

Abstract

Social Background of Students and Quality of Higher Education: A Study of Colleges at Kakatpur Headquarter, Odisha

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ABSTRACT

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The study is focussed on examining the social background of graduation students at two colleges located at Kakatpur, which is the block headquarters of Kakatpur district in Orissa. It is divided into five chapters. Chapter I discusses about the quality of higher education, higher education in Odisha, the review of literature, objectives, and hypotheses of the study and its methodology. Chapter II gives an analysis of the socio-economic profile of Kakatpur block and of the college students who formed part of the sample of study. Quality of education in the two colleges located at Kakatpur is discussed in chapter III. Chapter IV includes suggestions for improving the quality of education at those colleges. Finally chapter V briefly discuss the conclusion of the study about socio-economic background of students and quality of education at their colleges.

Education

UNESCO states that “Education is a human right for all human beings throughout life and that access must be matched by quality and sustained instruction to communicate a combination of knowledge and skill”. According to International Dictionary of Education, “Education is the total process of developing human ability and behaviour. It is a social process in which one achieves social competence and individual growth, carried in a selected, controlled setting which can be institutionalized as a school or college” (cited in Montry 2014).

Education is viewed as the gateway to all round development of human beings and society. Elementary and secondary education fulfils the need of common man, but higher education takes humankind ahead in the competitive world, raises critical issues and facilitates critical knowledge about society, creates innovative ideas and helps in growth of nations.

According to Ronald Barnett there are four predominant concepts of higher education: (1) Higher Education as the production of qualified human resources. Higher Education is seen as a process in which the students are counted as “Products” absorbed in the labor market. Thus Higher Education becomes input to the growth and development of business and industry. (2) Higher Education as training for a research career: In this view, Higher Education is preparation for

qualified scientists and researchers who would continuously develop the frontiers of knowledge. Here Quality is more about research publications and transmission of the academic rigor to do quality research. (3) Higher Education as the efficient management of teaching provision: Many strongly hold that teaching is the core of Educational Institutions. The tasks of Higher Education institutions focus on efficient management of teaching-learning provisions by improving the quality of teaching facilitating a higher completion rate among the students. (4) Higher Education as a matter of extending life chances: here higher education is viewed as an opportunity to participate in the development process of the individual through a flexible continuing Education mode (See Montry 2014:1-2).

But it should also have welfare motive as it helps in improving quality of individual and group life in a decisive manner. In the present globalised and liberalized world, we need to improve productivity and adopt an innovative spirit. This requires a well trained work force, high level of productivity, optimal application of existing technology and innovation as a means to improve competitiveness and growth.

It is observed that India's higher education system is the third largest in the world. But the emphasis has largely been on quantitative expansion of the university system. Educational policies and implementations of policies are sometimes responsible for poor quality of Higher Education. In the competitive world quality of Higher Education needs to be improved. Quality of Higher Education raises the strength of a nation. Indian Universities and Colleges are not able to provide Quality Education to the students. They lag far behind the developed countries on different parameters of quality of higher education. Indian universities function under the overall guidance, supervision and regulation by the University Grant Commission (UGC), and when it comes to Quality assessment of Universities and Colleges is done by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous body established by the University Grants Commission of India to assess and accredit institutions of higher education in the country. Engineering Education and business schools are monitored and accredited by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). Medical Education is monitored and accredited by the Medical Council of India (MCI). Similarly, Agricultural Education and research is monitored by the Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR). National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) controls all the teacher training institutions in the country.

Further, it is held that one of challenge of Indian higher education, is access of higher education to all. According to the Indian Constitution everyone is equal before law. According to United Nation (UN) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 declares, in Article 13, states that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education". However, those goals are not fulfilled yet because of regional imbalances, many socio-cultural disparities and economic disadvantages, though the government has introduced equity in policy level for inclusion of students from the disadvantaged and under privileged sections.

