

Chapter 23

Closed City ‘Spaces’: Differential Access to Education in Vijayawada, South India

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23.1 Introduction

Vijayawada is a city located on the banks of the Krishna river in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, which is one of the five South Indian states. This city was one of the few important provincial cities even during the colonial period. Vijayawada today is a high-growth city as it is part of the new capital city region, where the new capital ‘Amaravati’ is being built in about 50,000 acres by the new state of Andhra Pradesh.¹ In order to understand Vijayawada city and its transformative phases, it is important to analyze the coastal Andhra region where it is located. The agrarian economy primarily revolved around the two river basins – Krishna and Godavari (comprising four districts Krishna, Guntur, East and West Godavari) contributing 60% of the agricultural produce in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. As the region has adequate canal irrigation facilities, it is economically well developed. Scholars have traced a significant increase of cultivable land both in Krishna and Guntur districts at two intervals, first, when the barrage was constructed across the Krishna river by Arthur Cotton in the year 1852, and secondly when the Nagarajuna Sagar dam was constructed in 1960s (Rao 1985; Reddy 1989). The region’s growth curve

¹ Andhra Pradesh state has been bifurcated into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana on 2nd June, 2014. Hyderabad was the capital of united Andhra Pradesh, while it is now the capital of Telangana. The state of Andhra Pradesh is building the new state capital in Amaravati, which is located adjacent (25 kms) to the Vijayawada city.

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took another major turning point with the green revolution since mid-1960s, intensifying commercial crops and generating surplus from the agrarian economy. This process subsequently led to rapid urbanization, as a result of which number of urban centres – Vijayawada, Guntur, Mangalagiri, Rajamundry, Kakinada, Tenali, Machilipatnam emerged in the region. The nexus between land and water played a significant role not only in economy but also in politics and the social sphere (Parthasarathy 2004), thus contributing to the development of social and cultural capital to use Bourdieu's concept (Jenkins Richard 1992). The economic, social and political networks constituted the basis for the upper castes to emerge as educational entrepreneurs in and outside the region by 1980s.

The period 1965–1980 formed an important growth phase for the coastal Andhra region. Economically, a rich peasant class² emerged with the agrarian surplus due to the green revolution. Secondly, distinct social and cultural strategies were adopted by the upper castes that contributed to class formations in the region (see Upadhyaya 1997; Prasad 2015b). In the next phase during 1980–1994, a dramatic transformation occurred in the deltas of Coastal Andhra. The surplus generated by the class of rich peasants was channelled into aquaculture, large coconut farms, rice milling, petty investments (e.g. in Cinema Halls, Hotels, and Restaurants) in both the semi-urban and urban towns in the region. Later, this class reinvested their surplus in Hyderabad in various 'new economy' enterprises (e.g. shares in IT, and Pharmaceuticals). Also a significant investment took place in education (engineering and medical colleges) and health (corporate hospitals) across the urban centres in the region and Hyderabad (Prasad 2014).

When the rich peasant class diversified their economic activities in 1980s, this period also marked two parallel developments. One, Telugu Desam, a regional political party emerged in 1982. Within a short period of forming the party, it came to power in Andhra Pradesh. This facilitated the upper castes³ to assert themselves socially, politically, and of course in consolidating their economic base. Second, the Indian information technology (IT) industry which was a marginal entity that catered to domestic needs in 1970s rose significantly in 1980s as major industry and later acquired a global software companies' status by the year 2000 (Nasscom 2012). This rise in this software industry has promoted educational entrepreneurship across south India, and in the coastal Andhra region in particular.

English medium education and strong motivation to pursue science and mathematics at school and college level have been the major 'advantages' for the southern states of Andhra Pradesh (A.P), Telangana, Karnataka, and Tamilnadu. As a cultural attribute, education, especially at the higher education level is highly valued in south India. The proportion of the urban population is also higher in south India (33 %) compared to the national average (28 %). Therefore, cities such as Bengaluru,

² *Kamma, Reddy, Rajus* and *Kapus* constituted the rich peasant class further consolidated their economic and political power, controlled the economy not only in the region but also in Hyderabad. They also constituted the interlinked moneylender-merchant-input agent class that managed all kinds of agricultural transactions related to commissions, inputs, credit, marketing of agricultural produce of the Coastal Andhra region.

³ *Kammas* in particular gained from this political momentum.

Chennai, Hyderabad and Coimbatore in south India have developed as software hubs. Given this scenario, this chapter analyzes how the rise in the IT industry contributed to the ‘entrepreneurship in education’ leading to the corporatisation of school and college education in coastal Andhra region. A particular mode of education (enabling the decoding of competitive entrance examinations for obtaining seats in the increasingly sought after IITs) spread across the urban centres in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, covering all the major cities – Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Tirupati and Warangal.

