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Essay

Leveraging Social Mobility: What India's Schools are Missing



[AKILA RADHAKRISHNAN](#)



Preparing adolescents for life is an important expectation from school systems. However, the manner in which current curricula are framed does not equip school leavers adequately. File photo of students on the way to their village school in Uppalapadu Village, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. Photo: G N Rao / The Hindu

What are schools meant to do for adolescent-aged children? Are they merely institutions that instil conformity while imparting basic knowledge of the three R's? Should they blindly roll out prescribed syllabi to prepare students for year-end examinations or can they inculcate thinking and other skills to face life in and beyond school? Are teachers meant to, to borrow from the title of the late French philosopher Michel Foucault's celebrated work on modern prisons, "discipline and punish"; or can they creatively channelise the energies of students towards reflection, social engagement, and "rearing of selves", as exhorted by the American philosopher, John Dewey? Moving from theory to practice, how has the U.K.'s society and politics approached the challenging linkages between education, income, and social inequality, and what are Indian schools missing?

These and related questions sprang to the mind of [Akila Radhakrishnan, a 2022 Chevening Gurukul Fellow for Leadership and Excellence at Oxford University](#). A trained Sociologist and a Social Policy Specialist at UNICEF-India, a sabbatical at Oxford gave her the time, space, and ambience to take a step back from her decades of ground-level experience to look at how India's schools could better cater to the interests of their students and the country.

Placing school education against the social and political backdrop, Dr. Radhakrishnan argues the case for a wider approach to school education – perhaps the most important external intervention in the shaping of an individual. She raises, among other issues, the importance of imparting socio-emotional as well as vocational skills to young children. The larger question that directs her first-person Essay on the options that lie ahead for India's school education framework is the following: Are India's schools preparing its children for life – be it the domains of self-management and further education, or the world of work?

The last few weeks at Oxford University as an academic visitor¹ freed up some space for me to reflect on an assortment of issues that are shaping the world we live in. We had professors and practitioners talking to us – a diverse set of Fellows selected from different disciplines – about their work and concerns around politics and international governance, net zero emissions, gender intelligence, disruptive innovation, the future of food, and eudaimonia [well-being] to name just a few. Some were meant for an instant upgrade of knowledge and triggered debates in the class; others were to leave a lasting effect on the day job I would return to. As a trained sociologist and a child development practitioner, I was aware of the significance of both the instant and the enduring. The mid-career incursion into the world of academia, the related meetings with

people and visits to places, and the whole package of the varied experiences in the U.K. served as an immersive opportunity to test knowledge and practice².

Thanks to my long interest in the theory and practice around education for social mobility, I sat at a public lecture delivered by Katherine Birbalsingh, who has been known as Britain's strictest headmistress³. Ms Birbalsingh had her audience spellbound in the popular Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford when she spoke about the racial, political, and economic undercurrents in the U.K. that have decided who goes to school and university, why or why not. She made passionate references to her unique school for underprivileged children. But to much dismay, she eulogised certain idealistic and even archaic principles of imparting education. She said that strict disciplining and punishments in schools *are essential* for fostering *high-quality* learning, behaviour, and character development. (Emphases mine.) Her 'traditional philosophy' viewed child-centric schools as a *threat to the mobility* of children from poor and marginalised families. She said it would keep them lazy and unmotivated to reach higher. She glorified the mode of memorising and the emphasis placed on manners and order in her teacher-led school model. It was only slightly relieving that canes and whips were not a part of her school kit when she was wandering about its corridors.

The well-intentioned headmistress seemed to overlook that in contrast to her experimentation and advocacy, progressive educational thought during the last two centuries has put the child – not institutions – at the centre and has argued for maintaining schools as a joyful place of learning for all. On matters relating to curriculum and methods of teaching, thought leaders from Dewey to Foucault to Paulo Freire (the Brazilian who pondered over the constricting vs liberating effects of education), and others across continents have deliberated on the merits of open and reflective experiences for the child. They have contributed to the worldview that while schooling is domesticating when it calls for order, it is transforming when it asks students not to repeat teachers' words but to seek their own answers.

Progressive thought during the last two centuries has put the child at the centre and has argued for making schools a joyful learning place for all.

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Bhattacharya, S. 2017. [Interview: India has not taken education seriously since independence: Prof. Krishna Kumar](#), December 1.