Quality Indicators of Higher Education

There are various dimensions of quality in Higher Education, if an educational institution produces high quality human resources, it can be said that their quality of education is high. The indicators of quality in higher education includes Student-Teacher Ratio, availability of reading materials and teaching aids, Teachers, Books, Journals, other documents in Libraries, Infrastructure, Curriculum, access to Information Technology as well Quality Research, employability etc. Where quality is better in institutions excellence would come automatically. The notion of quality is closer to the concept of efficiency, performance and productivity. Ensuring quality in Higher Education is amongst the foremost challenge being faced in India today. Some of the important Indicators of quality in Higher Education are discussed below:

Curriculum: The better inputs can produce better outputs. Quality of curriculum improves student's excellence. For quality up-gradation, the curriculum should be made multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary for its relevance in the present society. Still many universities and colleges have traditional curriculum.

Infrastructure: According to the UGC, infrastructure indicators include Library, Computer Centre, Class Room, Health Centre, Sport Facilities, Hostel, Guest House, Teacher's Housing, Canteen, Common Rooms, Gymnasium, Auditorium and Seminar Hall. But still Indian Universities lag behind these basic infrastructures facilities.

Academic indicators: This includes Student-Teacher Ratio, number of permanent teachers or teachers with PhD degrees, books per student, students per computers, etc. But these are crises

issues in many universities. Due to poor basic facilities and quality of teaching, student excellence is adversely affected.

Industry Linkages: Close linkages of higher education institutions with industries world facilitate better quality education and national development. But in India, there are insufficient levels of meaningful industry participation in aspects like curriculum development, research and faculty exchange programmes. Placement services in many universities are very limited resulting in a lack of co-ordination between employment seeking graduates and prospective employers who require suitably qualified candidates.

Management and Governance: The regulatory environment governing higher education in India has been debated quite a lot. In particular, the envisioned role of the private sector needs to be clearly defined, especially in wake of the need for more financial resources in higher education. It is noted that the higher education system suffers from an over-centralized structure and hence, needs proper decentralisation and guaranteeing meaningful autonomy to educational institutions.

Regulatory Environment: It is observed that regulatory environment governing higher education in India is characterized by uncertainty and conflicts between multiple regulatory authorities. The role of the private sector in Higher Education is considered essential, particularly in the context of a lack of adequate financial resources for higher education. However, the Working Group on Higher Education in the 12th Five-Year Plan (2012-17), noted that regarding there is also lack of clarity on funding pattern, incentives, and regulatory oversight”.

According to NAAC, as of June 2010, “not even 25 percent of the total Higher Education institutions in the country were accredited. Among those accredited, only 30% of the Universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level.”

Growth of Higher Education in Odisha

No single Higher Educational Institution in the state of Odisha before 1868. The Higher Education had been started in Odisha in the year 1868, when the British government established the Ravenshaw College at Cuttack (It has become University since 2006), Department of Law was attached to Ravenshaw College in 1881. In between 1868 and 1936, five colleges were established including a training college in 1923. Basically from 1936 to 1947 the progress was noticed in the field of general education and law, with establish only 13 colleges. From 1947 to

1985, Odisha made rapid growth in the higher education. The establishment of Sambalpur University, the Berhampur University in 1967, the Odisha University of Agriculture and technology in 1962 and Sadasiva Sanskrit Viswavidyalaya in 1981. During that time, three Medical Colleges, Engineering College, Research Institutes in Physics and Life Sciences, and an Art College, Teacher-Training Colleges and Law Colleges were established. In 1966, there were 76 colleges. In 1979, there were 138 colleges- both government 38 and non-government 100 with 92000 students from those 75000 boys and 17000 girls and 4027 college teachers. From 1980 to 1982, the number of colleges increased to 223, with 1, 12,386 students and 5,922 teachers. In 1983, there were 306 general colleges and 91 professional colleges under the 3 university, increase the number of colleges to 397, with postgraduate in 53 colleges and M.Phil facilities in 42 colleges. In 1985, the Junior College level classes were bifurcated and the Intermediate Level Two-Year programme becomes affiliated to the council of Higher Secondary Education. The number of colleges after up graduation to degree classes was 405 in 1985 in Odisha (Dash, 1990, in Mate, 2013).”The administration of Higher Education was being done by the Directorate of education and the Department of Education, government of Odisha. The Universities were autonomous and were partly financed by the state government. The privately arise institutions were controlled by a different division in the directorate. The state institute of education was established to promote teacher education and the council of higher secondary education to look after +2 studies. The state of Odisha had been separated from got separate from the state of Bihar in 1936, the condition of state in chaos during 1947. The domination of British was barrier to the progress. The Princely States contributed in poverty, absence of organized efforts, seen in between 1936-47. In 1986 elevated the Parala Junior College to a Degree College and the Maharaja Library therein has attained the highest watermark as a dependable institution for research.

