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A Textual Analysis

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INTEGRATED CHILD PROTECTION SCHEME AND NEOLIBERAL GOVERNMENTALITY: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Biplaw Kumar Singh*

Abstract

The content analysis of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) unsettles and questions the settled normative understanding of ICPS rooted in welfare logic. Anchoring the analysis in the shared temporal landscape of ICPS and Post Washington Consensus (PWC), this study shows the strong linkages of ICPS' normative grid with the basic tenets of PWC. Drawing the inferences from the analytics of governmentality, this study exposes the ICPS's biases toward a market-oriented solution to child protection that invisibilises the structural constraints. Therefore, it indicates that ICPS aims to realise the rights of children through neoliberal mechanisms and strategies. In this process, the welfare goal and structure of ICPS uniquely blend with neoliberal operationalisation.

Keywords: ICPS, PWC, Governmentality, Child Protection

Introduction

Social welfare policy[1] is a dynamic process that develops in a particular country through complex interactions between a set of socio-economic and political processes, internally and globally. During the 1990s, when India adopted a neoliberal agenda in the form of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), its impact on social policy was widely discussed (Tendulkar *et al* 2012; Mukherji 2017; Dev *et al* 2002; Ruparelia *et al* 2011; *Jayal 2011*). The new paradigm was instrumental in shifting the focus from income generation programmes to human development[2] (Harris 2011) and contrary to popular expectation the Indian state continued to strengthen the welfare measures. However, the closing years of the 1990s witnessed a concern-driven[3] departure in India's social welfare approach in line with the post-Washington consensus[4] (PWC) the slogan of 'neoliberalism with a human face'.

[1] The usage of "social welfare policy" has a wide range of meanings from "welfare services" by the state to "welfare state's policy". In this paper, social welfare policy is used for "social welfare", "social protection", and "social safety net", etc. interchangeably and includes the state's efforts to contribute directly to the welfare of the vulnerable.

[2] The Eighth Plan (1992–1997) stated that "human development" is its end aim.

[3] The proportion of social sector expenditure in overall expenditures plummeted from 38.5% in 1990–91 to 29.7% in 2004–05. Similarly, social sector expenditure nose-dived from 6.1% to 5.4% of the GDP throughout the same time (Ma 2008, p.68).

[4] Neoliberalism underwent a transition from "neoliberalism" to "neoliberalism with a human face" when PWC was came into existence. This marked the beginning of the second phase of neoliberalism. In the context of economic policy suggestions for developing nations, the term "Washington Consensus" refers to the degree of agreement that exists between the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the United States Department of the Treasury regarding those policy recommendations. All of them were of the opinion, which is commonly referred to as neoliberal, that the functioning of the free market and the elimination of state intervention were significant factors in the growth of countries in the global South. Towards the end of the 1990s, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the outcomes of the Washington Consensus were not even close to being ideal. The increase in criticism resulted in a shift in strategy, which changed the focus away from a concept of development as just economic expansion and toward the alleviation of poverty and the necessity of participation by both the

This departure is symbolised in the five neoliberal prescriptions[5]. One is the "pro-poor" growth i.e. inclusive growth[6], which is based on the notion that growth must be linked with employment generation. The second is distinguished by the augmentation of the investment in human capital, with a specific focus on education and health. The third element is the prioritisation of 'good governance', underscored by the principles of transparency, accountability, participation, efficiency, anti-corruption, macroeconomic fiscal management, and decentralized administration. The fourth aspect underlines the significance of 'social safety nets' for individuals negatively impacted by the neoliberal reform and/or not able to partake in the growth process. These safety nets are intended to support and stabilise vulnerable populations during economic transition or when structural changes may create disparities. The fifth is the focus on 'empowerment'. This reform is termed a "right-based accountability instrument" constituent of a 'broader project of state transformation and democratic deepening' (Aiyar *et al* 2014). The rhetoric of "rights" emerged as central to welfare policy, occupying a pivotal position[7] in political discourse (Ruparelia, 2013).

This broader climate of social welfare policy impacted the arena of the National Child Welfare Policy and was instrumental in framing many policies and programmes premised on a child rights-based approach. For example, the National Children Charter 2003 and The National Child Policy 2013 showed their commitment to enabling children to claim their rights by empowering them. In this larger setting, a nationwide centre-sponsored ICPS[8] was initiated in the Eleventh Five Year Plan. There is near unanimity that the nature of ICPS is welfare-oriented as reflected by Balakrishnan (2011, p.193), the ICPS[9] was the "first entirely welfare-oriented scheme for children by the Government of India." It is also hailed as an initiative by government commitments to uphold children's rights by institutionalising the essential services for children. ICPS provides a range of institutional and family-based non-institutional care to children. However, it is imperative to seriously examine these claims because the broader framework of India's social welfare regime at this temporal juncture[10], as discussed above, was influenced by the

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governments of developing countries and civil society. A change in course that came to be known as the post-Washington Consensus was brought about by this change.

[5]   Elaborated in World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach which was adopted in 1999 and reviewed in 2001.

[6]   The 10th Five Year Plan motto was "to promote inclusive growth and equitable development. "The Eleventh Plan (2007–2012) declared" empowerment that creates a true feeling of participation so necessary in a democratic polity" with the objective of rapid and more inclusive growth (Planning Commission 2007-2012).

[7]   Much rights-based legislation such as the Right to Information Act (2005), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005), The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (2006), Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) and the National Food Security Act (2013) were enacted during the opening decade of 21st century.

[8]   The provisions of the JJ Act are executed through the *Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS).* ICPS was founded to ensure a protective environment for vulnerable children in difficult circumstances. In 2017, with a revised financial norm, ICPS was renamed Child Protection Services (CPS). CPS was subsumed under Mission Vatsalya[8] in 2021-22. For this work, all these different nomenclatures are expressed by the term ICPS.