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Even in ascriptive societies like India – in which individuals are assigned statuses “without reference to their innate differences or abilities”⁴ but, for instance, by birth and/or gender – education is a primary tool for social mobility. Leading Indian pedagogues like Krishna Kumar have argued that ‘only by examining the intentions of the learner, the conditions under which learning has to occur, and the means or conventions of teaching to be used, can we ascertain what precisely will happen’⁵. Given the dynamics and complexity between the processes and outcomes for children, it is indeed extremely difficult for adults to take a child’s perspective while deciding what they would teach and how. They, therefore, tend to take decisions that best suit them as adults, albeit claiming to do so in the ‘best interest of the child’!

What was more concerning about Ms. Birbalsingh is that she is also the chair of the U.K.’s latest Social Mobility Commission⁶. In a multicultural society like Britain, it is not surprising that the government has been keen to watch the nature and trends of social mobility across its diverse population groups, and has put in place a body to advise it on how to address the country’s income-based and social inequalities⁷. Surely, the linkage between how children are educated and what happens to their mobility through education is not questionable. However, the concern is that in her guidance to the government about what should go on in schools and classrooms towards achieving higher level mobility outcomes, would she drive more of her own teacher-led model? Would that then make the U.K. and the world reverse its thinking about education philosophy and methods? Would the girls and boys from already disadvantaged groups then move up through such education?

Lessons for India

Leaving the above concerns to be sorted by the U.K. government and society, the Report of the U.K.’s Social Mobility Commission is relevant for India, where social mobility is

undoubtedly low⁸. India's social mobility concerns are age-old but it is yet to grapple with how to address them through promoting education for all. Unlike the U.K. for example, India has not built robust data systems to discuss the efficacy or impact of its policies and action for social mobility – neither from a political nor an educational lens. It remains a fact that India neither collects and analyses systematic data nor uses them for comprehensive review mechanisms⁹. Despite positive discrimination and reservation, special schools, schemes and scholarships for girls and most disadvantaged communities, and several other interventions for promoting chances for employment and social mobility, there is a lack of clear understanding of what has worked, and when and where to apply the accelerators. Therefore, Chapter 4 of the U.K. Commission's Report that elaborated on the 'drivers of social mobility' seemed important for India. The four drivers discussed there are: 1. conditions of childhood; 2. educational opportunities and quality of schooling; 3. work opportunities for young people; and 4. social capital and connections¹⁰. The following points emerged from reflective reading:

In terms of approaching intergenerational social mobility, India's policymakers need to recognise that

Related articles from The Hindu Group:

1. **Chandra, J. 2023.** [Annual Status of Education Report 2022 flags widening learning gaps](#), The Hindu, January 18.
2. **Poorvaja, S. 2023.** [Tamil Nadu students score poorly in basic reading skills after pandemic, finds survey](#), The Hindu, January 19.
3. **Agnihotri, R. K. 2021.** [Education in the time of pandemic](#), Frontline, February 27.
4. **Swarup, A. 2018.** [School education — what's gone wrong?](#), The Hindu BusinessLine, December 21.

- Relative positioning of parents not only by their educational attainment but also by the resources and connections they can make for their children – i.e. the 'cultural capital' – is a key factor for inter-generational mobility. The transmission of

advantages or disadvantages from parents to children must first receive critical and longitudinal consideration by the Indian academia¹¹.

- Children born into families with low parental education and unstable family income levels must be addressed by special schemes and social protection measures, that are delivered from a not-one-size-fits-all approach. Robust evidence must inform localised social policy for education.
- Measurements of absolute as well as relative poverty, generated regularly at smaller geographical zones and in multi-dimensional and participatory manners, must be prioritised. This may hold a huge advantage in promoting participatory and inclusive social mobility processes, and also help governments to envision realistic mobility for the marginalised.
- Taking this for positioning India's school education policy, there is a need to refocus on what is taught, especially at the secondary stage:
 - Improving proficiency in languages, mathematics, or sciences (as measured by international or national level learning assessments) is not adequate. Honing a child's emotional intelligence, gender intelligence, mental well-being, and coping skills would help overcome the lapses created by inadequacies in one's social, cultural and knowledge capital. Schools must endeavour to square this circle.
 - In addition, integrating socio-emotional and vocational skilling into education for all should be at the foundation of any radical policy thinking. It is time to hear the truth that the academic approach alone in education cannot work.

