

EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOR MINORITY

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Abstract

The 12th plan has highlighted expansion, equity and excellence as the major concern in education. India has witnessed significant increase in gross enrolment ration and inclusivity through affirmative action. However persistent disparity exists across states, religious minorities and backward classes. Education is a prerequisite for socio-economic development, particularly for the weaker sections that have all along been subjected to various kinds of deprivation and discrimination and therefore, stand in need of instant development. A proactive state initiative to foster excellence while improving equity through higher access of disadvantage segment of the society. Education is a right and all citizens of the country should have access to it. It is through education that they can fully utilize the opportunities for socio-economic development since it opens to them various avenues of mobility and employment. Education is also an instrument of liberation and endows the deprived groups with confidence, courage and ability to resist exploitation.

Keywords: (Equity, Excellence, Education, Minority)



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Introduction:

It's been decades since India attained Independence, and ever since independence the issue of social access and equity are far too complex for SC, ST, Minorities, Girls and Children with special needs. Large and growing learning gaps threaten the equity gains achieved on the enrolment front because children with lower levels of learning are more likely to drop out. The participation of Muslim children in education has been below the national average. Verification of this information by the Sachar Committee Report of 2008 revealed that the gap with the other communities is increasing 25 percent of children of Muslim parents in the 6-14 year age group have either never attended school or have dropped out. According to the Census figures of 2011, Muslims have a total literacy rate of 59.1 percent, below the national average. We need a change in the education policy to eradicate the label of being disadvantaged. This paper, limits its discussion on the educational issues of the Minorities particularly with reference to the policies; educational provisions; the progress that have been achieved in terms of literacy, enrolment, and retention at different levels of education; and the recommendations of different working groups are as follows:

The National Commitments:

The National Policy of Education 1986, as revised in 1992, had indicated three thrust areas in elementary education:

- (i) Universal access enrolment
- (ii) Universal retention of children up to 14 years of age
- (iii) A substantial improvement in the quality education to enable children to achieve essential levels of learning.

These objectives were address

Right to Education:

Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) is the top priority programme of the Government of India. Since Independence, India have been making efforts through constitutional directives and amendments, committees, commissions, National policies and Programmes to make elementary education of good quality available to all. The recent efforts are mainly directed towards making elementary education fundamental right.

Education as a Fundamental Right:

In 2002 the union Government brought out the constitution (86 The Amendment) Act-2002 with the avowed aim of making education a Fundamental Right for children in the age group of 6-14 years.

1. After Article -21 of the Constitution, Article-21-A was inserted which states :
"The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine".
2. Article 45 of the constitution ,was substituted as follows:
"The state shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years."
3. In Article -51-A of the Constitution ,After clause (J) the following clause was added:
“(k) Who is parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years” (Govt. Of India, 2002)

By the help of these above said constitutional provisions as well as programmes the gaps in average enrolments between Minorities and the general population have decreased, but still there is a considerably large gap in learning levels with historically disadvantaged and economically weaker children having significantly lower learning outcomes. Large and

growing learning gaps threaten the equity gains achieved on the enrolment front because children with lower levels of learning are more likely to drop out. We need to examine current interventions in bridging the gender and social gaps and identify focused strategies for effective inclusion.

Minorities

India is a country with diversity inhabitation of various ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious groups. The groups of people who are perceptibly differentiated from others by race, nationality, religion or language are defined “minorities” by the contemporary sociologists (Shukla, 1997; Reported in NCERT, 1997, p.564). The Constitution of India under Article 29 and 30 defines minorities on the bases of religion and language. The Government of India have notified five communities, viz. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Budhists and Parsees as religious minorites. Due to historical and sociological reasons, certians sections of religious minorities of the country, viz. Muslims and Neo-Budhists, have been identified as educationally backward in the national context. The population of India is divided on the basis of language and the reorganization of State according to language gives each India State an official language. People in the States who speak another language as their mother tongue are considered as language or linguistic minorities, for example the Bengalis or Biharis living in the States of Assam and Tripura. The educational and economic development of this section of population, whether religious or linguistic, is crucial for achieving major national goals and social justice.

Population Profile

The five national minorities, according to 2001 Census, constitute 18.8% of the total population of the country of which Muslims are 14.22%, Christians 2.29%, Sikhs 1.72%, Buddhists 0.69%, Jains 0.36%, Parsies 0.4% (Census of India, 2011). Thus, amongst the national minorities the Muslims are the largest and the Parsies the smallest. Highest concentration of Muslims population is in Jammu and Kashmir followed by Assam, west Bengal, Kerala, U.P. and Bihar. Christians are next to Muslims in terms of population. Highest concentration of Christian population is in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andaman Nicobar Island, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Goa, Pondicherry and Nagaland. Most of the Sikhs live in Punjab. Sikhs have reasonable presence in the states of Harayana, Delhi, Rajasthan and UT of Chandigarh. The concentration of Buddhists is in Arunchala Pradesh, Sikkim, Mizoram, Maharastra, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh. Large majority of neo-Budhists are in

Maharashtra, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh. Parsis mainly live in Maharashtra and Gujarat (reported in Prada, 2004). India is home to the third largest population in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan. India also contains the majority of the world's Zoroastrians, Sikhs, and Jains.

