sunday school material. They vary in spelling, and sometimes in script. Scripts can often be the source of inter-group disputes(Lall, 2020).
- The MoE has lamented the lack of following a common structure and expertise in curriculum design. As a response to this challenge, it hosted several conferences where the high number of participants meant that no meaningful outcomes or cohesion emerged.
- The State Education Office (SEO) has been involved in designing the LC to varying degrees. Their involvement depends on whether they have staff in their office who possess the knowledge that corresponds to the language and culture of that ethnicity(Lall, 2020).
- Minorities within a state, which is dominated by an ethnic group, who are minorities nationally are 'minorities within minorities'. They feel that certain minorities languages and textbooks are legitimately recognised, while their language is not, owing to numerical inferiority or less political clout(Lall, 2020). This has been observed in other parts of South Asia too (Nambissan, 1994).
- Several of the minorities within minorities also preferred that Burmese as LoI as it was the language of economic and social mobility. Therefore, their children ought to learn it now as it would improve the prospects of higher education, professional and government jobs and escaping poverty. They were unhappy that the government policy was not helping them learn Burmese or their own language. Their languages were seen as too small to be viable for MTB-MLE. To them, Burmese was the way not merely to prosperity, but also the means to access government services and the administration(Lall, 2020). The Pa-O community, a minority within a minority, had attained some success by assimilating into Burmese, speaking the language among families in non-school contexts. Through the phenomena of language shift, some academic and socio-economic successes had been attained but at the cost of not being able to speak to rural relatives and sometimes their own grandparents(Lall, 2020).

Overall, we see that an inadequately conceived linguistic policy that falls short of MTB-MLE, has several deficiencies in implementation. It failed to consider the mosaic of ethnic identities that exist along with each other. The lack of trained teachers who speak the local language, the lack of books and content and lack of leadership that drives the development of LC has been the causes of a myriad of problems. Intra-ethnic group divisions and smaller minorities living alongside bigger minorities further compound questions of which language ought to be taught and by whom – and who is ultimately responsible for outcomes? (Lall, 2020)

This illustration from Myanmar is useful, to understand the complexities of implementing policies across national education systems in a systematic and cohesive manner. As Afghanistan's new government articulates its policies on education, and particularly women's education, it should anticipate the challenges the implementation may face, and allocate sufficient resources and monitoring mechanisms that can overcome these challenges.

Similarly, policies related to educational governance, at a decentralised community level, while well intentioned, are likely to fail if not successfully implemented. We see that the Village Education Committee / School Management Committee was created in many countries such as Nepal and India, as an association that was legally bound to exist and be involved in the management of the

school. However as the IIDS report showed, either the committee was not representative, or as the DFID report (2007) describes, they existed nominally and were often disregarded by teachers who felt no accountability towards ensuring it existed(Sayed et al., 2007). Therefore while the intention of policies and laws was to ensure the SMC provided authoritative oversight, in practice accountability would depend on whether the members of the SMC have the intention and social capital to reduce exclusion (Sayed et al., 2007). Therefore, local power relations took precedence over policy objectives.

Curricular Exclusion

The IIDS report on Nepal, published in 2008, highlights how the curriculum does not tackle social inequality and rather reinforces it with stories, poems and proverbs that are demeaning to Dalits. Further, it noted exclusion of Dalit persons of eminence from textbooks, as well as their contributions in history as well as their folklore. Neither was there explicit rejection of caste hierarchies and caste-based discrimination within the curriculum. Additionally, there was little in the curriculum that emphasised social justice and equality. Also, agricultural tools and manual labour often associated with the professions of *Dalit* communities are portrayed as backward and regressive.

This was also highlighted by several studies reviewed by Nambissan, where like Nepal, the knowledge of various indigenous communities was disregarded. Their knowledge and languages were not given a place in the curriculum, as well as orally disparaged. There have been several instances of children having to face punishment or have been berated for speaking their home languages (Nambissan, 2015; Nambissan & Rao, 2012). The normative value associated with the knowledge of *Adivasi* communities was low – than the structured knowledge from the curriculum. Nambissan reviews studies which talk about the 'silence' of an *Adivasi* child to a question is a result of a child being aware that their answer, which represents their worldview and perspective will be disparaged and therefore chooses to remain silent (Nambissan & Rao, 2012). Further, a study by Sayed identified a concern with parents that formal school demeaned manual labour, akin to the findings in Nepal by the IIDS study (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008).