[9]   The ICPS was launched in 2009 to ensure a protective environment for vulnerable children in difficult circumstances. In 2017, with a revised financial norm, ICPS was renamed Child Protection Services (CPS). CPS was subsumed under Mission Vatsalya in 2021-22. While the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 provisions and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 form the basic framework for implementation of the Mission Vatsalya, the founding principle of the mission is based on the "protection of child rights" and "best interest of the child".

[10] During the latter decade of the 20th century, the Washington Consensus was met with a significant amount of opposition. The idea that the expansion of markets is accompanied by significant societal costs was almost

transnational discourse of 'neoliberalism with a human face' and more specifically, child welfare regime was impacted by UNCRC's notion of child rights.

In the above respect, ICPS's protection model is premised on the UNCRC's idea of 'child-sized citizenship' (Jan. 2004). It means the right to protection and care must include the right to self-determination of children but when conflict arises between these two, basic and developmental interests override the autonomy interest. Otherwise, the right to self-determination should be encouraged as much as possible. Thus, the right to protection as enshrined in ICPS defuses the tension between viewing children as 'competent social actors' as well as 'victims' of abuse by devising the principle of the 'evolving capacity of children'.

However, here an epistemological question needs to be raised. In what way does ICPS approach child rights? Does ICPS see the rights of the child meshed with the right of the family or views it in a silo? Does a child's right to participation intersect with the collective right to participation? This normative question is important to explore as an interpretation of child rights may take two very different ways. One, a liberal individualistic version of child rights focuses on individual children disconnected from the family and community. This version promotes Western individualism (Burr, 2004) and reinforces children's regulation and suppression by self-governance (Millei, 2010) in tune with "neoliberal concepts of 'competition', 'choice' and 'enterprise'" (Kryger, 2004 p. 157). Second, child rights are rooted in the family and community and have a symbiotic relationship with the collective. In other words, the problem of children is seen as a broader structural issue, and in line with welfare logic, any initiative to address the protection of children includes holistic measures to alleviate the condition of the family and social groups. This contextualisation may enable a very different understanding of ICPS. In this backdrop, the research paper locates the structural, and functional framework of ICPS in the normative context of neoliberalism. In doing so, it delves deeper into exploring the ways neoliberal rationality interacts with the welfare logic of ICPS. With this broader objective, the scholarly piece strives to address a key question; What ways does neoliberal rationality shape the structural and functional aspects of ICPS?

There are serious scholarly works not only on childhood and child rights in the Indian context (Nieuwenhuys 1998, 2009, Balakrishnan 2011, Raman 2017, Bajpai 2018, Balagopalan 2019, Maithreyi 2023) but also on child protection regime (Kumari, 2011). These works have rigorously explored the various normative aspects of childhood, child rights, and child protection and situated them in global and local contexts. However, the same cannot be said about the study of child protection schemes such as ICPS. In general, there is a dearth of scholarly works on ICPS, and available scholarly works (Sharma 2014; Rao *et al* 2018; Rattu 2023) inadvertently ignore the historical context and normative

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universally accepted. This societal cost manifests itself in the shape of widespread poverty, widespread unemployment, widespread starvation, and inequality all throughout the world. Subsequently, these unfavorable outcomes "triggered reactive response on the part of the society that is reactive" (Palacios 2004). The criticism of WC originated from three different quarters: first, as a socio-political response; second, as a response from the government and the economy; and third, as a response from the academic community. Shigeru Ishikawa (1994), Joseph Stiglitz (2002), Paul Krugman, Ravi Kanubar (2002), Amartya Sen, Robert Chamber, and others were among the academics who expressed opposition to the neoliberal program with the most compassion. This was despite the fact that the policy was condemned by a large number of academics at various points in time. Because of all of these counter-movements, the material conditions were created for the shift of the paradigm of global development. This was accomplished by pressuring the international financial institutions to bring about a change in their strategy, which was represented in the shape of PWC.

underpinning of the scheme. They focus mostly on the implementation aspects (Bhattacharyya, 2018) of the scheme and a few pieces have explored other dimensions such as social work (Rotaby *et al* 2019). This academic situation provides the rationale for this study.

Neither childhood nor child protection is a homogenous epistemic category. They are interpreted in multiple ways that have serious implications for child protection programming. Thus, understanding the 'politics of childhood' is a foundation for understanding the way child protection programmes are designed and whose vested interest it serves. Therefore, the first section of the paper contextualises the construction of childhood and related child protection models of the ICPS in the normative settings of neoliberalism. Further, the financial arrangement of a scheme is a key aspect of understanding the scheme's normative location as it shows the welfare priority of the government. Hence, the next section analyses the financial allocation to ICPS during the last 10 years. Further, the structural framework of any scheme derives its legitimacy from a certain normative framework. Consequently, unmasking the relationship between programmatic structure with inherent normativity exposes the hidden power effects of mainstreaming. Thus, the next section unearths the relationship between the ICPS structural framework and the underlying normative context of neoliberalism. The last section concludes by summarising the analysis of the above two sections.

Methodology

Content analysis is applied within the governmentality framework to analyse the functional, structural, and normative framework of ICPS. Governmentality is "the scientific beliefs and associated technologies that govern conduct. It concerns the ways governments and other social actors draw on knowledge to construct policies and practices, especially those that create and regulate subjectivities" (Bevir 2010 p.438). In this sense, governmentality is the "contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self" (Foucault 1997, p.225). Hence, the focus of the chapter is to unmask the underlying notion of the technology of domination and the technology of self in the texts of ICPS. The technology of self is premised on the process of subject formation derived from diverse political rationalities such as neoliberal governmentality. Here, neoliberal governmentality explicates the process through which individuals are regulated externally as market agents as well as encouraged to develop themselves as autonomous, self-interested individuals as human capital by continuously refining their skills, attitudes, and knowledge.