The Policy

The policy of India towards the education development of Minorities may be inferred from the Constitution of India, Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), proclamation of National Policies of education 1968, 1986 and Programme of Action 1992 and Five Year Plans of Government of India. The Constitution of India grants minorities the "fundamental right to equality which prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion besides race, caste, sex or place of birth" (Article 15). It seeks to protect the rights of minorities with built-in institutional arrangements under Article 29, 30, 347, 350, 350-A and 350-B. Article 30 confers upon them the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. Article 350-A provides for facilities for instruction through mother tongue at the primary stage of education. Article 350-B lays down appointment of a special officer for linguistic minorities. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) emphasized on Article 30 of the Constitution and stated it should adopt necessary steps for the fulfilment of such obligations. The Commission pointed out that where minorities exist provision should be made to give instruction in the mother tongue if required numbers of pupils are available. The NPE 1968 made a broad policy statement for the first time, in respect of education of Minorities. It said, every effort should be made not only to protect the rights of minorities but also to promote their educational interests. The next major policy came in the year 1986 which suggested that objectivity would be reflected in the preparation of textbooks and in the school activities and all the possible steps would be taken to promote an integration based on appreciation of common national goals and ideals. The modification of NPE undertaken in 1992 reiterated the 1986 policy regarding the education of Minorities.

Educational Profile

The educational profile of minorities is not available as the census data is not cross-tabulated on the parameter of religion. Although it is difficult to draw an all-India picture on the status of education of minorities, reports of some sample surveys conducted on a localized basis in some districts and States show the relative backwardness of Muslims and Christians.

Based on the data emerging through a survey conducted by National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi in 1994 covering 33,230 rural households in 16 states, Muslims are identified as backward, both educationally and economically, as compared to other minorities. According to Rao (1995) in rural India, 51 % of Hindu males were illiterate. But the figure for Muslims males was 58%. The difference was more striking from urban India. The percentage of illiteracy in urban India was 25.30 % for Hindu males and 42 % for Muslim males. Moreover, the rate of illiteracy in urban India was 42 % for Hindu females and 60% for Muslim females. Another study by Ahmad (1994) also shows that Muslims are backward than Hindu regarding literacy. According to his study, the literacy rate was 32.20 % and 53.65 % among Muslims and Hindu respectively in Diwana town of Rajasthan and 31.46 % and 55.17 % among Muslim and Hindu respectively in Kishanganj town of Bihar. The study reflects that females lagged far behind males.

The DISE 2011-12 data reveals the state of education of the Muslims, particularly with reference to their enrolment at Primary and Upper Primary levels as follows:

- There has been overall increase in the enrolment of Muslim children, including girls at both Primary and Upper Primary levels.
- The percentage of enrolment of Muslim Children at Primary level increased from 9.39% in 2007-08 to 10.49% in 2011-12.
- The percentage of enrolment of Muslim Children at Upper Primary level increased from 7.52% in 2007-08 to 8.54% in 2011-12.
- The percentage of enrolment of Muslim girls in 2011-12 at Primary, Upper Primary and Elementary levels seems to be satisfactory (48.67%, 49.40% and 48.84% respectively).

Recommendations for New Education Policy

The recommendations presented below are a compilation from the reports of different working Groups, particularly those constituted for the formulation of 10th and 11th Five Year Plans pertaining to the development of education of SC, ST, Minorities, Girls and other disadvantaged groups.

Minorities

- More Minority concentration districts should be identified so that more children from minority groups get facilities under SSA.

- Recognized Madrasah's should be brought under SSA and facilities extended to them.
- Dropout rates of disadvantaged groups are noticed to be going up as the level of education goes up. To reduce the rate of dropouts amongst disadvantaged should become the focus of the Eleventh Five Year Plan.
- Inclusive Education should become the idea of every school located in villages taking care of OBC and other Disadvantaged Groups.
- Cash incentives may be given to adult illiterates, especially the female illiterates.
- Coaching schemes for SCs/STs and Minorities should be transferred to MHRD from other Ministries.

By giving priorities to new education policies are crucial to address equity and excellence in the education of minority. There is a need to examine current interventions in bridging the gender and social gaps and identify focused strategies for effective inclusion.

Conclusion:

Education represents true empowerment and must be used as a liberating force. It is widely accepted that there are remarkable increases in measures of quality of life index in the population that have become educated. If we are going to seriously and equitably educate minority students in the 21st century, we have to point out the inequalities of the present, while forging a path for a different future. The future must include all of us and a clear path to practices of new educational policies. With a little more sincerity, empathy and a sense of caring, the educational needs of these categories can be met and with that, their lives and those of the people around them can truly be transformed. The measures suggested in the various recommendations deserve to be fully implemented, subject of course, to the availability of resources and an enabling legal and administrative framework. Through better targeting and tighter monitoring, all the funds allocated for these sections should be fully utilized and all the inputs should be made available in a timely manner so that students can derive the desired benefit and show appropriate results.

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