The curriculum, Sayed (2012) argues is suited to those with the correct social capital, akin to what Bourdieu argues and fits with Bernstein's instrumental order. Homework involves parental support which is not always available for many first generational learners. Nambissan also discusses how do not account for the fact that the school is the main pedagogical site for most *Dalit /* Adivasi children. Therefore giving tasks for homework which require a literate adult's support will not work for first generation learners (Nambissan & Rao, 2012). Their failure to carry out such tasks leads to labels of 'ineducability', with the blame by teachers on the *habitus* of these children (Sayed et al., 2007).

Socio-Economic exclusion

Socio Economic Exclusion usually manifests with the withdrawal of the state from the provision of adequate and quality education and with the involvement of private sector in education. This effectively makes the primary education system deeply stratified, unlikely most European countries where the differential within a country of schools is not so stark.

While Universal Primary education is the goal and schooling at a primary level is free in many countries, the lack of adequate scholarships to fund education materials and transportation costs leads to exclusion of groups on a socio-economic basis. Also, those living on the margins of society in severe economic insecurity rely on children to work to support the family. By sheer desperation of circumstances, they are excluded from accessing education regularly.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and remote learning using online resources, children from poor socio-economic backgrounds who lack a smartphone, or sufficient money to ensure internet access have been excluded by the state education system. The degree of exclusion depends on how

proactive the education authorities have been. In a report co-ordinated and complied by Jean Dreze (2021), some states in India recorded severe exclusion, relative to others.

Conflict induced exclusion

A report by the consortium RISE focuses on children from non-Bamar indigenous groups who are out of school in Myanmar. It studies the systemic factors that left children out of school as well as the factors that inhibit their return to school. It finds that in remote areas that are affected by conflict, children from indigenous communities face extreme poverty. Once they drop out of school, limited availability of schooling beyond a certain age, linguistic exclusion and extreme poverty affect re-enrolment (Johnston et al., 2019). A book chapter in *Analysing Myanmar's reforms* (2021), Lall explores the dynamics of running and being educated in parallel education systems with different, sometimes adversarial actors. She noted that conflict outcomes can lead to change of education management and even systems of education (Lall, 2021). The book also focuses on linguistic exclusion and related alienation as well as the limited opportunities of schooling in these areas marked by conflict. The RISE study elaborates on how years of conflict have contributed to extreme poverty and parents with few years of schooling. They do not see education as a means to alleviate poverty. Children are seen to be using their time better at work in the fields or at home and the opportunity cost of sending them to school is high(Johnston et al., 2019).

Exclusion by Relational factors

Disability and resulting Exclusion in South Asia

A study in Afghanistan (Trani et al., 2019) focused on outcomes of the presence of a school on access, attainment and mental well-being of students with disabilities. Its findings were that children were reporting less distress during this period, although a causal link towards the presence of a school in a village could not be established. Second, the presence of a school in proximity had little impact on the access and attainment for disabled students. The study compares its results to a study conducted in 2005 and found that access and attainment in basic cognitive skills was lacking at both times. The study takes cognisance of the fact that enabling access to education in conflict and low-income countries does not usually make adequate arrangements for children with disabilities (Trani et al., 2019).

Parental education was a largely determining factor, which ensured disabled children had some access to education, despite the widespread stigma against the capacity of disabled children to learn(Bakhshi et al., 2017; Trani et al., 2019). In the context of Afghanistan, among disabled children, girls were further excluded due to prevalent prejudices regarding the education of women(Jamal, 2015; Trani et al., 2019). The stigma against disability is rooted in locally held notions of being cursed by super-natural phenomena. This crystallises the challenge that merely the presence of inclusive schools in the area will not be adequate to ensure inclusive and accessible education.

