

# QUESTIONING CAPITALIST EDUCATION A DELEUZEAN CRITIQUE\*

S.M.Mahboob-ul-Hassan Bukhari  
Department of Philosophy,  
University of Karachi

## Abstract

Education has always been an instrument for realizing state policy. Education is never seen as an end in itself. It has always been a means to an end. The state of Pakistan inherited capitalist institutions from its British colonial power. These instruments of capitalism were seen as natural and were accepted as legitimate by Pakistan's founding fathers. All subsequent policies including education policies were developed to promote capitalist values and transaction forms. Capitalism has been taken for granted as a state policy in Pakistan from the time of the country's independence.

However, Modernity has lost its legitimacy and has been questioned by Post Modernism and Post Structuralism. Gilles Deleuze questions the capitalist life structures on ontological grounds. He objects to the biases of Modernism. He argues that Modernism is not self validating. Hence its values and ideals are not justified but require justification (Deleuze 1994). Modernism and capitalism have negatively affected the traditional conception of being, disintegrated religious collectivities and cosmopolitan nationalism has replaced ethnocentric nationalism in Pakistan. Capitalist education has created a perception that capitalism is a natural and rational mode of life and is a neutral perspective to determine good and evil. Capitalism sees traditional

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values as necessarily irrational and illegitimate. It argues that traditional values have to be reinterpreted within the context of the capitalist value system (Ansari 2005).

This paper seeks to question the legitimacy of Modernity on Deleuzean grounds and to show that modernism and capitalism have delegitimized our social and religious norms and values.

**Key Words:** Capitalism, Education, Post Modernism, Modernity, Difference, Image of Thought, Transcendence, Immanence, Transcendental, being.

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## I. Introduction

This paper seeks to develop a critique of capitalist education policy. This critique is based on a post structuralist thought, a tradition that questions the legitimacy of structuralist presumptions. Pakistan has embraced capitalism since the time of its birth. Pakistan inherited different institutions of Modernity and capitalism such as democracy, cosmopolitan nationalism, free market etc from its colonial masters. All institutions including education were used to realize capitalist ends. All education policies from 1947 to 2010 were based on capitalist norms and premises. Capitalism was assumed to be natural. National education policies have sought to produce individuals who could productively serve capitalist institutions.

Gilles Deleuze (1926-1995), an eminent post-structuralist, questions the values of Modernism. He points out that Modernism is trapped in transcendence<sup>1</sup>. Transcendence is not self justificatory. Hence, the concept of Modernism is not an advance from pre-modernism. Pre-modernity regulated reality around the transcendence of God. Deleuze concludes that modernity is not self justified and its ideals cannot be and should not be universalized (Colebrook 2002, p 28).

Modernity has lost its justification; Modernity and capitalism have damaged the traditional conception of being, disintegrated religious collectivities, and replaced ethnocentric nationalism by cosmopolitan nationalism<sup>2</sup>. Modernity has not only lost its legitimacy but is badly deconstructed our traditional values.

Now an important question arises what is the justification to follow Modern ideals and promote Modern value systems in Pakistan? Modernity has been questioned from within the West (Hart 2006). Hence Pakistan should revisit its state policy and also its education policy. The purpose of this paper is to elaborate this argument.

This paper is divided into three sections which are followed by the conclusion. The first section seeks to explore the

ideological foundations of education policy in Pakistan. The first section also deals with the relationship of Pakistani education policy with Modernity and capitalism. The second section explicates a critique developed by Gilles Deleuze of Modernity in general and capitalism in particular. The third section deals with the effects of capitalist education on Pakistan's education system.

## **II. Education Policy: an instrument for building a Modernist, Capitalist Pakistan**

Education seeks to teach new generations the beliefs, the norms, and knowledge and skills valued by society (Hunt & Colander 1996). It is through education that society transmits to individuals the knowledge dealing with the ways of life of the group resident in a specific community. Education is a prime agency of social control, and decisions made about how to educate people play a crucial role in determining the direction society will take. Education is always a means to an end and never an end in itself. Hence, the education policy of a country is the reflection of its overall state policy. The state instrumentalizes all institutions including education to realize its ideological ends.