Under this regime, individuals perceive their resources and skills as human capital for investment and profits. Neoliberalism, with its perspective that humans are fundamentally irrational, the conduct of their 'conducts' requires manipulation of their environment by inventing behavioural technology. Peeters (2017) expounded three kinds of techniques for behavioural modification for manufacturing responsibility. One is, reciprocal governance expects reciprocity in exchange for access to social services. Second, is choice engineering which modifies individuals' behaviour by manipulating the psychological mechanisms underlying the choices they make. Third is the training and treatment for the individuals who are self-destructive and as per the assessment of experts need behaviour alteration. These behavioural technologies enable individuals to realise their potential to compete in the market as

rational actors and pursue self-interest. Hence, three categories of children covered under the ICPS and their parents are the target of behavioural technologies.

Within the overarching conceptual context, content analysis has been used for analysing the text and to frame the ICPS. Content Analysis is one of the well-established methods for analysing text (Flick 2009: 323). To conduct the content analysis I created the codes in line with the study framework to articulate information and phenomena through conceptual categories of technology of domination and technology of self. Further, the codes were classified and subjected to analysis to establish a correlation among them. This process culminated in the selection of key codes premised on the relationship observed. The selected key codes incorporated under the above conceptual categories are Structural Framework: Technology of domination and Neoliberal Subjectivities: and Technology of self (See Annexure 1 for a list of codes and their relationship).

As per the purpose of this chapter, the two documents, namely ICPS Guideline 2014 and Mission Vatsalya Guidelines 2024, have been used for the content analysis. The former document is the revised guideline of ICPS whereas the latter is the guidelines of Mission Vatsalya in which ICPS is subsumed. ICPS Guideline 2014 is selected as a document for content analysis as it is the latest document delineating the framework for the operation of ICPS before the integration of ICPS in Mission Vatsalya. Similarly, Mission Vatsalya Guidelines 2024 is used for the content analysis because it is the latest operational guideline of ICPS after ICPS subsumed in Mission Vatsalya. In this way, both documents capture the normative underpinning of ICPS in two temporal nodes. The researcher has deliberately avoided a comparative analysis of these two documents and rather focuses on the normative uniformity spread across the texts in both documents. This is because the scope of this study is limited to understanding the normative mooring of ICPS and not to capture the continuity and change in the functional and structural framework of the programme.

The chapter has used statistical techniques for analysing secondary data of the national as well as Karnataka budgetary allocation, disbursement, expenditures, and human resources on the various components of ICPS, child protection, and children. Looking into the scope of the study, I preferred to limit myself to mostly 6 years (2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22) budgetary and financial documents. But to understand the trend of budget allocation and expenditure for the last 10 years, I also referred to some previously analysed reports by various social agencies on child budgets and triangulated those figures with Government budgetary documents.

As this work is an attempt to derive the link between ICPS and PWC, the textual analysis is premised on the methodological tool of Neoliberal Governmentality. Neoliberal governmentality explicates the process through which individuals are regulated as market agents and promoted to develop themselves as autonomous, self-interested individuals.

Childhood and the Related Notion of Child Protection in ICPS

The epistemic terrain of childhood is marred with contestation and conflict. The spectrum of childhood discourse is marked by two extremes characterised by 'kiddie libbers' (Foster and Freed 1972, Farson 1974, Holt 1975) and the 'child savers'. Whereas the former claims that children have equal rights as adults, the latter's notion is grounded in the belief that childhood is the stage of innocence and

immaturity, thus children are dependent on adults for their protection. However, there is a discourse of childhood that sits in between these two extremes and strives to strike the balance between the two. As per the proponents of this school of thought, children have an evolving capacity to make decisions so that "protecting children and protecting their rights are… not necessarily oppositional but can be complementary objectives" (Franklin 1986, p 17). Hence, any mechanisms and strategies of protection must include the views of the children. In other words, the right to protection and care must include the right to self-determination of children. Supporting this view, MacCormick (1976) argues that as per the age and capacity of children, the protection of their interests could be safeguarded by a differential blend of paternalistic and permissive approaches.

Moreover, Eekelaar (1986) makes a distinction between children and adults by giving differential treatment to the right to make a mistake for both. He makes it clear that while the right to make mistakes is the key right for adults, in the case of children it is not simple. Children can exercise the right to mistakes only when there is no conflict between basic and developmental rights and with the autonomy of the children. In case of conflict between the two sets of rights, basic and developmental interests override the autonomy interest. Otherwise, self-determination should be encouraged as much as possible. Analogously, Michael Freeman (1992), advocates for children's "decision-making capacities" but with caution to keep "the dangers of complete liberation" in mind. Hence, contra to liberationists who advocated obliterating the legal division between children and adults, this school wants to alleviate the status of children in society by promoting "child-sized citizenship", a neologism coined by Jan (2004), that closely entwines "protecting children" with "protecting children's rights" (Archard 2014). It means recognising children's right to self-determination but to the extent that it should not put children in danger.

The normative grid of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is centered around the notion of child-sized citizenship. UNCRC sees child participation as a necessary condition for child protection. Child protection is enshrined as a right to survival and maximum development in Article 6 of the UNCRC, which along with child participation (Article 12), non-discrimination (Article 2), and best interests of the child (Article 3), is designated as a 'general principle' of child rights. With this, UNCRC General comment 13 reads, "Empowerment and participation should be central to childcare giving and protection strategies and programmes"[11]. Here, UNCRC by devising the principle of the 'evolving capacity of children,'[12] strives to defuse the tension between viewing children as 'competent social actors' as well as 'victims' of abuse. This principle has been formulated to acknowledge that children of all ages are persons capable of possessing rights. This method takes into account the premise that the developing abilities of individual children are relevant to determining which specific rights they possess (Cowden 2016 p.74). It acknowledges children's ability to exercise specific rights develops over time and should be recognised in the context of their individual growth and maturity.

