



Women, Early Childhood Education, and Global Reform Movements: New Perspectives on Colonial and National Education in India

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Reviewed works

H. May, B. Kaur & L. Prochner. 2014. *Empire, education, and indigenous childhoods: nineteenth-century missionary infant schools in three British colonies*. London: Routledge. 300 pp., ISBN: 9781472409607, £110,00.

T. Allender. 2016. *Learning femininity in colonial India, 1820-1932*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 352 pp., ISBN: 978-0-7190-8579-6, £75,00.

M. Mann, ed. 2015. *Shantiniketan—Hellerau: new education in the 'pedagogic provinces' of India and Germany*. Heidelberg: Draupadi, 348 pp., ISBN: 978-3-945191-05-7, €24,80.

Introduction

'I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully that India today is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago', M.K. Gandhi wrote in 1931 (cit. in Dharampal 2000: 6). The critique of colonial education, and the recovery of the 'beautiful tree' of meaningful indigenous education were central concerns of the national



movement. Among the relevant recent publications which revisit these topics, I want to concentrate on three books, which offer innovative perspectives on the unfolding of colonial education in India (May et al. 2014; Allender 2016), and the challenges posed to it in the inter-war period by the project of 'national education' (Mann 2015).

One of the interests these books share is an increased attention to pedagogical technologies, the development of which was often linked with debates about the nature of the child, particularly the young child. Thus, we get a rare glimpse on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), a so far neglected field in the historiography of education in colonial India. Moreover, they contribute to the ongoing research interest on women's agency in education (cf. Gayatri 2013; Akhtar 2013; Allen 2013). Finally, they introduce different trans-regional perspectives. This not only provides us with new insights on the project of 'national education' in India. It is also a relevant contribution to the growing research on connected and transnational histories of education (Möller & Wischmeyer 2013; Bagchi et al. 2014).

Missionaries, empire, and the infant school movement

The co-authored monograph *Empire, education, and indigenous childhoods* tells a story of British missionaries promoting infant schools for indigenous children in three sites of the British Empire: India, Canada, and New Zealand. This story unfolds in an age of imperial expansion, geographical exploration, and scientific discovery. It links enlightenment pedagogical thought with the evangelical zeal of moral reformers and missionaries of the early nineteenth century. Combining 'useful instruction' with 'necessary recreation' (May et al. 2014: 69), infant schools were meant to mould the character of young children, civilise their home environment and contribute to the uplift of society.

The well-written and illustrated book is remarkable not so much in the diffusionist narrative it constructs—the transplanting of a British educational innovation to the colonies—but in its focus on institutions for children below the age of primary schooling. As the authors rightly state, the positioning of ECCE outside the mainstream of education systems, and the gender of the fields' professionals, led to its marginalisation in historiography (May et al 2014: 2). Only in recent years, ECCE has become a topic for comparative education, and transnational historical research (Wollons 2000; Allen 2017). Co-author Baljit Kaur is a pioneer in researching the history of ECCE in India (Kaur 2004, 2009). ECCE is a field which was, from its beginnings,



closely linked to the development of experiential forms of learning, reflections on the learning process, and the definition of standards of normal development. The history of infant schools, therefore, offers an interesting background to the pedagogical reform currents which presented themselves as 'New Education' in the inter-war period (Mann 2015).

In Britain, infant schools started as a project of educating "the poor". In 1816, industrialist and Utopian socialist Robert Owen (1771-1858) established the first infant school in his mill complex at New Lanark (May et al 2014: 15). It catered to the mill workers' children, from the time they started walking, to about age ten. The 'chief occupation' of the younger children was 'to play and amuse themselves' indoors or in the attached playground (May et al. 2014: 76f.). The older children received elementary instruction, using the then fashionable "monitorial" method. The young London schoolmaster Joseph Lancaster (1778-1828), had suggested this method, which employed advanced pupils as teaching assistants, or "monitors". At age ten, most children would leave school to start working in the mill (May et al. 2014: 72f.).

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The 'novel and pleasing spectacle' of the infant school (as the American visitor John Griscom observed it in 1819) combined care and safekeeping with training: 'it enable[d] mothers to shut up their houses in security, and to attend to their duties in the factory, without concern for their families.' This was particularly relevant, since at that time the majority of the New Lanark mill employees were women. Most importantly, however, infant schools aimed to moralise and discipline future workers (ibid.: 77f.). The new institution was soon established among the urban working classes. The authors adapt the term 'Nurseries of Discipline' (ibid.: 70) from a contemporary report to tease out the social reform agenda of the infant school movement. Infant schools would remove children as early as possible from the 'contaminating' influences of unhealthy neighbourhoods and immoral homes (ibid.: 124).

According to the campaigner for the "Infant System", Samuel Wilderspin (1791-1866), the aim was to build among the children 'habits of cleanliness and decorum, of cheerful and ready subordination, [...] and of abstinence from everything impure or profane.' (ibid.: 109) Thus, poor children would be 'resocialize[d] [...] in line with middle-class expectations for the lower classes.' Their 'habits of discipline' would spread in the neighbourhood, where schooled children



modelled their newly acquired behaviour for their playmates. Infant schools would improve the home, since parents had to send the children washed, with well-mended clothes, and according to a strict time schedule. The infant school activists expected the 'nurseries of discipline' to thus unfold their effects in the wider social environment of the children (*ibid.*: 109f.).

