

## **A political economy of education in India: The case of Uttar Pradesh**

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## **Abstract**

The effectiveness of the arrangements governing an educational system depends on the motivations of key actors. This paper analyses the state of education in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and the role that teachers have played in the political process. It describes how teachers have become embedded in the political system and the way teacher associations and unions have actively pursued demands through various strikes and other forms of actions. While teachers have been successful in improving pay, job security and service benefits, less progress has been made on broader improvements in the schooling system such as the promotion of education in general or improving equity and efficiency in the system.

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### **Introduction**

While there has been encouraging progress over the last fifteen years in terms of increased school enrolment rates, there are continuing concerns about education in India, especially in terms of the quality of education. Debates continue about the role and efficacy of reforms such as educational decentralisation, use of contract teachers (para-teachers), curriculum reform, the provision of mid-day meals and the use of 'second-track' approaches such as the Education Guarantee Scheme schools. However, the role of key actors, the teachers and their unions, has received scant attention in these discussions. Yet it is important to ask whether there is a conflict of interest that causes teacher unions to oppose educational reforms and to assess the implications of teachers' political and union-based activities for the functioning of the education sector as a whole.

Using the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) as an example, this paper assembles evidence to suggest that teachers and their unions are critical to understanding some of the failings of Indian public education. According to Drèze and Gazdar (1997, p76-77), "the most striking weakness of the schooling system in rural Uttar Pradesh is not so much the deficiency of physical infrastructure as the poor functioning of the existing facilities. The specific problem of endemic teacher absenteeism and shirking, which emerged again and again in the course of our investigation, plays a central part in that failure. This is by far the most important issue of education policy in Uttar Pradesh today".

The PROBE Report (1999) recognised this and linked teacher absenteeism and shirking partly to the disempowering environment in which the teachers have to work. However, it also says, "yet, the deterioration of teaching standards has gone much too far to be explained by the disempowerment factor alone... Generally speaking, teaching activity has been reduced to a minimum in terms of both time and effort. And this pattern is not confined to a minority of irresponsible teachers - it has become a way of life in the profession" (PROBE Report, 1999, p 63). It linked low teacher effort to a lack of local level

accountability. This, in turn, has its roots in teachers' own demands for a centralised education system, as discussed later in this paper.

Other authors too have noted lax teacher attitudes and lack of teacher accountability. Myron Weiner in his book *The Child and the State in India* (Weiner, 1991) reports interviews with a number of stakeholders in education who express concerns including the following:

- “The teachers aren't any good. Often they don't even appear at the school...”. p. 57 (senior education official)
- “the teachers do not care... It is not because teachers are badly paid... Education is well paid now and the teachers are organised but they do not teach. If we don't respect them it is because we see them doing other business than teaching”. P. 59 (Ela Bhatt, an Ahmedabad social activist)
- “the teachers in the government schools are indifferent. They have their union and they do not think about academics. Once teachers enter the school system, they cannot be terminated. No one is ever terminated. The crux of the problem in education is the lack of interest by the teachers in the children. They don't care about results and ... we cannot compel the teacher to teach!”. P. 66 (The Secretary of Primary Education in Gujarat, Mr. Gordhanbhai)
- “the problem is with the teachers. They are not accountable to the students”. P. 70 (Dr. V. Kulkarni, physicist-turned-educational researcher and teacher-trainer)

This paper argues that the lack of teacher accountability is rooted in teacher demands for a centralised management structure in education. The data sources for this study are government documents and statistics, including UP secretariat publications, academic publications, interviews with teacher union leaders and education officials, newspaper reports, the Report of the National Commission on Teachers, Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE, 1992) documents and the published debates of the Constituent Assembly.

## **Teachers, education, and politics**

Two factors help to explain the dynamics of the political economy of education in India. First, teachers have guaranteed representation in the upper house of the state legislature. Second, teachers in private 'aided schools', although government-paid workers, are allowed to contest elections to the lower house since they are not deemed to hold an 'office of profit' under the government. As a result there is substantial representation of teachers in both houses of parliament. In addition, the district level chiefs of many prominent political parties are from the teaching community. Even in the early 1970s Gould (1972: 94) observed that "political penetration of the education system has gone far in Uttar Pradesh. In this respect the province is probably not unique in India, but it stands out when compared with many others". Gould also observed that in all democratic societies, "continuous debate and competition occurs over who shall control education and for what purpose. The question, in other words, is not whether politics or politicians shall influence educational processes, but how and to what degree they will do so. This is the real issue in India today". Susanne Rudolph (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1972) states the matter aptly as follows, "we do not assume, as is often assumed, that there is such a thing as an educational system free of political intervention.... In a democratic society and in educational institutions which receive government funds, there will be political influence... The real questions focus on distinguishing what type of political pressure and politicisation is benign and what not...whether educational purposes are subsumed by the political system, or whether politics becomes a means for strengthening or redefining educational goals".

## **Teachers' status in the constitutional provisions**

Article 171 (3c) of the Constitution of India states that one-twelfth of the members of the State Legislative Council shall be elected by electorates consisting of persons who have been for at least three years engaged in teaching at the secondary or higher levels. The Constitution grants voting rights to a limited number of groups, including teachers, to elect Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs). These groups are Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), members of Local Bodies, graduates of the State and teachers in secondary schools and above. It

is noteworthy that no other civil servants have been given the special status enjoyed by teachers.

The Government of India Act 1919 provided that no government servant could become a member of the legislature. If a person held a government job, she would have to resign from being a MLA and this was reiterated by the Constitution. Teachers of government schools/colleges are recognised as public servants and are bound by the code of conduct of state employees (Shikshak Pratinidhi: 1992). By contrast aided school teachers, despite being paid by the government, are not deemed to hold an 'office of profit' under the government since they are, de jure, employees of private managements. As a result, they can contest elections to the Legislative Assembly. When this has been legally challenged on grounds that such teachers are paid by the government (like government school teachers), the Supreme Court of India has upheld the position that aided schools' teachers do not hold an office of profit under the government and can contest elections to the Legislative Assembly (Navjeevan: 1988).