Post-Independence India the Higher Education in Odisha include Degree and Post-Graduation Education, and Higher Secondary and +2 Vocational Educations, and no Central University in the State, 14 State Universities, 2 Deemed Universities and 3 Private Universities. Total 20 Universities are existing in the state of Odisha, when the report of task force in Odisha, (the Department of Higher Education) recommended that each district must be having 1 University. The Odisha has 30 districts, so expansion and establish of new university should be increase. In 2015, there were 97 government colleges, 787 aided colleges, 643 Block Grant Colleges, 571

Non-Governmental (unaided) colleges 287 Self-financing colleges, 14 other colleges and 43 aided Sanskrit colleges in the state.

At the time of Independence, there was only one university in the state which has increased to 20 including 3 new Private Universities. As well, the Centurion University of Technology Management Parala Khemundi, Sri Sri University Cuttack. Government has agreed in principle to establish the Xavier University of Management and Amrita Viswaya Vidyapitha University and Odisha State Open University. Besides there are 12 more proposals for establishment of University in Private sector, which are under consideration of state Government University in Private Sector, which are under consideration of State Government. The Accreditation Council NAAC has been recognized about 14% of colleges in Odisha.

The initiation of State Government is not only for Quantitative Expansion but also for Qualitative Improvement in Education. According to the Report of Task Force on Higher Education (2009), (Department of higher education, Govt. of Odisha) all degree colleges should adopt semester system and choice based credit programmers for the enhance quality of education and all vacant posts will be filled with permanent staff. Selected autonomous colleges may be made into branch campuses of university. Skills of teachers for enhancing teaching learning transaction, creating conducive academic environment, improving the learning, infrastructure, reforming examination system, need based revision of curriculum.

According to UGC 2009, the Odisha state higher education system is an average in rank. The key indicator of higher education is access, expansion, equity, inclusion, and lastly very important and essential indicator is quality. Quality is most important indicator of human development as well as socio-economic development of a region or nation. The first indicator for development of higher education, it is access, for achieve quality education. Access should be in all community and the entire region. In a country people will live in a decisive manner, when people fulfil their basic need. A common man fulfils their basic need when he/she aware about outside environment. For aware about outside of environment a human being will get proper education. So higher education facilitate to all the human being to think critically and aware about society and themselves. It is possible when access of education facilitate to all.

In the year 2015-16 the total number of admissions were 1,94,483. Out of this the percentage of GEN/OBC Category students who got admission were 87.21 percent, but the percentage of SC and ST were very low that is 7 percent for SC and 6 percent for ST category respectively.

As per gender distribution of general/OBC is concerned, in year 2015-16 Girls (53 %) admission was greater than boys (47%). But in case SC/ST the gender distribution in admission is opposite. The boys' admission in SC category in same year is 54% and ST category is 52%. Whereas, for girls it is 46% for SC and 47% for ST. Further, it is noted that SC/ST students got less admission than General/OBC students, because of their economic disadvantages, socially unprivileged, regional disparity in case of ST and gender disparity. So for development of unprivileged category, access of education can be achieved by erasing the disparity. Government should give emphasis on policy to maintain equity. Government should give priority to expand of universities and colleges to accept more enrolment and inclusion. In India, although equity can be achieved in public educational institution but implementation of policy is haphazard. In the educational sector many internal politics and corporate education institutions increased, which is directly excluding poor and unprivileged groups. To achieve quality of education government should promise access, expansion, equity, and inclusion. The inclusion is not only for students but also for teachers.