Pedagogically, infant schools presented a remarkable ambiguity. They combined a socialisation agenda of 'discipline, order and obedience' with a learning process ideally characterized by 'play, freedom and enjoyment' (*ibid.*: 130f.). Infant schools brought together two rather contradictory pedagogical currents. On the one hand, they built upon the monitorial system of education (*ibid.*: 72f., 138f., 200). This was exactly the kind of pedagogy which was later criticised as 'the "gradgrind" teaching of facts' (Hilton 2014: 85). On the other hand, they emphasised learning via the senses, which was the keystone of the educational method developed by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) in Yverdon, Switzerland. Pestalozzi's educational philosophy inspired not only Johann Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852), the founder of the kindergarten, and other advocates of child-friendly education methods. His school became a pilgrimage site among educationists from all parts of Europe, including Robert Owen. The British infant school movement suggested Pestalozzian object lessons. Moreover, they favoured physical exercise, and introduced playgrounds for joyful outdoor activity in urban environments (May et al. 2014: 24, 92).

The infant school movement soon attracted missionaries and educational reformers in different parts of the British Empire. The social technologies devised to re-socialise the 'savage-like' European poor were deemed equally appropriate to promote a 'civilising mission' among the 'heathen' abroad. The infant school movement coincided with a new wave of Protestant missionary expansion (*ibid.*: 69). Similar to—and sometimes overlapping with—the movement which promoted monitorial schools (Ressler 2013; Tschurennev 2011), infant schools were exported to British colonial territories. The imperial infant school movement rested on a network which comprised infant school societies and model schools, the educational experts, who gained experience in those institutions, and missionaries and churchmen who promoted colonial institution-building (May et al. 2014: 83f., 117).

In the post-emancipation context of the British West Indies, infant schools were used as a means of Christianising the children of former



slaves, and as an enticement for parents to remain working on the plantations for the sake of their children's education (ibid.: 83). In Canada, and New Zealand, they were part of a rigorous politics of 'de-Indigenising Aboriginal children' (ibid.: xxi). Also, the infant schools for the British poor aimed at the 'transformation of entire ways of living and being' (ibid.: xviii). However, the rupture caused in "indigenous childhoods", played out in more violent ways. The radical acculturation strategies started with the re-clothing and re-naming of the children, who were to be turned into 'missionaries to their countrymen' (ibid.: 16). In Canada, hence, infant schools became part of a history of indigenous communities' deep-seated mistrust towards educational institutions.

In India, infant schools started as a project of educating the urban poor of "mixed-race" descent. The first infant school was founded in 1830 by the Bishop of Calcutta, John Mathias Turner. Turner's successor, Daniel Wilson, established the Calcutta Infant School Society (CISS) in 1833, with a view to spread the new system throughout the Bengal Presidency. In 1839, the General Committee for Public Instruction in Bengal sanctioned an infant school attached to the Hooghly College, and requested a "native" schoolmaster trained by the CISS. Bishop Wilson welcomed these news, expressing his hope that 'ere long' India would be 'filled with this *fine moral machinery*' (ibid.: 123, italics orig.)

A promising teacher trained at the CISS's model school, a Mr. Gomez, was immediately sent off to the new institution. With its emphasis on physical activity, nursery rhymes and songs, the Hooghly College infant school proved popular among parents and students from various backgrounds (ibid.: 126-9). The CISS, however, declined in the early 1840s: the 'public interest in the spectacle [...] waned' rather quickly. As the biographer of Bishop Wilson put it, 'the spark which had been lit with so much care, and which seemed to kindle into so bright a flame, went out.' (ibid.: 123). The CISS shared the fate of many subscription-based educational projects. Securing the necessary government-funding for the continuation of their 'experiment', proved rather difficult. It was left to the missionaries, spearheaded by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Bengal, to incorporate infant schools into their strategy of educational institution-building.

Protestant missionaries promoted the Infant System in tandem with "female education". As we will see below, such 'intertwined histories' of ECCE and women's education (ibid.: 112) can be traced throughout the



colonial period. The educational activities of Mary Anne Cooke (later Mrs. Wilson) in Calcutta can illustrate this. Cooke's is a well-documented case in the history of imperial feminism (Midgley 2000; Allender 2016, below). The Baptist missionaries from Serampore, Bengal, and several educational societies had cooperated in the fund-raising effort to recruit a specialist in Britain, who would further the cause of "female education" in Bengal. Cooke was trained in the monitorial methods. At the same time, she championed Wilderspin's Infant System for teaching large numbers of children with the help of picture objects (May et al. 2014: 132). After a few years, the CMS became a major funding agency for her work in two institutions: a "central school" for girls with several branches in and around Calcutta, and a female orphanage.