### **The 'office of profit' provision**

This special privilege has invited sharp criticism. As Singh (Singh, Satyendra Pal: 1986) notes, "It is amazing to note that a teacher's post has not been recognised as an office of profit. A teacher continues to remain a teacher in his post even after having won the election. Because of this facility, teachers in large number have entered into politics. It has corroded the virtue and holiness of the education system. Politically active teachers draw full salaries from their schools and colleges and they do not have time to take their classes." The UP High Court, the Madras High Court, and even the Supreme Court of India, have observed that teachers working in aided educational institutions do not hold an office of profit under the State Government. Therefore they cannot be held disqualified to contest elections for the Legislative Council and need not resign from their posts if elected as MLCs or MLAs. Taking advantage of this guaranteed job security, aided school teachers not only contest elections for MLC, they also freely contest elections for local bodies, such as Nagar Palika (municipalities), Nagar Nigam (town corporations) along with the elections for the Legislative Assembly (lower house of the state legislature) and the Parliament of India. Consequently, teachers in aided schools have become politically

more active and united. Furthermore, the main primary school teachers association ('Prathmik Shikshak Sangh') in UP has been demanding that primary school teachers should be given the same privileges as their counterparts enjoy in secondary schools. Teachers in government primary schools in UP have also demanded that equal rights be given to them (as Aided school teachers) so that they are also able to contest MLA elections (Dainik Jagaran: 8.3.92).

### **Justification of teachers' representation**

The makers of the Constitution of India debated hard before they decided to make provision for teachers' representation in the Legislative Councils. They wished the upper house to comprise of intellectuals and talented scholars so that society could benefit from their knowledge and wisdom. An examination of the published debates of Constituent Assembly (CA) reveals that there were some strongly dissenting voices about allowing teachers to be elected as Legislative Council members and fear expressed about the potential politicisation of teachers. Dr Deshmukh vehemently opposed the proposal. He did not consider secondary teachers to be "experienced and sober elements", or to be of a type "who are not likely to take part in the day to day politics and to fight elections and spend the money that elections need". He said: "We have graduates of universities. One can understand representation being given to them. I do not see why a secondary school teacher is lucky enough also for the grant of this privilege? I think this is very unfair to the primary school teachers. Secondly, when we are considering a graduate as a qualified person to elect persons to the second chambers and also a secondary school teacher, how will it be possible to keep these people away from politics?" Another member of the CA, K.T. Shah remarked: "I fail to understand what principle there could be in just selecting graduates and teachers as against any other section or professions in the State. The teachers, moreover, would be a part of the 'social services'... to select a fraction of it like the teachers separately is again an over-doing or rather duplicating the machinery". When Dr Ambedkar (chairman of the CA) rose to reply to these criticisms, he could not find any convincing logic to revert the arguments raised against his proposed amendment. He could only say: "I do not know that those who have indulged in high flown phraseology in denouncing this particular article have done any service either to themselves or to the House.... We have to provide some kind of



constitution (of the LC) and I am prepared to say that the constitution provided is as reasonable and as practicable as can be thought of in the present circumstances.” (GoI: CA Debates: p. 490). Thus, the proposal of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee, was approved and teachers’ representation guaranteed.

While teachers’ reserved representation in state parliaments was linked to their supposed high-thinking, erudite and noble traits, a contemporary analyst observes: “Leaders of our country are found saying from the dais that the teacher is the nation builder because he is moulding the character of the new generation by his teachings. In fact, these statements do not have any substance. They are based on slogans which do not comprehend the entire social process. Education is only part of the total vision of a society. A teacher comes from groups of working persons in society who are engaged in different sectors of the economy, and is just one of them. No different ideal, psychology, attitude or outlook can be expected of him.” (translation from Raghuvansh: 1995, p. 29).

The results of these political privileges are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows that between 1952 and 1998 the proportion of UP Legislative Council members who were teachers or ex-teachers varied between 13% and 22%, a sizeable enough number to wield real influence. Information on the occupations of contestants for the Legislative Assembly elections was not available. Table 2 suggests that there has been a gradual increase over time in the proportion of Legislative Assembly members that are teachers.

**Table 1: Teachers' representation in the UP Legislative Council**

Year	Total seats	Teacher members	Ex-teacher members	Total teachers	Teachers as a % of total
1952	72	7	5	12	17
1954	72	7	4	11	15
1956	72	6	4	10	14
1958	108	10	4	14	13
1960	108	12	4	16	15
1962	108	16	2	18	17
1964	108	14	3	17	16
1966	108	10	4	14	13
1968	108	12	2	14	13
1970	108	14	2	16	15
1972	108	14	-	14	13
1974	108	18	1	19	18
1976	108	17	3	20	19
1978	108	14	1	15	14
1980	108	15	-	15	14
1982	108	16	2	18	17
1984	108	19	5	24	22
1986	108	13	-	13	12
1988	108	17	1	18	17
1990	108	15	1	16	15
1992	108	16	4	20	19
1994	108	15	3	18	17
1996	108	16	3	19	18
1998	108	14	0	14	13
2000	100	17	6	23	23
2002	100	16	7	23	23
2004	100	17	5	22	22

**Source:** GOUP: Vidhan Parishad ke Sadasyon ka Jeevan Parichay, UP Vidhan Sabha Sachivalaya, 2004, and previous issues.

*Note:* From 1960, the teacher Legislative Council members were sitting in a group named the "Rashtriya Dal" (Nationalist Party). This group was soon recognised by the Chairman of the Council (Chaudhari: 1983 p. 73) but it did not exist for long and teachers were divided into political factions within a year.

Teachers have always been included in the Council of Ministers since 1952, except for one occasion in 1967 under C B Gupta's chief ministership (in which the cabinet lasted for only 15 days). Moreover, several Chief Ministers in UP have been former teachers. For instance,

Sampurnanand, Sucheta Kripalani, Tribhuvan Narayan Singh, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Kalyan Singh and Mayawati were all former teachers. Many Education Ministers in UP have also been former teachers, for example, Acharya Jugul Kishore, Kalicharan, Swaroop Kumari Bakshi, Rajnath Singh and Narendra Kumar Singh Gaur etc. Teacher ministers have also held many other portfolios apart from Education.