A study carried out by the Social and Rural Research Institute in 2014 in India reported that children with mental and multiple disabilities are out of school by 35.9% and 44.1% respectively (Social and Rural Institute (2014) as cited in Bakhshi et al., 2017), which gives us an approximate idea about the degree of exclusion from schooling. Bakhshi et al., 2017 assessed factors that influence enrolment and dropouts for disabled children, in a study of 2599 children with disabilities who lived in the Delhi region. It was found that for those with mental illness among disabled children were less likely to enrol in school and were more likely to drop out, compared to peers with no disabilities. Children from minority religions, from less affluent families, and those with a head of household who lacked substantial education were more likely not to enrol their children with disabilities in schools. The study discussed parental attitudes and beliefs that children will not be able to learn. This attitude is also shared by teachers. Further, the study recognises the structural challenges that physical access and transportation is often not available, budgets for special instruction and materials in the class to

participate are small. Finally teachers while trained, have limited experience towards teaching children with disabilities.

Inclusion for disabled students should be assessed beyond mere access and include attainment, as while access is a worthwhile step, relational factors in school can lead to exclusion and must be accounted for.

In a commentary analysing oppression for a person with autism, the author says that historically, autistic people have been viewed as having challenging dispositions, and as incapable of socialisation, and are particularly vulnerable to cultural hegemonies (Milton, 2016). Their heightened vulnerability to medical disorders is evidenced by the likelihood of their mortality rate compared to non-autistic people. Further, in Sweden, the suicide rate among autistic people with no learning impairments was 9 times the suicide rate for the general population (Hirvikovski et al. (2016) as cited in (Milton, 2016)). The degree of alienation, in South Asia for autistic people is hypothesised to be far higher. This hypothesis assumes that knowledge of autism is limited among the general population, and severe stigma against disability, mental health or any condition outside the spectrum of 'normal' as decided by the hegemonic culture is the norm.

Gender related Exclusion

A study carried out in Afghanistan highlights the code of *Pashtunwali*, which effectively dominates the norms of a highly segregated spaces and gendered roles in communities among the Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan. As per this code, men and women have very different roles in this society, and since a women's role is seen as domestic, school is seen as providing very little utility (Jamal, 2015). The degree of the permeation of the *Pashtunwali* in social life varies, between rural and urban areas.

In Nepal, the custom of *Chaupaddi* involves restrictions on adolescent girls while they menstruate. This affects their access to education as well as peer interaction (Presler-Marshall, 2017). Further, the capital they may inherit as per the Bourdieu-Sen's framework (Hart, 2019) is lower than their male siblings would. While there is gender parity at primary level enrolment, unequal access persists at a secondary level (Presler-Marshall, 2017). Further, disproportionate household work restricts her access to school in terms of attendance, even though primary completion rates remain high. Additionally, there is vast variability among girls in Nepal, especially girls from the *Dalit* communities, and among those girls who are disabled. Among some Dalit parents surveyed in India, they expressed preference that they would send their children only to *girls only* schools in the vicinity and since such schools did not exist, girls were excluded(Sayed et al., 2007) .

Childbearing and its effects on access and attainment were measured across Bangladesh, Malawi and Zambia, did not show an impact on literacy levels in the first language. However, it had an impact on attainment in English, the 2nd or 3rd language learnt. The author argues that the effects of childbearing on access and attainment in education were long term rather than on literacy skills, much of which may have already been acquired before pregnancy. (Psaki et al., 2019).

Religion based exclusion

A report on discrimination based on religion in South Asia (South Asians for Human Rights, 2010) finds that although Bengali Hindus are represented in National textbooks, there is a bias towards Islamic historical figures particularly since the colonial period. The report also refers to a keynote paper presented by Dasgupta (2008) where approximately a third of Hindus had said that religious discrimination is prevalent, and they have experienced it atleast once.

The inter-communal conflict in Rakhine state, Myanmar had led to, by UNICEF's estimates in 2015, 124,000 children who were living in camps and whose education has been affected. Many of these children have returned to school but violence and volatility still affect access to school, particularly for the Rohingya minority in Arakan state (Lall, 2020). Considering the linguistic provisions under

NESP of Myanmar, the LC in Arakan state would be dominated by Arakanese in Rakhine state, putting the Rohingya students at a linguistic disadvantage of having to learn two languages, neither being a mother tongue. This is also an illustration of the complex mosaic of exclusion along various dimensions.