Cooke understood her work, first and foremost, as a social rescue mission (Allender 2016: 50). She reached out to child-widows, orphans, and the destitute (May et al. 2015: 132). Brought under 'Christian influence', Cooke hoped to turn those 'outcastes' into teachers and 'respectable head[s] of families.' (May et al. 2014: 132; Allender 2016: 50) The policy of the missionary female orphanages was to isolate the students from the non-Christian environment. Marriages with converts, and employment as teachers in missionary institutions, often as infant teacher, hence, were the only options found suitable for them. Indeed, a source from 1846 found 'Rose', a Bengali widow educated in Cooke's institution, as a teacher in the Female Orphanage attached to Alexander Duff's Free Church College. Rose had been married to a 'native catechist'. Another such case was 'Rabee', the 'pious teacher' in the infant school run by Mary Weitbrecht, with the CMS in Burdwan. Having been raised in the CMS orphan school, Rabee was married to an Indian Christian. She was sent out to the central school of the Home and Colonial Infant-School Society in Britain for training, after which she served as the infant school teacher in the Burdwan mission (May et al 2014: 131-47). The employment by missionaries of "native" women as infant teachers was no Indian specificity. Also in New Zealand, Maori women taught in mission-run infant schools (ibid.: 200).

While infant schools became a common feature of missionary education, another, more well-known pedagogical current emerged in the field of ECCE. In 1851, the first Froebel Kindergarten was established in England. By 1882, when the Hunter Commission set out to review the state of education in British India, the kindergarten movement had already 'taken over the way teachers for young children were being trained' in England (ibid.: 139f.; on the kindergarten movement Allen 2017). Soon afterwards, in 1885, Isabel Brander, 'inspectress' of girls'



schools and an ardent supporter of kindergarten teaching, started her work in the Madras Presidency (May et al. 2014: 141; cf. Allender 2016: 223-7; Powell 2017). In contrast to the infant system, aspects of kindergarten pedagogy were endorsed by the colonial education policy, in connection with female teacher training. The development of the colonial policy toward "female education" is what I am going to discuss now.

Women's agency in colonial education

Tim Allender's meticulously researched monograph *Teaching femininity in colonial India* links up with his earlier work on long-term processes of colonial educational institution-building and policy-making (Allender 2009). Allender studies female agency within the unfolding colonial education system. As he convincingly shows, there was much less unfolding going on than the colonial rhetoric would lead us to believe. The study on the infant school movement already pointed to the remarkable contrast between the 'diminutive geographies' of colonial education, and its 'macro-scale sociopolitical and economic agendas' (May et al 2014: xvii). Allender makes this contrast a central topic of analysis. In a way, his book reads like a history of the colonial government's ideological excuses for not substantially investing in schooling for the majority of Indian girls. The rhetoric on the importance of "female education" corresponded with a policy approach of instead fostering small communities of British, Eurasian, and Christian convert educators. The inefficient downward filtration policy, which was abandoned in the domain of boys' schooling around the mid-nineteenth century, continued to implicitly shape colonial female education policy well into the twentieth century.

The narrative starts with an initial divergence of the regional trajectories of Bengal, the North-Western Provinces (NWP) and the Punjab. For Bengal, Allender also discusses the evangelical endeavours of Mary Anne Cooke and the CMS. Apparently, Cooke and her partners created what can be called an 'educational island.' This is a concept which Christine Kupfer (2015) uses to discuss the problem of cultural isolation in the case of the New Education movement. Already the physical appearance of Cooke's central school in Calcutta symbolised cultural separateness. In contrast to the popular CMS's boys' schools, no curricular adjustments were made in regard to students' and parents' demands. Instead, a direct conversion strategy was pursued. The limited curriculum was oriented towards basic literacy, Christian morality, and domesticity. Allender argues that the CMS underestim-



ated the enormous cultural barrier which the caste and class composition of the student body, and particularly the presence of widows, posed to other prospective students. By 1824, girls from caste Hindu families had ceased to attend. The evangelical model of female education pursued by the CMS in Bengal was not able to bridge the distance to the "respectable" caste Hindu society. The missionary hope that their female schools and orphanages could be the basis for an extensive institution-building remained unfulfilled (Allender 2016: 50-4).

Allender contrasts the evangelical endeavours of rigorously re-fashioning (renaming, re-dressing, re-educating) individuals as a way to bring about cultural change (May et al. 2014) with the more collaborative approaches adapted by Lieutenant Governor James Thomason 'and his imaginative [Director of Public Instruction], Henry Reid', in the NWP (Allender 2016: 57). Away from the centre of colonial governance in Bengal, Thomason and Reid continued the orientalist strategy of accommodation of the local Indian elite, which was coupled with a more serious engagement with Indian knowledge traditions. They introduced as system of tax-funded halkabandi, or 'circle' schools, which incorporated existing village institutions. Many of these schools were co-educational. In Agra, one of Reid's experimental districts, almost 5,000 girls were found in the 288 halkabandi schools by 1857—which contrasts favourably to the 600 girls reached by Mary Ann Cooke's 30 branch schools in 1826 (ibid.: 56-8).

In the case of the halkabandi schools, Allender found a 'genuine responsiveness' on the part of the local population. The schoolgirls came from diverse backgrounds, ranging from artisans and weavers to Brahmins. Allender argues that the willingness even of upper-caste families to allow girls entry into the public space of schooling was due to the fact that their guardians exerted some control over these institutions. Parents selected the schoolmasters, and 'committees of respectable native gentlemen' superintended them. In the neighbouring Punjab, the Director for Public Instruction William Arnold adopted the halkabandi experiment. He employed a large number of Indian sub-deputy inspectors. Thus, in those two provinces, British government actors were able to bridge the gap to Indian communities (ibid.).

