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THINKING THURSDAYS: IIHed Research Seminar Series

on

## Through the Lens of History: Globalisation and the Contested Terrain of Education

by



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### Abstract

The thrust of the global knowledge economy towards a standardised, technocratic approach to education is common knowledge. Both academics and grassroots educators have responded to the situation with important questions that require thorough investigation. Can a standardised education be of real help to people when the economic opportunities created by neo-liberal globalisation are themselves quite unequal? Have global standards become an alibi for cultural conquest of people on the margins? The disciplines of sociology, economics and educational studies have been paying attention to such questions for a while.

In our conversation we shall pose the above questions as historical questions rather than sociological or economic ones. A historical approach allows us to take the long-term approach that these issues require, for the impulse to deploy institutionalised education for cultural conquest and economic progress dates back to the age of empires. Drawing upon nineteenth century debates in Bengal and the erstwhile North Western provinces, we shall discuss how the standardising tendency of colonial education was repeatedly thwarted at local levels and how people – both local elites and subalterns, and of multiple castes, classes and genders – appropriated colonial education to suit their purposes. Alluding to the nineteenth century debates on medium of instruction, curriculum and pedagogy, I shall argue that not only has education historically been a contested terrain but also that such contestations contained creative solutions to policy issues.

### Short Bio of Speaker

Akash Bhattacharya has conducted research on a range of themes in South Asian history including histories of education, vernacular literary histories, and politics of history-writing. In his doctoral dissertation he has studied the advent of modern education in nineteenth century Bengal, focusing on the emergence and subsequent life of the modern school as an institutional form. Moving away from linear, state-centric understandings of the advent of colonial education, he has examined the shifting strategies and technologies of governance pertaining to education in response to an uneven and often hostile social terrain. His future research interests lies at the intersection of history, education and post-colonial democratic transitions in South Asia. He is presently working as Research Associate on a project on long-term histories of urbanism in Bengal viewed through the lens of education.

Date: Thursday, 7 March 2019 | Time: 4:00 pm

Venue: IIHed Seminar Room, T1, 2nd Floor, O. P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat-131001, Haryana