A study by the National Commission of Human Rights, Pakistan reported that Hazaras who mainly live around Quetta, near the Afghan border, reported to be studying in fear when accessing education(National Commission for Human Rights Pakistan, 2018). Therefore prosperous families, send their children to other parts of Pakistan or even overseas. Therefore, religious identity and poverty combine to limit access to education.

Caste based exclusion

The IIDS report (2008), was a comprehensive report that looked at all parts of caste-based discrimination faced by the *Dalits*, of Nepal. Focusing on the discrimination faced by *Dalits* in education, respondents said teachers used caste-based slurs or proverbs which demeaned them (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008). Further, there are some practices of purity and pollution related to water sources as well as utensils, as well as segregation regarding seating in the classroom. The report, along with Sayed's research also says that corporal punishment is disproportionately faced by *Dali*t and *Adivasi* students. Also, an overwhelming number of teachers belong to the privileged castes. Only 4% of the teachers were *Dalit* in the Far Western Development Region and 1% in the Eastern region at the time of the study (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008).

School learning also involves learning from interactions with your peers. In fact, utilising the zone of proximal development and co-operative learning as well as other pedagogical techniques draw on the social relations within the school environment as a resource for learning (J. S. Brown et al., 2005). Therefore school-based discrimination, especially from ones' peers cannot successfully utilise these pedagogic techniques. As it has been highlighted above, such attitudes also affect cognition of a learner facing school-based discrimination.

The implications of historical discrimination, as well as widespread social discrimination, and the way it manifests in the school system has contributed to high dropout rates within *Dalit c*ommunities (Nambissan & Rao, 2013; Sayed et al., 2007; World Bank & DFID, 2006)(Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008).

Ethno-Linguistic Exclusion

Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and several states of India have education policies where the language of instruction is usually the official language and the language of the linguistically dominant group. Citizen led assessments that are carried out in the dominant language and may not necessarily be a child's mother tongue or even a neighbourhood language. Poor performance will lead to a child being classified as not able to read / write .

Skutnabb-Kangas introduces the concept of linguistic human rights, which proceeds on the welcoming premise that at an individual level, children ought to identify positively with their language and still be positively accepted by others, irrespective of whether or not the language is a minority or majority language in that region (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994). It is also the right to learn the language orally and through writing, receive academic instruction at a basic education level, and to have opportunity to use it, to some extent, in formal, linguistically plural contexts. It also involves the right to learn an official language of that region / country. This idealised concept has at best, been subverted by the state in most parts of South Asia, and at worst, completely disregarded by neglect and official discouragement and exclusion based on linguistic policies, which the author claims, contributes to *cultural genocide*, as per United Nation's definitions.

The 2015 Constitution of Nepal has however, as a part of the peace agreement, emphasised that every mother tongue spoken in Nepal is a language of Nepal and every individual and community

has a right to support and promote their language. While this has also been complemented by strong recommendations by the Languages Commission of Nepal in September 2021, optimism should be cautious. As we saw above in the case of Myanmar, officially allowing other languages to be taught at school level, without the necessary plans and resources in place can result in severe implementation challenges.

Overlapping dimensions of exclusion

The studies of disability-based exclusion in Afghanistan and India(Bakhshi et al., 2017; Trani et al., 2019), discuss overlapping dimensions of exclusion. It illustrates how poverty and disability are mutually reinforcing, as well as matrix of poverty, disability, and gender. As per the Sen-Bourdieu framework of capability approach, understanding the sociology of disability in education necessitates providing resources- financial, organisational and human to overcome the mesh of prejudice, lack of resources and training to enable education (Hart, 2019). Understanding this overlapping dimension is key to understanding the sociology of education, as Nambissan has eloquently argued. The dimensions of exclusion are socially constructed and addressing one dimension without considering other aspects affecting the same individuals can offset inclusion in one domain (Kabeer, 2000).

