

**Higher Education and Social Justice in India: A Sociological Study of the
Marginalized Section Students**

ABSTRACT

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Higher Education is regarded as one of the vital elements for national development. It is a powerful tool for building a knowledge-based and helps the marginalized sections of the society to access the policies implemented by the government for their upliftment. India possesses a developed higher education system. Social inequalities in higher education are deep-rooted in the society. The state has to create opportunities for honing the skills, expanding manufacturing sector and rapid urbanization to throw ample opportunities of employment for the marginalized sections. The major challenge on offer is to develop an approach to ensure meaningful participation of marginalized sections. Higher Education is assumed to be the door-step to social esteem, expanded life options, intellectual stimulation. The diversity in higher education covers many areas. These are engineering colleges, medical colleges, government and other management institutes, various vocational training institutes etc. It is believed that the institutions of higher education will prove to be a major engine to attain social justice by virtue of creating equality of opportunity.

Social Justice is the fair and just relation between individual and society. Justice is natural and not to be enforced by any human-made law. Social Justice is reflected in Equity and Equality, and is often used as a synonym for “equal” opportunities or “equity”. The notion of equity is manipulated politically as the concept of equality and Social Justice is fabricated in the manner it is deemed to be necessary for democracy. All members of society deserve to be placed on equal footing so that they can realize their needs and potential.

‘Marginalization’ describes the overt actions or tendencies, where some people are considered to be undesirable or dysfunctional.

In my work, I have focused on four groups namely:

- (a) Schedule Castes
- (b) Scheduled Tribes
- (c) Minorities (Focus on Muslims)
- (d) Gender

Review of Literature

The literature on Social Justice and Education exists in a complex space that focuses on the development of society and the role of education in creating just social structures. Marxian perspective states that Social Justice is based on economic equality of all members of society.

Durkheim views education as an agent of proliferating social solidarity. **Parsons’** views education as a function of meritocracy.

The educational institutions are expected to equip knowledge in students and secure a meaningful place in society. This would help to foster and develop an egalitarian society. The existing educational patterns have failed to cater the needs of the students of marginalized sections who are vulnerable and face exclusion from the society. This has affected the interests of marginalized section students and increased marginality. Unplanned expansion of Colleges and Universities without adequate infrastructure and finance has diluted the quality of education. It has also failed to cater to the needs of the marginalized section of the students. Instead it has increased the difficulty to access higher education thereby increasing the social divide.

Statement of Problem

The numbers of institutions providing higher education have increased at a rapid pace. It is a serious matter of concern that, there has been a dearth of research in the field of higher education. various commissions and committees which have been set up time and again to improve higher education have proved to be eyewash. Few studies have been conducted at micro-level and their focus area is very circumscribed.

Research Methodology

The study is focussed on higher education and social justice and tests the hypotheses whether higher education in India has been discriminatory in nature so far, Representation of marginalized section students at higher education is disproportionate to their population, Socio-economic inequality in higher education in gender disparity and Marginalized section students are lagging behind on issues like access, equity and quality education. understand various theories of social justice relating to higher education, This is done by analysis of secondary data. It involves obtaining datasets from various reports, government documents and research studies pertaining. All the secondary data has been collected from various government reports, gazettes, records of University Grants Commission and reports of Ministry of Human Resource Development. Valuable information has been collected from internet, Jstor, NUEPA Journal and Indian Journal of Political Science and various other sources.

Data published in these records was in the form of tables. Intensive reviews of the related literature have been done to identify the tables and make them coherent with the objectives of the study. The tables mostly represent the status and conditions of marginalized section of society in higher education.

All the tables have been looked into to capture the pattern of disadvantages faced by the marginalized section of students in higher education. The tables are compared with each other with the help of results of other research work already published. The result thus arrived at, is used to test the hypotheses of the study and develop the broad pattern of marginalization in higher education.

Chapter 2

Social Justice and Education—A Theoretical Framework.

In this chapter, effort has been made to understand various theories of social justice. Some of the popular theories pertaining to education and social justice are;

Utilitarianism, who measured justice in terms of what was good, right, ethical, progressive and just.

Self-Perfectionism; which stressed that if everyone performs his expected role, it leads to creation of a just and egalitarian society.

Marxism says that notion of justice focuses on the fact that exploitation laid in the economic structure.

Ambedkarism

Ambedkar said that “Justice” was synonymous to liberty, equality and fraternity. Democracy exists if it is based on the principles of social democracy which is based on equality, liberty and fraternity.

Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach and Education

Sen said that most of the policies of higher education are in cognizance with the instrumental view of education. They prioritize development of human capital, with the objective to promote economic growth. He viewed education as a right. Sen’s approach gives a broad framework on social justice as a criterion for shaping universities. He said that education addresses not only need of human capital, it should also cater to the needs and aspirations of individuals. Sen’s capability approach also provides theoretical and conceptual insight in capitalist models in general, and university and higher educational institutions in particular.