**Table 2: Teacher members in the Legislative Assembly**

Legislative Assembly (LA)	Total LA members	Teacher members	% of LA members that were teachers
First (1952)	430	N.A.	N.A.
Second (1957)	430	11	2.6
Third (1962)	430	26	6.0
Fourth (1967)	425	21	4.9
Fifth (1969)	425	27	6.4
Sixth (1974)	425	22	5.2
Seventh (1977)	425	23	5.4
Eighth (1980)	425	39	9.2
Ninth (1985)	425	30	7.1
Tenth (1989)	425	27	6.4
Eleventh (1991)	425	36	8.5
Twelfth (1993)	425	46	10.8
Thirteenth (1996-2002)	425	37	8.7
Fourteenth (2002-2007)	404	24	6.0

**Sources:** Table computed on the basis of information in: (i) GOUP: UTTAR PRADESH VIDHAN SABHA KE SADASYON KA JEEVAN PARICHAY, published by Vidhan Sabha Secretariat. (various issues); and (ii) Nirvachan Ayog (UP): Chunav Parinam Vishleshan (various issues).

In summary, teachers' privileged legal position has meant their substantial presence in both houses of the State legislature as well as in State cabinets. It has fulfilled the apprehensions of some of the members of the CA who had expressed misgivings that due to their special constitutional status, teachers would become embroiled in politics. The effect of the presence of teachers in the corridors of power appears to have been to create a culture of political activism among teachers, especially among secondary aided-school teachers. There is now a strong body of teachers for whom the membership of the Legislative Council, or 'serving their fellow teachers' as they put it, is the ultimate aim of their career.

## **The evolution of teachers' associations**

In 1921, two teacher organisations were formed in UP:

- (i) Adhyapak Mandal (Teachers Board) – union of primary teachers
- (ii) UP Secondary Education Association – union of secondary teachers

In 1956, the UP Secondary Education Association adopted a new constitution and came to be known as the UP 'Madhyamik Shikshak Sangh' (or MSS). The MSS is the strongest teachers' union in the State. The primary teachers association was also re-named the UP 'Prathmik Shikshak Sangh' (or PSS) and re-recognised by the GOUP in the 1950s. The most important reason for the formation of a teachers union in the 1920s was the poor condition of teachers during the British period (K.L. Shrimali, Ex-Vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University). Teacher leaders claimed that it was this subjugation that compelled them to unite to form unions as early as in the 1920s (Chaudhari: 1983). Both these organisations, the MSS and the PSS, gathered momentum over time and made their presence felt more significantly during the 1960s when union action became intense, mustered wide publicity and became influential.

Teachers associations at the university and college level in UP emerged much later. The Federation of UP Universities and College Teachers' Association (FUPUCTA) formed in 1966. They also have much less strength, publicity and political influence as compared with unions of school teachers. In order to increase their strength and bargaining power, teacher leaders in universities have pressurised more and more lecturers to join politics by encouraging them, first, to become a member of their local union and then gradually to take a more active part in political activities and agitations. For example, at the time of instituting a new union at Lucknow university, teachers wishing to contest for the executive of LUTA (Lucknow University Teachers' Association) deposited a fee on behalf of a large number of teachers, effectively coaxing them all into joining the union.

### **Factions in teachers' unions**

Teachers' unions in UP are not unified bodies of teachers. They are ridden with internal in-fighting and groupism. Different groups are patronised by different political leaders and parties, resulting in political intervention becoming more common. The MSS is particularly ridden with differences and factionalism. The "Sharma Group" is the largest within the MSS. It has dominated teacher politics for at least the last four decades and, during that time, teachers' representatives in the UP Legislative Council have been elected mainly from this group.

Placed at number two in strength is the "Pandey Group" which has led many teacher agitations in the State. But gradually it has also lost most of its membership and it now has about 500 members left with it. The "Thakurai Group" occupies the third place. Its strength has, however, been dwindling over the last few years after the death of its leader RN Thakurai and now (2008) it has just 100-200 members. The fourth is the "Bhatt Group" but its presence is hardly felt and its strength is waning fast and now it has only 48 members left. Many teachers have also assumed membership of more than one group. It is, therefore, difficult to place all groups of the MSS in descending order in a precise manner. We estimate tentatively that 80 to 90 percent of the secondary teachers in UP are unionised (Kingdon survey showed 84% in 1991). The teacher representatives of the MSS in the UP Legislative Council claim that they not only represent the interests of secondary teachers but also safeguard the interests of all teachers of the State.

Factionalism in teacher unions has divided the teaching community into political groups and ideology-based-factions, a fact lamented by the Report of the National Commission on Teachers, which considers it detrimental to the professional development of teachers.

### **Teacher union strikes and other activities**

The MSS has spearheaded several strikes and 'agitations' in support of teachers' demands from the government. The following methods are frequently used by teachers to press their demands:

- Creating mass awareness through discussion, seminars, symposia etc.
- Meetings of teacher representatives with the government

- Mass casual leave, meetings and demonstrations
- Statements on mass media
- Signature campaigns, observing 'black day' and 'opposition day' etc.
- Sit-in's, demonstrations, and processions
- Collective fasting and gherao (picketing)
- Opposing the ministers in election
- Writing postcards to government
- Boycott of or disturbing the sessions in the Legislature
- Examination boycotts
- Pen-down / chalk-down strikes
- Jail Bharo Andolan ('fill-the-jails' campaign).

Table 3 lists some of the more important union-inspired activities. However, it is notable that other than the strikes and activities listed in Table 3, there were substantial teacher actions in other years too. Some were to oppose curbs on teacher union activities and to oppose moves to introduce local level accountability. For example in 1979, the All India Secondary Teachers Federation and the University Teachers Association held demonstration in New Delhi on 23 April to express their resentment against the Employees Service Condition and Dispute Reconciliation Act - which gave the government powers to take action against teachers unions.