This chapter primarily uses a political economy perspective to analyse the issues of ‘access’, ‘quality’ and social differentiation that is emerging among different classes of learners in urban India. This is conceptualized in terms of closed ‘spaces’. Here space is used the way Lefebvre (1991) defines it as one of the privileged instruments of the state in its efforts to control social relations among individuals, groups and classes. Lefebvre argues that the state is reconfigured in a new set of relations as necessary to the working of globalization. Lefebvre understood this reconfiguration of state as “production of space”. Thus, state is conceptualised not as fixed entity or container which holds both the market and society but as an ensemble of social relations that form a complex, intertwined temporal and spatial grid (Brenner 2004). Here in Vijayawada, the city space excludes certain social groups from gaining access to housing, basic amenities, and other critical resources including education. Under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) or Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and urban Transformation (AMRUT) the lower classes located in the core or inner city of Vijayawada got constantly displaced, raising questions about access to education. Inequality in the Indian city is not simply a legacy of the past but is produced and reinforced by the state, a result of active policies and practices that result from its institutional character (Heller and Mukhopadhyay 2015; Kamat 2011). Of course, David Harvey (2012) places the city at the forefront in terms of its position as a generator of capital accumulation and absorption of surpluses (of both capital and labour). Harvey explains that urbanization is very crucial for the capitalist production process and has an inherent tendency towards over accumulation. It is within this framework that the findings of the study are analyzed.

Primary data was collected through field work in Vijayawada and Guntur in February, 2015. Individual interviews and group discussion was conducted with the current and retired teachers from the coaching institutes, government and private schools, and colleges. In addition, municipal officials, members of the private college teachers’ association, and political activists were also interviewed. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section traces the historical trajectory of Vijayawada city, its growth, and how urban reforms and governance through JNNURM (renamed by NDA government as AMRUT) impacted educational and other services. The second section provides a macro narrative explaining how Vijayawada emerged as a corporate educational model that transformed school, college, and professional education. The third section talks about the present situation of schools and education run by the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation to draw a comparative social class analysis of municipal and private (both aided and unaided)

Table 23.1 Demographic details and the decadal growth rate of Vijayawada City

Year	Population (in lakhs)	Growth rate
1961	230,397	42.93
1971	317,258	37.70
1981	461,772	46.95
1991	701,827	51.99
2001	845,217	20.43
2011	1,048,000	23.99

schools and colleges. The fourth and final section analyses the findings and raises questions on differential access to education, educational aspiration and mobility of different social groups, and the role of the state and market in transforming the city spaces in India.

23.2 City Growth and Educational Governance

Vijayawada city is located on the banks of river Krishna. It is considered as the agricultural and commercial capital of Andhra Pradesh. The Vijayawada urban agglomeration consists of Vijayawada municipal corporation (VMC), Mangalagiri municipality and four Panchayats and has a population of 1.04 million as per 2011 census (see Table 23.1). Vijayawada became a municipality⁴ in 1888 with an area of 30 sq kms which was upgraded as a selection grade municipality in 1960 and further to a municipal corporation in 1981. In 2011, VMC has an area of 61.88 sq kms and Vijayawada Urban agglomeration has 110.44 sq kms. An important feature is that areas around the VMC experienced higher growth indicating the dynamic growth of the city. The city development plan prepared by VMC predicts a two million population in less than a decade (Government of Andhra Pradesh 2010a). Vijayawada is a major railway junction and has good road connectivity between north and south India, linking Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata and Hyderabad. As a commercial centre, Vijayawada has specialized in agricultural produce, edible oils, machinery & metal goods, transport, automobile spare parts, and numerous small scale industries, employing a large proportion of labourers (Baken 2003).

The city has witnessed a rapid growth over the past six decades with an average decennial growth rate of 40%. During the period 1981–1991 the net growth has been about 52% attributed to a large influx of the rural population to the city. However, during the past two decades 1991–2011, the growth has stabilized with a

⁴ Vijayawada's locational advantages can be traced back to the construction of railway bridge across the river Krishna in 1892. The bridge effectively made Vijayawada the 'gateway to the south'. All the south-bound trains from the north and north-west India pass through Vijayawada. Later on, road and railway networks were substantially expanded and improved.

decennial population growth of 22%. The population growth can be attributed to the in-migration from the surrounding villages and towns in the region due to the growth of commercial activities. It includes: agricultural market centre, a host of wholesale and retail activities dealing in consumer goods, textiles, automobiles, industrial products etc. It is also a major trade centre for processed Virginia Tobacco, Cotton, and Turmeric. The agricultural commodities produced in this part of Andhra finds its market in Vijayawada both for local consumption and export. Vijayawada is also known for its Mango exports generating millions of rupees annually. Steady growth in the education sector (e.g., a large number of private schools, colleges, coaching institutes, professional colleges) also significantly contributed to the migration of students and their families into the city.

The Municipal Corporation's administrative area is divided into 59 wards⁵ for the purpose of governance. The slum⁶ population has grown from 169,043 in 2001 to 287,983⁷ in 2011, constituting about 28% of the entire city population (Vijayawada Municipal Corporation 2013). If one looks at the city's land use pattern, it indicates that about 26% is residential, with a significant part of the city's land use, i.e. 21%, assigned towards the transport activities, about 10% towards commercial activities, about 11% is towards the public use, 15% towards the slums (9.27 sq kms), and the rest, 17%, of city land use which is not clearly demarcated (ibid:7). However, the city is facing severe land use problems like scarcity of disposal sites for garbage whose daily production is around 600 metric tonnes.