Chapter3

Higher education and Marginalized Sections in India

In the previous chapter, the various theories which explained the correlation between education and social justice were discussed. It helped to give us a vision of how education helps to attain social justice. In this chapter, current status of higher education in India and how it has benefitted the marginalized section students will be studied. UGC is responsible for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of university and higher education in India. It provides funds, coordinate and maintain the high standards of institutions providing higher education.

At the time of independence, there were an abysmal number of 20 universities and 500 colleges in India. In 2014, the number of universities increased by about 34 times to 677. The number of colleges providing Higher Education rose to approximately 34,000 in number. According to the stats provided by the UGC, the numbers of institutions imparting higher education in the country have witnessed a comprehensive rise from 595 in 1950 to 42,388 in 2016-17. While the number of universities has shot up from 30 in 1950-51 to 895 in 2016-17.

In the aftermath of Globalization, the numbers of institutions imparting education at higher level have also increased at a tremendous pace. But even then Current status of Gender disparity can be inferred by the fact that total enrolment of male students is 55% while female students constitute 45%. In higher education the ratio has further declined. This is a very disturbing fact considering the various steps taken by the government to enhance the status of women in society. The enrolment of students belonging to SC, ST category students, OBC and Muslims is a far cry from the population percent.

There are various Constitutional Safeguards and Provisions for Education, Equality and Social Justice

From time to time, the Government of India has launched a number of schemes and programmes for the purpose of enhancing the participation of deprived classes in higher education. Due to the efforts of the Indian government, there is a tremendous increase of participation of marginalized section students in the institutions of higher learning. The Government has made it mandatory for all the institutions imparting higher education to provide 15% reservation to SCs, 7.5% reservation to STs.

In order to provide relevant and good quality higher education in an equitable manner the Government has proposed a number of measures to remove regional, social and gender disparities.

So we see that there has been a vast improvement in the field of higher education. All reforms and suggestions should focus on increasing the education of marginalized section of India and not just the literacy rate. Pragmatic measures can sufficiently motivate the marginalized students especially girls to pursue study and work simultaneously.

Despite all the articles the steps taken by the government for improving the representation of the Marginalized section Students, a lot of steps are desired and remain to be taken.

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Chapter 4

Higher Education, Access, Inequality and Social Justice in Contemporary India

In the last chapter we have seen that several efforts have been made by the government. Policy Interventions have been done to promote equality and social justice at higher education level. But, it is a pity that even after more than 70 years of independence, there is no single article in the constitution which directly adheres to the cause of these marginalized sections at the level of Higher Education

Access and Inclusion

Access and inclusion needs to be structured within the purview of knowledge societies, noting ‘Social justice has kinships and associations with notions of human and socio-economic rights, social inclusion, equity, and access to resources and capabilities for human wellbeing’. Privatization of education led to the opening of a large number of colleges. But whether its fruits reached to the marginalized section is an unanswered question. So, we can conclude that there is a huge gap in the ratio of population of the marginalized section vis-à-vis their participation ratio in the sector of higher education. This is a staggering reality which means that we are far from achieving social justice via the medium of higher education. Indiscriminate privatization without considering its fallibility has led to widening of the gap between the marginalized class students. The cultural and social traditions of our country have had a great effect on the education of the girl child. There is no dearth of schemes from the government side, but the modus operandi to approach and access those schemes is missing.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this study, I have tried to study the condition of the marginalized section students of India. This study conclusively points out the disparity amongst the Marginalized Sections of the Indian Society as far as Higher Education is concerned. The main problem in improving the condition of marginalized section students is that they have no access to the existing government policies so they are unable to take advantage of these policies and improve their condition.

Implementation of the policies by governments for the upliftment of the marginalized groups has been faulty. The gap between privileged and the marginalized groups has widened. As far as higher education is concerned, the students from the marginalized sections are discriminated vis-à-vis their counterparts in other societies.

In the era of Globalization, the government started to withdraw its hand gradually from the field of Higher Education. The intention of the government behind inviting private players in the field of higher education was to provide international expertise and exposure in India's lagging higher education. But this led to widening of the huge gap for the marginalized sections. The higher education in contemporary India became an expensive affair. Marginalized societies find it extremely difficult to survive in the current economic scenario as they lacked the resources to meet the expenses required for achieving higher education. So, it can be said that Higher education in India has been discriminatory in nature despite the effort of the government. Representation of Marginalized sections students at higher education is also not disproportionate to their population. Socio-Economic inequality in higher education also

reflected in Gender Disparity. Also, the Marginalized section students are lagging behind on the vital issues like access, equity and equality.

So, we can conclude that higher education in specific had been a mean of achieving higher mobility for the marginalized sections of the society. It provides a level playing field and a spring board to all those who aspire to live a life with dignity, success and social justice and equality. It is pertinent therefore, that the marginalized societies should be given opportunity to pursue higher education to bring paradigm shift in the social structure and to make them equal stake holders in the development of the nation.