Under the leadership of the Teachers Federation of UP, the PSS, MSS and the UTAs organised a big demonstration in Lucknow on 1 May 1979. They raised the slogans against the Act: "Sangathanon Par Rok Lagi To Khoon Bahega Sarkon Par" (if the organisations are opposed/banned, it will lead to blood-shed on the streets), demanding that the Act be revoked by the government.

**Table 3: Important teacher actions in UP (1956-2004)**

Year	From	To	Duration (days)	Details
1956	31 Jan.	31 Jan.	1	-
1959	3 May	8 May	2	Main demand: revision of pay scales
1964	24 Apr. 4 Aug.		1 1	4,000 teachers demonstrated 10,000 teachers demonstrated; 11-point charter included demands for triple-benefit-scheme
1965	11 Mar.	28 Mar.	18	30,000 teachers demonstrated; demands included interim relief, equal pay to G and PA teachers; hunger strike by some teachers from 22-28 March; central govt announced financial help for UP Teachers; GOUP increased salaries of PA teachers by Rs. 20 per month.
1966	5 Dec.	10 Dec.	5	5,000 teachers demonstrated in violation of prohibitory order; demand was pay parity between G and PA teachers; teacher leaders were jailed but released on 17 <sup>th</sup> December.
1968-69	25 Nov.	5 Jan.	45	Initially 3000 teachers demonstrated (600 arrested); strike intensified; 20,000 teachers sent to jail; Demands included pay parity between PA non-teaching staff and G employees and direct salary to PA teachers from the state govt treasury
1971	27 Jan.	18 Feb.	23	Total strike observed; issues were lack of implementation of agreements; 1000 teachers and their leaders arrested.
1973	3 Dec.	23 Dec.	21	11-point charter of demands included nationalisation of education; 500 teachers arrested.
1974	14 Jan.	4 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	>2	Pandey group threatened to go on strike; on 4 <sup>th</sup> March, demonstration invited 'lathi charge'. Leader badly injured, remained hospitalised for 8 days. This was made an issue for prolonging the strike.
1975	31 Mar.	31 Mar.	>1	Demonstration in front of LA, demanding pay increases and nationalisation of education. 2000 teachers arrested.
1977-78	2 Dec.	13 Jan.	42	Organised by Pandey group of MSS; demands included the nationalisation of education, retention of education of Concurrent List, and parity in gratuity pensions etc. between PA and G teachers; 40,000 teachers took mass casual leave; 80,000 striked; 30,000 teachers were arrested
1979	1 May	1 May	1	Demonstrated against the Employees Service Conditions and Dispute Reconciliation Act, which sought to regulate the activities of teacher unions
1981	27 Jan. 17 Aug. 21 Oct. 7 Nov. 16 Nov. 24 Nov. 27 Nov. 1 Dec.	27 Jan. 17 Aug. 21 Oct. 7 Nov. 16 Nov. 24 Nov. 27 Nov. 3 Dec.	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 3	Pandey group's dhama and demonstration to ask for a Education Service Commission to regulate teacher appointments 'Pen down' strike against the removal of temporary teachers from service 'Pen down' strike in demand for pay revision Mass casual leave and demonstration because of dissatisfaction with the UP Pay Commission's recommendations Sit-in or dhama at Raj Bhavan in demand of pay revision 'Fast until death' (A-maran Anshan) protest; fasting teachers arrested Pandey group and Sharma group stage separate demonstrations Strike in opposition to the UP Pay Commission's recommendations
1984	12 Jan.	18 Feb.	35	Demands included nationalisation of education; 3000 teachers sent to jail; schools remained closed for 35 days
1985	30 Aug. 5 Sep. 5 Nov. 7 Nov.	30 Aug. 5 Sep. 5 Nov. 7 Nov.	1 1 1 1	-Sharma group of MSS organised mass casual leave -Sit-in at DIOS office, 'postcard to chief-minister' campaign -80,000 teachers took mass casual leave -40,000 teachers demonstrated; 28 demands included nationalisation of education, payment of salary for the previous strike period, abolition of private management in schools, and regularisation of ad-hoc teachers etc.
1986	5 Sept. 20 Sept. 14 Nov.	5 Sept. 20 Sept. 14 Nov.	1 1 1	All three groups had agitations in 1986. On 5 Sept. Scooter rally agitation against the appointment of part-time teachers 'Chalk down' strike, against National Policy on Education Rally to demand the implementation of the Fourth Pay Commission's recommendations, schools remained closed
1987*	15 Sept.	7 Oct.	23	Agitations on 16 June (warning day), 15 September (historic rally of teachers with govt employees suppressed by use of tear gas and lathi-charge, one person died and many teachers were injured; many teachers were arrested; called off on 7 Oct), and 13 November (60,000 teachers participated in a rally). GOUP announced generous improvements in DA.