As a city's development and welfare is directly linked to the functioning of urban local bodies, it is important to understand how different development projects influenced the urban governance mechanism in Andhra Pradesh. The major urban governance reforms, programmes, and projects initiated in Andhra Pradesh since the early-1990s include urban poverty programmes, such as the Urban Basic Services programme (UBSP), Swarna Jayanti Sahari Rojgar Yojana (SJSRY), and UK's Department for International Development (DFID) supported Andhra Pradesh Urban Services for Poor (APUSP) and urban reform and restructuring such as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM),⁸ Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA),⁹ and the World

⁵Every municipal corporation in India classifies a particular size of population into wards for administrative and political purposes. Each ward will have an elected representative (corporator), who in turn elects a mayor to govern the city. In Vijayawada, each of these 59 wards has about 18,000 people.

⁶A slum is heavily populated urban informal settlement where a large number of below poverty line (BPL) people live in substandard housing with inadequate facilities.

⁷This figure includes only the population from the notified slums. If one includes the estimates of non-notified slums, the slum population constitutes about 35% of the city population.

⁸The Indian government launched its largest post-independence urban planning initiative JNNURM in December 2005. Four cities – Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada and Tirupati have been identified in A.P. In order to access JNNURM funds, these ULBs will have to commit themselves to several mandatory and optional reforms.

⁹MEPMA has been initiated in A.P. in the year 2008

Bank-sponsored AP Municipality Development Project (APMDP).¹⁰ Starting from 2005, the Indian state justified urban reforms through JNNURM that it wants to make select cities as “world class”, “smart¹¹” & “slum-free”. The assumption is that all the above reforms initiated in post-1990s will enable the cities to emerge as more livable, secure and of course, global in character.

The JNNURM and APMDP Programmes come under particular scrutiny, the former being referred to as the “official carrier of neo-liberal urbanism,” (Banerjee-Guha 2009:96–7), which conceptualizes cities primarily in economic terms, as engines of economic growth, while also creating a “modern” homogenized society. JNNURM also comes in for a great deal of criticism for the manner in which it advocates the aggressive pursuit of outsourcing, privatization, and public-private partnership, thus reducing the state to the status of a mere facilitator rather than an actual delivery agency when it comes to social necessities and essential urban services. Andhra Pradesh First Referral Health Project (APFRHP) supported by the World Bank, and the District Primary Education Project (DPEP), supported by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank, have been the flagship programmes in the health and education sectors in Andhra Pradesh, which became integral to urban governance. As part of this neo-liberal governance framework, Vijayawada municipal corporation was also compelled to implement several measures such as mortgaging vacant land, buildings, generating revenue through a hike in property taxes, casualization of work force,¹² outsourcing day-today running of parks, and street lights through public-private partnerships etc. Urban local bodies such as Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati in A.P visualized a huge opportunity in JNNURM and other reformist agenda to overcome their financial crisis and improved governance, but the studies indicated the contrary to it (see Prasad 2014).

The school witnessed a paradigm shift in the education policies of the last decade due to a new governance framework adopted by the state. Several studies indicated that the urban mission agenda under JNNURM is to privatise/commercialise basic services, including education through public private partnerships (PPPs). Vijayawada, one of the 63 cities identified under JNNURM indicates this trend clearly. Apart from running the municipal schools through contract teachers, *vidya*

¹⁰This project is for a period of 5 years starting from 2010 with a grant of Rs 1800 crores (\$405 million) and is aimed at improving basic services for people by strengthening ULBs (News Reporter 2009).

¹¹The union government is planning to develop 100 ‘smart’ cities. Under the city challenge method, the centre will contribute 50 % of the funds needed to develop a smart city and the state will chip in with 20 % and the selected city the remaining 30 %. The selected city should be levying user charge or ready to impose them on its residents. State governments will have to give an undertaking that they will float municipal bonds and to make up for the shortfall funds, the selected municipalities will have to contribute their share. State governments can go for public issue as well.

¹²Casualization of workforce occurs whenever workers are employed in a casual, temporary, contract or otherwise non-permanent and non-full time capacity.

(education) volunteers, the private entrepreneurs have been invited by the urban local bodies to participate in school development, thus opening the window to use prime government land for commercial purposes (*ibid*:89).

23.3 Education Through Coaching Institution

During the pre-Independence period the coastal Andhra region, particularly Guntur and Vijayawada cities, witnessed a lot of charity and philanthropic work in the education sector. Credible private (not for profit) educational institutions such as Loyala, Stella Mary, Satavahana colleges located in these cities attracted talented and meritorious students from different urban centres across south India. The education was highly valued in the region due to the schools and colleges established by the British as well as Christian Missionary efforts, and of course the intense literary reform movement¹³ in Rajamundry and other towns (Ramakrishna 1983). In supplementing some of these efforts, an educational entrepreneur named CVN Dhan started a 'coaching centre' in 1957 in Guntur. The purpose was primarily to help those students unable to academically cope with school education. The fee structure of this coaching centre was modest, and hence also affordable for the lower middle classes. He continued this initiative for about two decades resulting in reasonable profits. This coaching centre model became popular from then onwards and was considered as a successful experiment in the region. Subsequently several entrepreneurs explored different business models in the education sector building on the idea of coaching centres.