Can Citizen have led Assessment's measure discrimination and exclusion? If so, how?

A citizen led assessment could theoretically, as studies on the perception of discrimination have shown, be carried out using a survey or a self-reporting tool. Such a tool would have to illustrate high psychometric properties. However, some of the inadequacies of the approach are considered below and a methodologically wider approach is suggested.

Psychometrics: Reliability

Inter-observer reliability.

Since discrimination is a sensitive subject, the question within the survey and the training would have to be precise enough that the discrimination is recorded with as little subjectivity as possible. Training would have to ensure that the surveyors are aware and honest to themselves about their own biases, not influenced by social norms. They would have to be reflective about their own ethnic identities vis-à-vis the respondent to not let that affect their interpretation of a surveyor's response.

Test-retest reliability:

This occurs when the same assessment is undertaken with the same sample of the population at different points in time. This kind of reliability may be problematic when measuring exclusion using CLAs. As perceptions of discrimination and exclusion are shaped by own or vicarious experiences and are likely to vary with time. Learning levels itself will vary over time. Therefore, this kind of reliability would be redundant.

Parallel reliability:

This reliability measure measures equivalence, when two different assessments that claim to be equivalent are administered. In the context of SAAA, any attempt to compare exclusion along a particular dimension such as a gender would require us to use this measure. Considering the varied dimensions of exclusion in South Asia as well as the highly diverse people and contexts, a high score of parallel reliability may not be a realistic expectation as questionnaires would be adapted for local contexts. However, measuring the degree of parallel reliability is useful as it prefaces and indexes any transnational / trans-contextual comparisons.

Psychometrics: Validity

Discrimination can be measured by the perception of discrimination. This can be a sound construct from a psychological well-being perspective as several studies have found that perceiving discrimination to be negatively related to mental wellbeing (Barkan, 2018). A meta-analysis found a

negative correlation, where higher perceived discrimination led to lower mental wellbeing across a range of stigmas (Schmitt et al., 2014). However, perceived discrimination was more strongly related to sexual minorities, people with disabilities, as well as obese people, rather than those who were discriminated based on gender or race.

On the assumption that perception of discrimination by a parent or guardian of a child is a sound basis for measuring perceived discrimination, we must consider whether CLA-like instruments, or self-reporting scales can measure discrimination and exclusion.

"*Racial and ethnic discrimination are difficult to measure accurately because they are defined by the victim's appraisal of the perpetrator's intention to discriminate in conjunction with unfair events*" as per Phinney (1998) as cited in (T. N. Brown, 2001). In the context of SAAA, the guardian or parent will be speaking on behalf of the child's experiences. Further, a person may choose to deny discrimination as a manner of coping, to feel they are control of their child's fate and be reassured(Molero et al., 2013). Subtle framed questions on discrimination may also lower validity (Schmbrwitt et al., 2014).

It is also possible that certain marginalised groups, which have been dehumanised in a sustained manner, may be so conditioned to marginalisation that certain behaviour would not be perceived as unfair. It is hard to say if self-reporting scales on discrimination would effectively capture discrimination faced in schools by the children of the respondent. Particularly the same social factors that make one group more dominant than the other, may prevent a member of a vulnerable group from reporting discrimination, even in a formal context. Even if the respondent is assured of anonymity, the assurance may not be enough particularly if the surveyor is local. This has implications for validity.

Alternatively, explicit questions on discrimination may also cause 'interpretive response bias', where individuals are encouraged to recollect events in the past, in a discriminatory way (J. S. Brown et al., 2005). Otherwise, they may have not done so. Further, one must account for the 'person-group discrimination discrepancy', where people report less suffering than members of the group (Molero et al., 2013). This can be due for the above-mentioned reasons, such as for maintaining a positive image.

Regarding semantics in assessment, a study that was carried out in America illustrated the effects of using the word 'discrimination' in the initial question. It led White Americans to not report daily perceived mistreatment (Barkan, 2018). This illustrates how framing the question may elicit or inhibit certain responses. Speculatively speaking, 'heavy' words can carry certain heuristics which provoke certain sentiments among the surveyed and since social constructs prescribe 'weight' to words, they vary from population to population. Therefore, survey responses can be quite sensitive to the framing of questions, which would make designing such surveys for a complicated context like South Asia, quite challenging.