Because they were tax-funded, these experiments were more sustainable than subscription-based civil society efforts. However, the halkabandi schools fell victim to the centralisation of educational policy in the early 1870s. For the most part, this was due to the intervention of Mary Carpenter (1807-77), another well-known figure from the



literature on imperial feminism (Watts 2000). Carpenter's journey to India, in 1866, met with a lot of media attention, and fuelled the debate on the importance of "female education". For Carpenter, a trained but motherly female teacher was the crucial figure in girls' education, as role model for moral character-building. Paradoxically, it was her promotion of a new standardised system of "female normal schools" (i.e., teacher-training institutions) across the provinces of British India, which led to a withdrawal of funds from the direct provision of girls' schools. The scarce money was re-allocated for teacher-training, and female school inspectors. This de-funding affected not only the halkabandi village schools, but also the girls' schools rooted in the Bania and Parsi communities of the Bombay Presidency, which had secured government grants-in-aid for their efforts (Allender 2016: 105-12).

This episode entails an interesting lesson for the question of women's agency in education reform. It was due to her personal standing with the Secretary of State for India, Stafford Northcote, that Carpenter was able to exert an unprecedented influence on educational policy-making in India. Her efforts did indeed change the direction of female education policy, but not in the way she had envisaged. The scheme of female normal schools, which had been set up due to her intervention, proved rather short-lived. Not only did the normal schools meet with opposition from those affected by the reallocation of funds, they often lacked backing in the local community. This left the institutions rather vulnerable. Allender exemplifies this with the case of a scandal in Nagpur, where the widowed students were accused of illicit sexuality, and subjected to 'Venereal Diseases' policing. This not only fuelled the Indian-conservative discourse on the dangers of "female education", it also led to the government's abandoning the female normal school scheme in favour of grants-in-aid for missions, who took up the project of female teacher training (ibid.: 116-23).

Allender's consistent focus on 'the practices of ruling, rather than a general colonial condition itself' (ibid.: 65) brings out the limits of state education institution-building. It also sheds light on the politics of racial differentiation. This is particularly apparent in the chapters on medical care and teaching as emerging fields of female professionalism (ibid.: 159-232). Medical training—particularly nursing—became one of the earliest field where Indian women engaged with the colonial state. Educational professionalism in state institutions, in contrast, remained mostly limited to British and "Eurasian" women. In the nineteenth century, "Eurasian" girls were priority targets of colonial educational



intervention, first as morally endangered nominal Christians, and later as privileged candidates for teacher training. Schools for Eurasians and British expats with middle-class aspirations not only produced female professional educators. They also became centres of pedagogical exchange and innovation.

One such noteworthy institution was the Lawrence Military Asylums. Established after 1847, they aimed to remove children from unhealthy tropical climes and the moral dangers of barrack life. The Lawrence Asylums initially recruited female teachers from the graduates of the Norwood school for pauper children in London. Pedagogically, they abandoned the monitorial system, and introduced new forms of classroom teaching, based on the educational philosophy of Pestalozzi, among others. They developed a model curriculum for girls which Allender calls the 'accomplishments curriculum': a combination of academic subjects with skills that advertised cultured femininity, such as 'needlework' and drawing (ibid.: 79-83). This accomplishments curriculum became the hegemonic model of female education until the end of the century.

From the 1860s onwards, an increased educational interaction between metropole and colony brought more British female professionals to India. The import of female expertise from England, however, could prove problematic at times. Inspectresses arriving from Britain lacked local knowledge, and reinforced colonial stereotypes among the expat communities they joined (ibid.: 114-6). British teachers brought pedagogical innovation and a fresh wind, but also conflict to the teacher training institutions in colonial India. The Froebel kindergarten methods became one such point of contestation. Old-fashioned headmistresses, who understood their task as preparing the 'Eurasian' students for respectable marriages, were confronted with the demands of newly appointed specialists from England, with clear ideas of professionalism and method. New compromises had to be worked out between feminine "accomplishments" and aspirations to teaching professionalism (ibid.: 220-4).

Allender's book provides valuable insights on the micro-politics of colonial governance. This includes a nuanced analysis of female professional hierarchies based on racial categorisation. He is highly suspicious of the representation of indigenous structures of domination in the colonial discourse. This allows him to dismantle common myths used to legitimise colonial policies—such as the easy reference to "native resistance", to point to the futility of spending money on girls'



schools. But this also leads him to be less critical of 'brahminical patriarchy' (Chakravarti 1998), than colonial racism. The conflicts over education and social power within Indian society however are crucial to explore the mixed responses to colonial education and its sometimes contradictory effects. This can be illustrated by pointing out contrasting interpretations of the orientalist strategy of elite accommodation which was underlying the halkabandi experiment in the NWP and Punjab.