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[11] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13: The Right of the Child to Freedom from all Forms of Violence, CRC/C/GC/13, 18 April 2011, 3.

[12] UNCRC, Article 3

The concept of childhood and the related notion of child protection of ICPS is premised on the epistemological framework of the UNCRC. One of the aims of ICPS is to guarantee children's right to Survival, Development, Protection, and Participation necessitates prioritising the child's best interest at the time of conceptualising and executing the child protection programmes. This also includes adopting proactive steps to uphold the children's right to grow within a nurturing and loving family ambience, reinforced by a robust social safety net that supports families in providing optimal care. (Mission Vatsalya Guidelines 2022, p.2).

Similarly, the ICPS guideline reads: "Child protection is integrally linked to every other right of the child (2014, p.6). Relatedly, in the ICPS framework children are considered a key player in the management of CCI. As per rule 40 of the JJ Model Rules 2016, the constitution of children committees for the management of CCIs is mandatory. Children shall be encouraged to participate and given adequate weightage in the planning of activities such as play, food, recreational activities, etc.

Financial Implication

While children are around 40% of India's population, their share in the Union Budget is insignificant and shows a declining trend. It fell to 2.35% in 2022-23(BE) as compared to 3.39 percent in 2017-18 and much lower than 4.76 percent in 2011-13. The National Plan of Action for Children, 2016, suggested that "at least 5% of the Union Budget must be spent on schemes and programmes directly related to children". Yet the budget for children has never crossed the magic figure of 5 percent. The Union Government's allocation for child protection in 2022-23 is only 0.038% of the total Union Budget. Although the allocation spiked from the last three years' budget, still lower than actual spending in 2018-19.

Figure (1): Union Government spending on Children and Child Protection
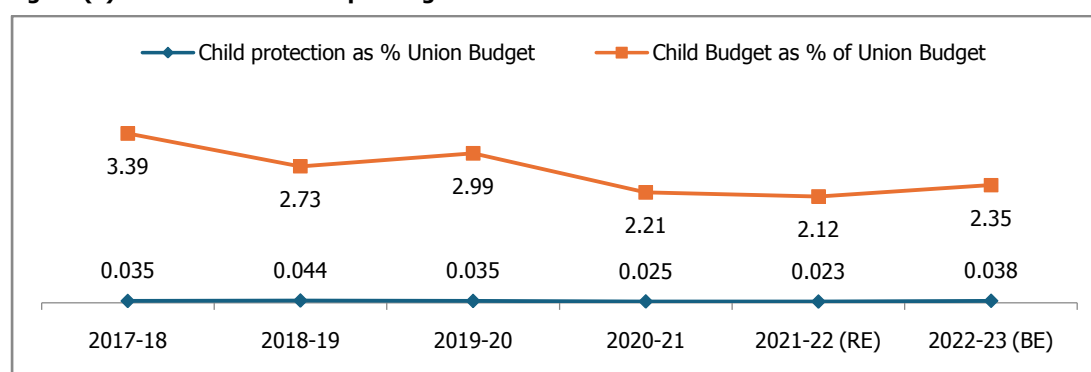
Note: RE-Revised Estimates, BE-Budget Estimates; Source: Union Budget, various years.

Further, statement 12 in the 2022-23 Union Budget proposes a total of 159 programmes/schemes. It is a jump of 31 percent in the number of programmes in comparison to the earlier budget. However, there is a twist here. This significant increase of 159 programmes/schemes across 24 Departments/Ministries does not reflect in the corresponding hike in the share of children in the Union Budget. When compared, it plummets to 2.35 per cent in 2022-23 from 2.46 per cent in 2021-22.

The low level of budgetary outlay for child protection has remained a source of concern over the years. In 2019-20, there was a 107% jump in the CPS outlays from 2018-19 (BE). However, the trend of rising outlays under ICPS has not been carried further in the following Union Budgets. The budget estimates for ICPS report the same allocation of Rs.1,500 Crore as was in 2019-20 (BE), which further declined by 40% in 2021-22. It is also to mention that the resource demanded by MWCD for ICPS in 2021-22 was Rs. 1,500 Crore. It shows a 40% gap between projected demand and the actual allocation to the MWCD. Further, the allocation of Rs 1,472.17 Crore in the 2022-23 budget for Mission Vatsalya is still lower than the allocation of Rs 1,500 Crore for the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) alone in 2020-21, which has been now merged under Mission Vatsalya.

Figure (2): Union Government spending on ICPS (Rs. Crore)
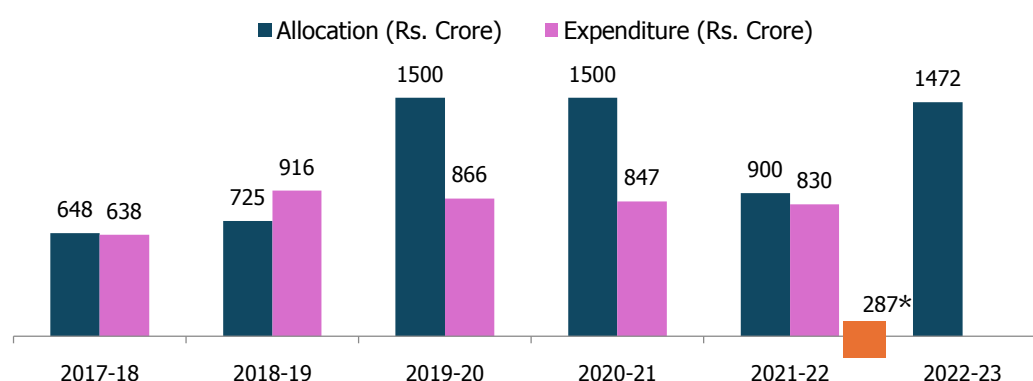
Note: The figure for 2021-22 expenditure is revised estimates for 2021-22; * expenditure on ICPS till 31st January 2022. Source: MWCD budget, Union Budget Document, Various years