The sections above have discussed different and adapted scales that have been used to measure discrimination across different dimensions of exclusion and discrimination. However, there have been attempts to assess discrimination across stigmas of ethnicity, sexual orientation, HIV+ status using a global scale of perception of discrimination (Molero et al., 2013). This study conducted in Spain argues that assessment tools of the perception of discrimination should measure blatant and subtle as well as individual and group level discrimination (Molero et al., 2013). The scores in these tests were strongly correlated to scores on a simultaneously conducted 'stigma consciousness' questionnaire that was carried out. This was used as an alternative basis of validity of such a scale.

Methodological Approaches

CLAs, in their current form would face many methodological challenges, some of which are briefly discussed in this section. While studies on perceptions of discrimination have used self-reporting

tools, considering the *field* and *habitus* framework (Hart, 2019), may demand a more eclectic approach in methodology. A successful methodology might have to combine self-reporting scales with participative ethnographic research. This would be key to capture all dimensions, including overlapping ones of exclusion. It would be key to understand that the shifting power dynamic between marginalised and dominant agents, and how this dynamic is shaped by mutual negotiation and sometimes, dependence. Such an approach conceptualised power as more than top-down, institution-centric. (Madhavan, 2021). The volatile socio-cultural matrix in South Asia suggests that within this *field*, structural and socio-political events can alter the value of cultural capital. A mixed methods approach can also capture the negotiation of power between two actors with differential power.

A participatory research model, where members of the community are involved in researching relational dimensions of exclusion would not only be less extractive, but also contribute towards capacitating community agents. Apart from developing research and analysis skills, it would also develop a disposition among community agents that is more reflective. This would enable communities to be the primary motive force behind Citizen led assessments in the future. It would also mitigate for the risk of research fatigue among most marginalised communities. Such research, apart from being participatory, would have to be culturally sensitive, and careful not to reify prejudice against the perceived discriminator. Stringent data protection standards too, would have to be ensured, which can be demanding during the data collection process.

The complexity and time-consuming nature of the methodological implications of such CLAs will have impact on implementation, budget as well as the scale of the project. However, the act of education itself is a rich human experience of development. Within this context, capturing exclusion and discrimination is powerful, poignant, and meaningful (Madhavan, 2021). To posit this against the operationalising costs would be simplistic. The operationalising costs are project considerations seen from the perspective of a national / international organisation driving the CLAs and will become less relevant and problematic when CLAs are truly citizen and community led.

Ethics and non-neutral CLAs

Beyond methodological challenges, there would be several considerations related to the cultural and political challenges of implementation and the power differentials of the agents in the assessment process itself. We considered some of these factors in the section discussing the neutrality of CLAs. The previous paper in this series discusses (Street Child, 2021) how the assessment exercise, its design and use of assessment can itself be an exclusionary exercise.

Sternberg discusses (Sternberg, 2007) the concept of 'successful intelligence' as "*successful intelligence to refer to the skills and knowledge needed for success in life, according to one's own definition of success, within one's sociocultural context*" (Sternberg, 2007, p. 6). Assessments, whether it is PISA, national assessments and CLAs such as Uwezo and ASER construct and conduct assessment in a standardised form.

As Sternberg illustrates, the type of knowledge that may be valued highly by assessment may not be valued by that culture. The IIDS report as well as the DFID study documents how parents have some reservations of schooling that creates a negative portrayal of manual labour (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008; Sayed et al., 2007). Within a family of farmers this has implications as farming families would not value such a disposition among their children. Further, how people think about concepts and problems vary from culture to culture. Therefore, the concepts assessed, or assessment as a concept is constructed in one culture and examined in another (Sternberg, 2007).

Apart from the design of assessment, the very act of assessment itself has the potential to exclude some and advantage others. Indigenous cultures, where collectivist outlooks and teamwork for solving problems is a cultural norm would be at odds with the form of CLAs and PISA assessments that look at the individual's performance in isolation. The meaningfulness of the assessment

therefore would vary and as a result, the affective heuristic towards assessment among students may vary too. (Sternberg, 2007). The lack of neutrality and the differentiated impact of it's design and implementation must be acknowledged.