One major aim of Pakistan's state has been to use education as a vehicle for creating and strengthening nationalism. This is an aim of all modern states and especially ex-colonies of European powers; Nationalism is now formally established as a principle of legitimizing state power (Tariq Rahman 2004, p20). There was a time when the European nation-state was the model, and most major European states, except Switzerland, had one national language (Tariq Rahman 2004, p8). As Benedict Anderson has pointed out that the great European print languages, along with the national flag, the museum, the census etc had created 'imagined communities' called nations (Anderson 1983). Pakistan was also seeking to become an ideal Europeanized nation state.

The Quaid-i-Azam made it clear that 'democracy and not theocracy' is the political ideal of newly born Pakistan (Tariq Rahman 2004, p8). The impression that Pakistan "being an Islamic State, is a theocratic state is being sedulously fostered in certain quarters with the sole object of discrediting it in the eyes of the

world” (GoP 1947: p6). The Quaid-i-Azam went on to equate Islam with democracy, freedom, civil rights and rights of (capitalist) property (Tariq Rahman 2004, p8). Islam was seen as a tool to promote nationalism in Pakistan. Islam was used to oppose identity formation on the basis of ethnicity. (Tariq Rahman 2004, p8). All values of Modernity were accepted as natural and historical. Hence the state of Pakistan had accepted Modernity uncritically at independence.

**Pakistan**, at the time of its birth, also accepted capitalism unquestionably. The promotion of capitalism: cosmopolitan nationalism, democracy and a free market economy were explicitly the objectives of state policy. Islam, Urdu, ethnocentric nationalism etc. were instrumentalized to foster capitalist modernization.

The institutions developed in the country have been means to realize state policy. All institutions such as the army, the bureaucracy, and the education system were instruments to articulate this state policy. Educational policies should be seen not as end in themselves but as a means to perpetuate capitalistic values and transaction forms in the state of Pakistan.

The first meeting after independence on education policy was held in Karachi from 27 Nov to 1st Dec. 1947 (Tariq Rahman 2004, p7). The participants besides setting up an instrumental infrastructure (Advisory Board of Education, Inter University Board, Council of Technical Education) set out to consider what should be the ideological basis of education in Pakistan. They argued that “the Islamic conception of universal brotherhood of man, social democracy and social justice should constitute this (Pakistan education policy) ideological basis- cultivation of democratic virtues, i.e. tolerance, self-help, self sacrifice, human kindness etc. and the consciousness of common citizenship as opposed to provincial exclusiveness” (GoP 1947). The education institutions should work to impart democratic values among students. The text books should promote democratic values as natural and objective. The policy makers took capitalism for granted.

The Committee also decided that all other forms of education such as madrassa education which are either posing a threat to capitalist education or are not helpful for its promotion should not be tolerated. The Committee decided that “Steps should be taken to bring madrassas in line with the existing systems of general education” (GoP 1947:p22). The Committee displayed complete loyalty to capitalism and Modernism.

The following years have seen no fundamental shift in these policies. Government policies are also reflected in subsequent statements of national education policy for example “we must strive to create a sense of unity and of nationhood among the people of Pakistan and imparting the skills and training necessary in a complex modern society ( GoP 1959: p11). National Education Policy 1998-2010 (GoP 1998) repeats the clichés every policy has been expounding with differing emphasis. Similarly, Education Sector Reforms: Action Plan 2001-2004 (GoP 2002c) issued during the rule of General Pervez Musharraf did not suggest anything different from the previous policies. The new education policy announced by the present government is not new at all. It mentions the age old commitment to nationalism, capitalism and Modernity.

The capitalist system and its ideological foundations (Modernity) have never been questioned in Pakistan. It has been taken for granted in educational policies and these have always aimed to strengthen Modernity. Modernity claims to know reality as it is. For Modernity social reality is capitalism. Knowledge of reality (capitalism) has come through presumably unlimited, uncontested universal source i.e. rationality. This reality (capitalism) is universal and unlimited and ought to be accepted universally. It is legitimate to use state power to implement this reality (capitalism) all over the globe. Modernist thought has the following characteristics:

1. Humanism. The human being is seen as the source of meaning and value. Nature is valued only in so far as it is useful to humans. The development of human potential is the highest goal of politics and of all social policy.

2. Individualism. The individual is both ethically and intellectually prior to society. Humans have rights governments must acknowledge. Intellectual progress, and hence technological progress, is made by leaps of genius.