In the last 10 months of the fiscal year 2021–2022, a dismal 31% of the outlay was utilised. (Figure 3). Therefore, spending the remaining 69% within two months would be challenging, or spending quality would be very poor. This picture was gloomy in the recent past also. CBGA report (2014) states that the total share of expenditure on child budget has never been more than 0.65% of GDP. The budget allocation and expenditure analysis in India's Shadow report to UNCRC raised the concern of declining budget allocation for children in the Central Government's Budget. While state share expenditure on children fell from 4.28 percent to 4.22 percent between 2007–08 and 2009–10, the federal government's budgetary allocation to children climbed only a little from 5.08 percent to 5.09 percent between 2007–08 and 2011–12. It suggests that even the meagre funds designated for the execution of children's rights are being underutilized (CRC 20 BS Collective, 2012, p.20).

Thus, the budgetary allocation for child protection and rights seems to be a smoke screen, particularly when it has been noticed that the major chunk of these subsidies goes to the large corporate and manufacturing units (Haq 2014).

Why the declining trend?

Despite being a state-sponsored programme, ICPS guidelines (2014, p.8) place the responsibility of child safety squarely on the shoulders of the family. Nevertheless, it states that the family has had the support of various stakeholders like the community, the government, and civil society. Analogously, the guidelines (ibid, p.11) explicate that child protection does not fall solely within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Instead, it sees the execution of ICPS as a joint responsibility of the government and civil society, with federal and state governments ultimately responsible for oversight and accountability. Relatedly, the state and Centre provide less than the minimum required fund to ICPS and in line with the market model expect institutions such as DCPUs and CCIs to mobilise the balance amounts from private sectors as Mission Vatsalya Guidelines (2022, p.2) urge to "Encourage private sector partnerships and interventions to support children".

In this way, competition among institutions to mobilise financial resources is unleashed. The institutions that will be able to mobilise most resources and consequently able to run CCIs efficiently would be graded high as stated in Mission Vatsalya Guidelines (2022, p.42). The declining trend of financial resource allocation seems to be a deliberate move to push ICPS to operate on the market principle of competition, and it will continue for years ahead.

ICPS Structural Framework: Technology of Domination

Good Governance

The ICPS guideline (2014 p.9) point 10 with the title "Good governance, accountability, and responsibility" stresses the necessity of a transparent decision-making process within a child protection system. As per the guideline, it will not only make a child protection system productive and efficient but also hold everyone in the system, including institutions and the state, accountable and make them responsible. This also stresses the public disclosure of performance evaluation reports of service providers at every service tier. Children's ease of access to performance evaluation reports by crafting them as child-friendly is specifically noted in the guideline.

The above provision of ICPS falls very much under the ambit of The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)[13] approach which lays greater emphasis on good governance. The notion of good governance is premised on the understanding that without improving the efficiency of the state and creation of effective institutions new development strategy will not give the desired result. The concept of good governance puts greater emphasis on the improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the state by using market mechanisms. Thus, neoliberalism recognises the fact that the state is important for the effective functioning of markets, at the same time market-like mechanisms are considered important for the effective functioning of the state.

Moreover, to improve the performance of state bureaucracy PWC advocates for the incorporation of the system of internal incentive and reward in state machinery. In addition to this, it is considered important that the State should promote competition between public agencies and private

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[13] In line with the PWC, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach was adopted in 1999 and reviewed in 2001 to "help poor countries and their development partners strengthen the impact of their common efforts on poverty reduction" (World Bank 2001: 'Reviewing Poverty Reduction Strategy Program).

firms to make public agencies more competitive. In line with the principle of competition, ICPS introduced a grading system. Mission Vatsalya Guidelines (2022, p.42) specifically instructs state governments to conduct evaluations of the CCIs and grade them periodically. Guidelines make it mandatory for state governments to develop parameters and indicators for grading considering factors such as the infrastructure quality, service provision, and well-being of children. Here, the well-being of children includes the aspects of health, and education as well as restoration, and rehabilitation of children. Guidelines suggest that the state government take support of NIPCCD in developing grading.

Further, PWC's idea of good governance underlines that participation, transparency, and accountability will reinforce the democratic institution and practices which in turn facilitate the process of inclusive development. It is considered that the participation of civil society organisations and the poor in the governance process is crucial for inclusive development. In line with this understanding, ICPS stresses the participation of civil society and private organisations in one of the provisions of ICPS guidelines (2014, p.10) with the title "Partnership Building and Community Empowerment". ICPS guidelines highlight the importance of collaborative relationships between governmental institutions, civil society organisations encompassing communities, and corporate entities not merely in the execution but also programme development of ICPS.

In line with the above context, PWS underscores the need to devolve and decentralise the functional and structural framework of ICPS.PWS sees this as a prerequisite to infusing vitality into the ICPS system by enhancing its transparency, accountability, participation, and efficiency. Along the same line, ICPS guidelines (2014, p.10) focus on "Decentralisation and flexibility to focus on local needs". Guidelines underline the necessity of need-based decentralisation of the planning and execution of ICPS's services at the different tiers of administration. The distribution of human resources will align with the service demands to ensure high-quality child protection services.

Identify Risks and Vulnerabilities Affecting Children

Mission Vatsalya Guidelines (2022, p.2) explicitly stresses the need to enhance the child protection system and mechanisms at the family and community level. It makes the case of arming families and communities with the skills, attitude, and knowledge to recognise protection risks and vulnerabilities impacting children. It also directs to establish and advocate preventive measures shielding children from situations predisposing them to vulnerability, risk, and abuse.