From the literature review, it emerges that there are several studies pertaining to quality of higher education from the perspective of external agencies and researchers. But the proposed study focuses on examining the quality of education focusing on the views of students and teachers who are direct stakeholders.

The study examines quality of education in terms of major quality indicators: (a) infrastructure facilities like building, classroom, library, labs and sports facilities, (b) student-teacher ratio, (c) curriculum, (d) use of information and communication technology used in teaching, (e) examination results, and (f) quality of teachers. For knowing about the quality of education, the views of students and teachers are obtained.

Objectives of the Study are: i) To examine the socio-economic background of college students at Kakatpur block headquarter in Odisha; ii) To know the quality of college education at Kakatpur in Odisha; iii) To make a comparative analysis of quality of education at the colleges located at Kakatpur in Odisha, and iv) To find out the views of college students and teachers for enhancing quality of college education.

Hypotheses of the study include: i) The majority of college students come from the socially economically advantaged sections of society; ii) The quality of college education is overall average at Kakatpur block headquarter in Odisha; iii) The quality of higher education varies across colleges located at Kakatpur block headquarter in Odisha; and iv) Certain measures are required to enhance the quality of college education.

Methodology

The research design of the study is descriptive. The strategy of research is mixed methods approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study uses both secondary and primary sources of data. The secondary data include relevant books, journal articles and government reports. As for primary sources, data has been collected from the field.

The tools of data collection include questionnaire, interview guide and group discussion. Interview guide was used for collecting data from teachers and college management regarding quality of education. Questionnaire was used to obtain data from students about their socio-economic background and quality of education. Camera has been used in the field to capture the photos of infrastructure facilities and the voices of respondents.

Universe of the study: Considering the resource constraints and time availability, the colleges located at Kakatpur Block headquarters in Orissa are taken as the Universe of the study. Kakatpur Block is part of Puri district in the state of Odisha. It is a rural area. It is one of the tourist places in Odisha. Kakatpur is famous in Odisha for the River Prachi and Goddess Mangala.

Kakatpur Block headquarters has three colleges. These are: 1) Mangala Mahavidyalaya, which is a partially Government-aided co-education college and has graduation programs in arts, sciences, commerce streams, 2) Netrananda Shao Women's College, which is a block grant college for women only and has graduation programme in only arts, and 3) Sarala Residential Colleges, which is a private college and has only +2 sciences programmes. In the year 2016-17 Sarala Residential Colleges has introduced +3 B.Sc programme, hence there are only first year students.

The present study proposed to cover only graduation final (third) year students of the colleges at Kakatpur. But at Kakatpur only two colleges have students of all three years of graduation course. So, the study included Mangala Mahavidyalaya and Netrananda Shao Women's (NSW) College only. Mangala Mahavidyalaya has co-education (both for girls and boys) but Netrananda

Shao Women's College is only for girls. The sample of study include graduation level third year students in the streams of arts in NSW College, and arts, science, and commerce streams from the Mangala Mahavidyalaya.

Sample of the study:For this study I have taken two colleges, Mangala College and Netrananda Sahoo Women's (NSW) College at Kakatpur.Total students to whom questionnaire was distributed= 250 (Mangala college=170 and N.S.Womens college=80) and Returned-209 only. Out of 209, 157 returned from Mangala co-ed college (all streams e.g. arts, science and commerce) and 52 returned from N.S. Women's college (has only arts stream).I have taken a sample of total 209 students out of that 53 are male and 156 are female.I provided 30 interview guide to the teachers in both colleges (Mangala College=23 and N.S.Womens College=7), but only 15 were returned, Out of 15, 11 returned from Mangala college and 4 returned from NSW college. 15 teachers and few management staff are also included for collecting data from both colleges.