Allender argues that those were successful experiments in rural schooling, adapted to local circumstance. Parimala Rao, in contrast, emphasises that the students who studied in the vernacular village schools 'could not enter the English-teaching Anglo-vernacular schools meant for the local elite', and that the schools hence affirmed educational inequality (Rao 2014: 41f.; cf. Preeti 2014). Dilip Chavan found the 'chief defect' of Governor Mountstuart Elphinstone's (1779-1859) orientalist education policy in Bombay in 'the limited scope it had for the universalization of primary education.' Elphinstone explicitly warned that if government schooling was to take roots among the lower castes, this would impede its acceptance among 'the upper and middle castes-classes'. Securing local acceptance, in this case, meant that the colonial government reinforced caste-based exclusions and tolerated practices of untouchability (Chavan 2013: 191).

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Protestant missionaries, in contrast, at first remained isolated from the elite and middle classes. I agree with Allender, that the educational and cultural islands they created were by no means suited as a basis for the proliferation of mass education. Early nineteenth century Protestant missionaries, such as Mary Ann Cooke, disrespected and interfered with the every-day culture of their female recruit-converts, and "put them in their place" in the racial and class hierarchies of colonial patriarchy. However, missionaries did make literacy available for the disadvantaged and destitute. For widows such as Rabee and Rose, teaching infant classes in mission schools provided income, community, and even possibilities for foreign travel (on widowhood: Chakravarti 1998). In the Bombay Presidency, missionaries were the first to include the lower and lowest castes in their schools. The educational facilities set up by Scottish and American missionaries helped create the conditions for the emergence of an outspoken anti-caste movement (Mhaskar & Tschurennev 2017). Nevertheless, the failure of colonial policy to approach anything close to universal education, was particularly apparent in the field of girls' schooling.



National education in a global frame

The edited volume *Shantiniketan-Hellerau* suggests an interesting new lens to revisit the Indian national movement's efforts to build alternatives to colonial education. It demonstrates how closely particularly the Indian National Congress leadership were connected with the global New Education movement in the first decades of the twentieth century. In different parts of the world, critics of traditional teaching technologies suggested more experiential, creative, and holistic pedagogical approaches, which would stimulate individual growth, and the fulfilment of human potential (Mann 2015a: 13; Koslowski 2015: 24; Datta 2015: 333). This included the notion of bringing children close to nature, and to foster artistic expression through dance, music, and painting (Chakraborty 2015; Bickelmann-Aldinger 2015; Pehnke 2015). Another remarkable aspect was the co-education of boys and girls (Koslowski 2015: 24).

The volume starts out with a view to correct national and Eurocentric historiographies of the New Education movement. Despite a lack of recognition, several chapters argue, the contributions of Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948), and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) were actually on par with New Education's European protagonists Paul Geheeb (1870-1961), Maria Montessori (1870-1952), and Alexander Sutherland Neill (1883-1973) (Datta 2015: 332; Koslowski 2015: 23; Kupfer 2015: 302; Mann 2015a: 14). Indeed, the first part of the volume provides ample evidence for India's involvement with New Education. An important platform for global exchange was the New Education Fellowship (NEF). Co-founded in 1921 by Beatrice Ensor (1885-1974), Adolphe Ferriere (1879-1960), and Elisabeth Rotten (1882-1964), the NEF built on Ensor's footing in the Theosophical Society (TS; cf. Moritz 2017¹). Not only did the TS provide funds essential for running the NEF. Theosophical thought also inspired the educational philosophy of some of its prominent members, including Montessori (Koslowski 2015: 25).

It was because of her contacts to the TS, that Montessori came to spend the years of 1939-46 in India (Kaur 2009: 152f.). As an important agency for the globalisation of scientific study on pedagogy and the child, the NEF was also part of the history of the International Bureau of Education, and UNESCO (Koslowski 2015: 27). Fifteen delegates from India attended the important NEF conference in Elsinore (1929), together with Geheeb, Montessori, Neill, and Jean Piaget—a fact, which Elisabeth Rotten highlighted as proof of the movement's global reach. Among them were Dondo Keshav Karve



(1858-1962), a pioneering institution-builder in the field of women's education, and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903-88), a co-founder of the All India Women's Conference. The most famous Indian representative, Tagore, was listed among the delegates, but apparently unable to attend. He was, however, appointed as one of the five permanent NEF vice-presidents in 1935 (Oesterheld 2015: 45f.).

Tagore's educational philosophy was well received within the NEF. Indeed, he was ardently admired by the European seekers of spiritual wisdom (Horn 2015: 76). Also, Gandhi was famous in the international New Education debate. The global symbolic status of both, "the Mahatma" and "the Poet", as representatives of emerging India was reinforced by the NEF's channels of communication. However, there were also many professional contacts and personal relationships between educationalists in India and Germany. One such case is the Berlin experience of Zakir Husain (1897-1969), the co-founder of Jamia Milia Islamia (JMI). While pursuing his doctoral studies at the Berlin University, he took the chance to attend the lectures of educational philosopher and psychologist Eduard Spranger (1882-1963). He also acquainted himself with the writings of Georg Kerschensteiner (1852-1932) (Oesterheld 2015: 41-3), 'the founding father of the German system of vocational training' (Holzwarth 2014: 130).

