

Shifting times and spaces



**HISTORY TO AND FROM THE
THE CLASSROOM**

Some statistics (1)



As of 2011

Gross enrolment ratio [ages 18-23]

India	11.4 %
World average	24 %
High income countries	67 %

Absolute numbers

China	1 st
USA	2 nd
India	3 rd

Some statistics (2)



Institutions of higher education

Total number of universities 711

Central universities 46

Colleges 40,760

Standalone institutions 11,922

Private institutions 63.9 %

State government institutions 35.6 %

Central government institutions 0.5 %

Some statistics (3)



Distribution of students

Arts	37.41 %
Science	17.59 %
Commerce and management	16.39 %
Engineering and technology	16.2 %
Medical	4.02 %
STEM and CEM	54 %

Implications



Public universities— shrinking in number and significance

Potential space for diversity in terms of class, caste, gender/ sexual orientation, region/ ethnicity, community and disability also shrinking?

Elements in the background



Schools– tendency to marginalize the social sciences/
humanities– focus on science and commerce streams
Shrinking space for critical, uncomfortable thinking
The question of ‘relevance’

Contexts (1)



History within universities

Emerge in the colonial context and subsequently

Increasing spread of private institutions that focus on
STEM or CEM subjects– marginalization of the
social sciences

Perceived as ‘traditional’

Contexts (2)



Complex relationship with the state– questions of autonomy

Universities not the only sites of knowledge production

Balance between transmission and generation of knowledge

Generally in an urban milieu– issues of diversity and differentiation as constant

A longitudinal perspective



Schools and higher education institutions as not mutually exclusive

Recruitment

Time lags

Hierarchies

Acknowledging the hidden curriculum



Caste

Class

Gender

Community

Disability

Region

Approaching the social sciences



Privileging history

A broader social science perspective

Educating for social efficiency

Education for reflection

Education for social transformation

Poonam Batra and Disha

Nawani, 'Social Science

Texts: A Pedagogic

Perspective', in Batra (ed.),

Social Science Learning, p.199.

Why history?



Continuity

Change

Causality

Contingency—intentions and consequences may not always coincide

Context

Chronology

Contributions?

Synoptic view of ‘everything’?

History and the new central universities – absences (1)



Central University of Himachal Pradesh –2009

School of Business Management– more than 30
courses

School of Earth and Environmental Sciences– 20

School of Humanities and Languages– 9 in English
literature and language, 6 in Hindi and other Indian
languages

School of Journalism, Mass Communication and
New Media-- Department of Journalism and
Creative Writing 11 courses

History and the new central universities— absences (2)



Mass communication and electronic media— 15

School of Life Sciences—21

School of Mathematics, Computers and Information
Sciences—24

School of Physical and Material Sciences—17

School of Social Sciences— 7 on Social Work and 11
on Economics and Public Policy

School of Tourism, Travel and Hospitality—21

Marginalization within older central universities- -?



Delhi University– figures for admissions in 2015

34 % queries about B. Com

25 % about Economics

13 % about BMS

9 % about English

8 % about Statistics

5 % about ‘others’—[including history?]

History in the oldest universities



Madras– very limited faculty strength– separate dept of ancient Indian history and archaeology– only university dept of its kind in south India– courses focus on technical and practical skills– set up in 1959

Dept of Indian history– focus on producing ‘good citizens’

Calcutta- Dept of Ancient Indian history—set up in 1918 – richer in terms of faculty strength, diversity of courses. Dept of Archaeology, Dept of History, Dept of Islamic History and Culture

Mumbai– relatively recent– 1969

Other examples



Allahabad– emphasis on antiquity

Jamia Millia Islamia– emphasis on plural nationalism and linguistic diversity—social, political and cultural history as focal points

History and the post graduate teacher



A long chain– and various possibilities

Studying some history throughout

Studying history only at some levels

The problem of specialization

The B.Ed programme

Returning to school

Absence/ paucity of training facilities

Pressures

Gender and issues of the hidden curriculum



Disciplinary spaces as increasingly feminized?

Implications in terms of other privileges– class/ caste?

Perceptions of teaching as an option

Three questions



What do you remember from what you learnt at school?

What are the topics/ themes about which you would like to know more?

How would you go about finding about these?

A typical response?



