strategy for growth, investment and employment followed by gender equality, education and social protection. Another prominent recommendation is the progressive expansion of parliamentary oversight of the multilateral system at the global level and for the creation of a global parliamentary group concerned with coherence and consistency between global economic and social policies.

The report recognises the progressive decline in international development assistance. The target set by rich countries for the same in the early 1970s was 0.7 per cent of their national income. Development assistance never reached 0.4 per cent even in its peak years in the 1980s; subsequently it started declining (coinciding with the collapse of the Soviet Union) and is about 0.23 per cent of the national income of rich countries now. If the commitment of 0.7 per cent had been met, an additional US$2,500 billion would have been available for development, the report says.

One of the major contributions of the report is in the articulation of the role of the state in advancing economic development in developing countries. This goes against the currently fashionable argument for downsizing or reducing the role of the state. The report recalls the active role of the state, both in the distant past (western countries) and recent times (east Asia) in adopting a variety of policy instruments to foster industrialisation. These states controlled the flow of foreign capital, encouraged imitation and innovation, gave subsidies and protection and, of course, played a central role in mobilising domestic investment and influencing its allocation.

The new context of globalisation has restricted such freedom. The report calls for good national governance built on a strong democratic political system and social equity. It calls for state provisioning of public goods, social protection, and human capabilities. While calling for the support and supervision of markets, it also calls for prudent management of the process of integration into the global economy. It has advocated caution in capital account convertibility (India and China have been praised on this account). Employment creation should be a priority in national policies it emphasises. Empowering local communities and local governments is also seen as strengthening national capacity in a globalising world.

The report, coming as it does from an independent commission, has addressed its recommendations to global institutions such as the UN system, IMF, World Bank, G8 and G77, national governments, organisations of business and labour as well as, what it calls, civil society organisations. It states that action to achieve reforms to create a fair globalisation will require mobilisation from many actors. Both at the national and international levels it calls for not just tripartite social dialogues but quadrupartite ones that would include civil society organisations.

The director general of the International Labour Organisation constituted the commission. Its composition reflects the importance of many constituencies in the world stage. It was chaired by a sitting president from the north (Tarja Halonen of Finland) and another president from the south (Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania) with members representing organisations of employers and workers, renowned academics, political leaders, leaders of civil society organisations, and international civil servants. The report reflects this diversity of constituencies but the tone and tenor is one of sending a positive message. The signatories to this unanimous report wrote: “As a collective document it [the report] is quite different from alternative reports each one of us would have written individually. But our experience has demonstrated the value and power of dialogue as an instrument for change”.

The report was prepared after holding a series of dialogues around the world. Nineteen national dialogues, seven regional dialogues and 10 consultations with key actors were held. These engaged a large cross-section of global public opinion involving over 2,000 leaders and opinion makers from different backgrounds.

The report may not satisfy the appetite of avid anti-globalisers; yet it is unlikely to be of any comfort to the equally avid globalisers and unilateralists. Its main contribution, as I see it, is its insistence on conducting social dialogues within a democratic framework, at the local, national and international levels, to create a fair globalisation that is inclusive.

Out-of-School Children

Child Labourers or Educationally Deprived?

Saying that all out-of-school children are child labourers is not convincing because, among other reasons, it sounds as if work and schooling are mutually exclusive activities for children. Referring to them as educationally deprived children is justified from the perspective of human capital, development and human rights.

M VENKATANARAYANA

There is a general consensus on the view that child schooling is welcome and child labour is reprehensible in any society. Developing countries such as India are facing the daunting problem of child labour, and several policy measures have been aimed at combating this problem. However, as there is no conceptual clarity over work/labour in general and child work/labour in particular, ambiguities still persist. Conceptual clarity is crucial for theoretical and policy formulations. Unfortunately, we don’t have clarity with respect to child labour. This paper is an attempt to clarify some of the problems involved in the concept of ‘child labour’. Moreover, our modest attempt is to say that referring all out-of-school children as child labourers is not convincing.

Official statistics for India, on school-age (preferably 5-14) children reveal that a small proportion (5 per cent in 1991) of the children are reportedly working. But a large proportion of children are reportedly out of school and out of work. They are referred to as ‘nowhere children’ in the literature (Chaudhri 1996). This is the segment that needs conceptual clarity. Scholars working on child labour do recognise the fact that many children who are, in fact, working do not report so. This is said to be for two reasons. Firstly, a restrictive definition of work excludes many activities in which children are involved. Secondly, parents under-report their children at work because of the low value attached to it. It is acknowledged in the
literature that the existing definition of work in general is leading to underestimation of the workforce, especially female workers due to the exclusion of certain kinds of jobs [Hirway 2002]. Similarly, there is also an underestimation of child workers. Due to the restrictive definition of work, many out-of-school children who are working do not get included in the category of working children. Having realised these problems, one school of thought came up with an idea to refer to all out-of-school children as child labourers [Sinha 2000; Burra 1995]. The study group report on ‘Women and Child Labour’ for the Labour Commission, also recommended it [Lieten 2003].