The JMI, an important higher education institution that had sprung from the national education movement, became a site of vibrant Indo-German intellectual engagement.² In 1937, Husain was asked by Gandhi to chair an expert committee, appointed to draft a primary education scheme for independent India. The resulting Wardha Scheme of Basic Education, was 'framed in the spirit of Indian nationalism [as] a genuine challenge to the colonial approach of education.' It also, however, reflected elements of global progressive educational thought (Oesterheld 2015: 43). This does not imply, that Indian nationalists merely adapted ideas from the West, as several contributions to the volume emphasise. Instead, it points to a global cloud of ideas, and the cosmopolitan spirit, in which educational reform experiments unfolded.

The schools formed by New Educationists, such as the German Odenwaldschule, or Tagore's Shantiniketan (see below), were not only sites of pedagogical experimentation, but also of knowledge exchange. A prominent institution of the German "Reformpädagogik", the Odenwaldschule, was founded in 1910 by Paul Geheeb and his wife Edith Cassirer (1885-1982). Geheeb and his students were aware of Shanti-



niketan; much excitement was caused by Tagore's visit in 1930. There was a regular stream of Indian visitors (Oesterheld 2015: 31-6). Kamala Bose (1885-1947), the Principal of Modern School, Delhi—another school emerging from the national education movement—visited Odenwaldschule (Oesterheld 2015: 33, Horn 2015: 63f.), probably on her way to attend the NEF conference in Locarno (1927) (Allender 2016: 247). Another visitor was Shrimati Hutheesing, a Shantiniketan alumna, who had trained as a kindergarten teacher in Berlin (Horn 2015: 64; Oesterheld 2015: 32f.). Born into a wealthy Gujarati Jain family, Shrimati was married to Saumendranath Tagore, Rabindranath's nephew, while her brother was married to writer Krishna Nehru (1907-67), Jawaharlal Nehru's youngest sister. The contacts established at Odenwaldschule enabled German educationists to go to India. This included Ingeborg Badenhausen (1904-64), who was in charge of the pre-primary, or 'Montessori Department', at Kamala Bose's Modern School in 1931-32 (Horn 2015: 64), and Alwine von Keller (1878-1965), a long term-teacher at Odenwaldschule with an ardent fascination for Indian philosophy. While travelling in India, Keller 'took along a Technicolor film containing documentation about the Odenwaldschule, [which] was presented in several cinemas.' (Horn 2015: 59) Her daughter, Ellen Teichmüller (1898-1978), and Ellen's husband V.N Sharma, founded a successful reform institution, the Children's Garden School in Madras, in 1937, which was modelled after Odenwaldschule (Oesterheld 2015: 39-41; Powell 2017: 293).

Many German-speaking female new educationists as well as young women from the leading families of the Indian independence movement worked or were trained in ECCE, a field that now had become associated with Montessori. This is particularly apparent in the case of Gerda Philipsborn, a Berlin friend of Zakir Husain's, who built the pre-school department at JMI (Oesterheld 2015: 43), and Elise Herbatschek (1904-1994), a pianist from Vienna, who collaborated with Montessori to develop new ways of music education. In 1927, Herbatschek had been invited by a theosophist friend to take charge of a Montessori school in Allahabad, where she became friends with her assistant teacher, none other than Krishna Nehru. Among her charges were the little daughters of politician Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Krishna and Jawaharlal Nehru's sister (Horn 2015: 69-72). This shows how closely the Congress leadership and their families were linked with New Education. Moreover, it points to the radical transformation which had taken place in ECCE, from the "nursery of discipline" among poor



Eurasians, and native converts, to a highly advanced pedagogy for the political elite.

The second and third part of the volume juxtapose the history of two famous institutional sites, Shantiniketan and Hellerau, an innovative comparative approach which brings out the multiple connections of New Education with other social reform and spiritual "regeneration" movements. The book introduces New Education at Hellerau with the concept of the 'pedagogical province' (Pädagogische Provinz). European Educationists had borrowed this term from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1821/29), to envision a 'humanist republic of education' (Mann 2015: 14). The garden city of Hellerau was founded in 1909 in the vicinity of Dresden, Saxony, as part of the search for healthier and less alienating ways of living and working. The "Lebensreform" (life-reform) community of Young Hellerau experimented with vegetarianism, anti-alcoholism, and dress reform. They explored "Eurythmics", a new form of physical expression (Mann 2015b; Nitschke 2015; Straumer 2015). It was this environment which promised ideal conditions for educationists to develop new pedagogies for children unspoilt by the degeneration of modern cityscapes. Paul Geheeb, and Alexander Sutherland Neill, the founder of the "democratic community" of Summerhill School, had their roots in Hellerau (Nitschke 2015: 164). Also, Odenwald-teacher Alwine von Keller had opened her first school at the garden city (Horn 2015: 57). 'Although none of the schools founded in Hellerau survived very long [...], the garden city was nevertheless one of the early centres of German New Education.' (Nitschke 2015: 164)

Close-to-nature living and learning were also essential elements of the school settlement of Shantiniketan. Shantiniketan proved a lasting institution which produced remarkable graduates such as Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. Rabindranath Tagore established it in 1901, at a lonely spot near the village Bolpur about 160 kilometres north of Calcutta. The property had been acquired by Tagore's father. As part of the early *swadeshi* movement, Shantiniketan was also part of the quest for national education (Das Gupta 2015: 222-4). For Tagore, colonial schools were robot-producing factories which made students fit for nothing but cogs in the wheel of colonial administration. Instead of the gradgrind teaching of facts, which Tagore satirised as Parrot's Training, he conceptualised knowledge as holistic comprehension, based on experiential learning, and an active engagement with the world (Kupfer 2015: 288-92; Kumar 2015: 311).



