SOCIAL EXCLUSION LEADS TO EDUCATIONAL DROPOUT AND VICE VERSA — A STUDY ON SCAVENGER'S CHILDREN

Prasamita Mohanty

Reader-cum-Deputy Director, CSSEIP, BBAU, Lucknow

Abstract

Right to Education Act is the recent social intervention through which India has chalked out a bright road map towards her future. Undoubtedly, education will empower the two-third of populations who are socially excluded. Social exclusion is a global phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of ill practices prevailing in the society. Poverty, casteism, gender inequalities, communalism, and regionalism are becoming stumbling blocks for social progress. Fundamental skills and knowledge in the form of education that serve as the basis for enriching life of every citizen is the need of the hour. Designed to examine the educational status of scavengers' children, the present study revealed significant kinship between social exclusion and educational drop out. Low socio-economic status and low level of parental education are responsible for scavengers' children to be dropped out from the education system and those who are educationally drop out have become prominent factors for their exclusion.

Key words: *Social Exclusion, Inequalities, Drop out*

Why social exclusion needs to be debated?

Because of two-third populations in our country are unable to comprehend equity and equality, democracy, secularism and above all sovereign and republic. Not only they are huge in number, they are equally potential and productive for India. The success to stabilized and improved GDPs (Gross Domestic Products) is in the hands of those who are marginalized economically, underprivileged and socially weaker sections. Poverty, on one hand, casteism and gender inequalities on the other have drawn attention of planners, policy makers and academia. All such groups are of national and international priorities and titled as socially excluded. Towards the end of last century, discussions and deliberations have multiplied their frequencies on the issue of "social exclusion in the era of knowledge economy." Globally, the concept of social exclusion characterises contemporary forms of social disadvantages. In many parts of the world the concept of social exclusion refers to the

illegitimate and non-democratic social processes in which certain groups are denied access to fundamental rights, primary opportunities, and key resources and have been away from the mainstream of social development and social integration (Mohanty, 2012). Historically originated from marginalization and disadvantages, the concept reflects significant kinship with poverty and alienation.

Social exclusion refers the ill social processes. It involves the systematic denial of entitlements to resources and services, and the denial of the right to participate on equal terms in social relationships in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. Exclusionary processes can occur at various levels – within and between households, villages, cities, states, and globally. This is an actor-oriented approach which is useful because it points to who is doing what and in relationship with whom. It also provides information for international development agencies to identify those dynamic processes already extant which they could aim to strengthen or minimize. In a situation where there is a disparity in social power relationships, the question of who has the prerogative to define, who is the definer and who is the defined, becomes a site of conflict. Social exclusion relates to the alienation or segregation of certain people within a society. It is often connected to a person's social class, educational status, relationships in childhood and living standards and how these might affect access to various opportunities.

It also applies to some degree to people with disability, to minority men and women of all races, to the elderly, and to youth (unemployed). Anyone who deviates in any perceived way from the norm of a population may become subject to coarse or subtle forms of social exclusion.

According to Sociologists there is a strong links between crime and social exclusion in industrialized/modernized societies. Growing crime rates may reflect the fact that a growing number of people do not feel valued in the societies in which they live. The socially excluded population cannot meet the standards of economic status and consumption that are promoted within society. Therefore legitimate means are bypassed in favor of illegal ones. Crime is favored over the political system or community organization. Young people increasingly grow up without guidance and support from the adult population. Young people also face diminishing job opportunities to sustain a livelihood. This can cause a sense of willingness to turn to illegitimate means of sustaining a desired lifestyle. Social exclusion is a concept used in many parts of the world outside of the United States to characterize contemporary forms of social disadvantage. Dr. Lynn Todman, director of the Institute on Social Exclusion at the Adler School of Professional Psychology, suggests that social exclusion refers to processes in which individuals and entire communities of people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources (e.g. housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation and due process) that are normally available to members of American society and which are key to social integration. The ideological basis of social exclusion is mostly found in major social values. Social exclusion in principles defines boundaries between groups, locates the different groups in a hierarchy and regulates and guides their interaction. The attitude of discrimination is passed from society to individual

and in due course the individual passes it back to the society. Thus both individual and society reinforce discrimination. Since social exclusion is intimately related to systems of domination and oppression, it is often highly resistant to change and transformation. It is not only those who discriminate against those who are inferior, incapable and lower who do not want this form of social relationship to be changed. But those who are discriminated against also do not want to alter the situation since they fear greater discrimination and assault. And thus, discrimination becomes a focal point for social conflict.