In Mangala College, I have taken a sample of total 157 students, out of that 91 students are from B.A., 46 from B.Sc. and 20 students from B.Com. All are third year students. When in B.A. courses 843 students are enrolled, 424 in B.Sc, and 391 are enrolled in B.Com courses in Mangala College. So the sample of B.A. students is 11%, in B.Sc. 11% and for B.Com. 5% of the students. For the present study the sample size chose according to students attendances of their classes. In case of teachers sample I have taken 11 teachers, which include one college principal and 10 lecturers.

In case of NSW College the sample consists of 52 students; all are B.A students, 16 students from 3rd year and 36 students from 2nd year students. Here i had to take also 2nd year students because in that college B.A third year class was not held regularly. Here also I was choosing students according to their attendance. B.A. final year 149 numbers of students are enrolled, and the sample proportion is 11% and in second year 154 number of students are enrolled but 23% is sample size. The total 17% of students sample is collected from NSW College. Whereas total 4 teachers are taken from NSW College comprising one principal and three lecturers.

Tools of data Collection: The studytool of data collection includes questionnaire, check list and interview guide. The researcher gathered students and divided into three groups for group discussion. The group discussion with students was conducted on quality of their college

education and their suggestion about improving it using a check list. The questionnaire for the students of colleges was designed to get information about: a) socio-economic background of students, b) status of quality education in their course, and c) suggestion for improving quality of education in college.

The questionnaires comprised three sections. Section 'A' included questions regarding students gender, religion, caste, family in urban rural, educational status of father and mother, main occupation of father and mother, family type, family income, class, type of house, family and personal assets. Section 'B' of the questionnaire included covered questions pertaining quality of teacher, teaching, syllabus, lab and library facilities, internet and Wi-Fi in colleges, class room and colleges building and extracurricular facilities. Section 'C' is included questions regarding their suggestion about improving quality of education in their college. The questionnaire's multiple choice responses were close ended in but open ended in section 'C'.

Questionnaire for teachers included questions on their: a) educational qualification, publication and seminar publication, b) status of quality of education in their college, and c) suggestion for improving quality. It comprised three sections. Section 'A' included questions on teacher's designation, highest qualification, nature of job, teaching experience, published book or research paper, presented paper and teaching lord. Section 'B' included questions on their opinion about quality of education in their college. Section 'C' comprised questions regarding their suggestions for improving quality of education in their college. The questionnaire's multiple type responses were close ended in sections 'A' and 'B', but open ended is section 'C'.

The interview guide prepared for the college administration, about type of college management, number of teachers, nature of appointment, courses and students problems of quality of education in college and kind of support it needed for improving the quality of graduation courses.

The data for the study was collected during June to August 2016 from both colleges at Kakatpur. It was monsoon time heavy rain and hence the communication was affected which created problem in data collection. In spite of that the proper data collection was completed properly.

Conclusion

On the basis of findings of the study, the concluding observations of the study are as follows-

- 1 First hypothesis of the study was that: **“The majority of college students come from the socially and economically advantaged sections”**.

The hypothesis relates to the case of Mangala College and NS Women's College at Kakatpur. In this connection it is found that proportion of SC students in both colleges together was only about 13%, whereas their proportion in the Kakatpur block is about 22%. The rest of the students in the two colleges are from OBC and General categories. Hence, in the total sample of the students, proportion of OBC and General category of students is higher than their proportion in the total population of Kakatpur block. So, the hypothesis is found to be valid with reference to caste composition of studies.

In regard to the religious groups, in Mangala College, students coming from Hindu religion are 96%, Muslim are 3% and Christian are 1% (see Table 2.5). Whereas in Kakatpur block, Hindus are 86.7%, Muslims are 13.2% and others are 0.1%. So Hindu students are more in Mangala College than their proportion in the population of Kakatpur block. In case of N.S.Women's College, Hindu students are 98%, Muslim are 1.9% and other religion is nil. So even in terms of religious composition, the hypothesis is found valid.

