

# Knowledge Production and Colonialism New Enquiries

DR K M VISHNU NAMBOODIRI<sup>1</sup>, DR AGNEY G K<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Assistant Professors Department of History, Mar Thoma College Tiruvalla

***Abstract- This paper delves into the intersection of knowledge production and colonialism, highlighting specific potentialities and precautions in navigating this contentious terrain. It contends that recognizing the pivotal influence of colonial education policies is indispensable for understanding the formation of contemporary societies in colonized regions. Beyond the transformations wrought by technological advancements and capitalist endeavors, the paper underscores the significant role played by colonial education policies in reshaping the social fabric of colonial societies.***

***Indexed Terms- Colonialism, Knowledge production, Native, Policy, Education***

## I. INTRODUCTION

The scholarly discourse on knowledge production within colonial contexts engenders considerable debate, with researchers undertaking an exploration of diverse academic dimensions. This inquiry extends to the examination of political frameworks in colonies, intricate dynamics of caste and gender, public spheres, and the impact of entrenched social hierarchies on knowledge creation. In this context, the assertion by Foucault regarding the nature of knowledge assumes paramount significance, underscoring the imperative to critically assess one's cognitive processes for continuous learning and development. This perspective finds particular relevance in the investigation of colonial education, where the origination of knowledge is intertwined with its profound influence on methodological paradigms. Consequently, any comprehensive analysis of the evolutionary trajectory of education in colonial-era South Asia necessitates a nuanced consideration of the intricacies inherent in the politics of knowledge production.

## II. THE ISSUES

Under the hegemony of colonial governance, the primary objective of modern education was the cultivation of an intrinsic "otherness" within colonial domains. This transcendence of colonial education not only manifested in the emergence of reformist figures such as Raja Ram Mohun Roy but also gave rise to individuals exemplified by Henry Vivian Derozio, embodying distinctive perspectives (Sengupta, 2000:1). Beyond the purview of Roy and Derozio, the impact of modern education extended to the configuration of novel societal structures, civil organizations, gender norms, and caste identities within the colonial milieu. Scholars have explicated that the production of knowledge under the auspices of colonialism entails a comprehensive interplay of intricate relationships and interactions, transcending the confines of the educational domain alone (Peabody, 2012:82-83 & 85). Noteworthy scholars, such as Krishna Kumar, have undertaken an in-depth exploration of the nuanced dimensions of colonial education, focusing on the "homonymity" of education and its pivotal role in the establishment of a civil society grounded in English political ideals (Kumar, 2014:27).

The intricate social dynamics intrinsic to colonial education demand meticulous scholarly scrutiny for two imperative reasons. Firstly, the enduring influence of colonial educational policies on contemporary forays into the complexity of knowledge production is evident. As articulated by Fanon, the diffusion of colonial education has resulted in a restructuring of indigenous paradigms, engendering the emergence of hybrid cultures (Smith, 2016:27). Moreover, scholars have substantiated that colonial education, particularly in its interplay with the social fabric of colonized nations, begets an intricate labyrinth of complexities (Viswanathan, 1988:85-104). While extant scholarship often focalizes on the correlation between colonial education and societal transformations, as evident in narratives of social reforms, such unidimensional

approaches often neglect the heterogeneous power dynamics intrinsic to native regions.

The scholarly gaze has seldom penetrated the interactions among diverse groups and individuals within the knowledge-production process. The identification of lacunae within the fundamental agencies of knowledge production, dissemination, and reproduction contributes to a nuanced comprehension of Native engagement with colonial education and its enduring ramifications in the post-colonial epoch. Consequently, a critical examination of power structures, educational policy frameworks, and their perpetuation in post-colonial times is imperative to apprehend the nuanced role played by colonial educational policies in shaping contemporary systems and practices of knowledge production.

Paul Gilroy posits that the construction of a civil society necessitates the cultivation of a hybrid mentality (Gilroy, 1993:12), thereby underscoring the imperative to scrutinize the unintended consequences of colonial knowledge production. These consequences, encompassing the body politic, moral codes, civic life, hybrid identities, and the formulation of civic policies, demand heightened scholarly attention. This underscores that the study of colonial education transcends a linear historical narrative of educational progress. Instead, it necessitates an exploration of how educational policies contributed to the development of civic values and "the modality of relating themselves to the governing authority" (Hollander & Doss, 2018:219). Therefore, contextualizing colonial education mandates an examination of shifts in educational policies and the resultant emergence of new social relationships and power dynamics among various stakeholders (Wagoner, 2003:783-814).