Deliberations and discourses pertaining to social exclusion are multi-dimensional in their nature and effects, cursory glance with scientific conclusions on such efforts will enhance comprehensibility and draw a road map for the future.

Who are excluded?

It is surprising that social exclusion is a global issue and has been prevailing in varied forms of suppression, marginalization that are to a noticeable extent. Social exclusion describes how more than a half of Indian populations are not protected through the Constitution. Duties and rights are equally important to achieve the targets set by the Constitution. Who are excluded? Girls and women are found to be marginally excluded at all stages and levels. Nearly half of population either at local or global level are women and girls whose role has not been accorded due importance till current times. Scheduled Castes and Tribes, other backward classes constitute the two-third of the total population in India whose needs have not been addressed so far. Such classes are economically weaker, socially alienated, educationally delinked. Poverty continues to be the main reason for which a majority of population thus becoming the stumbling blocks for social progress. Migrants are found to be excluded regionally and since they belong to minority they suffer the most. Religious minorities, such as, muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, and Jains etc. are the victims of exclusion. Certain vocations are equally responsible for fuelling exclusion among certain strata of population in India. Manual Scavanging—the traditional vocation in which certain population used to act in-human and thus carry human faeces from one place to another.

Despite of constitutional provisions, legislations and policies on education in the post independence period rural marginalized groups in general and scavengers' children of urban slums in particular continue to be in bad state. In the era of globalization, urbanization, modernization and privatization of education, the non enrolment and drop out is the real challenge before the nation. How to integrate them in the main stream and make universalization of education successful is the immediate call of the hour. The India Country Report 2009 reveals that the number of people living below poverty lines in 1990 was 37.2 per cent. This was to be brought down to 18.5 per cent by 2015 but is expected, most optimistically, to reach 22 per cent. There were 53.5 per cent of underweight children below three years age in 1990 targeted to be reduced to 26.8. This is expected to come down to about 40 per cent only. Under five child mortality rate was 125 per 1000 live births in 1990 targeted to be reduced to 42. It is expected to only reach 70. In 1990, infant mortality rate was

80 per 1000 live births targeted to be reduced to 26.7. This is expected to reach only 46. Only 51 per cent of our populations are covered by sanitation facilities targeted to be brought down to 38. Keeping the current statistics in view, it may be said that if the world wants to realize the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, we need a renewed policy trajectory for our country. Eliminating social exclusion and empowering the poor are among the paramount challenges facing the country today. If democracy needs to survive, we must strive further toward inclusion of socially excluded groups which will reap a double dividend for citizen and country as a whole.

What does present research reveals on excluded scavengers' children?
Education is emancipation and defined as the inculcation of knowledge, values, skills, attitudes by means of institutions. It helps to bridge wide disparity across social status, political power and economic distribution. Significant role played by education in transforming the existing social order into the defined goals of human beings is appreciated. It is only after Independence; Govt. started making systematic efforts to raise the educational standard of Dalits. In 1950, with the commencement of the Constitution, education included in the Directive Principles and declared to achieve free and compulsory education for all the children up to the age of 14 years by 1960. Article 46 of the Constitution states that the "state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the population and particularly SCs and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitations." But the ruling class wishes to honour the values of modernity, democracy, equality without rejecting the values of old social order. Thus the lower level people particularly SCs live in a society dominated by the values of caste and verna system. The inhuman practice of manual scavenging and it's inextricably links with the caste system have sensitively been documented by policy makers, academicians have been enacted and crores of rupees have been spent to eradicate manual scavenging. But even after six decades of Independence, India continues to dehumanize, degrade scavengers and the same are most vulnerable amongst us. Governments in several states have denied in court the existence of manual scavengers despite evidence to the country. Manual scavengers are called Hains, Hadi, Balmiki, ,Dhanuk, Mehtar or Methar Bhangi Paki, Thoti, Madiga Mira, Lalbegi, Chuhra,Balashahi and so on in different languages but they are invariably considered 'untouchables', without exception all of them are dalits. A Press release of the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on the July 22, 2005 estimated the total number of manual scavengers in the country as 6.76 Lakhs. According to this estimate the largest number of scavengers is in Utter Pradesh (1.49Lakh) followed by Madhya Pradesh (80,000) and Gujarat (64,000). 'Shameful', 'Degrading' 'Dehumanize,' 'Disgusting', 'Obnoxious', 'Abhorrent', 'Blot on humanity'- some of the words that are being used to describe manual scavenging which in plain language means people lifting human excreta with their hands and carrying the load on their heads, hips, or shoulders, if they get to use a wagon. They live in some slum areas of city and have their own colonies within and outside the cities because they are 'untouchables'. They are deprived of the basic needs of their lives. They lack proper sanitation, proper educational facilities. They are deprived of their basic human rights. They

