Public vs Private Schools in a Democracy

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5:00PM to 7.00 PM
Sunday, January 18, 2015

Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan
# 43, Race Course Road, Bangalore, Karnataka 560008

Registration: The talk is free and open to all. However, prior registration would be helpful. Register here

Seating will be on a first-come-first-serve basis. Kindly be seated 15 minutes prior to the start of the talk

Enquiries: poe.conference@apu.edu.in
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About the Discussion

Democracy grows and deepens only through the cultivation of citizens who embrace and uphold democratic values and ideals; and accordingly exercise their rights and fulfil their civic and political duties. School education plays a critical role in the cultivation of these values and the development of citizenship in a democracy. At the same time the democratic ideals of justice and equal opportunity place a demand of equal education being a fundamental right of children. This raises important questions about the extent of responsibility and freedom of the State, Private providers of education and Households/parents.

(i) What is the role of the State in educational provision in a democratic society? Is it the primary responsibility of the State to run a public schooling system for all children? Can the state regulate and constrain market forces providing education? To what extent can the state be an arbiter between households and the market?

(ii) Households and parents have the greatest incentive and interest in making appropriate decisions on behalf of their wards. The freedom to choose the kind of schooling they prefer is a fundamental aspect of any democratic arrangement. Does this "democratic liberty" mean unfettered choice in the schooling of their children? Or should the state be trusted to make decisions on behalf of households? Then can the state be an "honest broker"?

(iii) Should private providers be able to offer education with minimal interference from the State? Are private providers necessarily more efficient and better at educating than the State? Is government failure to provide good education a bigger threat than market failure?

In India, significant policy decisions and prevailing trend of privatisation are making it important for a serious debate on these questions. Public opinion ranges from School Choice programs allowing unfettered opportunities for private providers at one end of the spectrum, to a Common Schooling System completely funded and run by the state at the other end. Speakers in this panel discussion will reflect on and debate these and similar issues. For more details visit: http://www.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/poe/

About the Speakers

Harry Brighouse is well known among philosophers of education, and has first-hand experience of the school systems in the United Kingdom and the USA. He has been representing influential theoretical and philosophical arguments in favour of a public education system. His work on Social Justice and Education, (OUP 2003), Justice (Polity 2005) and On Education (Routledge, 2005) has
been very influential which has set agenda on political philosophy thinking in education. He is professor of Philosophy and Education at University of Wisconsin-Madison USA.

**Venu Narayan** became an educator after leaving the business world in 1988. Inspired by the philosophy of J.Krishnamurti, he helped found a small alternative school called Centre For Learning in Bangalore and has worked as a teacher, administrator and Trustee for close to twenty-five years. He is also one of the Trustees of a botanic sanctuary that works to conserve endangered species of plants in the Western Ghats. Venu has been associated with Azim Premji Foundation from 2009 and was a member of the core group that worked together to establish the University. In the University, he is currently the Director of the School of Liberal Studies, Director of Strategic Development, and also a member of the Academic Council.

**Gurpreet Mahajan** is a Professor at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. In her recent work *India: Political Ideas and Making of a Democratic Discourse* tackles the predisposition of political theory to be limited by the Western canon. Her seminal and influential work include *The Public and the Private: Democratic Citizenship in a Comparative Framework, Accommodating Diversities: Ideas and Institutional Practices*, and *Explanations and Understanding in Human Sciences and Identities and Rights: Aspects of Liberal Democracy in India*, among other books and seminal papers.

**About Azim Premji University**

Azim Premji University has a clear social purpose – of working towards a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society. The University is committed towards developing outstanding professionals for the education and development sectors in India, conducting contextually relevant research in these fields and strengthening the capacities of existing professionals through high quality continuing education programmes.

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