Identifying risk is key for a rational actor as only then can she or he "calculate the best means of providing security against the risk" (Dean 2009, p.195). By doing so they take steps to boost his or her autonomy and minimise dependence on the state and others. It is the process of neoliberal responsibilisation. What is significant here is to "prevent certain risks from being taken" (Ewald 2002 p.296). It is based on the notion that social problems are the outcome of individuals' behaviours and as humans are not inherently rational actors but rather driven by impulses and instincts, needs to be trained and manufactured to inculcate responsible behaviours[14].

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[14] Foucault called it called 'practices of the self' and Rose termed it 'ethical reconstruction'.

However, some people are more irrational than others. Hence, the neoliberal paradigm divides the population into two categories. One is people exhibiting advanced risk management capacities so they don't require any support. Two, are those individuals who have reduced capability to mitigate their risk. The disadvantageous and marginalised populations such as vulnerable children and families, CNCP, and CCL[15] fall under the second category. Put succinctly in the neoliberal lexicon, they are at risk and high-risk population. They need external intervention for risk mitigation and "technology of agency" is an effective tool in this direction (Dean 2009, p.196).

Thus, under the ICPS provision as part of the technology of the agency vulnerable children and vulnerable families are empowered so that they are enabled to manage their risks with the purpose of prevention. It is facilitated through collaborative engagements with experts such as professionals, bureaucrats, activists, and service providers. Theat-risk population shares a common identity such as CNCP, CCL, etc., and strong bonding that links them with others "to engage in their own self-management and political mobilisation" (Dean 2009, p.222). This creates a site of ethical reconstruction in the form of associations and aggregates which Rose termed a "community". However, the neoliberal community's[16] nature is very different from the traditional community as a community in a new avatar became an aggregate of self-responsible agents with a common goal of mitigating the expert-constructed 'risk' by expert-devised technical solutions.

It is in this light, that ICPS's community serves as a site of 'manufacturing the responsibility' for the ethical reconstruction of targeted children and families by identifying the protection risks and preventing the risk of any kinds of protection hazards.

Horizontal Government

The sacred triangle of the state-corporation-NGOs is the key mode of public-private partnership which is termed by Dingwerth (2004) ashorizontal organisational networks comprised of a tripartite alliance of civil society organisations (typically NGOs), private sectors (market-based), and state actors. It has been a notable neoliberal arrangement of power in child welfare and all aspects of neoliberal governance. Under new arrangements, clearvariances between public and private realms become progressively vague and flexible. It is because power is diffused across networks of action that navigate the legal-constitutional boundaries delineating the state from civil society (Morison 2000). Post-1991 globalisation and economic liberalisation, the Indian state witnessed the rise of horizontal governance to sustain and implement neoliberal rationality in the social domain.

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[15] ICPS covers three categories of children namely Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP), Children in Conflict with the Law (CCL), and Children in contact with the law. Apart from this, at-risk and vulnerable children are also covered under the ICPS.

[16] …the 'birth of community' in a new form, it is not as the traditional bonds and hierarchies of small-scale human association such as the village but as the transitory, overlapping, multiple relations of affinity and identifications felt by self-responsible subjects…groups of various kinds have come to understand themselves, their futures, and their needs in terms of risks, with the assistance of a range of specialists and tutors in the identification and management of risk (Dean 2009, p.222).

Following the same line of reasoning, the governance mechanism of ICPS is characterised by governance-at-distance[17] with a hybrid structure incorporating government, civil society, and private agencies. There are four main categories of governing agencies that form the ICPS implementation structure. The first group is the State Child Protection Society[18] (SCPS) comprised of both civil society and government representatives. SCPS is registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860, and functions under the overall supervision and control of the DWCD. SCPS is the topmost agency for the implementation, supervision, and monitoring of ICPS and all other child protection schemes/programmes and agencies/institutions at the State level. Here, the relationship between the state and civil society is characterised by intra-agency collaboration where decisions have been taken through mutual discussion between Civil Society representatives and state actors. SCPS provides the collaborative space for state and civil society to set the direction of ICPS.

The second set of ICPS agencies, for example, the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), and the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) is represented exclusively by civil society actors, and they work in close convergence with other entities within the ICPS framework. It is interesting to note that before the genesis of ICPS, CWC was working in consultation with the District Collector. However, after the birth of ICPS, CWC was mandated to coordinate with DCPO. CWC is the quasi-judicial body authorised to set the future course of action for the CNCP and DCPU has the responsibility to implement the decision taken by CWC.

The third set, such as the Department of Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU), Women and Child Development (DWCD), District Child Protection Unit[19] (DCPU), and State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA), etc. includes government agencies taking the lead in the implementation of ICPS. The DCPU is headed by DCPO who is responsible for developing the child protection plan and supervises its implementation in the district. DCPU reports to the District Commissioner.

Nature of Human Resources

This aspect of ICPS is very much in line with India's post-1991 structural adjustment programme. A neoliberal state restructures its functions in line with the market principle of efficiency. This efficiency is achieved through the "technology of performance which includes "the devolution of budgets, the setting

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[17] The term is coined by Rose as elaborated by Gupta *et al* (2006, p.277)" Neoliberalism works by multiplying sites for regulation and domination through the creation of autonomous entities of government that are not part of the formal state apparatus and are guided by enterprise logic. This government-at-a-distance involves social institutions such as nongovernmental organizations, schools, communities, and even individuals who are not part of any centralized state apparatus and are made responsible for activities formerly carried out by state agencies. Neoliberalism thus represents a shift in the rationality of government and the shape and nature of states."

[18] SCPCRs are created under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005. The commission monitors the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012 and the JJ Act 2015. Maharashtra formed the SCPCR in 2007, followed by Karnataka SCPCR in 2009, Odisha in 2010, and Tamil Nadu in 2012. In Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, SCPCR came into existence in 2013.