lead a very deplorable life. The Constitution of Independent India had promised a socialist democratic state, but it brought to the Indian people a mixed economy and mixed up politics while state politics were justified in the name of the people the old structures of wealth and privilege were left untouched and the common people were left in the benign neglect. Affirmative action on behalf of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes establishing quotas in education as well in employment did improve condition somewhat for the weaker section of the society but more needs to be done.

Education: A Potential Instrument to Reduce Social Exclusion

Education has a major role to play in order to bring the deprived sections to a reasonable level of social and economic development. Universal and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years became the most desired goal of the Government and Constitution. It was realized that educational development will provide educational opportunity to the deprived children to make full use of their potential and enable them to play a vital role in sustained economic development of the country and improve their own standard of living. Even after fifty eight years of our independence universalisation of education has not taken place in India. Even now educational development is related to the economic condition of the parents. Weaker sections are mainly engaged in unorganized agriculture, forestry and other part time labour. In 1999-2000, about 35% of them were still livings below the poverty lines. Therefore, they have to face the hardship in maintaining subsistence level of living and have failed to get the benefits of educational facilities provided by the democratic government, which has given education importance to means for development. The role of education in the process of social exclusion has yet to be fully elucidated. The dominant mode of analysis has focused on the concept of human capital. From this perspective education or schooling increases productivity as it equips individuals' with skills and knowledge. As productivity is reflected in earnings and rates of labour market participation, education offers an important means of social mobility, particularly for the poor. Widespread changes in the economy such as the emergence of high level service sector jobs have opened up important opportunities, to those with the necessary levels of education. The government certainly adopts this perspective. Tony Blair has noted the importance of acquiring education and developing human capital as a route out of social exclusion: "We should root out educational failure, because it is the greatest inhibition to correcting poverty…in today's world, the more you learn the more you earn." ("The will to win" speech, June, 1997) Opponents of the human capital model argue that little of the variation between individual's earnings and labour market participation is explained by education. The 'signaling' or 'screening' paradigm suggests that the process of education merely serves to identify individual ability or personal attributes. From this perspective the positive correlation between education and income arises because they are commonly founded in an individual's ability. Educational attainment merely allows individuals to signal their high level ability and low prospective training costs to employers.

Recent research in the US has rebutted the long-standing criticism of the use of education as a tool to reduce inequality. On the basis of studies of intra-family comparisons and natural experiments' in the US, Ashenfelter and Rouse (1999) conclude "the return to schooling is

not caused by an omitted correlation between ability and schooling...the school is a promising place to increase the skills and incomes of individuals". Furthermore research in the UK has found no evidence of heterogeneity in the return to schooling completed by the age of 23, according to ability, and family financial circumstance as a child (Dearden *et al*., 1998). If anything the evidence suggests that those individuals whose parents have low levels of education benefit slightly more from schooling. They found that the estimated return to an additional year of full time education decreases by around 0.23 percentage points for every additional year of father's education. Whilst no economist would subscribe solely to the signalling paradigm, many accept that the screening argument may have some relevance, especially in relation to particular courses. Other theorists suggest that an increasing supply of qualifications leads to compositional changes in the demand for labour. Employers merely respond to the increased supply of qualifications by raising the qualification levels they ask for as means of screening out large numbers of applicants – otherwise known as the process of credential inflation. Hence differentials between the less and more qualified remain. Educational attainment is devalued as more people achieve a given level, stimulating a further round of contest at a higher level qualification. Recent analysis by Green *et al*. (1998) however rebuts the notion that credentialism has occurred on an economy wide basis but concludes the phenomenon is apparent in some areas such as the real estate industry. New economic theory provides compelling evidence of the importance of education and training as a strategy to reduce social exclusion. As Glennerster, Noden and Power (1998) outline "The reason we cannot run nearer to full employment lies in the fact that there are pools of people who are not effectively part of the labour market (Layard, 1997). The Bank of England has to check and turn back the economic tide long before it can ever reach the poorest areas as the labour market tightens and inflation takes off. Macro economic policy is not independent of its micro roots." The effectiveness of education as a means of overcoming social exclusion may be differentiated on the basis of an individual's previous experiences. Using NCDS data, Gregg and Machin (1997) have analyzed the extent to which individuals can improve their wages and employment prospects by upgrading their education attainment later in life (between the ages of 23 and 33). In general the results showed that educational upgrading had a positive and significant impact on wages and employment.

