

Indian Higher Education and Inclusion of Marginalised Section

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Abstract

After independence, education became available and accessible to all sections of society equally in the constitution through law. Therefore, due to the LPG policy, education's commercialisation increased, and now education is treated as a commodity which can be sold and bought in the open market. Quality private educational institutes have become costly and inaccessible for marginalised societies. In 2020, National Education Policy was introduced at all India level and claimed that it would provide a vision of "sabkasath, sabkavikas and sabkaviswas" that means end of exclusion of access to education. But there are some questions regarding higher educational institutions and their access by marginalised class people. Most quality Indian universities like Amity and Ashoka are not accessible to the oppressed class students due to their very high fees charged. Is any guarantee given by the state that when top rankers foreign universities like Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard etc will, open their campuses in India (as provision in NEP 2020) the exclusion of marginalised class students will not face any exclusion in the form of the high fee charged by these institutions? These are fundamental questions and I am trying to discuss these questions in this paper.

Keywords: Commercialisation, exclusion, higher education, marginalised section, and NEP 2020

1. Introduction

Education and Health are included in basic needs of human beings after Roti (food), kapda(clothing)and Makan (shelter). So, these needs should be fulfilled to all human beings for their comprehensive development in any society. 'Modern Indian Education' is developed in colonial period during the mid nineteenth century. As part of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda, governments across the world have committed to delivering inclusive and equitable high-quality education for all children (quoted in Anand and Lall, United Nations, 2015).

Education is basic human rights in all democratic societies in this world and India is not exceptional of it. Without education human being cannot be socialised properly in contemporary society. It is also a main component of human development along with health and longevity and fundamental indicator/ instrument of social mobility in contemporary society. Education being an integral component of modernity. Therefore, we cannot hide our face from the issues which largely concerned to the education. Some scholars argued that education is a tool of emancipation of human being and the other scholars claimed that it reinforce the inequality in society through the process of cultural reproduction. Therefore, education is not only a positive but it is also a negative instrument by which equality will establish as well as inequality will be reinforced in the society. Global north countries are witness lots of cultural reproduction due to education. This cultural reproduction leads to social disparities and inequality instead of equality among socio-economic classes. So, therefore, education has not only work for reduced to disparities among social classes but also to maintain the existing inequality and disparity in the society as well. So education is working for both equality and inequality respectively directly and indirectly in the contemporary society.

1.1 Education policy in India and Marginalisation

Here, at first, I want to defined the term Education Policy what does it mean? Education policy basically means the rules and regulations/principles that govern the educational systems. Now I will examine the education

policy in India with reference to marginalisation. We can divide the time period in two main categories; first is before the Independence (pre-British and British period) and second is after independence.

If we go back in history of existence of educational institutions it goes with the emergence of civilization. In India educational institutions have existed since the emergence of civilization (Keay,1972).

1.2 Pre- British Period

There are no any authentic literary sources are available to understand the educational policy in ancient India. But some evidence so that the Aryans were the first to make a significant attempt to formulate an educational policy in India. Nalanda and Taxila were two major universities of that time and thinkers in ancient India treated education as an instrument. During the period of 400BCE to 1000CE, there was a long struggle between Buddhism and Brahminism to gain prominence in inter pretating the 'word'. Buddhism was more radical and more people centric and it was based on equality. It was opened for all castes of people. Nalanda was important centre of Buddhism and teachers were also not Brahmin. Its counterparts Brahminism was based on hierarchy and not opened for all castes people, it was only opened for twice born (brahmin, kshatriya and Vaishya) caste. Overall, both school of thoughts practice the policy of exclusion by not allowing women in their respective learning centre. Brahminism follow the policy of exclusion on both caste and gender while Buddhism only on gender. Religion was the major objective of education in the ancient period.

1.3 British period

During the British period, the pioneering work in the field of education was done by missionaries. Later, government realize that it is their duty to work for education. Therefore, first school, St. Mary School, was opened in 1715 in madras. The curriculum of this school was based on 3R (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) and Christian teaching. The charter Act of 1813 had provided 1 lakhs rupee for education and by which first formal education policy was formulated. During the Macaulay, English was the medium of instruction. Therefore, learners belong to rural and marginalised section of society, not got their inclusion at that point of time. In 1854, the woods education dispatch Act was introduced and it is considering the magna carat of English education in India. And by which first university established in Calcutta in 1857. Though, at that time, main purpose of education was to produce clerk but it played a progressive role. During the British period, most of the educational institute follow the English as medium of instruction and situated in urban areas. Therefore, marginalised people and women of rural areas remain out of the educational institutions.