By the 1980s the rich peasant class in the region consolidated its social and political power, by diversifying its portfolio from agriculture to non-agricultural enterprising sectors, particularly the entertainment industry, education, and health sectors. As the regional economy flourished and diversified, provincial towns such as Guntur and Vijayawada became centres not only of trade and finance but also for education, drawing many students from rural areas. The emergence of this rich peasant class, the Telugu Desam Party, and the political and social consolidation of upper caste Kammas in the region, provided a basis for this entrepreneurship in several sectors, including education. The region also had a long history of caste associations which started hostels for lower classes within each caste group. For example, Vasihya, Kamma, Reddy, Kapu communities established hostels, community halls in several towns and cities, largely reflecting educational priorities.

¹³Reforms include: spread of western education through the medium of English, establishment of schools and colleges by the British government and Christian missionaries; rise and growth of journalism, the first Telugu journal Satyadoota appeared in 1833; rise of socio-political associations particularly literary associations like Vijnanachandrika, Andhra Bhashabhi vardhani Samajam of Masulipatnam, Saraswatigrantha Mandali of Rajahmundry etc awakened people through numerous publications and activities.

These caste associations were not formed by rural farmers but by educated caste members or lawyers living in towns (Washbrook 1975). These educational initiatives by the caste groups helped the mobility of lower classes over a period of time.

In the education sector, the entry of private capital went initially into the 10+2 educational coaching but later expanded to 10+2 (intermediate) colleges and subsequently to engineering and medical colleges. Thus the flight from government to the privatisation of education happened by the 1980s, when professional education became highly valued. Moreover, when this professional education fulfilled the aspirations of the rich peasant classes from coastal Andhra to migrate to North America, then the significance of coaching centres increased enormously. Now a different class of students became eager to get into these coaching centres to access the limited seats in government engineering and medical colleges. While the Dhan coaching centre was the first, the next generation of coaching centres that emerged in 1980s (Vignan, Vikas, etc) were of a different kind altogether. Coaching centres were seen as a big business from then on.

The privatisation of education became intensified with the rising demand for professional education from late 1970s onwards. With the growing number of jobs in the Information Technology (IT) sector, the coaching centre managements were able to market themselves as the most viable option for affordable and aspiring students. This process further proliferated when the educational entrepreneurs from the region lobbied successfully with the TDP government to receive grant aid money and other incentives for private educational institutions. It was only after this government intervention that both college and school education got commercialised, and subsequently the coaching centre business got concentrated in Vijayawada. This was later expanded to Nellore, an adjoining urban centre. With the shift from Guntur to Vijayawada, large entrepreneurs entered into the field. As a result several coaching institutions and schools such as Chaitanya, Narayana, Ravindra Bharati, Bhashyam, Keshava Reddy, Gautam, Krishnaveni Schools emerged and later acquired a particular brand for themselves. These institutions have scaled up the cost of education several times higher, and also accelerated the privatisation of education. The coaching institutions have become attractive for upper and middle classes to receive individualised tutoring while it restricted access to the lower classes further.

Similarly, the private capital also went into establishment of several engineering colleges. Sidhartha, an engineering college, was established in 1977, and was the first private technical institution in Andhra Pradesh. Then came V.R College of engineering, Vignan, KL University etc. Vignan foundation for science, technology and research transformed coaching centres into intermediate colleges and later expanded his enterprise into a diversified educational group. KL engineering college and Vignan college have all now become deemed universities. Similarly, NTR health university, 'pinnamaneni' Siddhartha institute of medical college, Gannavaram, Gudlavalleru college, NRI Institute of technology, Bapatla engineering college, Tenali engineering college etc all came up. Majority of engineering colleges are owned by kamma regional elite.

By 1990s, the entrepreneurs focused their investments on aqua-culture, arrack,¹⁴ sericulture, and also on education. The education sector came to be seen as one of the best investment options to get higher returns. Over a period of time, the 'provincial propertied classes' to use Balagopal's (1987) phrase controlled education through these coaching centres. These classes lobbied tax concessions, recognition, financial aid, and other incentives from the state for private colleges and schools. Along with these entrepreneurs, the growing Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), who are highly educated migrants from the region, also played a major role in investing and promoting professional education.

By 2000s these coaching centres focused not only on professional engineering and medical education but also usurped school education. This was achieved by re-conceptualizing school education in a more 'technical' and 'innovative' way, i.e. through concept schools, techno- schools, and foundational schools etc. These 'new' schools were packaged as early stepping stones to successfully crack the entrance examinations of Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and Engineering, Agriculture, Medicine Common Entrance Test (EAMCET) after 10+2 education. This is one process by which the coaching centres adopted the 'backward integrative strategy' by including the school education into their fold. It was emphasized that in order for competitive examination coaching to be effective, students should enrol themselves from sixth grade onwards so that their basics will be strong particularly in the science stream. On the other hand, they adopted the 'forward integrative strategy' by including the NRIs, educational consultants to help students get admissions in foreign universities. This is how coaching centres attracted students from secondary school onwards to engineering education. As Carol Upadhyia (2014) points out with the movement of many young people to the US and other countries via the IT route, the 'IT craze' swept the region, enhancing the choice for engineering degrees and spurring the restructuring of education all the way down to the primary school level.