The missing linkages

India has far too many adolescents who are 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET). Globally about 10 per cent of girls and boys aged 15 to 18 years are not in school. Distressingly, in India, 35 per cent of boys aged 15 to 18 and 39 per cent of girls in the same age group are not in school¹². In short, India's schools have failed the nation's young girls and boys – literally and figuratively – and have dragged down their mobility choices. This will have strong inter-generational effects on the education and social mobility of school finishers. The country's education system needs support to develop foundational,

transferable, digital, and employability skills that empower young people to develop into engaged and productive citizens.

Better quality schooling and stronger education-to-employment linkages through relevant skilling are urgently needed to reap not only the economic benefits that are said

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to be on offer from the much-talked-about demographic dividend but to also progressively improve the social status of millions of underprivileged children by opening up to them such avenues of upward

mobility. Schools must include relevant content and experiences towards changing the uncertain landscape¹³ into a world of opportunity for mobility and progress.

On the other hand, there is a need to reconsider the manner in which students are assessed. Merely analysing the performance measurements of students and looking at some schools which produce good scores is far inadequate to understand or alter deeper processes of social and emotional growth that schools must build. Unfortunately, this has been proposed by the U.K. Commission and was discussed at length. Mere ad hoc, interventions to improve student scores will also remain insufficient as long as they are unaccompanied by programmes that can help navigate both teachers and the taught through hard-core social and gender norms. These hindrances stand in the way of learning among marginalised girls and boys, besides casting a permanent tag that they are 'poor learners'.

Rather, school administrators must understand how to invest in qualitative observation, monitoring, and correcting of prejudices and biases among several stakeholders, including teachers. They need to work with parents from diverse/unequal backgrounds to arrive at the kind of socio-emotional learning that schools could design and deliver for their children. These are deeper challenges which need time and effort to arrive at convincing solutions. They also constitute critical areas for a participatory rethinking of India's educational and social policy.

Unless students and their communities are thus holistically developed, their chances to overcome entrenched barriers to mobility¹⁴ will remain untouched, even from a labour market perspective of education¹⁵.

Skills – to teach or to train?

Skill education or vocational education has always remained subordinated and second grade, compared with general education¹⁶. As an alternative form of education, vocational education is cheaper and is posed as a quicker route to expand opportunities for employment. Thus, it has typically attracted children from low-income families more than those who would stick to the prestige of gaining a university education¹⁷. Efforts to break down prejudices against vocational education, and raise its esteem have had little impact¹⁸.

India's latest National Education Policy has suggested that by 2025, at least 50 per cent of learners in the school and higher education system would have exposure to vocational education¹⁹. It has proposed the need to identify, design, and develop vocational courses introduced from the secondary education level as part of the general education stream. It has also rightly highlighted the merits of introducing 21st-century skills and entrepreneurship education in schools. In addition, it proposes facilitating actual work exposure through internships facilitated with the help of community and industry partnerships. Ultimately, whether these would help to address the long-dragging issue of unemployability versus unemployable is not yet clear²⁰. A point to add in context is the need to recognise the aspirations and capabilities of the students, rather than only the needs of the economy. This may in fact help to build a better discourse for skill development²¹.

Further research is needed to explore the association of caste differentiation with vocational education²², as also issues of relevance of content, diversification of courses, quality, staffing, and leadership – to name a few. Academic support programmes are needed for teachers and students, so that the latter get timely support to self-reflect and plan their career paths, and accordingly choose courses of study that would equip them. This is notwithstanding the climate of information asymmetry and socially regulated external environment, which control who gains admissions to what courses and where.

Given the marginalised nature of students, there will be a need for capacity-building of teachers and students to work on a good fit regarding courses of study and career path options.

Schooling and skilling in secondary education

At a policy level, considering that India has made relative progress in primary level schooling, the Right to Education Act must be expanded to bring under its ambit compulsory education up to 16 years, with a wide variety in choice of subjects and institutions; and progressively to 18 years. These are the most vulnerable periods of time when students struggle to cope, drop out of school and lose hope for the future.

In relation to administrative governance, evidence related to the efficiency in process and outcomes after the converging of the Union Ministries of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (since 2014) must be critically reviewed for possible replicability in States. Inter-departmentally reviewing the governance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) could bring much-needed course corrections. India has 20 departments running 70 skill development schemes - calling for consolidation and avoidance of replication. It could learn from international examples regarding expansion in choice in courses and facilities, improving gender-responsiveness, and ensuring coordination for higher level outcomes with equity.