1.4 Education policy in independent India

After independence, education was included in concurrent list which means state as well as central government can make rule and regulation on education. Rights and duties of both the government to develop education.

In 1948, university education commission was set up under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Its focus was on improvements and extension of university education in India. The main goal of this commission to make higher education accessible to all section of society but it was not got successful to include the marginalised section of society. Higher education in independent India has seen nothing but the creation of a handful of 'centres of excellence' (John, 2013). In 1952, under the chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshamaswami, Secondary Education Commission was established but this also did not provide framework for promotion of women's education. In 1964-66, Indian Education Commission was set up by government of India under the leadership of D S Kothari. By this commission, the evolution of a national system of education in India started at all India level. This commission consider that education has power to work as a powerful instrument of social, economic, and political change. Interestingly, while the Commission's recommendations for vocationalisation were geared more towards laying the ground for a meaningful, purposive, and practical school-level education, their implementation has only reproduced the prevailing inequalities between the rich and the poor (John, 2013). In 1986, National Policy on Education published it reports. Its main objective was to provide education to all section of society with a

particular focus on Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backwards Classes and women. There is also provision of fellowship for poor students. To encourage the distance learning, government set up the Indira Gandhi National Open University in New Delhi. In 2000, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) was introduced to include the all students which are out of school and there is provision of Mid-Day Meal (MDM) to attract them and this scheme is successful and inclusive. In 2009, Right to Education was passed from parliament and included in constitution under fundamental right the Article 21A. it has provision for 25% seats reservation for socially disadvantaged group but there is no any special provision for encouraging education for girls. This act is also silent on children with disability.

1.5 National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

National Education Policy 2020 is a landslide shift in existing Indian education system. Higher education plays an extremely important role in promoting human as well as societal well-being and in developing India as envisioned in its Constitution - a democratic, just, socially conscious, cultured, and humane nation upholding liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice for all (NEP,2020,9.1.). In this policy there is clear mention of justice for all and getting this justice education in general and higher education in particular playing a prominent role in society. Entry into quality higher education can open a vast array of possibilities that can lift both individuals as well as communities out of the cycles of disadvantage (NEP,2020,14.1.).Therefore, entry in quality higher educational institute of marginalised students as well as women can be fruitful for both the individual as well as their communities/society. But there is provision of multiple entry and exit option at the graduation level course and complete graduation programme is 4 years course which is presently 3 years. There is a very good chance of dropout rate may be increase among the students of socially disadvantage group. During the 1990s, government adopted the policy of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation in most of the sectors. Now, market is open for all the players to invest and make profit in the name of development and globalisation and education in general and higher education in particular also does not exclude from this provision. Now, education became the commodity that means any one can bought and sold the education in open market according to their capacity. There is provision in NEP 2020 that top level of high quality of foreign universities can also open their campuses in India. But there is no any provision of reservation in these foreign universities campuses and what are their fee structure. If fee structure will be according to these university and government will not regulate it in the name of 'autonomy' and reservation will not apply in these institutions then there should be only exclusion of marginalized section from high quality higher education and we will witness only 'cultural reproduction'. Now there is shifting the goal post from grant to loan for university. The introduction of Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) is a prime example of it. There is also not clear understanding that the appointment of faculty members through direct recruitment the seats will be reserved or not for socially marginalised groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Women. This is also a major concern if these foreign university open their campuses at large scale in India.

2. Some important review of literature

John (2013) argues that Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) in University of Delhi will increase the rate of drop out among the marginalised section as well as students belongs to working classes. She said that for liberal the primary purposes of university courses are to train students to become broad-minded, tolerant, and self-reliant citizens continues to prevail while for masses higher education as it provides them employability. Further she argued that our school education is hierarchically arranged and it create exclusion in getting education. For instance, CharvahaVidyalayas/Ekal Schools for the children of agrarian workers and poor peasants; Navodayas for the children of agrarian elite.

Kumar and George (2009) examine the Kerala education system and argued that there is a recent shift in Kerala's education system from an inclusive to an exclusive one. They said that the earlier education policy was

inclusive because of following reason; there is no any fee at any level in school, the widespread availability of public transport system and the highly subsidised transport fares have facilitated an easy access for rural students to higher educational institutions in town and cities. The ratio of recovery of government's revenue expenditure was only 2.6% in 2006-07. Further they claimed that now education shifted towards the exclusion because of following reason; government not spending enough on education, transport system as earlier it was done, people of Kerala got much more remittances and therefore, the rise of new medical classes which prefer high quality premier educational institutions, there are emergence of lots of private player in the field of education as well as finance, emergence of self- financed professional courses etc.