This has led to an ongoing and inconclusive debate on the concept of child labour. As mentioned above, one school of thought considers all out-of-school children as child labourers. Andhra Pradesh has become the first in India to declare it so. Another school of thought supports the conventional definition of child labour, where it is said the phenomenon of child labour has to be narrowly defined such that child labour should be distinguished from child work [Lieten 2003]. According to yet another school, as the work which children do affects their education, growth and development it could be considered as child labour [Misra 2000].

Let us now have a brief look at the changing roles of children and the values attached to child and child work. The phenomenon of child work, in fact, is not specific to modern society. The origin of child work can be traced back to human history. In the early stages of the evolution of societies, the process of learning by doing, child work was considered part and parcel of the socialisation process. In the transitional period, attitudes towards children and the nature of work they were doing changed. In the pragmatic perspective, the nature of work that children carry out, working conditions, environment and employment relations have changed over a period. All these were found to be unsuitable to children’s growth and development. In the normative perspective, the notion of childhood differentiated children from adults and it is established that childhood should be work-free and for education. Meanwhile, the school as an institution emerged as the best place for children. Human capital and human development paradigms of economic development reinforced the need for education, especially of children. In the process, the norms that are established are that no child should work and that all children must be in school. One point is clear: education is a must for every child. And it is their basic right. But in case of work it is not clear what kind of work children are not allowed to do.

Here arises the controversy over the concept of child labour, where the conventional approach distinguishes between child labour and child work. While the latter is accepted as a process of socialisation, the former is rejected as it is detrimental to children’s overall development and negatively affects their education [Fyfe 1989, George 1993, Lieten 2003]. It is said that all the work that children do is not child labour. This implies that child work is more generic and child labour is restrictive. One of the reasons the study group on women and child labour employed for rejecting the existing definition of child labour is that it is restricted to paid employment and working for others [Lieten 2003]. Even the NSSO definition restricts the labourer as working for wages when it defines rural labour. When one takes up this restrictive definition, it excludes even other reportedly working children, especially in unpaid jobs, as child labourers. In fact, the census defines a worker as one who participates in economically productive activity. NSS defines it as a participation in economic activity, i.e., production of goods and services that adds value to national product. In both cases, the definition includes paid and unpaid work and participation in household farms and enterprises, self-employed and outside the household working for others. Referring to child labour in the strict sense excludes children who are not working for others and those working in unpaid jobs as per the usual definition of work. However, in practice we consider all children who are involved in economic activity which includes paid and unpaid work, work within the household and outside, and self-employed, and refer to them as child labourers. Yet, as it is argued, it is an underestimate of working children. It is because the definition of worker is in general restrictive in the sense that it excludes some activities especially unpaid services like household chores and domestic duties [Hirway 2002]. When a broader definition of worker is considered, the workforce estimation in general and that of child workers in particular will shoot up. As the concept of work is more inclusive, more and more children will be included as child workers.

However, saying that all out-of-school children are child labourers is not convincing for several reasons. Firstly, while suggesting that all out-of-school children are child labourers, it sounds as if work and schooling are mutually exclusive activities for children. That is, it implies that only out-of-school children are working and school-going children are not working at all. Instead, it is evident in both developing and developed-country

---

Research Fellowship on the theme of “Citizenship, Participation and Governance”

PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia), a non-profit organization engaged in research and action, invites proposal for research fellowship on the theme of Citizenship, Participation and Governance. The fellowship is open to researchers/NGO practitioners/activists based in West Bengal/ Jharkhand/Orisa/Chhattisgarh/ Bihar.

Duration of the fellowship will be of 10 months. Each fellow will receive a monthly sum of Rs. 5,500/- for the first three months and for the remaining seven months he/she will get a monthly sum of Rs. 8,500/-.