Significance of Social Exclusion Leads to Educational Dropout and vice versa

The 21ˢᵗ century has been widely acclaimed as the "knowledge century". Every nation is finding itself to be performing in an increasingly competitive and globalised international environment where the information, research, research innovation, education and lifelong learning have became critical parameters. It has been well recognized that the creation of new knowledge primarily depend on strengthening the education system, promoting research, teaching and innovations. To promote education it is very essential to aware about right and duties in the field of education. As education is the birth right of the child thus each and every child should get the opportunity out of it. In India, provision of free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years is a fundamental right. As Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) is still an elusive goal thus much ground is

yet to be covered. As per the Revised Program of Action (1992) the area which became the uncovered in UEE till date is socially , culturally and economically excluded groups particularly marginalized group of rural, slums and remote areas i.e. Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe , minority, girls, economically poor slum children. Despite of various constitutional provisions, legislations and policies on education in the post independence period rural marginalized groups in general and   scavengers' children of urban slums in particular continue to be in bad state.

In the era of globalization, urbanization, modernization and privatisation of education, the non enrolment and drop out is the real challenge before the nation. How to integrate them in the main stream and make universalization of education successful is the immediate call of the hour. Thus in the present context, the slum children in general and scavengers' children in particular constitute the priority target group. In order to examine the problems associated with dropout and non-enrolment among children belonging to scavengers' families the present study had been designed. The present study examined the factors responsible for educational drop out and non enrolment among children of scavengers' families at primary stage. For the purpose of the present study, four pertinent objectives were formulated. In the first objective, effort was made to explore the historical background of scavengers' families settled in Kanpur and Lucknow. Attempt was made in the second objective to find out current statistics relating to dropout and non-enrolment among children belonging to scavengers' families. Factors responsible for dropout and non-enrolment among children belonging to scavengers' families were explored in the third objective while fourth objective was meant for investigating the educational interest of dropout and non-enrolled children of scavengers.

Methodology

Population and Sample

The population of the present study consisted of dropout and non enrolled children among Scheduled Caste families particularly living in Urban Slums/Basti and whose occupation is basically scavenging. Uttar Pradesh is the most populous State of India. The Scheduled Caste population (35,148,377) of UP is 21.1% of total population of the State (166,197,921).There are 70 districts in UP, where as the present study was carried out in two districts, i.e., Kanpur and Lucknow. Kanpur and Lucknow are the biggest and oldest city of northern India with a total population of 41, 37,489 and 36, 81,416. In order to see the numbers and population of urban slums of Kanpur and Lucknow, Kanpur has total 505 slums and Lucknow has 530 slums in general. Out of 1035 slums, there are 62 scavengers' colonies in both the cities (28 in Kanpur and 34 in Lucknow).

The sample of the present study is consisted of dropout and non enrolled primary school children of scavenger family from the selected colonies of Lucknow and Kanpur city. The criteria for selecting these scavenger families were that they are mainly the socially excluded group and literacy rate of such children are below the national level literacy rate (64.84). The reason for which the Universalisation of Elementary Education is becoming impossible and

integrating them into the mainstream is the real challenge before the nation. The drop out and non enrolment rate of such scavengers' children is highest among the Scheduled Caste children. Thus the investigators decided to take up the research project on this particular group of the society. The data for the present study was taken randomly from 10 scavenger colonies of both Kanpur and Lucknow city on the basis of large population. The investigators could locate 2000 households of scavengers from 10 slums of Kanpur and Lucknow. A household survey was conducted in phased manner. In first phase, each household was visited by the investigators just to know the caste background of the inhabitants. In the second phase the investigators selected randomly the households from each colony with drop out and non-enrolled children belonging to the age group of 6 to 14years. Out of 2000 sample, only 250 households were considered for the purpose of the study.