More complex, yet critical, is the agency of individuals and the community. This remains at the crux of building a new social and cultural capital for India's young people. Demand-side issues due to caste, gender, geography, disability, and a culture of silencing young people's voices related to their entitlements and rights must be redressed by proactive and participatory governance at all levels, especially in education. This would go on to mitigate the supply-side issues as well by extending the reach of the capability-enhancement schemes for vulnerable students.

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Worthy to demonstrate is the packaging of some of these ideas related to skill education into the school education system, There is new scope available for this within the recently

introduced mission mode programme under the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's '*Naan Mudhalvan*' scheme [a skill-building programme for the youth of Tamil Nadu, including for students from Class 9 to 12.]²³. Besides opening out space to support the idea of schooling and skilling, it has a component to leverage CSR funds as well. It could become a game-changer for bringing visibility and pride in promoting social mobility through schooling and skilling of our adolescent girls and boys.

Specific to school students, Tamil Nadu could show the way by firstly building robust data profiles for every adolescent in the State. This could facilitate better insights from relevant data related to the students and their family members that are collected in the available school education data (as in the EMIS annual data sets) and learning assessment scores from time to time, but building over that an additional inclusion of a careful linkage to critical indicators of their social and cultural capital²⁴. What this would require is not any new data collection, but a creative and integrated linking and review of the developmental statistics, sitting with representatives of different departments. This will help to understand how the government has invested in students from difficult backgrounds and what additional specific support would be required considering their specific circumstances in life. Given its primacy of policy space, the School Education Department could champion this at every district and block level.

Every school would then prepare an individual development plan for its adolescent students who are ready to leave school, factoring in the support to their families provided by the government of the day. Suitable mentoring would be delivered not just by professionals but through leveraging local resources, institutions, industrial and entrepreneurship opportunities, and other people in the community and neighbourhood. A high-quality academic approach, backed by evidence on the processes, challenges, and pathways for change could then create new knowledge to promote change in policy and programme. Policy think tanks and interest groups could also be convened to promote goalsetting, participation, and accountability from time to time.

External uncertainties

It is also imperative to recognise the challenges to social mobility that arise from the broader environment in which the individuals and society function, which are external to

the issue of pedagogy, but influence policies. One such factor is the political environment in which education functions. Not only in India, but in other parts of the world too, the political climate is riled by conflicts, hierarchies, and authoritarian tendencies. This present swing in the political pendulum adversely affects the level and distance of inequality among common people and social groups. The political role that Education is being called upon to play in this broader environment, may push the academic and social needs of the diverse sets of Indian students to the back burner.

Further, COVID-19 has made any discourse on education and social mobility increasingly difficult²⁵. The pandemic has undoubtedly jeopardized efforts towards reducing inequality in education, income and social status, more so in pockets needing them most. Social gaps have widened due to the loss of jobs, higher costs of living and the bleak opportunities to overcome such shocks. There is still no reliable count of the number of individuals or families who have fallen beyond repair into deeper cracks due to this pandemic. Those who were already at the bottom rungs of opportunity need well-guided policies and actions from a sociological perspective that prioritises their well-being and mobility.

Therefore, against this complex backdrop, decentralised and child-centric education in “mission mode”²⁶ holds greater promise. The scars from any less-effective action will imaginably be longer lasting on children, adolescent girls and boys and the younger population. Students in villages and urban slums have shared with me stories of despair and depression during and after the pandemic – their inability to sit hours on end in unexciting classrooms, the lack of skilling which has made their endurance in schools difficult and meaningless.

Conclusion

Connecting to where I started this essay, if the accent is on ‘order’, ensured through ‘punishments’ the already-disadvantaged Indian adolescent girls and boys would have lesser chances to link to what goes on in school and where they could go with it. These students must leap out of the low-paying, unskilled work of their parents’ generations, and school education must be more carefully re-calibrated to not only usher in social

mobility but also go beyond it to create willing acceptance of the new social orders that result from the mobilising effects of education.

Towards this, the two arguments advanced by this Essay are:

- ‘Adolescent responsive schooling’ that is, schools that actually speak to marginalised students and provide meaning and purpose to their life in and beyond school; and
- ‘Combining schooling and skilling’ that is, schools deliver not just knowledge (however poor or inadequate it has been) but develop foundational and transferable skills in students.

