

## 2014 Seminar series

**INTERROGATING THE EDUCATION POLICY GAME IN INDIA: INSTITUTIONS,  
MENTAL MODELS, MARGINALITIES, AND THE IMAGINARY**

A seminar by

**Dr. Prachi Srivastava,***Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, NUS | Associate Professor,  
School of International Development and Global Studies, University of Ottawa***Abstract**

Despite numerous attempts to institute free and compulsory education for all in India, the *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009* (RTE Act) is the first national-level legal framework upholding the right to education, with particular implications for socially and economically disadvantaged groups. While many argue that the spirit of the Act rests on principles of social equity and equality of opportunity, it has been hotly contested.

This paper posits that the reason for the vociferous debate is that, at its heart, rest fundamental concerns about education, social exclusion, and the processes of policy enactment and implementation in a deeply factious society. These raise questions about how or whether the RTE Act, as any legal framework, can redress entrenched inequities.

The paper argues that the distance between the mental models of the actors devising and implementing education policy in India, and those for whom education access is thus structured (i.e. 'the disadvantaged'), assume critical importance in interrogating the terms on which access and inclusion are framed. These can be better understood by more deeply examining 'marginalities and the imaginary', or how marginalities are conceptualised in the social imaginary and by influential policy elites, in contrast to the way that education exclusion is tangibly and directly experienced by the disadvantaged.

**Event Details**Wednesday, 29 October 2014  
2.00pm to 3.30pm**About the Speaker**

Dr. Prachi Srivastava is Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, NUS and tenured Associate Professor, School of International Development and Global Studies, University of Ottawa in the area of education and international development, with a regional focus on South Asia. She holds a doctorate from the University of Oxford.

She has written extensively on the privatisation of education; non-state private actors and global philanthropy in education; global education policy; and education in India; and has delivered numerous conference papers and invited symposia on the topics. Dr. Srivastava has provided expertise to a number of agencies and international organisations, including the UK Department for International Development, UNESCO, and the World Bank. She has held academic appointments at the University of Oxford and University of Sussex, and has served with the United Nations.

Dr. Srivastava coined the now widely accepted term, 'low-fee private schooling', and was one of the first researchers to conduct work on this sector in India, which she has been researching for over a decade. Her work has been featured in the hallmark UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Her latest edited book, *Low-fee Private Schooling: aggravating equity or mitigating disadvantage?* (Symposium Books, Oxford, 2013), has been independently reviewed 'as a brilliant starting point' and 'of special value'.

She has attracted close to \$450,000 in external research funding. Dr. Srivastava is currently Principal Investigator on a major SSHRC-funded project on the right to education in India and the role of non-state private actors (e.g. CSR units, consultancies, think tanks, philanthropies, etc.) in the Global South.

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