Yes, I remember so many topics of Indian history which I used to study during my school times. Regarding Sikh gurus, Mauryan Empire, Indus Valley Civilization and many topics of National Movement.

Areas of interest?



“The Mauryan Empire, or art and culture of the Mauryas.”

Potential sources of information?



www.harappa.com

Any other information



Role models [in English in original, the rest in Hindi] hamaare desh ke mahaan logon ke baarey mein itihaas mein avashya padhaayaa jaaye, taaki bacche unmein se kinhi ek ko apne aadarsh ke roop mein chun sakein, taaki desh phir unhi unchaaiyon tak pahunch sakey. Inhe padhaatey samay sirf inke gun bataayen jaayen, na ki jaati, dharm, bhaashaa, taaki desh ki ektaa mazboot ho va hamaaraa desh gauravaanvit ho.

Implications



Great men

Ideals

Erasure of social markers

Young researchers/ teachers



“Mohanjodado [sic] and Harrappa [sic] civilisation was more modern and good for the best and equal society”

Inherent inegalitarian/stratified nature of urban societies?

Remembering Mahatma Jotirao Phule from learning history in school

Other areas of interest identified in terms of gender, caste and region—spaces that can be enriched/developed, opened up further?

Young teachers in Delhi



Diverse disciplines

More uniform in terms of social diversity

Tendency to interact minimally with history

Greater familiarity with English

Teaching as an immediate option

One that is chosen after exhausting other possibilities

A contractual/ temporary option

Significance of the past



City Planning at Mohenjodaro & Harrapan [sic]
civilization

Clay coinage [?]

Silk route for trade

The then great Nalanda University

Spread of Buddhism

Adding that, “They are still the guiding force at various
fronts like

City planning

International political & trade relations

Young students



Remembering teachers rather than courses

“excavations, artifacts, texts”

Last in first out as far as courses are concerned

Reading practices virtually absent

Substitutes– guidebooks, notes, distance learning material

Comments on readings– generally in terms of style and language rather than substance /concepts

Differential engagement with courses– issues of privilege and social capital

Teachers and autonomy



- At the immediate functional level, academic freedom serves as my assurance that I can do as I choose in my teaching and research...Yet it is marked by cultural, professional, disciplinary, legal, administrative, departmental, and psychological constraints that could take more than a lifetime to unravel. Even my desires do not arise independently. Most of what I want to do in the classroom grows out of decades of disciplinary and institutional involvement...The course schedule is shaped by the syllabus I write, a syllabus that mirrors disciplinary protocols and amounts to a public commitment. Perhaps I could better challenge my students if I could dream more wildly and unpredictably, but for better or worse I am, like other faculty, a product of my times and my experience.

Cary Nelson, *No University is an Island*

Perceptions of diversities



Fairly diverse in terms of class/ caste

Not always as diverse in terms of community, region,
gender, disabilities

Sometimes reluctance to acknowledge implications

One size fits all?

The challenge of teaching



James Scott, 2010, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (Yale Agrarian Studies Series). This book is one of my favourites and I discuss it in the M.Phil/PhD course of Readings in Trends of Historiography as an important work on social and cultural historical anthropology. It talks of about how various social groups residing in Zomia (a mountainous region comprising 7 Asian countries) opt out of state systems and organized states. A bold book, it makes students think and I have had lively discussions in the class.

Issues of language



In the classroom

Of reading

Of writing

Speaking

Listening

Of research

Moving beyond monolingualism?

Areas of exclusion



The vast grey zone of tuitions

Estimated to be worth Rs 16,800 crores [*Statesman*,
22nd January 2016]

Student population involved 164 million

Lifeline for students

‘Spending money on learning history??’

Location of teaching within middle class aspirations?

Diverse understandings of history



As irrelevant

As celebratory

Tendency to gloss over concepts

The challenge of building bridges

The Potential of History



History is an argument, and arguments present the opportunity for *change*...When presented with some dogmatist claiming that ‘this is the only course of action’, history allows us to demur, to point out that there have always been *many* courses of action, *many* ways of being. History provides us with the tools to dissent.

John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 122 [emphasis original].

And finally...



We are merely custodians for the present generation of a complex intellectual inheritance which we did not create—and which is not ours to destroy.

Stefan Collini, *What are Universities For?*