3. Rationalism. There is a natural human faculty of reason, in two guises, theoretical and practical, moving from universal principles to particular applications. Reason and knowledge are antithetical to power, which is centralized and repressive.

4. Secular moralism. Human reason alone can determine moral actions and prevent such a moral society; society should be freed from the superstition and prejudices of religious dogmatism.

5. Progressive history and progress. Human history is progressive: the modern human being is more humane and moral, because of the public use of reason in governance and practice.

### **III. The Deleuzean Critique of Modernity**

Gilles Deleuze (1926-1995), a French Post Structuralist, has questioned the self evident character of modern ideals. He points out that modern thought is not transcendental but transcendent<sup>3</sup>. Transcendence is not self evident and hence not justifiable. Deleuze argues that we should not simply accept transcendence or the outside world (reality) as our starting point that we need to ask how something like a distinction between subject and object emerges. The error of Western thought has been to begin from some already existing thing, some transcendence, some given point of reality (such as matter, the subject, God or being). Deleuze insists that we need to understand how the experience of the world as a real and external world is possible: this is a transcendental approach. We can not use power to implement Modernist doctrines and policies. We can not prove Modern dogmas as being the correct meaning of life.

According to Deleuze, Pre-modern thought had grounded the truth, being and identity of the world on God. All differences emanated from this undifferentiated origin (Colebrook 2002: p 28). This grounding of reality as an omnipotent God is a form of transcendence. Transcendence is not self evident. It does not provide us concrete proof about the validity of the claim. In Modern thought, while difference is regarded as primary, it is grounded in the subject (Colebrook 2002: p 28). Modernity is seen as an advance in history as it opens up the possibility of freedom which was not possible in pre-modern thought. But Modernity has been trapped by transcendence. Reality is grounded but this time around man. Freedom is limited by this transcendence. The supposed radical shift from God to man, Deleuze argues, is no shift at all (Deleuze 1990).

For Deleuze, the problem in Modern thought is embodied in his conception of the image of thought.<sup>44</sup> By image of thought Deleuze means that it is presumed that there is the truth which can be unfolded through thought by following the correct rational way. Deleuze believes that there is no truth hence no correct method to unveil it.

According to Deleuze, the image of thought deprives us of immediacy and presence. He is of the view that the presumptions of Modernity are the sources of its failure. They are neither self evident nor justifiable. He suggests that we need to constantly overturn, question and disrupt our terminologies and our differences. True thinking does not operate from an 'image of thought', such as 'self-determining rational man'—it tries to take thought beyond any of its determined images (Deleuze 1994, p. 276).

According to Deleuze, capitalism is also caught up in transcendence. Capitalism is the epitome of a tendency in western thought to reduce becoming to being. In capitalism, all the flows of desire, and all the intensities of life, become grounded on one single flow: the quantifiable medium of capital and exchange. For Deleuze, capitalism also opens up new possibilities for thinking if we extend its power of decoding. If no single object or measure can organise the flows of desire then we might liberate desire (and

thinking) from any fixed ground or axiom (Colebrook 2002 : p 50). It is the idea of the human individual that represses chaotic, inhuman and dynamic differences in capitalism: 'Man must constitute himself through the repression of the intense germinal influx, the great biocosmic memory that threatens to deluge every attempt at collectivity' (Deleuze & Guattari 1983, p. 190).

**I**n capitalism, difference is not organised around a transcendent object such as God or the king; difference is homogenised from within. All differences are differences of two uniform, equivalent flows: money and man. The intensity of difference is reduced to two extended terms: man and his other. The transcendence—or organising value—is now no longer explicitly imposed from above but appears as 'our' inner life; it is transcendence in immanence.

**D**eleuze offers an alternative to Modernity which may be debatable (Habermas 1998). The possibility of an alternative is an indication of the fact that Modernity and capitalism are not natural. This alternative, according to Deleuze, is *difference*. By image of thought, difference has been seen negatively through out western history. Difference has been reduced to identity. Difference is the ontological principle prior to identity. Ontological difference which is prior to any identity, Deleuze calls "positive difference". For Deleuze, western thought has been committed to dogmas of representation which regard positive productive differences negatively, as something that lies outside concepts and good thinking (Deleuze 1994). He further says 'the world of representation is characterised by its inability to conceive of difference in itself' (Deleuze 1994, p. 138). Positive differences are produced at a prehuman level (Colebrook 2002: p xlii). It is at the level of the interference of many practices that things happen, beings, images, concepts, all kinds of events (Deleuze 1989, p. 280).