Reflection on the practices and biases during the process of assessment as well in the process of analysis would improve CLA tools. Recording relational aspects of discrimination through mixed methods would also aid reflection on assessment. In terms of psychometrics, such approaches would help reframe the validity of the data and acknowledge possible systematic errors caused by reasons described by Sternberg.

Advantages of broadening the scope of CLAs.

The advantages of reconceiving and broadening the scope of CLAs go beyond reporting learning levels. They may explain why some learning levels are lower. The pedagogical implications of a non-inclusionary environment can also be gauged by understanding levels of attainment within the CLAs along with identity, group dynamics and discrimination. Attainment data combined with data that can capture exclusion and discrimination, as well as mitigation strategies, would provide insights into the dynamics of the classroom and the school. It would help opening the proverbial 'black box', which has remained only partially explored in the sociology of education, especially in South Asia (Nambissan & Rao, 2012).

For policy makers, this data, may possibly better explain why provision of inputs has not always led to corresponding outputs in education. It would also serve as efficacious tools for evidence-based, bottom-up policymaking for inclusive schools and education. Policy makers would be more willing to allocate resources to ensuring education is inclusive when they can see a link between poor attainment and group identity. Educators, curriculum designers and content makers too can channelise the feedback to reflect and improve their own curricular materials. At a fundamental level, it may also modify the objectives of education, moving past illusions of neutrality and the ends orientated approach of assessment to consider 'dynamic assessment' or broader forms of measuring success. Ideally, this would lead to plural and constructive pedagogies shaped by genuine ceding of power as part of a wider constructive approach to decentralisation, governance and 'structured democratic voice'(Hevia & Vergara-Lope, 2019).

For teachers and other institutional agents such information would provide an opportunity for reflection. An opportunity to look at the education framework critically; detached from their usual perspectives that have emerged from their own socialisation within the education system and beyond. At an individual and organisational level, it could develop a more progressive and inclusive framework of education. Within this framework, they could significantly modify their pedagogies and methods of assessment to the socio-cultural realities of school. It would also have implications for the M&E framework of teacher performance.

Community level mobilisation around identity and culture are commonplace in South Asia. Availability of attainment data and data on exclusion and discrimination would harness their efforts with evidence to lobby for policy reform. Through democratic socio-political action, education can be a part of the 'agenda' through a 'structured democratic voice' (Hevia & Vergara-Lope, 2019). There is potential for political and social churning that such a survey on scale may entail and therefore it ought to align itself to constitutional aspirations and national education frameworks.

The rhetoric of ratified treaties declaring Universal Human Rights and progressive constitutions cannot overturn millennia old, internalised and often socially endorsed prejudices. However, community-led assessment and engagement with citizen collected data to understand education can set the agenda for inclusive universal education, possibly curtailing the 'social reproduction' carried out by schools.

Conclusion

This article has focused on ultra-diverse societies in South Asia, and inequitable education systems that exclude along various relational and structural aspects. Using Bourdieu's dynamic conceptualisations of exclusion and Kabir's institutional analysis, we have tried to understand non-inclusive features of education systems and their interaction. It was argued that CLAs, assessments like PISA, are advocated by organisations led by certain principles of political economy that have a high threshold to overcome to establish neutrality. To measure exclusion, it would have to broaden and evolve its methodology and must also have high psychometric properties. But these challenges do not preclude the value that this will bring towards generating social accountability in education, by looking at a broader dynamic of child development beyond the binary of student and teacher.

Overall, the imperative of the paper has been to advocate measurement of exclusion as a means of generating consciousness. The thrust of collecting such information will be to generate evidence to engage citizens and consciously reflect on exclusion and discrimination. The South Asian Assessment Alliance's focus has been analysis and engagement for advocacy. According to Bourdieu, these actions and interactions will create consciousness, which is the basis of resistance, struggle and change through a structured democratic voice in education.

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