

IDENTIFYING INCONSISTENCY OF MINORITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION AS BARRIER TOWARDS INCLUSIVE SOCIETY IN WEST BENGAL

Ranjini Ghosh

Lecturer, Katwa govt. PTI, West Bengal

ABSTRACT

Social exclusion marginalizes a community by taking them to the fringe of the main stream. Various studies on educational stratification pointed that inequality in education between different social strata continues in social practices and even it effects educational growth. Racism was a malpractice in India which led the country towards social stratification as Upper castes and Backward Castes etc. The suppressed classes or castes as Scheduled Caste (SC) and/or Scheduled Tribe (ST) were ignored for years even in the field of education. After independence there a lot of provisions were made for their uplift. Still they are facing a lot of problems in perusing education, getting jobs, choosing life style independently etc. The present study was conducted to find the barriers what they face in perusing higher studies. The data consisted of 60 samples from Scheduled Caste (SC) from two different universities of West Bengal, to explore the barriers faced by the students belonging to Scheduled Caste (SC) in higher education by collecting data through open ended questionnaire and case study.

Keywords: Minority, Higher Education, Learning Barrier, Inclusive Society, West Bengal

INTRODUCTION

Social exclusion discriminates a part of the society from the process of development and it pushback the population to participate in the main stream. India consists of diversities in caste, creed, economic background, language, color and culture etc. which pull down the backward caste from the main stream society. A few people always want to keep the social power to their own hands and the rest becomes victims and deprived (Sen, 2018). During the period of national movement West Bengal took a main part in it. This state was glorified through education science culture and art. The researcher is going to gauge the educational inequalities among one of the depriving communities in West Bengal.

Mainly the Sudras were classified as the low caste and were considered as untouchables. Several social restrictions were imposed on them. However before independence, in 1931 census they were named as Harijan (People of God) by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The Simon Commission in 1935 first coined the term 'Scheduled Castes'. After independence the backward or lower caste became Scheduled caste by the article 341 in the Indian Constitution. According to the 2011 census there are 16% Scheduled caste in India. Every state of India has its own status regarding Scheduled caste (SC). West Bengal also has a historical background and different culture regarding SC. 11.1% SC belong to West Bengal. They have some specific surnames e.g. Hait, Rui, Bagdi, Ojha etc. Some of them have changed these surnames into Roy, Das etc. for the mobilization in social status. Article 15 (4) and 16 (4) of the Indian constitution has made provision of reservation for backward classes in educational institutions and public employment, and it was mentioned that these provisions would be maintained by the Central and the State Government. Through the first Backward Classes Commission constituted on 29th January, 1953 under the chairmanship of Kakasaheb Khelkar, the government of India accepted the necessities of reservation policies. The reservation prolonged also to the education sector (Ahmed, 2012).

RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Sen (2018) said in his research that deprived society of West Bengal facing a lot of problem regarding sustainable development including education. The cultural gap leads unavailability of facilities of deprived people in rural inhabitants. Social exclusion keeps away this state from cent percent literacy.

The National Council of Educational Research(2005), found that, due to social exclusion and poor socio-economic condition the students belonging to Scheduled Caste (SC) did not attend school and remained educationally backward. After independence, schools have been thrown open for them. But it has not been possible to enroll all children of SC in school because of inadequate availability of schools, poor implementation of school level policies of positive discrimination, poor physical infrastructure of schools, inadequacy of teachers and teaching and poor provision of teaching learning materials. There are many steps to take in education through different plans for the disadvantaged or the deprived people. Still these steps can't remove inequality and untouchability from the classroom even in higher education also (Bajpai, 2001). Yet some of the SC students come out with excellent results, others with good and most of them remain below the average. They belong to the class of low achievement (Sharmila, 2012).

Economical barriers, socio-cultural factors and some psychological phenomena are the reasons of their poor performance or the low achievement. To eradicate these barriers strategies have been suggested by the educationists in the various commission and educational policies (Pradip, 2012).

Ahmed (2012) said that students belonging to Scheduled Caste can avail scholarships, concession on annual fees of the institution, and also now they are the part of inclusive education. These attempts have been made towards affirmative action to dissolve the causes contributing to performance inequality between the students of General Castes and Scheduled Castes at higher education. He also added, this is to know whether the creamy layer of Scheduled Caste community taking the advantages and the real needy people are being ignorant as the effect of social exclusion among the people belonging to the same caste.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Social exclusion has become a mind setup of the people that they cannot accept the development of marginalized or deprived one. Scheduled Castes, the term of reference listed in the Indian Constitution, and in government, legal and scholarly writing, particularly of the colonial period. The Supreme Court of India declared in 1992 "Education is a means for life with dignity." A study by World Bank (The Hindu, 24 March 1998) also opined, "Education is a corner stone of economic growth and social development and a principal means of improving the welfare of individuals." So education has become the powerful means of socialization, and if our country wants to eradicate the curse of backwardness then equal opportunities in education should be maintained by the government as well as the people of others castes. It is not justified to dominate a learner for her or his caste in this 21st century. There are various scholarships for availing with but the discriminations in mind setup pinches the concept of inclusion in the society (Bajpai, 2001). After having 27% reservation quota for the SC in government jobs, it has been necessary to make them aware of the provisions what are made especially for them. Otherwise the quota will remain vacant or will be filled up by non eligible person or the other castes. Thus it is necessary to give them proper education and awareness along with facilities which are made for them. However it has been found that the SC has a tendency to apply for the jobs of peon, sweeper etc., where no one of higher caste come for these posts (Jayswal; Sinha; kumari; Arora; 2003).