#### IV. Modernizing Pakistan through Education

This section seeks to point out the effects of modern and capitalist education on the society of Pakistan. These effects may be summarized as follows:

- Traditional values have been redefined in the context of modern institutions.
- Non modern institutions have been regarded as necessarily illegitimate.
- Ethnocentric community consciousness has been subsumed by cosmopolitan nationalism.
- A Crisis has emerged in the joint family structure and culture.
- Religious collectivities have been deconstructed. These collectivities have been subsumed by Modernity.
- Traditional conceptions of being have been deligitimized.

The first and the foremost effect of modern and capitalist education is delegitimization of the traditional concept of being. Traditionally man in Pakistani society associates himself with some *Murshid* in various *Salasil*. Man recognises significance in being associated with his ethnicity. On the other hand, man after being subjected to capitalist education serves capitalism. He tends to prefer profit earning over piety.

The second negative effect is that our religious collectivities are being undermined. We cease to be sunni/shia barelvi/deobandi. Capitalist education creates the perception that these collectivities are condemned by religion itself. These collective life perceptions are considered irrational. The capitalistically educated individuals take shelter under capitalist collectivities. They feel proud to be members of capitalist collectivities such as professions, nationalities, classes etc.

We tend to see the joint family as an obstruction to the development of civil society. The joint family imposes certain

responsibilities which are not consistent with capitalist values and capitalist and modern life styles. Capitalist individuality is promoted through modern and capitalist education. Capitalism is interested in the creation of its own individuality which privileges capital accumulation.

**Ethnocentric community consciousness** has been subsumed by cosmopolitan nationalism. This is yet another effect of capitalist education. Ethnocentric community consciousness is a hurdle to capitalist accumulation. Capitalism can not tolerate any other social or cultural system. It subsumes other systems and creates its own individualities, states and societies. (Ansari 2006, p14)

Non modern institutions are necessarily considered irrational, as they are not able to contribute anything in accumulation. Hence they are regarded as irrational and illegitimate. *Jirga* is a traditional, local institution to resolving distributes. Its structural organization is not capitalist. It may not serve capitalism. It is now regarded as an irrational and illegitimate judicial institution.

These negative effects on our society are the consequences of capitalist and modern education. These effects are alienating us from our traditions. Our values and norms are being reinterpreted through capitalist discourse. Education is used to promote capitalism. If local values are able to serve capitalism, they are regarded as functional. Otherwise, they are either subsumed or delegitimized.

## **V. Conclusion**

As we have seen above, Pakistan as a state has used education policy to strengthen capitalist order. The output of this education (the nation) is ready to surrender to capitalism willingly. Educated -Pakistanis regard capitalism as natural, not as a historical construct and a transcendable phenomenon. Capitalist education has disintegrated traditional conceptions of being, religious collectivities, and ethnocentric community consciousness. However, Post Modernist philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze have disputed the legitimacy of Modernity. Deleuze argues that

Modernity and its values and structures are not self evident and its ideals are not legitimate hence they can not and ought not to be universalized.

We, the people of Pakistan, should reevaluate state policies in particular education policies which are endorsing modernity and capitalist individuality, civil republican society and state. We should strengthen the traditional conception of being, our religious collectivities and communitarian and traditional values which are regarded as irrational under the influence of capitalist education.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Transcendence means outside the consciousness, external. Plane of immanence (polar opposite of transcendence) requires the justification of transcendence.

<sup>2</sup> Ethnocentric nationalism is mere community consciousness which is different from cosmopolitan nationalism.

<sup>3</sup> Transcendence is what we experience as outside of consciousness or experience. We experience the real world as transcendent, as other than us, or as external. Transcendental method refuses to begin with an already given thing such as matter, God etc.

<sup>4</sup> By image of thought Deleuze means that it is presumed that there is the truth which can be unfolded through thought by following the correct rational way. Deleuze believes that there is no the truth hence no correct method to unveil it.

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