Tagore shared not only Gandhi's emphasis on the rural development, but to some extent also his vision of traditional Indian ashram, and its guru-shishya (teacher-student) relationship. Tagore found inspiration for new education in the Vedic tapovan (*The Forest School*, 1909), where the guru would live with his disciples in a natural environment, teaching them by example (Datta 2015: 341f.; Kupfer 2015: 293f.). Tagore's ideas of the "forest school" were framed in a universalistic spirit, and in a global intellectual environment, which connected his own Brahmo Samaj heritage with other thought traditions such as American Transcendentalism (Alam 2015). Despite this veneration for an imagined Indian past, Tagore rejected a 'narrow Chauvinism', as he wrote to his son in 1916. Shantiniketan's 'world university' Visva Bharati was projected as 'a centre for humanistic research concerned with *all* the world's peoples' (Das Gupta 2015: 227). This vision of humanistic cosmopolitanism was mirrored in the notion that the human potential can grow only by an education that cultivates inclusive sympathy (ibid.: 219).

The volume must be appreciated for broadening our understanding of New Education. It shows how closely Indian nationalists were integrated into global exchange processes, within which New Education was drafted as a cosmopolitan project. Its trans-regional comparative perspective, at the same time, sheds new light on colonial and national education in India. It is remarkable how closely the nationalist critique of colonial education ("Parrot Training"), resembled the critique which New Educationists simultaneously expressed in Germany and other places. This raises important questions for research: how specific were the pedagogical problems of colonial education? Central aspects of the 'text-book culture', which Krishna Kumar's classical study (1991) identified as a core of colonial education, such as the detachment of school knowledge from students' life-worlds, or an overarching formalism, were indeed standard critique of New Educationists all over the world (Pehnke 2015: 83).

Several contributions however present a somewhat idealised notion of New Education. We do learn about Hellerau's failures as a social reform project. As Mann convincingly argues, 'Hellerau serves as a lucid example' of a social utopia 'turn[ing] into the bourgeois version of a suburban settlement.' (Mann 2015b: 138) The same critical lens should be applied to New Education. Many progressive educationists certainly aimed 'to liberate children [...] from mental barriers and social confinements' (Mann 2015a: 18). But the reality in new education institutions often departed from the 'cooperative and, at best,



non-hierarchical' ideal (ibid.: 14). New Educationists rejected the machinery metaphors which had been used as praise for monitorial and infant schools in the early nineteenth century ("a fine moral machinery"). Instead, "robot producing factories" came to symbolise the alienating aspect of modern schooling. Human relationships were placed at the centre of the pedagogical process. Student-teacher relationships, however, are often strongly hierarchical. Sometimes, they turn exploitative and abusive. Much discussion on the 'dark side of Reform Pedagogics' (Oelkers 2011) has occurred in Germany, after a sexual abuse scandal at Odenwaldschule, which has resulted, in 2015, in the closure of this pioneering New Education project.

I want to emphasise that "New" Education, associated with Youth, "rejuvenation", and "regeneration", claimed to radically break with the past. However, many traces of the "new" were already present in the "old". Particularly in the field of ECCE, experiential learning (object lessons), a warm atmosphere and play had been valued since the early nineteenth century. There was also a long trajectory of removing children from "contaminating" environments, produced by industrialisation and urbanisation. At the same time, problematic features of traditional schooling haunted New Education. The new schools were still—some more, some less—disciplinary institutions which aimed to (re-)shape students' subjectivities. Moreover, the 'social power of normalcy' (May et al. 2014: xv), which monitorial and infant schools had fostered, was certainly reinforced in some New Education currents, such as Montessori's pedagogy.

Most importantly, New Education institutions did not stand outside the cycle of the social production and reproduction of inequality. Tagore was a practical supporter of 'village empowerment', which included the promotion of cooperatives, village industries, and universal education. Sriniketan, Shantiniketan's twin institution for rural reconstruction, was to instil in the students a sense of practical social responsibility. However, as Deepak Kumar points out, 'Tagore believed in the picture of a benevolent *zamindar* [landlord, J.T.], which he himself no doubt was.' (Kumar 2015: 326f., italics orig.) The foundation of the "forest school" ideal in the brahmanical norms of varnashrama dharma was hardly reflected. From the perspective of the anti-caste movement, Gandhi's Wardha Scheme was highly problematic. It placed basic crafts at the centre of the pedagogical process. This was hoped to help rural and poor children to bridge the gap between life-world experience and school learning. Manual labour, however, was exactly what Dalit students struggled to move away from. The anti-caste movement, hence,



put a lot of emphasis of quality education on par with everyone else (Paik 2014). This points to the elitist basis of many New Education projects in India, and to the shortcomings of the national movement to democratise education.