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This study is going to identify the inconsistency or inequalities for the scheduled caste students in higher education in West Bengal.

It will also find the suggestions to create an inclusive society by promoting the mind setup of caste wise discrimination.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Sampling: The sample size of 60 Scheduled Caste students was collected purposively by getting permission from the heads of the institutions. They were chosen randomly from the registers regardless their sex and stream or other variables.

Tools and Techniques: Structured interviews were conducted for several times to get the data through 20 open ended questions through following patterns and heads.

Dimensions	
Admission	Relaxation/ reservation facility in admission in the School.
	Relaxation/ reservation facility in admission in the College.
	Relaxation/reservation facility during admission in the University.
Stipend/ Scholarship	Stipend in Schools.
	Stipend for low family income.
	Scholarship for performing well in studies.
	Concession on fees in Educational Institution.
Co- curricular Activities	Get chance in various Co-curricular activities in Educational Institution.
	Scholarships in professional course like Computer Course etc in any Govt. Institution.
	Get chance to pursue various skill oriented course, personality development course, which are totally free for them.
	Free coaching for various competitive test as NET, WBCS etc.
Others	Concession on bus and train fare.
	Get study material free of cost.
	In school got uniforms free of cost.
Higher Studies	Scholarship like Rajiv Gandhi fellowships to pursue higher (MPhil, Phdetc).
	Availed the reserved seat even if got low marks than the other Non SCs.
Job	Availed of 5% reserved quota in Government sectors.
	Relaxation on age, height, weight for any kind of defense service.
	Facilities provided by the Private sectors.
Examination	Relaxations on the cost of form for various forms for different examinations.
	Relaxation on qualifying marks for any kind of admission related, competitive and service related examination.

Age relaxation for the any kinds of admission, competitive and service related examination.
Relaxation of rail travelling charge at the time of any competitive examination.

RESULT

The collected data through open ended questions based on above mentioned dimensions were processed with the qualitative data analysis process which focuses on the problems of the Scheduled Caste students what they face during higher education in institute and outside of the institute. The problems were selected after a pilot study and after studying some related papers.

Many of the scheduled caste students get challenges from family as they may have superstitions, or they may afraid of facing taunts from other castes (Choudhry, 2007). According the study of Reservation and its Implication (Tulasi, 2009) there a few of the Scheduled caste students get benefitted by availing of the reservation provisions mainly they belong to the urban area. The students of rural areas face barriers to have their scheduled caste certificate which make them reluctant to peruse higher education. The barriers which they face as challenge in higher education must be documented as facilities availed.

Many of them may have financial burden from family what does not support to go for higher studies and they also cannot avail with the caste certificate as it is not taken on private educational sectors. It can be shown in the related studies of abroad, that the scheduled caste students face untouchability and they face exclusion from schools due to their caste (Pradip, 2012). But the present study says that the situations are probably same in the higher education with the elementary education as the other developing countries. The dropout ratio and ratio of absent students are mostly shown among the Scheduled Caste students.

They may feel shy to communicate with the peers or teachers of the other castes as they belong to the different cultures (Ahmed, 2012). They also face challenges in gender biasness. Mainly the girl children are affected by this cause. They are compelled to leave study and get married. Sometimes the students cannot avail with scholarships and stipend what are allotted for them. These problems grind them down to leave the higher studies. Such problems were enlisted as questionnaire to collect the data regarding them.

The subjects were asked some structured open ended questions for the interview. Some case studies were taken from those interviews, where the problems regarding their low caste came out. Some of the students were expelled from their primary schools in the villages. Such

incidents made them scared to mingle with others. The SC students, mainly who come from villages they experienced the differentiation what the higher caste people do in their rituals and maintain untouchability (Ahmed, 2012). Thus some of the students try to be under the shelter of the surnames which are same as the surnames of the higher castes. They have to give bribe to the councilor to get the caste certificates. And in the universities or in the colleges they get disrespect for using the caste certificates.

CONCLUSION

A glance may get on the Facilities availed, the problems faced and the suggestions what were given by the Scheduled Caste students through the present study. Instead of making policies the government should focus on the remaining policies which to be implemented yet. There are a lot of provisions for the Scheduled Caste but these are beyond of their reach to avail. These problems are related to their families, their economical conditions and family background. But these problems may happen to the other caste also. To find the differences there some case studies were taken. These case studies of the SC students who are pursuing higher education in colleges and in universities are the evident of their situation when they were disrespected by the staff of institutions for their low caste (Pradip, 2012). They keep mum in the classes and dare to talk to the peers for their inferiority complex due to their caste. The students want the awareness before getting scholarships as it is very disrespectful to get money with sympathy of the other higher caste. Some of the Scheduled caste students don't get the information for the scholarships or the stipend (Tulasi, 2009). During admission they face taunt from the other caste students that they would get admission with poor marks. Thus they suggest making people aware of the history of the racism. They cannot get all the facilities so the Government should be conscious to implement the policies of the scheduled caste to eradicate the negativity social exclusion.

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