### III. FORMATION OF THE 'NEW'

Recognition of the pivotal role played by colonial education policies in shaping contemporary societies within the colonies is imperative. Beyond the transformations catalyzed by technological advancements and capitalist investments, colonial education policies actively reconstructed the social dynamics of colonial societies. Kallaway's

examination of colonial education in Africa serves as a poignant exemplar, elucidating the establishment of a network involving missionary, state, and philanthropic entities, resulting in a substantial reorganization of knowledge systems (Kallaway, 2020:33-34). This underscores the inherent complexity within colonial knowledge production, involving the intricate interplay of power relations, social structures, and institutional frameworks.

In her seminal work, 'Educational Development in South India,' G. Vijayalekshmi (1993) delineates the conflict between conventional and colonial knowledge production methods. Vijayalekshmi argues that colonial education not only supplanted traditional education patterns but also introduced a modern, revenue-generating form of education. Colonial education, in essence, functioned as a form of social engineering, striving to replicate the West in the East (Tschurennev, 2019:61-62). However, these endeavors not only failed to replicate precise colonial prototypes but resulted in the emergence of hybrid forms of knowledge production. Crucially, the dissemination of education played an active role in reshaping native social relations into more intricate power dynamics under the colonial social order.

Existing studies on colonial education frequently fall short in according education its due recognition as a generative force of power. Rather than adopting a simplistic cause-and-effect model to comprehend the historical context of knowledge production, understanding the functions of education in colonial societies necessitates an examination through new theoretical lenses. This paper concludes by accentuating the vast potential for exploration in colonial education research, notwithstanding the abundance of existing literature. A refined methodology that traces knowledge production in its contextual genesis would amplify the value of such endeavors, necessitating inevitable transdisciplinary initiatives. In essence, the intricacies and multiplicities of centrality, standardization, unification, legitimization, and control in knowledge production should be subjected to rigorous scrutiny. While modern education engendered a structured framework for learning and knowledge production, the concept of civic policy finds its roots in antiquity. A comprehensive survey of policies and ideas

embodying 'civic sense' reveals that human societies historically devised specific methods to navigate plurality. However, with the advent of colonialism, these pre-modern notions were swiftly supplanted by a globally imposed Western-centric civilization.

Discourse Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education. Taylor and Francis, 1997.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Agamben, Giorgio. *Stato di eccezione* [State of Exception]. Translated by Kevin Attell, University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- [2] Apple, Michael W. *Education and Power*. Routledge, 2013.
- [3] De Oto, Alejandro J. *Frantz Fanon: The Politics and Poetics of the Postcolonial Subject*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2022.
- [4] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*. Harvard University Press, 1993.
- [5] Easton, David. *The Political System*. Knopf, 1953.
- [6] Hollander, I., & Doss, M. C. "Introduction: Hollowed Crowns, Composite India's Value Crisis and The Never-Ending Business of Education." *South Asia Research*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2018, pp. 219–228, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728018800764>.
- [7] Tschurennev, Jana, and SumeetMhaskar. "'Wake up for Education': Colonialism, Social Transformation, and the Beginnings of the Anti-Caste Movement in India." *PaedagogicaHistorica*, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/00309230.2021.1920986.
- [8] Kumar, Krishna. *Politics of Education in Colonial India*. Routledge, 2014.
- [9] Philip, Kavitha. *Civilizing Natures: Race, Resources and Modernity in Colonial South India*. Rutgers University Press, 2004.
- [10] Senagupta, Pallaba. *Derozio*. SahityaAkademi, 2000.
- [11] Smith, Andrew. "Racism and Everyday Life." Palgrave Macmillan UK, SpringerLink, <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9781137493569>.
- [12] Taylor, Sandra. *Critical Policy Analysis: Exploring Contexts, Texts and Consequences*. Discourse Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education. Taylor and Francis, 1997.
- [13] Vijayalekshmy, K. G. *Educational Development in South India*. Mittal, 1993.
- [14] Wagoner, P. "Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2003, pp. 783-814, doi:10.1017/S001041750300003.