Linkages between school and entrepreneurship or employment opportunity, and the power of social and market forces must be leveraged, using India’s education policy as a

School education must usher in upward social mobility and create willing acceptance of new social orders that result from such mobilising effects.

new opportunity. For example, we could explore an apprenticeship and earn-while-you-learn scheme for those aged 16 to 18, besides introducing equivalent credits to enter university education²⁷. Redirecting schooling in these two

ways and thereby levelling our educational inequality and promoting better chances for all is not only a smart thing to do but is actually the right thing to do. This will change the current flow where a few young people continue to be decorated with degrees while a lot many languish in low-paying everyday jobs and go around in vicious circles inter-generationally.

Lastly, my philosophising on these matters while sitting in Oxford seemed to be in place. The University claims to promote an inclusive culture but the diversity was not visible enough to assure equality or social mobility in the U.K. or the world²⁸.

Also by the Author

1. [Draft New Education Policy and Schools for the Skilling Age](#), September 16, 2019.
2. [Background Note No.7: Public Policy and the Child in Tamil Nadu: Governance and Social Spaces for Children: Tamil Nadu as a Potential Leader, Chapter: XII, Page 93](#), November 17, 2017.

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References:

[All URLs are last accessed on January 18, 2023]

1. Chevening Gurukul fellowship for leadership and excellence is the U.K. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's fellowship, hosted by the Department of Politics and International Relations, Oxford University from September-November 2022. This piece was written during the fellowship period, and I gratefully acknowledge Stephen Whitefield for his feedback and guidance.

2. In addition to the thematic sessions and lectures offered by the fellowship programme, there were departmental seminars and other public lectures called Ox-talks. We enjoyed enormous access to the Bodleian libraries and networked with academicians in colleges and departments across Oxford and even across the UK. I was deeply attracted by the compelling beauty of autumn colours, the meadows and canals, and Oxford's own gardens, libraries and museums collectively called the glam!

3. Documentaries and articles have discussed her method in the Michaela school: *Britain's STRICTEST Headmistress Debates The Power Of Her Teaching Methods!* [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJ0qlwSowxw>];

Hoods, H.R. 2022. *Is Britain's Strictest Headmistress a visionary or a tyrant?* The New Statesman, May 24. [<https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2022/05/is-britains-strictest-headmistress-a-visionary-or-a-tyrant>]

Carroll, L. 2022. [Britain's 'strictest headmistress' on what schools should do differently](#), *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 9.

[<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/britain-s-strictest-headmistress-on-what-schools-should-do-differently-20221007-p5bnza.html>].

4. **Linton, R. 1936.** *The Study of Man – An Introduction*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. New York. p. 115.

5. **Kumar, K. 1997.** 'What is worth teaching'; Orient Longman.

6. Social Mobility Commission, an independent advisory body, has the duty to assess progress in U.K.'s social mobility. Its latest report was released in June 2022, under the chair of Katherine Birbalsingh.

7. Relevant to note is that the name of this commission itself had changed from being called the social mobility and child poverty commission, and earlier just the child poverty commission. There were some compelling arguments in older reports that targeting child poverty through welfare measures, and chiefly education, is the most influential and impactful strategy for improving social mobility.

8. India has been ranked 76 out of 82 global economies for its low social mobility status based on five determinants, namely health, education, work, technology and social protection:

World Economic Forum. 2020. [Global Social Mobility Index 2020: why economies benefit from fixing inequality](#), January 19. [<https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-social-mobility-index-2020-why-economies-benefit-from-fixing-inequality/>].

9. Interestingly, CII Foundation in India has recently discussed social mobility drivers and challenges for our young people – although by just capturing the views of organisations - both corporates and funders who could be enablers for mobility; and civil society organisations and social enterprises who work towards social mobility on the ground. <https://www.rti.org/publication/india-social-mobility-study-2020-21/fulltext.pdf>.

10. These are areas where India must collect disaggregated data sets with process and outcome level indicators, with focus on quantity, quality and equity.

11. See **Ermisch et al (Ed). 2012.** *From Parents to Children: The intergenerational transmission of advantage*; Russel Sage.

12. With an estimated 444 million children entering the job market in the next 20 years, according to Census of India, India has a huge task to equip its adolescents with life and work skills.

13. In another country context, this is discussed by Vicky Johnson and Andy West (2022): *Youth and positive uncertainty – Negotiating life pathways in post-conflict and fragile environments*; Practical Action Publishing, UK.