By 2010 the competition among the coaching centres reached its peak. This is when Narayana and Sri Chaitanya went into the mode of typical business mergers, out-right buying up the smaller or medium units.¹⁵ This also involved weaning away the good teachers from other institutions in order to establish their monopoly. This is evident with the fact that the two institutions – Narayana and Sri Chaitanya emerged as the top two and have been dominating the school, college, and professional education sectors. These two institutions have opened several branches not just in Hyderabad and Vijayawada but in every possible urban centre across 13 districts in Andhra Pradesh, and 10 districts in Telangana. They have also opened branches in urban centres in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Maharashtra and Delhi in the last 5 years. In order to avoid competition and retain

¹⁴ It is a local alcoholic beverage that is distilled from a fermented mash of malted rice with toddy or molasses. Arrack contracts provide an important economic avenue for upper castes to earn profits.

¹⁵ Kesavareddy, an established chain of schools in Rayalaseema region in Andhra Pradesh have been bought by Sri Chaitanya educational institutions in the year 2015.

their monopoly in the education sector, these two institutions, partially merged into one entity called 'Chaina' (meaning both Chaitanya and Narayana) batch¹⁶ for the 'most talented students in accordance with capitalistic accumulation strategies. This of course led to a significant branding activity, and pricing the 'Chaina' batch to attract the students to the many coaching centres situated in all the urban centres. When the student enrolment increases in the coaching centres, then students are graded every week to classify them into different batches creating a hierarchy among students in terms of merit. The most talented are kept in top batches and are treated differently. The top few batches of students become privileged with the best infrastructure, air-conditioned class rooms, efficient teachers, and comfortable hostel accommodations, etc. These identified students in the top batches potentially become the top rankers in subsequent testing, thus giving credibility to the coaching centres. This success further contributed to the business model. Students in the Chaina batch are charged about Rs 300,000 (\$4384) each. The turnover of these two colleges today is estimated to be more than 50 million rupees (\$730,606).

The significance of these coaching institutes has been to prepare the ground for gaining entry into the software (Information Technology) industry in India. As the IT industry provided increasing job opportunities to a large number of people, coaching centres and professional education institutions also multiplied. At present, there are about 275,000 students in Sri Chaitanya, 140,000 students in Narayana, and another 250,000 students in all the other similar coaching institutions. From a mere 27 engineering colleges in 1996, the number grew to 540 colleges in 2009 in Andhra Pradesh. According to the economic survey 2004–2005, information technology (IT) and IT enabled Services (ITeS) make up the single largest contributor to India's service exports. IT, ITeS including Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) continues to be one of the largest employers in the country directly employing nearly 3.5 million people. Indians constituted 74 % of all computer related H1B visa holders in 1998–1999 in the united states of America (USA) and 78 % of all the foreign information technology (IT) professionals entering the UK in 2002 (cit in Xiang 2007). In 2011–2012, the sector employed 2.8 million IT professionals and contributed 7.5 % to India's GDP (Nasscom 2012). A.P accounts for about 23 % of software professionals from India in the U.S as per Nasscom survey in 1998. Also the way software technology parks (STPs) of India, set up in 1991–1992 in Hyderabad grew from 7 to 112 in 1997–1998 to that of 1300 in 2001–2012 (Ramachandraiah 2003), and about 4000 in 2012. A significant fact concerning the software engineers in USA and other European countries is that a large proportion of them are from the coastal Andhra region, indicating the impact of these coaching centres and professional education institutions. The ultimate markers of success of the coastal Andhra people is to have 'land in Andhra, a house in Hyderabad, and a job in America (Xiang 2007: 30)

The tangential growth of engineering colleges is evident from the way colleges rose from 107 in 2001 to 238 in 2004, and to 700 colleges by 2013. The four districts of south coastal Andhra alone have nearly 200 engineering colleges offering

¹⁶ A number of students grouped together is called a batch.

100,000 admissions. While the first generation of IT migrants were from the dominant castes and classes, the next generation of migrants in the last two decades are much more diverse. With the explosion of engineering colleges, the owners of these colleges lobbied the state government to provide fee reimbursement to the lower classes. The fee reimbursement scheme was introduced in 2008 by the A.P government, which covered the fees of students belonging to the backward castes (OBCs, SCs & STs). In 2009, the scheme was extended to below poverty line (BPL¹⁷) families, defined as those who have ‘white cards’. A critical scrutiny of the ‘fee reimbursement’ in education sector and ‘Arogyasri community health insurance scheme’ in health sector started in the year 2007, indicates how state resources have been effectively allocated to private engineering colleges and hospitals in Andhra Pradesh (Prasad 2015a).