Year	From	To	Duration (days)	Details
1988**	14 Oct.	26 Oct.	13	GOUP failed to implement 1987 agreement; Awareness week observed from 25 August. Big rally organised on 15 September; fasting by rotation organised from 25 Sept to 11 Oct; Shouting slogans: "Jeene Layek Vetan Do" (give wages worth a living). GOUP admitted that in giving new scales, a new burden of Rs 656 crores would come on its shoulders. Talks held 26 Oct. and agreement reached.
1989	19 Aug.	19 Aug.	1	All MSS factions in unified rally to demand Central pay scales for UP teachers; to make 450 more unaided schools aided; for the regularisation of ad-hoc teachers. Agreement pushed up GOUP education expenditure sharply.
1990	9 Aug.	9 Aug.	1	Pandey group's sit-in dharna in support of their 15-point charter of demands Sit-ins at Director of Education's offices. Agitation programmes for Nov /Dec. postponed in view of Babri Masjid unrest
	29 Aug.	30 Aug.	2	
1991	5 Jan.	5 Jan.	1	Pandey group demonstrated at LA in support of 51 point charter of demands, including regularisation of ad hoc teachers, bringing more schools onto the aided list, and remove of pay anomalies. Thakurai group agitated in month of August Demonstration at LA and gherao of the Director of Education offices - demanding implementation of various govt orders. MSS underwent a further split this year - a new group (the Bhatt group) formed.
	27 Nov.	27 Nov.	1	
1992	10 Jan. March	10 Jan. March	1 'many days'	10,000 teachers involved in a sit-in by the Sharma group of MSS on 10 <sup>th</sup> Jan.; Many days' teaching wasted in March due to mass casual leave, demonstrations and sit-ins. Unions declared (but did not carry out) a boycott of examinations.
1993	21 July	21 July	1	No statewide agitation of teachers in 1993 but most previous issues were taken up at low levels of agitation. Thakurai group satyagrah on 21/7/93; sit-in on 7 <sup>th</sup> Sept and a processions and demonstrations on 5 <sup>th</sup> Sept (31 demands) and 16 <sup>th</sup> Oct. Many other demonstrations were also held during the year but they did not make a notable impact.
	5 Sept	7 Sept	2	
	16 Oct	16 Oct	1	
1994	25 Nov.	6-Dec.	11	Agitations took place on 5-6 May (demonstration); 25 <sup>th</sup> Oct (picket); strike 25 Nov-6 Dec (strike); main demands were: unaided private schools be brought on aid list, regularisation of ad hoc teachers, removal of pay anomalies, no modification be attempted in the Salary Disbursement Act
1995	24 Aug.	24 Aug.	1	Sit-in at the offices of the District Inspector of Schools and at the LA, 49 point charter of demands All four groups of the MSS came together in historic unity to demonstrate
	14 Nov.	14 Nov.	1	
1996	17 Jan.	23 Jan.	7	Jail-bharo andolan (Fill-the-Jails agitation). Talks with the governor ended the agitation - but MSS factions accused each other for calling-off the agitation. Sit-in (dharna) on 6 June demanding salary payment in the first week of the month; demonstrations on 12 <sup>th</sup> Dec. at the district headquarters of all teacher unions in the state, with a 13 point charter of demands for district magistrates - one particular demand was the release of the report of the Fifth Pay Commission.
1998	1 July	7 July	7	Non cooperation movement by MSS which crippled the education system in the State of UP. It was the beginning of the agitation for the implementation of Fifth Pay Commission recommendations. Indefinite full strike started from 8 <sup>th</sup> July all over the State involving about 5 lakh teachers. Government tried to suppress the agitation but the leadership did not bow down. Lathi charge on teachers rally on 30 July and the strike was suspended on 6 August in people's interest (Janhit)
	8 July	6 August	29	
1999	22 August	22 August	1	Mammoth rally in Lucknow of teacher Mahasangh (all teacher unions and employees' unions combined). Teacher leaders were arrested yet lakhs of teachers joined the rally, blocked the roads in the State capital and offered their arrest. Black day was observed by closing all schools in the State and condolence meetings were held to mourn the death of teacher leader Bhagwan Bux Singh ( who was murdered in Lucknow) A huge torch rally (Mashal Juloo) was taken out in Lucknow.
	9 September	9 Sept.	1	
	20 Sept.	20 Sept	1	
2000	23 October	23 October	1	Mammoth rally of Mahasangh in Jyotiba Phule Nagar for implementing the Fifth Pay recommendations
2004	1 April	7 April	7	Under the banner of Employees-Teacher Coordination Committee, teachers went on strike and marched on roads for pressing their demand of merger of 50 percent of DA in the basic pay. The agitation continued for a week. The Government had to accept their demands to be implemented later.

**Table 3: (continued)**

**Notes:** \* led by Sharma Group; \*\* led by Pandey and Thakurai Groups; PA= Private aided school; G=Government school



In 1992, the BJP Government in UP led by Kalyan Singh (himself a teacher) made several announcements in the field of education which were largely disliked by the teaching community. The government gave more powers to management committees of private aided schools, self-financing schools were allowed, self-financing courses were started, pay disbursement authority was again transferred to private management, cheating in examinations was declared an offence and security of services were reduced by giving the management of Private Aided schools more powers. However, when all factions of the MSS united to fight these 'anti-teacher' measures and announced a call for boycott of examinations, the government of UP declared that it had no intention of changing legislation regarding the transfer of secondary teachers from one district to another, or of bringing in rules to allow authorities to prolong indefinitely the suspension of any teacher. The same government also legislated the historic anti-cheating law whereby students caught cheating could be jailed. The introduction of the anti-cheating law was accompanied by the deployment of police in all examination centres in 1992. The effect of this measure was to drastically reduce the pass rate in the UP High School Exams from 57% in 1991 to less than 15% in 1992! This is seen in Table 4.

**Table 4: Pass rates in examinations by the UP High School Examinations Board**

Year	Percentage of exam-takers who passed		
	Regular candidates	Private Candidates	Total
1988	49.6	40.6	46.6
1989	47.6	39.4	44.8
1990	46.4	40.4	44.2
1991	61.2	52.2	57.0
1992	17.3	9.0	14.7

Source: Swatantra Bharat (High School Exam Results Supplement) Wed 15th July 1992, p3.

The frequency of action by teachers' unions is remarkable. However, there is no information on whether teachers went on strike more often than workers in other government departments. Nevertheless, the Constituent Assembly had accorded teachers a uniquely privileged

political position because it believed/hoped that teachers were a wiser and nobler group than others.

Table 3 showed that the issues on which teachers have campaigned have almost invariably been to do with teachers' pay and job-security and rarely, if ever, for broader improvements in the schooling system or for the promotion of education in general. This conclusion agrees with the assessment in the Report of the National Commission on Teachers, which observed in 1986: "The main preoccupation of teachers' organisations particularly since independence has been with the improvement of salary and service conditions of teachers. And in this they have achieved considerable success." (NCT: 1986, p. 73).