Tools and Techniques

A set of questionnaires and interview schedules were developed and used in order to collect data from parents, teachers, students, children and community members. Descriptive survey method was employed to conduct the present study. Collected data were analysed by using percentages as statistical technique.

What are the recommendations of present research?

➢ Historical background of scavengers revealed that more than fifty percent of total surveyed population have been migrated from different places while 47% are found to be inhabited in the cities. Kanpur outranked Lucknow in terms of migrated scavengers. Migration among scavengers is noticed mainly because of managing livelihood, non-availability of traditional jobs in rural sectors, better life for future generation, industrialization, urbanisation and education. Banda, Barabanki, Hamirpur and Sitapur are the places from which a maximum number of scavengers have migrated. It is interesting to note that more than fifty percent (56%) of scavengers are found to be continuing in their traditional occupation. However, societal change has brought changes in the attitudes of scavengers for changing their profession from traditional scavenging to other types of jobs/profession, such as, driver, vegetable vendor and private services. Reasons for changing traditional occupation include future opportunities, liberation of social stigma, and better pay off. Literacy level among scavengers indicates that 55% of them are illiterate while rest are literate. Poor participation in education is mainly because of poverty and lack of scope for their education. About one-fourth of total surveyed population do not have Sc certificates and PDL cards though they belong to SC communities and Below Poverty Line Cards.

➢ Statistics relating to dropout and non-enrolment among children belonging to scavengers' families revealed that dropout rate in both cities is more than 55 percent of the total surveyed population. Non-enrolment among children belonging to scavengers' families is found to be about 40%. It is because of the obstacles that

scavenger children confront at home and school level. Gender wise statistics relating to dropout and non-enrolment revealed that dropout rate among girls is higher than boys but in case of non-enrolment the case is just reverse, i.e., non-enrolment rate among boys is higher than girls. The result is because of the parental perception of educating boys means spoiling /killing precious time. Boys are born to work and earn their livelihood. Dropout rate among girls is high because of their active participation in domestic activities and supporting mother in household activities. Class wise dropout rate indicate that from grade II onwards, the dropout is more prevailing. Such result is attributed to the study load, nature of teaching and assignments at school level.

➢ Factors that are responsible for high dropout and non-enrolment among the children of scavengers' families include poverty, school and home related factors. In the category of poverty, lack of money to fulfil basic physical needs; engagement in domestic work and child care, are found to be more pertinent. Among school related factors, inadequate physical facilities, punishment, irregular school functioning, and no study at school are found to be demotivating factors for children belonging to scavengers' families. Among home related factors, lack of interest among parents and traditional taboos are found to be significant factors responsible for dropout and non-enrolment among children. Lack of interest in studies and caste/occupation feelings found to be individual and cultural factors responsible for low participation in school sector. It is interesting to note that despite of innovative programmes at school level, school related factors are significant factors along with the poverty (which is traditionally prevailing). The result of the present study is an eye opener for the policy makers who are making tall claims in terms of school empowerment and reformations. It is pertinent to examine whether these children are willing to continue their education despite of many impediments.

➢ Educational interest of dropout children indicates that 71% of children want to continue their primary education despite of household work. Non- enrolled and dropout children want to continue their studies through non-formal and open education system. Such result indicates that scavengers' children are in search of opportunities which will enable them to educate and grow further. The reasons behind that some of them don't have interest in study, some are feeling out of age, and some are engaged in employment to support their parents economically. It is worth mentioning here that given a chance with adequate school support these children can succeed in their life.

Based on the results of the present study, it is recommended that initiatives are to be taken to improve the school level facilities. Institutional facilities and culture should be such that it must attract the maximum participation among scavangers' children. State Government should pay more attention to the children of such families and issue the SC certificates and declare them as community below poverty line. Financial assistance is to be given to such families so that their children can participate in educational activities. Free schooling with provision of free book and clothing is to be provided to children belonging to scavengers'

families. In order to sustain the interest of such children in education Centres for Open Schooling or non-formal education centres may be established nearby the slums. Community schooling to educate these children and empower with adequate skills on certain vocations will suffice their social cohesion.

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