23.4 Education Through Government Institutions

Government schools and colleges were highly valued until the 1970s due to the talented teachers, reasonably good infrastructure, and pedagogy. From 1980 onwards, however, coaching centres started attracting the talented teachers from government schools and colleges by paying higher remuneration. This is one process through which government educational institutions have been affected, thus leading to falling standards and ethics. Key respondents revealed that teachers who received a salary of Rs 240,000 (\$3506) per annum were offered Rs 500,000 (\$7306). In exceptional cases, such as KKR, a private residential School in Vijayawada pays 3.5 million rupees (\$51,143) per annum for a math teacher. Thus, several talented teachers have left their jobs and joined the private coaching cum residential schools and colleges across Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, thus affecting quality education in government schools.

Similarly, the concept of ‘residential school’ and ‘residential college’ was a successful attempt by the state not only to attract talented rural students from different social backgrounds, but these schools also gained a reputation for providing high quality education. In 1971–1972, three residential schools¹⁸ were established by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. These schools achieved top ten ranks in secondary school certificate (SSC) board exams for several years, acquiring reputation for its high quality. Similarly, in 1972, on the eve of 25 years of Indian Independence, a silver jubilee residential degree (undergraduate) college was established in Kurnool, and later in 1982, Nagarjunasagar a residential college in Nalgonda was opened in

¹⁷ Below Poverty Line is an economic benchmark and poverty threshold used by the government of India to indicate economic disadvantage and to identify individuals and households in need of government assistance and aid.

¹⁸ The three residential schools established during 1971–1972 are: Sarvail in Nalgonda district, Tadikonda in Guntur District and Kodegenhalli in Anantapur district. In 1998, Gurukulams were established to enroll and retain tribal children and improve the quality of education.

the district. These two colleges' recruited teachers and students¹⁹ based on merit, making these colleges highly credible. In fact these colleges were credited for producing IITians, civil servants, and high ranking professionals. The private coaching centres effectively used this same concept in 1990s to start the residential schools and colleges. The only difference is that government residential schools and colleges were for the rural poor, provided education free or at highly subsidized rates, while the private residential colleges charged heavily ranging from Rs 60,000 to 300,000 (\$ 877 to 4384) per child.

During the early 1990s, the software industry was in a boom. The most typical educational route students took in Andhra Pradesh was to go through the private residential colleges cum coaching centres, pursue engineering education, join the Software Industry, and then look for opportunities to go to US. These coaching centres offered comprehensive tailor made packages to the students: this provided an engineering degree and support for them to migrate to US. In this manner, they have successfully captured the whole 10+2 and under-graduation college system. Prior to the private residential colleges, there were several government aided residential colleges in the form of Loyola, Stella and Satavahana in Vijayawada. In these government and government aided colleges, regular teachers constitute 20 %, while the remaining 80 % of them are on contract. The contract teachers were paid Rs 10,000 per month (\$146) till 2014 but for the series of struggles and negotiations by the teachers' associations, they are now paid Rs 21,000 (367) per month.

These aided colleges, once reputed for attracting the best talent from all over the state, today have to contend only with the socially and economically poor students. Discussion with the aided college teachers in Vijayawada revealed that about 30 % of the students do part-time jobs to pay up annual tuition fees of Rs 20,000 (\$292). Most of these students are enrolled in social science and humanities courses. The teachers commented that it is the lower classes who sustain social science and humanities streams through government and government aided colleges. On the other hand, the private coaching colleges have focused only on the professional courses like engineering, medicine, bio-technology, pharmacology etc.

The coaching cum residential colleges and schools' have increased their enrolment by using a range of different marketing strategies. For instance, these colleges employed public relations officers (PROs), whose job is to persuade parents to enrol their children in the institution. In this process of persuasion, they have promoted technical courses only. This entire process has supplanted the government schools, government aided²⁰ and municipal schools.

The entry of private capital into the school and college education has been substantial in the last two decades. Although the private bodies are dominating the collegiate education, in terms of schools in the Krishna and Guntur districts, 59 % of students are still in the government schools. The rest, 41 %, are in the private schools.

¹⁹Students are recruited with due reservation to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and backward region. Accommodation, food and tuition fees is highly subsidized.

²⁰Despite the huge impact of coaching centres, a few government and aided schools such as Nirmala, MSM, Siddartha, Montessori in Vijayawada are still running a credible school system.

Table 23.2 Schools under the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation

Type of school	No of schools	No. of students (boys)	No. of students (girls)	Total no. of students	No. of teachers	Teacher-student ratio
Primary (1–5)	75	4905	5539	10,444	311	1:34
Secondary (1–7)	2	120	114	234	11	1:21
High School (6–10)	28	6109	7012	13,121	460	1:29
	105	Total students 23,799	782	1:31		

Source: Vijayawada Municipal Corporation community development office (2015)

Students in government schools are mostly from the scheduled caste, backward caste and minorities. The upper castes Kammas, Reddys, and Kapus do not send their children to the government schools any longer. In contrast, a small proportion of students belonging to the lower classes from the slums go to the private schools. Field data indicated that government high schools are faring much better than the primary and secondary schools. There are 360 schools in Guntur and 350 schools in Krishna district. Among them, 28 high schools each are under the purview of municipal corporations. Due to state intervention, especially through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan²¹ (SSA), municipal elementary and high schools became much more accessible. However, due to widespread private education, a ‘cultural value’ has been set in the minds of parents that school going children should wear a dress code. In order to make education more accessible to the lower classes, the SSA has removed the dress code and other accessories, which in fact had negative repercussions on the student’s enrolment. This aspect became an advantage for the private schools to attract students. In the last decade or so, there has been a consistent increase in enrolment in private schools. While this was always high for urban areas, it has now been estimated to have grown to 29% in rural areas as well (Karopady. 2014).