Modi (2015) is talking about exclusion and discrimination among the marginalised groups. There is no denying the fact that some or the other social grouping is always socially excluded, even as the affected group and the degree of discrimination varies from one society to another and from time to time (Modi, 2015). He argued that we can understand social exclusion in India through the caste system approach not through the Euro-centric and its labour market framework. As we know that the level of poverty among the socially disadvantaged and marginalised groups are very high and it would be affecting their human development in negative way. Modi (2015) in his article also supported the same argument. "Higher levels of poverty among the socially excluded groups translate, as might be expected, into poorer levels of human development in terms of both health and education." And he further said that the biggest consequences of this exclusion will be widespread of inequality. Thorat provides a compilation of data from Indian government surveys, contrasting dalits with higher caste Hindus on indicators such as earnings, unemployment, education, and health (quoted in Modi, Thorat and Attewell 2007). Education not only contributed to reduce social inequality and other social disparities but also to bring change in social and economic sphere. The universalisation of elementary education would not only reduce educational disparities (and other social inequalities associated with these disparities), but also contribute to a wide range of economic and social objectives (Dreze and Sen, 2002 quoted in Modi, 2015).

Basant and Sen (2010) write about the policy concerned to marginalised people about their promoting to higher education among them. Reservation for different social groups at the central and the state levels has been the typical response to India's long-standing policy objective of promoting access to higher education amongst its "marginalised" people (Basant and Gitanjali, 2010). They further argued that once persons from underprivileged groups cross the school threshold, the chances of their going to college are quite high. Sundaram (2006) study also supported the above argument when he said that the students belonging to marginalised section cross the secondary education level, their decision to go for higher education is not significantly affected by their economic conditions anymore. This implies that reservation may be helping in improving the level of enrolment, irrespective of economic status, once the threshold level of school education is crossed (Sundaram, 2006 quoted in Basant and Sen). They further highlight the scenario of labour market when marginalised students enter after their completion of higher education. For this, they have quoted the study of Chakravarthy and Somanathan (2008) who compare the job market achievements of the scs/sts and general candidates among Indian Institute of Management (IIM) graduates. And find that average wages of sc/st candidates tend to be lower than those of the general candidates. This means there is not only struggle in getting higher education but also this struggle continues in labour market for wages because of prejudiced and discriminatory behaviour of employers. Deshpande and Newman (2007) also highlight the discrimination against the marginalised candidates by employers when they enter in labour market. They further said that social network and social capital play the major role when they are hiring for the job of higher posts.

3. Conclusion

The role of education at individual levels as well as societal level are significant in the society because it transmitted the culture from one generation to other. Without education there is lots of difficulties in the process

of socialisation by which a biological being became a social being. Education opens the greater opportunities for all in general and marginalised group people in particular, if they got quality higher education. But there is lots of barriers (origin of social backgrounds, caste, gender, geographical location and so on) in achieving these goals. To counter these barriers, government has adopted the policy of affirmative action / reservation in education as well as employment sectors and this government policy is helpful if the student of marginalised communities complete the secondary level education. State never spends the 6% of GDP which was recommend by most of commission appointed on education and NEP 2020 has the same provision. At present time state spend less than 3% of GDP. Low public fund expenditure on education is a very critical. Theoretically and philosophically government policy in the sector of education (in general) and higher education (in particular) are mostly inclusive (except disable students) but their implementation on the ground level are not reflects the true value for deprived students because of lots of barriers. In National Education Policy 2020, there is a lot of provision of inclusion but these provisions also increase exclusion among socially disadvantage students. For instances, there is a provision of multiple entry and exit point at graduation level courses, that means, students can enter in a course in any year of their education as well exit. This policy looks like very comprehensive but there is lots of chances of dropouts among the marginalised student due to their poorly socio-economic family condition. There is a very good chances of unequal access of higher education will increase when foreign university opened their campuses in India because of their high charge of fees. It may also create disparities among rich and poor, rural and urban, male and female, privileged and underprivileged. So, therefore, there is a good chance of both inclusion and exclusion because of the nature of National Education Policy 2020.

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