The other main issue on which teacher unions have lobbied government and achieved success is in demanding centralised government-management of aided schools so that teachers can be protected from alleged unfair practices by their private managers and be sheltered from having to be locally accountable. Arguably the biggest successes of the teacher unions in UP have been the enactment of the Salary Distribution Act, 1971 and the Basic Education Act, 1972 – Acts which massively centralised the management of school education in UP.

### **The politics of educational finance**

The system of financing of secondary education in UP is based to a large extent on state support in the form of grants-in-aid to privately managed educational institutions. At the primary education level, the main responsibility for funding is meant to lie with local bodies. Grants to private aided schools account for a very substantial proportion of the education budget in UP - about 70% and 80% of the higher and secondary education budgets in UP respectively (Table 5) but, at present, they are largely devoid of performance conditions or incentives.

**Table 5: Share of grant-in-aid (GIA) expenditure in public education budgets**

State	Share of GIA in total public education expenditure		Share of GIA in Public Expenditure at each level (2000-01)		
	1990/91	2000-01	Higher	Secondary	Elementary
West Bengal	51.1	81.7	44.6	94.2	84.4
Uttar Pradesh	n.a.	n.a.	70.3	76.7	n.a
Kerala	55.2	52.8	57.1	51.7	55.3
Maharashtra	49.4	44.7	87.2	77.8	0.1
Gujarat	35.3	33.9	64.2	88.7	0.0
Tamil Nadu	59.7	32.1	54.6	34.9	26.2
Assam	33.3	24.8	29.8	66.3	6.4
Karnataka	24.1	n.a.	65.4	n.a.	n.a.
Haryana	9.9	10.0	35.8	7.8	2.0
Orissa	29.9	9.1	42.7	7.7	1.3
Andhra Pradesh	18.0	7.9	26.5	20.0	7.3
Madhya Pradesh	5.8	5.7	12.8	7.8	1.6
Rajasthan	5.9	3.2	11.1	3.7	1.5
Bihar	1.2	1.6	0.0	3.6	1.1
Himachal Pradesh	1.1	1.3	10.5	1.1	0.4

Source: Bashir (2005) who compiled it from Detailed Demand for Grants for Education of individual state governments.

### The politics of grant-in-aid

One of the abiding demands of UP teacher unions has been for more private unaided schools to be brought on to the government's 'grants-in-aid' list. They have achieved some success. For example, between 1984 and 1991, 681 junior and 298 secondary private unaided schools were made aided. During the financial year 1995-96 alone, 200 private, previously unaided, schools were included in the grants-in-aid list. Bringing unaided schools – those run entirely on fee revenue – onto the 'aided' list has a major advantage for teachers in that it places them on government salary scales, which are anything between 2.5 to 5 times the pay they receive in unaided private schools (Kingdon, 2007).

However, it also has some drawbacks. First, it greatly increases the financial burden on the state without leading to any increase in the overall number of students or teachers. Second, teachers of a school that is made 'aided' feel indebted to their political patrons (teacher politicians/union leaders) and obliged to support their political activities. This can undermine academic standards. Third, aided status typically leads to a loss of local accountability as teachers are now paid by a faceless bureaucracy far away. Fourth, 'aided status' is inimical to equity because relatively well-off students – who previously chose a fee-paying school and were able and willing to pay for their education – are targeted for subsidy. Given scarcity of government resources and the parlous state of state-funded primary education, this seems inequitable. Since it is mainly middle and secondary schools that receive grant-in-aid, many primary age children attend private primary school first, i.e. they have to pass a financial hurdle to access the subsidies available in aided middle/secondary schools. Finally, bringing private unaided schools onto the aided list appears inimical to efficiency as well: private unaided schools are more effective in helping their students to learn than aided schools (Kingdon, 1996a). The rapid increase in demand for private unaided schooling in UP suggests that parents perceive it to be of better quality. This may be partly because teachers in unaided schools are accountable to and closely monitored by their school managers and by fee-paying parents. The above considerations suggest that while private unaided schools' conversion to aided status is advantageous to unaided school teachers in terms of greatly increased salaries, it pits teachers' interests against the more general interests of an efficient and equitable distribution of scarce state educational resources.

**Table 6: Evidence from Indian studies on private unaided (PUA) and government school teachers' average monthly salaries**

School Level	PUA pay as a % of	Kingdon's study 1994	Kansal's study 1990	Govinda/Varghese 1993	Jain's study 1988	Bashir's study 1994	Singh/Sridhar 2002	Muralidharan & Kremer
		Lucknow district, Uttar Pradesh	City of New Delhi	5 districts, Madhya Pradesh	Baroda district, Gujarat	Many districts, Tamil Nadu	2 districts, Uttar Pradesh	20 states of India
<b>Primary / junior level</b>	<b>G pay</b>	42	39	49	47	47	20	20
	<b>PA pay</b>	43	39	66	-	50	-	-
<b>Secondary Level</b>	<b>G pay</b>	74	76	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>PA pay</b>	79	76	-	-	-	-	-

**Source: Kingdon and Muzammil (2003)**

*Note: The Kingdon study sampled 182 teachers, Kansal 233 teachers, Govinda and Varghese 111 teachers, Bashir 419 teachers, and Singh and Sridhar 467 teachers. The number of teachers sampled by Jain is not known. PUA is 'private unaided'; PA is 'private aided'; and G is 'Government' schools.*

### **Teacher appointments and service benefits**

Teachers' organised lobbying for centralised government management began to yield results in the early 1970s when two far-reaching education Acts were passed: the Basic Education Act 1972, which brought all local body schools directly under State government control; and the Salary Disbursement Act 1971, which brought the teachers of all Private Aided schools directly under the State government's remit. The main effect of these Acts was to greatly improve teachers' job security and to substantially centralise educational management by the State and thereby diminish the local accountability of teachers. The enforcement of these Acts seriously weakened the influence of local bodies and of private management in basic education.