A close scrutiny of the Municipal schools in Vijayawada city is undertaken here as these schools are the key sites for the lower classes of students who are increasingly neglected by the local state. The discussion with key respondents in Vijayawada city revealed that private schools have made significant inroads into primary and secondary level, while high schools in the government sector are still able to retain a reasonable student strength. This is quite evident if one looks at the 105 municipal schools in Vijayawada city. At the primary level: on average there are 139 students per school, at the secondary school level about 60 students, while at the high school level, there are 469 students per school (see Table 23.2). The teacher student ratio in

²¹ Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Government of India’s flagship programme is implemented in partnership with state governments. SSA is aimed at achievement of universalization of Elementary Education in a time-bound manner as mandated by 86th amendment to the constitution of India making free and compulsory education to the children of 6–14 years age group, a fundamental right.

Table 23.3 Students intake based on medium under the VMC

Type of school	Telugu medium		English medium		Urdu medium		Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Primary	3836	4342	677	694	392	503	10,444
Secondary	28	19	No school	No school	92	95	234
High School	5083	5812	828	758	198	442	13,121
Grand Total	8947	10,173	1505	1452	682	1040	23,799

Source: Vijayawada Municipal Corporation community development office (2015)

Table 23.4 Caste wise distribution of students going to English medium high schools

S No	Caste	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Upper castes	221 (27 %)	198 (26 %)	409
2	Backward castes	404 (49 %)	376 (49 %)	780
3	Scheduled castes	92 (11 %)	70 (9 %)	162
4	Scheduled tribes	10 (0.01 %)	9 ((1.2 %)	19
5	Minorities	105 (12.7 %)	115 (15 %)	220
Grand total		832 (100 %)	768 (100 %)	1590

Source: Vijayawada Municipal Corporation community development office (2015)

municipal schools is 1:31 while it is 1:50 or more in most of the private schools. This ratio was in the reverse direction until the 1980s but today the enrolment in the government sector is falling whereas the private sector is increasing. Of course, the lower classes and caste enrolment is higher in government schools while it is marginal in private schools.

One of the main reasons for the increasing enrolment in private schools is because of the medium of instruction. In private schools, English is the only medium of instruction, whereas in the Municipal schools students are taught in Telugu (81 %), Urdu (7 %) and English (12 %), (see Table 23.3). As the English medium provides greater access to educational and employment opportunities, private schools have an advantage over the municipal schools. Even if the lower classes aspire to send their children to private schools, because of high opportunity costs (school fees, hostel expenses etc), they are able to send them only to municipal schools.

If one looks at the disaggregated data of English medium students in terms of caste, three fourths of them are from upper castes and OBCs while the remaining one fourth are from Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes and minorities (see Table 23.4). It is true, however, that even the upper castes and OBCs are from the lower classes and those who could not afford private schools joined the municipal schools. Upper castes and OBCs are able to pursue English medium schools as they have social and cultural capital compared to SCs, STs and minorities.

Caste-wise enrolment of students under VMC indicates that 81 % of them are OBCs, SCs and STs, while only 19 % from upper castes (see Table 23.5). Even among the non-upper castes, it is OBCs who are predominant indicating the lower enrolment of STs (3 %), minorities (9 %) and SCs (17 %).

Table 23.5 Caste wise distribution of students in high schools under VMC

S No	Caste	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Upper castes	1158	1331	2489 (18.9%)
2	OBCs	3153	3769	6922 (52.8%)
3	SCs	1109	1077	2186 (16.7%)
4	STs	192	158	350 (2.7%)
5	Minorities	497	677	1174 (8.9%)
Grand total	6109	7012	13,121	(100%)

Discussions with the Vijayawada municipal school teachers indicated that the municipal schools located in the prime area of the city are facing stiff competition with the private schools. As private schools offer English medium instruction, there follows a lower enrolment in the municipal schools. There is tremendous pressure on these municipal schools to switch over to the English medium in order to retain the students, and also to justify the student-teacher ratio. Beginning in 2011, two municipal schools (Darsipet corporation school, and the AKTPM school) did start teaching only in English. However, there continues to be a decline in the enrolment of students in these schools due to eviction of the slum population in the prime area: their housing, it is claimed, is located on ‘illegal’ sites. On the other hand, municipal schools located in the periphery of the city are oversubscribed in terms of student enrolment.