A contingency grant of Rs. 4,000/- will be given to the fellows for purchasing of books and stationeries. Applicant must not be above 30 years and must have a minimum post-graduate degree with 55% mark in Sociology/ Political Science/ Social Work/ Social Anthropology. M. Phil in the above mentioned disciplines would be a desirable qualification. Last date for sending applications is 15 October 2004. For details visit our website: www.pria.org

Or write to us at: Coordinator, Fellowship Programme 2005

PRIA
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi – 110062
Phone: 91-11-29960931/32 Or email at: fellowship@pria.org
contexts, that children are working while attending school. It is also observed that in some contexts, children have to work so as to pay for their schooling expenditure [Grooteart and Patrios 1999]. In rural Andhra Pradesh, about 30 per cent of children in the 5-14 age group and attending school, reportedly more or less regularly helps in household chores (domestic duties). And about 2 per cent of school-going children are working. If one refers out-of-school children as child labourers, one can infer that it may legitimise the work that is combined with schooling [Nieuwenhuyys 1999:26].

Secondly, among the out-of-school children, a significant number are disabled (cognitive or orthopaedic) or unhealthy. For such children it is their deprivation of health that deprives them of education. Therefore, one cannot say that all out-of-school children are working. As per the NFHS-1, 1992, it is found that in Andhra Pradesh around 8 per cent of the children in the age group 5-14 are disabled by their activity status. In other words, they are neither students nor workers. It is a well-established fact that many children, especially in rural India, are undernourished and that in rural areas access to health facilities are inadequate. Illness may cause the gap in schooling. Sometimes it ultimately ends up in drop-outs. For instance, during my field visit to a village in Andhra Pradesh, an 8-year-old child told me of the reason for her non-attendance at school. She has two years of schooling. Once she was ill and bedridden for three months. After that, though she recovered her health, she never returned to school.

Thirdly, parents' perceptions of a suitable age for their children to enter school differ. For instance, in rural Andhra Pradesh, in the NSS 50th round, about 7 per cent of the parents reported that the reason for their child not attending school is that he/she is too young to go to school. In such cases, it is doubtful if they engage the same children in any work.

Fourthly, the Time Use Survey and PROBE, which included a more broader definition for work than the conventional one, do not find that all out-of-school children are working [Hirway 2002a, PROBE 1999]. In the PROBE survey, only 25 per cent of the out-of-school children were reportedly working the day before the survey.

Ideally, all children in the age group 5-14 must be in school irrespective of caste, gender, region and any other specificity. Those children are to be given a minimum level of education. Education is a prime requirement for them. Those who are not able to attend school due to economic-, health- or school-related problems can be referred to as educationally deprived children. It is justified in the perspective of human capital, human development and human rights. With this objective, we can categorise homogeneously all those out-of-school children as educationally deprived children rather than child labourers. Keeping the child in school reduces the working hours of the children. Moreover, as the political scientist Myron Weiner said, in the policy perspective keeping children in school and monitoring them is a rather easier task than monitoring their absence from work [Weiner 1994].

Notes

1 NSSO 1993-94 50th round employment-unemployment survey manual. It defined ‘rural labour’ as ‘manual labour (living in rural areas) working in agricultural and/or non-agricultural occupations in return for wages paid either in cash or in kind.’ It excludes exchange labour.

2 NSS 1993-94 50th round of employment and unemployment survey, specially designed follow-up questions to children in the age group 5-14 to record education and activity profile of the children.

3 It is defined that a child is considered working if he has spent at least a day at any work with some regularity which may be seasonal. Among those children who are working while attending school, 53 per cent reportedly doing so to supplement household income, 27 per cent work due to shortage of labour in household enterprise, about 9 per cent forced to work to repay loan and 4 per cent are working to acquire skills.

References


KARNATAKA ELECTIONS

Shifts, New Trends and the Congress Defeat

The Lok Sabha and assembly elections in Karnataka in April 2004 revealed a paradigm shift in the state’s politics. While the BJP has made several gains in most regions, boosted by its strong Hindutva base and by the division of votes between the two main secular parties, the state for the first time also looks set for an era of ‘secular’ coalition politics.

MUZAFFAR ASSADI

The results of the Lok Sabha and assembly election in Karnataka earlier this year have perplexed many. For the first time BJP won a larger number of seats than any other party both in the Lok Sabha and assembly elections. It won 18 seats in the Lok Sabha and 79 seats in the assembly. The Congress was completely mauled: it won eight seats in Lok Sabha and 64 assembly seats. In fact, in the assembly election the net gainer was Janata Dal (Secular) (UD(S)): it won 59 seats besides two Lok Sabha seats. In Karnataka, elections were conducted in two phases. The first phase (April 20) saw elections to 15 Lok Sabha and 124 Assembly seats.

Economic and Political Weekly September 18, 2004 4221