Rethinking colonial and national education in India

To conclude, three aspects of educational development in colonial India shall be highlighted. First of all, the reviewed books help us place the shifting role of the colonial state in a broader perspective of educational governance in which a variety of governmental and non-governmental actors participated. Missionaries and civil society dominated the scene of modern elementary schooling up to the 1840s. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, colonial governments became more active in the field of mass education, partially in continuation of the evangelical "civilizing" agenda. This, however, not necessarily meant substantial investment, but rather a standardisation of regulation. Moreover, the colonial education system which developed in the second half of the nineteenth century often relied on non-state institutions, provided by missionaries and diverse Indian reformers. From the first decade of the twentieth century onwards, the quest for national education became the hegemonic framework of educational development in India. The *Government of India Act* of 1919 was as a watershed in the history of education. Educational control got shifted to the provincial level, and into Indian hands (Allender 2015: 254). This has important implications for the chronology of educational development in India, and for the complex relationship of colonial governmental education and its alternatives.

Secondly, the trajectories of colonial and national education in India unfolded in a global frame. The reviewed books point to the increased complexity and changing patterns of trans-regional exchange. In the early nineteenth century, personal networks across the British Empire provided crucial channels of educational communication. The connection of metropole and colony remained highly relevant for educational development in India throughout the nineteenth century. As we learn from the case of the Lawrence Asylums, official contacts gained in importance in comparison to civil society networks. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, imperial communication became part of an indeed global environment for educational institution-building, financing, and pedagogical innovation in India. This was already apparent in the travelling of Froebel kindergarten ideas to India, which rested on several imperial and international (US-American), state and civil socie-



ty connections. After World War I, American philanthropy, such as the Rockefeller Trust, furthered the expansion of medical training for women in India, while the global catholic order of the Loreto nuns, among them the controversial "Mother Teresa" (1910-97), continued their activities among the poor (Allender 2016: 197, 271-96). At the same time, New Education established itself as a global movement, partially building on the TS-network.

The reviewed works pose interesting questions for comparative and trans-regional research. As Allender demonstrates, inter-cultural encounters did not necessarily imply any meaningful engagement with "the other". The intervention of Mary Carpenter shows, that imperial connections could actually prove a hindrance to local institution building. Comparing the Infant System in the 1820s and 1830s, and the Froebel kindergarten in the 1880s and 1890s, it appears that pedagogical innovation spread easier, when tied to the building of new institutions. Efforts to reform pre-existing schools, in contrast, could be blocked by the opposition, or inertia of the staff which run them. In contrast to the Infant School movement, Mann's (2015) edited volume found no single origin to New Education. The striking parallels are not by themselves treated as 'evidence of a transnational exchange' (Horn 2015: 53). Instead, the volume emphasises, reformers in different parts of the world 'reacted simultaneously to similar problems based on an analogously structured state educational system.' (Mann 2015a: 14) Later on, a movement—if one can even call New Education a movement (ibid.: 13)—was formed precisely on the basis of the discovery of such binding commonalities.

The third point I want to make is about colonialism, education, and social inequality. May et al. highlight, how missionaries and colonial officials in different parts of the British Empire used the same pedagogical tools for 'molding the very young children', in order to 're-make whole societies anew' (May et al. 2014: 113). They use the category of "the indigenous" to point to the disruptive effects of educational interventions on different colonized populations. Allender's long-term analysis brings out the complexity, changes, and ideological intricacies of "the Raj's" education policy. In both cases, however, the contestation over education within the indigenous population remains marginal to the analysis. Other contributions to the history of education in India (Constable 2000; Kumar et al. 2013; Rao 2014), provide a corrective to this. Colonial education in India was also disruptive, to some extent, of existing educational and social privileges. The question of response-



veness and resistance, therefore, was inextricably linked to the contestation over educational exclusion and social power.

Equally, we have to look at the national movement in the context of social inequality, and competing struggles for empowerment. In the perspective of European New Educationists, Tagore and Gandhi were beacons of educational reform and national liberation in India. Tagore's cosmopolitan-humanist visions resonated well with New Education's global aspirations. The national education movement in India, however, was much broader and more ambiguous than this. It contained not only socially conservative, but also national chauvinistic elements (Fischer-Tiné 2003). A strong and outspoken opposition to universal education continued throughout the colonial period (Rao 2014a). Looking at efforts of educational reform within a wider matrix of relations of domination is also relevant for broader evaluations of educational alternatives: who has access to pedagogically innovative schools? Will they be understood as a means to foster, or interrupt social exclusion and marginalisation?

Endnotes

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¹ Khan, Razak. 2017. Rethinking "national culture" of India: an entangled Indo-German intellectual history. *TRAFO—Blog for Transregional Research*, 16 Jan., (<https://trafo.hypotheses.org/5729>).

² Moritz, Maria Sofia. 2017. *Globalizing "sacred knowledge": South Asians and the theosophical society, 1879-1930*. Doctoral Dissertation. Jacobs University, Bremen. (<https://opus.jacobs-university.de/frontdoor/index/index/docId/703>).

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