[19] The DCPU and SCPS have now been elevated to being statutory bodies that each state government is obligated to establish under the Government of India 2015 (Section 106). Moreover, Section 2(26), Government of India 2015 defines the DCPU as the focal point to ensure the implementation of this Act and other child protection measures in the district. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rules, 2016 (JJ Model Rules 2016), framed under this Act provides 26 specific and one additional broad enabling child protection function that the DCPU has to perform.

of performance indicators, 'benchmarking', the establishment of 'quasi-markets' in expertise and service provision, the 'corporatisation' and 'privatisation' of formerly public services, and the contracting-out of services are all more or less technical means for locking the moral and political requirements of the shaping of conduct into the optimisation of performance"(Dean 2009, p.197).

ICPS is also designed on market principles and neoliberal technology of performance is one of the key dimensions of the neoliberal operationalisation of ICPS. The ICPS staff are employed on a contract basis. The performance indicators are crafted for the assessment of the work of contracted and outsourced staff. As per the provision of the ICPS, human resources would be recruited on a contractual basis. The engagement would be provisioned for a minimum of three years. In those cases where performance is satisfactory, it may be extendable for 5 years. Consolidated remuneration, with integrated increment provisions predicated on performance, may be provided to them. The underlying assumption behind the performance-based assessment is that it will make the execution of the scheme effective by fostering lean, dynamic, and responsive governance tailored to children's needs (MoWCDn.d).

In this way, ICPS personnel became "'calculating individuals'" within 'calculable spaces', subject to particular 'calculative regimes'" (Dean 2009, p.197) and whose performance would be overseen against the progress on objective parameters against well-defined Outputs and Outcomes Mission Vatsalya Guidelines (2022, p.2). In this neoliberal framework, the ICPS staffing pattern operates as explained in the next section.

Neoliberal Subjectivity: Technology of Self

Skill Development: Supporting Gig Economy

One of the key interventions of ICPS is to make the Skill Development of children an integral part of CCI and non-institutional care. This should be operationalised by orientating children about skill development. With this, there should be an effort to not merely provide them with information about skill development but also register children in skill development courses (Mission Vatsalya Guidelines 2022, p.38). Skill development gained momentum in post-reform social policy in India. It incorporated the skill development programme (SDP) as a tool to empower youth so that they make use of new economic opportunities rather than becoming obstacles to state development.

The neoliberal confluence of network enterprise with horizontal governance reinvented the workplaces in the form of shopping malls, industrial parks, and special economic zones. This necessitated a demand for a new set of skills driven by behavioural change. These skills are less defined in terms of "dexterity or technical knowledge" but more in terms of "soft skill" (Unni and Rani 2008). In this sense, 'soft skills' are instrumental in not merely imparting technical know-how to trainees but also crafting their personality and 'embodied performance' in the workplace. Put succinctly, workers are required to not only perform their technical tasks efficiently but also work on their personality and behaviour as per the requirements of the job (McDowell 2009). It is in this context that SDP has gained its prominence.

Life Skill Education is one of the main tools to impart soft skills during SDP. This derives its programmatic legitimacy from WHO's model which defines LSE as "abilities for adaptive and positive

behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO1994, p.1). It further lists a set of 10 skills including "decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, and coping with stress" to enhance the "Psychosocial competence" (ibid).

The purpose of vocational training and LSE is to make children "self-reliant, self-directing, employable citizens" to adapt in tune with "the predictable development tasks" such as employment (Adkins 1984 p.45-46 cited in Maithrey, 2019). Maithreyi (2019, p.255) says that "external conditions affecting an individual's life were made problems of individual psychological development". By placing focus on the core idea of liberalism constituting "rational, freely choosing, isolated equal individuals" (Sullivan, 1977 Cf Maithrey, 2019), LSE invisibilises the social, economic, and political locations of individuals that determine their capability to choose or exercise agency (Jeffrey, 2005). The significant absence of social components such as caste, gender, class, etc. in LSE makes it individualised with an exclusive focus on 'the individual deficit' of the child (Maithreyi 2019, p.267). This sense of deficit makes children work on themselves to fit into changing exploitative work conditions without questioning the broader oppressive labour regime. This creates a conducive environment for the emergence of the gig economy.

Ethical Reconstruction of Interior

ICPS seems to be operating as a tool of governance with the specific objective of transforming the subjective world of children as per the changing requirements of the market through employing behaviour-changing interventions. Premising its epistemic root in rationalities of "'coproduction', 'personalisation' and 'soft' or 'libertarian paternalism'" ICPS appears to be a connecting link between the 'social space' of children and the realm of the market (Pykett 2012 p. 217). This is being operational in CCIs through the process of responsibilisation.

The tapestry of responsibilisation is weaved through engaging with the diverse behavioural attributes such as the desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs of children. The purpose of responsibilisation is not merely to foster economic and social agency but also healthy, and productive subjects. Neoliberal responsibilisation stress prevention relies on mechanisms of self-regulation to make children act 'responsibly' of their own accord.

Therefore, responsibilisation intervention is pivoted on the psychological mechanisms of individual choice and application of techniques such as counselling, training, and "nudging" (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009). In this context, ICPS has initiated a programme named 'Support, Advocacy and Mental Health Interventions for Children in Vulnerable Circumstances And Distress' (SAMVAD). This is an initiative started in association with NIMHANS[20] for offering counselling and additional psychological well-being services for children and caregivers symbolising a stride toward fostering competencies in psycho-social counselling care. As per, the guideline it is a much-needed service for both children and caregivers (Mission Vatsalya Guidelines 2022, P.46).

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[20] The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences is an apex medical institution dedicated to mental health and neuroscience education in Bangalore, India.

Individualising the Discourse, Tightening the Control

The target groups[21] of child protection under ICPS are drawn from the ranks of the marginalised population. This characteristic is very much in line with the post-structural adjustment paradigm which is marked by the shift from universal income support and services to discretionary subsidies and 'hot spot' interventions. Also, it indicates the setting up of the unethical regime of control directed to regulate the so-called 'unruly behaviour' of marginalised children. It is also linked with the construction of a morally corrupt underclass of poor and marginalised beneficiaries.