14. Socio-emotional learning (SEL) has been proven to develop better learning and life-long well-being, through developing students' self-esteem, positive behaviours, etc. But despite this, it was said that even in the U.K., there is no targeting of social, emotional, or mental health in the government's education recovery plans or as part of the levelling up agenda spoken of in the Commission (see for example, Education Policy Institute. 2021. [CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH ANALYSIS: Social and emotional learning: An evidence review and synthesis of key issues](https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/social-and-emotional-learning/), November 4. [https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/social-and-emotional-learning/]).

15. While there will be a four per cent reduction in the labour force across the world in the next 20 years, India will see a 32 per cent increase during the same period. This is due to the younger population in India, as 54 per cent of its population is now below 25 years. Yet, there has been a stagnation in the skilled work population between 2004 and 2012: **Kumar, R, Mandava, S., et. al. 2019.** [Vocational training in India: determinants of participation and effect on wages](https://ervet-journal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40461-019-0078-y), *SpringerOpen*, January 21. [https://ervet-journal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40461-019-0078-y].

16. **Whiting, K. 2022.** [World Youth Skills Day: 15 key facts about training and education in 2022](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/world-youth-skills-day-training/), *World Economic Forum*, July 15. discusses the global crisis in skilling. [https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/world-youth-skills-day-training/].

17. **Jacinto and Fannelli (2006)**, confirm that this is the case in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico as well. See Chapter 4 of *Education, Training and Learning*, Carbonnier et al – Brill.com.
18. **Hyland.2002**. On the upgrading of vocational studies: Analysing prejudice and subordination In English Education – *Educational Review* 54(3).
19. Background note to the NEP - Reimagining vocational education and skill-building, prepared by Pathak-NCERT.
20. As early as the 1930s, the Education Commission for the Government of India recorded issues such as the poor state of vocational education, the cooperation required between business and education system, etc and debated if vocational training must be given in separate vocational institutions or in regular schools as optional subjects. The then Commissioner favoured the former as it may have more scope to allow vocational education to be practical than theoretical. (**Abbott, A and Woods, S. H. 1937**. [Report on Vocational Education in India With A Section on General Education and Administration](#), National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. 87. [http://14.139.60.153/handle/123456789/6997]).
21. **Carbonnier, G, Carton, M and King, K. [Eds]. 2014**. [Education, Training and Learning - Critical Issues for Development](#) [Chapter 6], Brill Nijhoff. [https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/32180/613430.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y].
22. **Selvamani, P. 2019**. [Rajaji Views on the Education System in Tamilnadu](#), Munich, GRIN Verlag, discusses the politics of education in Tamil Nadu. [https://www.grin.com/document/468239].
23. **Department of School Education Government of Tamil Nadu. 2022**. [Naan Mudhalvan: New visions for higher education towards 2025!](#) [https://naanmudhalvan.tnschools.gov.in/home].

24. Tamil Nadu has promoted a 7.5 per cent quota vertical reservation to government school students for admission to professional colleges, considering their parental education and related features that determine one's social and cultural capital.

25. **Social Mobility Barometer 2021**, a report based on a poll conducted with 4,693 adults in the UK, showed that 79 per cent of them agreed that there is a large gap between social classes in the U.K. and 56 per cent thought that the pandemic has increased social inequality. **Social Mobility Commission. 2021.** [Most people believe inequality has increased due to the pandemic](#), GOV.UK, March 11.

[<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/most-people-believe-inequality-has-increased-due-to-the-pandemic>].

26. [Mission mode](#) projects are those that “have clearly defined objectives, scopes, and implementation timelines and milestones, as well as measurable outcomes and service levels.” [<https://www.meity.gov.in/content/mission-mode-projects>]

27. Recent policy shift in Tamil Nadu to provide equivalent certificates of 10th and 12th completion to students who have finished class 8 and a relevant course at an Industrial Training Institution is a good beginning. Vide: G.O Ms 34 dated 30.03.2022, Department of Labour Welfare and Skill Development, Government of Tamil Nadu.

28. **University of Oxford [Online].** [Undergraduate Prospectus: 2023: Supportive and inclusive](#), says Oxford students come from over 150 countries, over 23 per cent of undergraduate students have declared a disability, and 27 per cent identify as black or minority ethnic. [<https://www.ox.ac.uk/digital-prospectus/ug-community/supportive>].