In connection of father education, it is found that in Mangala College and N.S.Women's College together over 60% of students fathers' education is under secondary level. In total sample of students, over 70% students mothers have education. So here hypothesis is not found valid as majority of parents do not have higher education. In total sample of the students fathers' main occupation is little less than 45%, who are doing agriculture and over 40% of fathers doing business and service/job. In Mangala College and NSW College together 47.4% of students family are staying in pucca house, and the rest in mixed kachacha house. In both colleges taken together over 50% of students have two wheeler, over 90% of students have bicycle and over 80% of students family have T.V.

In view of the above, it may be stated that first hypothesis is valid in case of some socio-economic indicators (such as caste) but not so in case of some other indicators (like house type).

- 2 The second hypothesis of the study was: **“The quality of higher education is overall average at Kakatpur in Odisha with respect to the major indicators of quality of higher education”**.

In this connection it was found that in the opinion of overwhelming majority of students and teachers the quality of their syllabus is very good/excellent/good. In Mangala College, students and teachers have said that quality of extracurricular facilities is good/very good/ excellent. But in case of NSW College students and teachers have said that they have no facilities in their college so they want extracurricular facilities.

In Mangala College, majority of students and teachers say that quality of their college building is very good/good/excellent. In case of NSW College, majority of students opined that quality of college building is under average, and teachers' opinion is very good/ good/ average. On observation it was also found that NSW College had very small building.

In Mangala College majority of students said that quality of their class room facilities is good/very good/ excellent and in case of NSW College majority of students said that it is average/good/ unsatisfactory. In Mangala College large majority of teachers said class room facilities is good, and it is under average opined about NSW College teachers. Observation above it was seen that NSW College has very poor class room facilities.

In Mangala College, majority of students said that quality of their library facilities is very good/good/excellent and in NSW college students opined that good/ average/ very good. On observation it was seen that NSW College has very poor quality of library facilities.

About quality of teaching and teachers, the total sample large majority of the students opined that it is excellent/very good/ good. However, it may be added here that in terms of objective quality indicators namely teacher-student ratio the quality of education is in fact below average. Classes are not mostly held and there were not teacher in one department in NSW College.

Hence, it emerges from the above that in the opinion of large majority of students and teachers quality of education in their respective college is very good/good/excellent in case of most indicators of quality of education. But considering objective quality indicator like teacher-student ratio and even building, library, ICT facilities, classes held and teaching (particularly in case of NSW College) the quality of education is below average. So, there is a gap between subjective views of students and teachers and objective indicators of quality of education. Thus, the hypothesis that quality of education in average is broadly valid.

3 The third hypothesis is that: “The quality of higher education varies across colleges located at Kakatpur”.

In this regard it is found that in terms of views of teachers and students, the quality of education is largely different in both colleges. Mangala College possesses good extracurricular facilities, good college building, good class room facilities, good laboratory facilities, library facilities but the other college has poor quality of such facilities. Mangala College has adequate teachers, few teachers publications but the other college does not have adequate numbers of teachers and lacks in teachers quality as well. So the quality of education varies in the two colleges at Kakatpur, and thus, the hypothesis is valid.

(4) The fourth and last hypothesis is that: “Certain measures are required to enhance quality of higher education at Kakatpur”.

In this connection it is found that several suggestions have been given by students and teachers pertaining to improving the quality of infrastructure facilities, library facilities and quality of teachers and teaching in their respective colleges at Kakatpur.

Regarding the suggestion for improving quality of syllabus, majority of students said make syllabus easy. Teachers said that college should introduce choice based credit system in syllabus. For improving extracurricular facilities, students and teachers said motivation, awareness, and more facilities are needed. Other suggestions include projector, good building and electricity connection in un-electrified positions. Regarding library facilities the suggestions include provision of more books journals, and more sitting arrangement for students. Regarding improving quality of teachers, need of teacher training course was suggested by both students and teachers.

On the basis of researcher’s observation and interactions at the colleges, it may also be suggested that both colleges need to appoint more teachers and develop their infrastructure facilities, particularly in NSW College. Thus, the hypothesis may be treated as valid.