The ICPS guideline (2014 p.72) makes it mandatory to craft "a child protection data management system" to not merely frame and execute efficacious intervention strategies but also oversee their outcomes. In line with this provision, the central government has set up "an integrated, live, web-based database on children including child tracking systems and a Management Information System (MIS)" (ibid). The provincial governments and administrations have the responsibility of maintaining and updating the data of the child tracking system and Management Information System at the sub national and lower administrative levels. With this, there is the provision of continuous assessment of the ICPS's structures and activities and based on the assessment's outcome, action for course correction needs to be taken. It enables overseeing the advances in objective metrics concerning well-delineated Outputs and Outcomes indicators.

The explosion of numerous well-being indicators hints at the state's move to control the lives of children and their families by establishing a system of hyper-surveillance. This provides the social workers a context in which he/she become instruments of the state to start working on families instead of working with families. The associated departure is discernable in the shifting role of social workers from social activists to techno-managers. Put succinctly, under ICPS, social workers are more inclined to design and implement the market-oriented individualised solution delinked from broader socio-economic such as technology of ethical reconstruction, and life skill education.

Moreover, ICPS is facilitated by an integrated data system that includes individually coded data related to health, income, justice, benefits, child protection, education, and employment (MoWCD, n.d.). Essentially owned by the government, the data analyses are used to evaluate interventions offered by third-party contractors who will link the information provided by children for specific purposes with all the other data held by the state. This process will furnish assessments of whether interventions have been 'successful'. It is a clinical intervention to protect the most disadvantaged children without referencing the economic policy responsible for that suffering. Instead of blaming the children and their families for their abysmal situation.

Further, ICPS is based on the neoliberal idea of individualism. Evans and Giroux, (2015) argue that the focus on individualism disguises the structural factors responsible for the socio-economic and

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[21] The ICPS provides preventive, statutory and rehabilitation services to vulnerable child including, but not limited, to children of potentially vulnerable families and families at risk, children of socially excluded groups like migrant families, families living in extreme poverty, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes, families subjected to or affected by discrimination, minorities, children infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS, orphans, child drug abusers, children of substance abusers, child beggars, trafficked or sexually exploited children, children of prisoners, and street and working children.

political marginalisation of children and aggravating disparity. However, ICPS provides the sponsorship[22] tore in force the families' ability to take care of children by addressing the root causes such as poverty. It is directed to support the children (of institutional care) by providing Rs. 2,000 per month to their families. However, it is just nominal financial support without much substantial impact. Moreover, the core of ICPS is to enable children to realise the goal of personal growth by building life skill education and other similar means is very much in line with Gilbert's (2013) view that the neoliberal focus is on individuality and personal attainment. Though, there is the provision of rehabilitation of children but family strengthening component is almost absent in such effort.

Besides, it purposely masks larger structural impacts on children and their families. It is done by designing an individual-centered solution for the child and their family. This leads to individualised pathology advanced by the more science-centric professions, such as medicine or psychology. As elaborated in the previous section, the psychological and behavioural dimensions of vulnerability and maltreatment are emphasised. Science-centered research knowledge is privileged and selectively utilised. In this relation, ICPS stresses the need for a child-cantered approach and individual care plan. The ICPS delivers services to children as per the individual care plan (ICP). The ICP is developed for each child under the supervision of professionals and experts. This mantra provides a potent over-simplification that ignores the relational context of children (Featherstone, White & Morris, 2014). In this instance, intergenerational neglect and related trauma are portrayed as preventing innocent children from becoming effective economic citizens (Welshman, 2013).

Conclusion

The formulation of ICPS as a welfare-oriented programme happened at a temporal juncture of the evolution of social welfare policy in India when the rhetoric of inclusive growth and right-based approach dominated the state's redistributive function. However, a meticulous skimming of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper establishes the strong link between this rhetoric and the objective of the Post-Washington Consensus i.e. neoliberalism with a human face. The shared temporal landscape makes it imperative to analyse the normative moorings of ICPS in the context of the basic tenets of PWC. The analysis of the operational guidelines of ICPS indicates the ICPS's normative embeddedness in the Technology of domination and the technology of self. This is further ascertained by the declining trend of budgetary allocation to ICPS. The visibility of this linkage seems to unearth the enmeshing of the ICPS's welfare-oriented goal in the neoliberal structural and functional imperative. Therefore, it indicates that ICPS aims to realise the rights of children through neoliberal mechanisms and strategies, and in this process, a disjunction as well as entangling between the welfare goal with neoliberal operationalisation may be discernible and imminent. Consequently, two distinct areas of research necessitate focused investigation emerging from this analysis. First, the efficacy of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) in attaining its welfare objectives hinges on the degree of alignment or discord between these welfare goals and the neoliberal strategies and implementation frameworks in

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[22] The preventive measures focus on strengthening the families' ability to take care of children by addressing the root causes such as poverty in institutions. ICPS's provision of Sponsorship falls under this category. However, the support provided under sponsorship is just Rs 2000 which is negligible.

practice. Second, it is imperative to examine how any identified disjunctions between welfare objectives and neoliberal operationalisation might influence the effectiveness of ICPS in addressing child protection issues.

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Annexure 1: Coding Tables

Structural Framework: Technology of domination			
Good Governance	**Risks and vulnerabilities**	**Horizontal government**	**Human Resources**
Participation, transparency, accountability, competition, grading, performance evaluation	Prevention, Technology of agency, neoliberal community	Public and Private Partnership, governance-at-distance	The technology of performance, contract, and outsourcing.

Skill Development	**Responsibilisation**	**Individualisation**
Life Skill Education, soft skills, self-reliance	Counselling, Training, Nudging	Management Information System, Individual Care Plan, Child-Centered Approach

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