The Acts provided a basis for the many concessions won by teachers in primary and secondary schools in relation to appointments, emoluments, promotion and service conditions: achievements in terms of political lobbying. Teachers were transferred from the sometimes exploitative control of private management and local bodies to the

generous supervision of the State Government. The effect was to centralise selection and recruitment procedures and to eradicate the authority of private managers and local bodies in disciplining errant teachers by dismissal or demotion, thus greatly reducing teachers' local answerability.

**Table 7: Teachers' nominal and real salaries in UP (Rs. per month)**

YEAR	Principal Inter college		Headmaster High School		Assistant Teacher Inter college		Trained Graduate Teacher High School		CT Grade Teacher		CPI 1960=100
	Nominal	Real	Nominal	Real	Nominal	Real	Nominal	Real	Nominal	Real	
1960-61	250	250	225	225	175	175	120	120	75	75	100
1969-70	275	153	247	137	215	119	138	77	100	56	180
1971-72	500	260	400	208	365	190	300	156	220	115	192
1973-74	550	220	450	180	400	160	300	120	250	100	250
1975-76	850	272	770	246	650	208	450	144	450	144	313
1985-86	2200	355	2000	323	1600	258	1400	226	1350	217	620
1995-96*	8000	519	7500	486	6500	422	5500	357	4500	292	1542
Annual % increase '73-96	12.9	4.0	13.6	4.6	13.5	4.5	14.1	5.1	14.0	5.0	

*NOTE: The above nominal amounts of pay are the minimum at the basic pay scale exclusive of 'Dearness Allowance'.*

*\* Re-revised pay scales announced in December 2001.*

### Teacher salaries

Teacher unions' success in improving teachers' pay can be assessed against two yardsticks: first, whether teachers made real gains in salary; and second, whether they increased their share of total state education expenditure. Table 7 compares the rate of increase in the nominal salary of UP teachers with the rate of increase in prices, to see whether real salaries have changed much over time. Table 8 shows changes in the share of salaries in total education spending over time.

Table 7 shows the minimum at the basic pay for each teacher-type in nominal terms and deflated by the All India Consumer Price Index (CPI). There was little real increase in teacher salaries until the early 1970s, although they were periodically 'inflation proofed' by way of a 'Dearness Allowance'. However, between 1973-74 and 1995-96, the basic salary of CT grade teachers (i.e. primary school teachers with a 'Certificate of Training') grew at a rate of 14% per annum in nominal terms and at 5% per annum in real terms. Over the 22 year period 1973-4 to 1995-96,

teachers' salaries increased at an annual percentage rate of approximately 4% to 5% per year in real terms, an impressive annual rate of growth over a long period of time, given that the rate of growth of real per capita GDP over the same period was 3% per annum. This provides a rough indicator of the success with which teachers and their unions have lobbied the government for pay increases. Moreover, it seems that in India, teacher salaries are higher relative to national per capita income than in many other countries. For example, the ratio of average teacher salaries to per capita income (admittedly an imperfect measure of teachers' standard of living vis-a-vis others) is 2.4: 1 in Latin America and 2.6: 1 in Asia but a much higher 3.6: 1 in India (Colclough and Lewin 1993, p52 and 143). A recent estimate of the ratio for the state of Uttar Pradesh is 8.5:1.

**Table 8: Wage costs as a proportion of total public expenditure on education**

YEAR	Recurrent as a % of total public expenditure on education	Salary costs as a percentage of total recurrent expenditure on education (%)		
		Primary	Junior	Secondary
1960-61	74.7	87.9	85.1	72.3
1965-66	79.4	90.7	89.2	75.3
1969-70	85.0	92.3	90.4	85.6
1974-75	87.1	96.6	94.3	87.1
1981-82	94.8	96.7	93.8	89.9
1987-88	97.3	NA	NA	90.7

**Source:** (GOI, *Education in India*), various years.

**Note:** The figures published for the year 1987-88 and later for primary and junior education levels are not comparable with figures published in previous years because from 1987-88, non-teaching staff salaries have been lumped together with the item 'other' giving the implausibly low figures (for 87-88) of 94.0% and 91.6% for primary and junior education respectively. Prior to 1960-61, expenditure information in published documents is not presented by item of expenditure (salaries, consumables, others, etc) but rather by expenditure on boys' schools and expenditure on girls' school, etc or expenditure by source.

An increase in the share of total education expenditure that goes on salaries is another indication of the success of teachers in winning financial victories. Table 8 shows expenditure on teacher salaries as a proportion of total recurrent public expenditure on education. It demonstrates a secular long-term increase in the share of total (recurrent) education spent on salaries. By 1981, fully 97% of all

primary education expenditure was going to teacher salaries and only 3% was available for non-teacher expenses. The corresponding figures for junior and secondary education were not much better: 94% and 90%, so that only 6% and 10% of total recurrent government expenditure on education was spent on non-salary school expenses. The government of India itself notes (GOI, 1985a, p25): “more than 90% of the expenditure - in some states even more than 98% - is spent on teachers’ salaries and administration. Practically nothing is available to buy a blackboard and chalks, let alone charts, other inexpensive teaching aids or even pitchers for drinking water”.

Some non-UP microstudies find that the situation was worse by the early 1990s. For example Tilak and Bhatt in Tilak (1992) find that salary costs account for 96.2% (in secondary) and 99.0% (in primary) of total recurrent unit costs in Haryana. Aggarwal (1991, p86) calculates that expenditure on salaries accounts for 93.5% of total expenditure in G schools, 94.0% in Aided schools and 87.7% in PUA schools in his sample of secondary schools in New Delhi. While there is some improvement in this situation under the current Sarva Shiksha Abihyan (Campaign for Education for All) policy, which provides each school with a Teaching Learning Materials grant, these figures provide an indication of the success of teachers’ organisations.