There is a tendency for parents to put their wards in the private schools at the primary school level while at the secondary and high school levels, students are admitted into municipal schools because of the high fee structure. There is wide range of choice at the primary school level for all classes of people as low-budget private schools are available in every urban centre in India. In terms of teachers, government schools recruit only qualified teachers, while private schools do not follow this norm. Discussion with the teachers indicated that it is quite demotivating for them to work in municipal schools because of the decline in students’ enrolment, irregular attendance, and lack of social diversity etc. They also pointed out paradoxically that the teacher quality is very poor in most of the private schools at the primary level, despite the high enrolment and popularity of these English medium schools.

There is thus a combination of educational, economic and social issues involved in the decision of parents to send their children to private schools. Parents preferred private schools because they want the school to fulfil their expectation of quality. The underlying premise was that government schools do not offer quality education and private schools were therefore a better choice (Mehendale et al. 2015). In Vijayawada, a few municipal schools such as Darsipet school are in high demand for admissions while few other schools in the periphery of the city have very few students. There is no uniform quality across municipal or private schools in Vijayawada. The discussion with the municipal school teachers indicated that about 20% of the children from private schools seek admission in the ‘select’ municipal

high schools because few of these high schools are rated by parents as efficient schools. The effectiveness of private schools, however, appears somewhat exaggerated. Chudgar and Quin (2012) pointed out that though private schools on the surface seem to perform better than government schools after more detailed analysis their benefits seem to become statistically insignificant. Emphasising the impact of lower standards in both private and government schools, Romila Thapar (2015) argues that students with substandard schooling cannot cope with higher education. Without good quality schooling, the institutes of higher learning are handicapped. Schools whether municipal or private, play a very important role in shaping up the children for higher education and hence they should maintain diverse student ratio.

There is a shift in the education policies recently due to a new governance framework adopted by the state. Two things became apparent with the new policy. One, government is in the process of rationalising the schools, implying closure of schools which are unviable (1 teacher: 20 or less students). Second, the government is planning to privatise the schooling system in the same way it has privatised the street lights, parks, sanitation etc. The A.P government has formulated policy that does not differentiate between public and private institutions. This is evident in the way the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) recently announced the setting up of international schools through public-private partnership (PPP). The GoAP will provide land while the private partners will be asked to operate the schools (Times of India 2015).

The AP government's policy of reimbursing the tuition fees for the students in private engineering colleges supplants the severely underfunded government educational system. As a result, private colleges gained from the state's allocation of resources. For example, the fee reimbursement scheme for OBCs, Dalits and economically backward students was a boon for the growth of private engineering colleges who effectively reaped the benefits from the government's educational resources. The network of private engineering colleges and coaching institutes, have lobbied successfully in making the government recognize a legitimate share for private sector in the state's resources. This has been possible mainly due to the neo-liberal framework that Indian state is pursuing, thus promoting the interests of the private over the public good.

23.5 Discussion

This paper traces the socio-historical trajectory of the coastal Andhra region, particularly the way surplus generated from agriculture was reinvested in enterprising sectors which significantly shaped Vijayawada city as a commercial and educational hub. It is quite evident that the commercialisation of education has pre-dated globalisation and has emerged from the changing economy, peculiar interfaces between class-caste, economic and social interests, and state policy. The city itself, over time, has been re-imagined around professional education, coaching, and its business interests – creating a new aspirational culture.

The large-scale accumulation of capital from the education sector in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana established a new corporate model of education for the country. The ramifications of this model have been huge for the re-imagining of education within the city space. In the education sector, drastic changes in pedagogy through coaching institutes actually redefined the student learning methods, outcomes, and of course parental desires. Technical education, through self-financing, became the norm while other courses in humanities, social science, and the liberal arts got completely undermined. As education is available only for the affordable groups, the middle and lower classes are forced to sell land and other assets to get access to education. Educational entrepreneurs have now entered into the political domain²²: and have become key players in influencing the policies and governance of education in the state.

This emerging corporate model of education promoted by both the market and state effectively created 'closed spaces' in the cities, denying access to diverse learning environments and socialization in the educational system. The credible government colleges and not-for-profit private educational institutions which attracted students and teachers from diverse social backgrounds and economic classes until the 1980s have now given way to corporate colleges. The state has not only reduced the resources for the government and aided colleges but diverted substantial finances to private and corporate colleges through the 'fee reimbursement scheme'. At the same time the municipal schools have been facing significant challenges in terms of student enrolment, irregular attendance due to displacement of slum population, migration etc. Education, then, has witnessed a paradigm shift in the last decade due to this new urban governance framework adopted by the neo-liberal state. The state led 'smart cities' are on an urban renewal mission basically to privatize the public goods, including education, through public-private partnerships, rationalisation of schools, which work to create further inequalities and exclusions.

In sum, it is clear that from 1980 onwards the state has played a crucial role in accelerating the entry of private capital into education sector, consequently restructuring the 'social space': while this has facilitated the global mobility of students belonging to certain social groups, it has also restricted the accessibility to higher education for other social groups.

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²²Narayana, the proprietor of the Narayana educational institutions has become a Cabinet rank minister in the present Andhra Pradesh government, who exerts a huge political clout in the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government.

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