However, they also point attention to the unfortunate fact that non-salary expenditure, which has educational merit, has been progressively squeezed out. Research suggests that the size of teacher salaries has no significant association with student achievement but that other forms of educational expenditure do. For example, in 72 developing country studies, the factors that boosted student achievement most were: instructional materials, length of the weekly instructional programme, school library activity and teacher training at tertiary level etc. (Fuller: 1986). Teacher salaries did not significantly affect student achievement in the majority of the studies. Similar findings were obtained in a survey of 147 developed-country studies (Hanushek: 2003). For the state of UP, Kingdon (1996) found similarly to Fuller and Hanushek - namely that teacher salaries had no significant impact on student achievement after controlling for student and household characteristics, but that school resources, instructional time, and quality of teacher’s education did significantly improve student learning.



## **Conclusions**

The paper presents evidence of significant political penetration by teachers. This is particularly prevalent in the case of teachers of aided secondary schools, which constitute the main bulk of all secondary schools. It would be naïve to think that the politicisation of the main actors in the education sector – namely teachers - has been without effect on school education performance. There is widespread concern about the deleterious effects of teacher politics on the progress of the education sector in UP. Teachers' politicisation – in the sense of their active participation in union activities and the fact that such activities are directed or supported by professional teacher-politicians - has been linked to the poor performance of school education in India. For example, the National Commission on Teachers states that “the most important factor responsible for vitiating the atmosphere in schools, we were told, has been the role of teacher politicians and teachers' organisations” (NCT: 1986, p. 68).

In view of the negative aspects of teachers' political activities, which are frequently brought into public focus in the media, they have often been advised to mend their ways and become constructive, through such exhortations as “teachers' associations should play an important role in increasing the professional honesty and dignity of teachers and in restraining professional misconduct. The National Federation of Teachers can prepare a professional code of conduct for teachers” (Agnihotri: 1987, p. 282).

The evolution of educational expenditure in UP appears to have been heavily influenced by the demands of teachers. There are many indications to suggest this, including the passage of the Salary Disbursement Act (1971) and the Basic Education Act (1972). The fact that these Acts – arguably the most important educational legislations in UP – were passed immediately after periods of intense strikes by teachers, suggests that educational legislation in UP has been a reaction to protests rather than being based on well-conceived principles of efficiency and equity. The content of these Acts has had the effect of increasing job-security and salaries of aided and local-government school teachers. They also centralised the administration and management of schools, greatly reducing teacher accountability to their local managers. This abandonment of local accountability is likely

to have had an adverse effect on the functioning of schools. Since the school manager or local body can no longer sack a shirking teacher, and has virtually no discretion to penalise errant teachers, there may be a greater incentive to shirk.

The lax attitudes of some of the teachers towards their schools and students have resulted not only from a loss of local accountability, but also from the strength and influence of their unions. Union-backed teachers do not fear adverse repercussions if they shirk their duties. The Report of the National Commission on Teachers notes that “some of the Principals deposing before it (i.e. before the Commission) lamented that they had no powers over teachers and were not in a position to enforce order and discipline. Nor did the District Inspectors of Schools and other officials exercise any authority over them as the erring teachers were often supported by powerful teachers’ associations. We were told that that there was no assessment of a teacher’s academic and other work and that teachers were virtually unaccountable to anybody” (NCT, 1986, p68).

Teachers’ participation in politics also has an adverse effect on the functioning of schools: it keeps them away from teaching because they are engaged in union or political activities. The evidence presented here and discussions with knowledgeable persons suggest that teachers are mobilised by their leaders for meetings, lobbying or protests in one form or another every year. Consequently, teaching suffers.

While no estimates are available of the number or proportion of teachers that contest elections, the evidence shows a high degree of participation by teachers in protest action and suggests that a good number of teaching hours must be lost in most years. Moreover, teacher members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) and Legislative Councils (MLCs) continue to occupy their teaching posts which are often not filled by replacement teachers, leading to a further loss of teaching activity, although only a small number of teachers are involved. Teacher union leaders and teacher MLAs and MLCs continue to draw their teacher salaries (as well as their MLA/MLC salary) for their full term in political office, although they do not teach during this period.

The Report of the National Commission on Teachers (NCT: 1986) – a document written with much sympathy for the teaching profession – levels three criticisms at teacher unions. Firstly that there is too much politicisation in the teachers’ organisations; secondly, that there are too many such organisations and it would be good if their numbers could be reduced substantially; and thirdly, that teachers’ organisations have not paid enough attention to the intellectual and professional development of their members.

It would be implausible to attribute the poor functioning of the school system only to the politicisation of teachers. The paucity of resources and teaching materials; inadequate school buildings and the lack of basic facilities, must surely create a disempowering environment for teachers and students. However, even as these physical facilities have improved over the recent years, it is not clear whether educational outcomes of students – especially learning achievement levels – have improved, or whether teacher effort has improved: a recent study put teacher absence rate at 25% in India (Kremer et. al., 2005).

While teachers have lobbied almost singularly for increased salary allocations, there is no parents’ or children’s lobby to demand greater allocations to school non-salary expenses. It is not surprising then that the National Commission on Teachers (NCT, 1986, p71) makes an impassioned appeal to redress this imbalance in political influence: “we must draw attention ... to the need to promote actively parents’ organisations all over the country. At present there are hardly any organisations interested in providing good education to their children. We feel that such organisations are desperately needed to promote and safeguard the educational interests of their wards and to counteract the negative and unhealthy political preoccupations of some the teachers and their organisations”.

Forming a trade union, including teachers’ unions, is a legitimate worker right in any democratic society and campaigning for better salaries and service conditions is one of their main purposes. However, this paper has presented evidence to show how teachers’ political strength has made it difficult for the government to deal impartially with teacher demands, and its consequences.

It has not been possible to provide comparisons between the behaviour of teachers and other groups of state-paid employees. It is possible that, by placing the activities of the teaching community in a wider perspective, such comparisons would suggest that teachers' behaviour is part of the wider work culture within the public sector. However, the special legal privileges of teachers place them at a political advantage in comparison with other public worker groups and this may have resulted in their having greater political influence. While such inter-group comparisons were beyond the scope of the present study, they should be a fruitful area of study in the future.

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