

Scheduled Castes in Professional and Higher Education

(A Study of Scheduled Caste Students in Engineering, Medical & PG Courses in Anantapur)

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Abstract

The educational progress of the Scheduled castes was visualized through provision of reservations in the educational institutions, provision of pre-metric and post metric scholarships, provision of text books, hostels and residential schools. These inputs provided for more than five decades did register enhanced levels of educational attainments among these disadvantaged sections both in quantitative and qualitative terms. It is now the third generation of Dalits, who have come up utilizing the special inputs provided for their educational. Occupational, economic and politic mobility. It also needs to be further examined whether those who were successful in the school education pursue higher levels of professional and post graduation making use of the protective discrimination and the other educational inputs provided to them. The progress of the Scheduled Castes in the realm of the higher education also has to the object of analysis for, the higher education opens avenues for employment and better career options the career of a person and propel his or her occupational and social mobility. This paper seeks to examine the quality and the level of progress of scheduled caste students in the realm of Higher education particularly in the Engineering, Medical and Post Graduate courses so as to gauge in the degree of their educational progress in terms of the levels and quality of higher education attained by the scheduled caste students in the era of globalization.

Key Words: Disadvantaged, Dalits, Protective discrimination, Educational inputs, Educational attainments Five decades, Vulnerable sections, Politic mobility, Social mobility Globalization.

Introduction

Inequality is the order of all the human societies. The inequalities get crystallized into stratification system, when the inequality is based on membership than on individual characteristics and backed up by long standing societal norms, all of which lead to groups having unequal access to scarce but desirable resources. Indian Society for long remained stratified with hierarchically frozen castes, having differential access to resources, Privileges, power and social honor.

There was wide gulf between the rest of the society and the disadvantaged sections like the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. They were disadvantaged in every sense. One of the important disabilities of the Scheduled

Castes has been the lack of education. India, as a welfare state has been committed to the ideal of welfare state and the upliftment of its people in general and of the vulnerable sections in particular. The government has special concern and commitment for the well being of the socially disadvantaged group's i.e. the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (S.Ts.) the other Backward Castes (BCs) and the minorities. The Constitution of India envisaged ensuring equality to the disadvantaged sections through provision of protective discrimination in big way through reservations in admission to educational institutions and government jobs have to pave the way for the upward mobility for scheduled castes and their entry into the mainstream society and be on par with others.

Education is an important development input, for it has multiplier effect on other dimensions of progress viz social, economic, political precipitating in the process an individual's occupational, geographic spatial

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mobility. (R.V.Naidu 2004) The educational progress of the Castes is a case in point. The educational progress of the Scheduled castes was visualized through provision of reservations in the educational institutions, provision of pre-metric and post metric scholarships, provision of text books, hostels and residential schools. These inputs provided for more than five decades did register enhanced levels of educational attainments among these disadvantaged sections both in quantitative and qualitative terms. It is a fact that the educational inputs did help them stay in the educational institutions among these disadvantaged sections both in quantitative and qualitative terms. It is a fact that the educational inputs did help them stay in the educational institutions without dropping out at the middle of their academic career.

The provision of educational inputs for the past five and a half decades has certainly enabled them to reap benefits which education brings and paved the way for their active participation in various avenues in the main stream society. These measures have created an atmosphere wherein equality of opportunity is evident. It is now the third generation of Dalits, who have come up utilizing the special inputs provided for their educational. Occupational, economic and politic mobility.

It also needs to be further examined whether those who were successful in the school education pursue higher levels of professional and post graduation making use of the protective discrimination and the other educational inputs provided to them. The progress of the Scheduled Castes in the realm of the higher education also has to be the object of analysis for, the higher education opens avenues for employment and better career options the career of a person and propel his or her occupational and social mobility. The overall progress of the marginalized sections signifies the degree of social empowerment of the erstwhile social exclusives.

The students on the educational progress of the scheduled castes have pointed out that the progress was slow and minimal and these studies were confined to mainly primary and secondary levels. The students made by J.P.Naik

(1971), Suma Chitnis and Aikara (1971) Abbasayulu (1978) Pimpley (1981) Victor D'Souza (1981), Bhatia (1982); Dube and Sachdeva (1985), A.R. Das (1990) pointed out to the limited progress made by the scheduled castes in the school education. There were not many studies on the quality and the levels of higher education attained by the disadvantaged sections, which is an indicator as well as the level for their social empowerment. The levels and the quality of higher education attained by the scheduled castes were never attempted in depth particularly at the turn of the century which has witnessed unprecedented forces of globalization.

This paper seeks to examine the quality and the level of progress of scheduled caste students in the realm of Higher education particularly in the Engineering, Medical and Post Graduate courses so as to gauge in the degree of their educational progress in terms of the levels and quality of higher education attained by the scheduled caste students in the era of globalization.

Objectives

The important objectives of this paper are (1) To examine the educational progress of Dalits in Higher education vis-à-vis the context of globalization enumerating their educational attainments, perceptions, attitudes.(2) To know to what extent they are equipped to face changing scenario in education brought forth by Globalization.

Method of Study

This study is based upon the survey of 300 Scheduled Caste students enrolled in Medicine, Engineering and Premier PG Courses in Institutions of Higher Learning in Anantapur town. Extensive data on their familial, educational background, academic achievements were examined to know how far the reservations have helped them to achieve higher education. The study also tries to know their levels of awareness, attitude, vis-a-vis the changing scenario brought about by globalization.

Findings and Discussion

1. The Respondents of the study comprised of 62.33% males and 37.67% females which

indicates that girls from Dalit sections are equally entering into the portals of higher education.

2. Their average age ranges between 18-24 (94%) which indicates that they have consistent unbroken academic career without any wastage and break in their educational career.

3. Considering the places of present residence 64.67% of the respondents hail from Rural and semi-urban places. This indicates the eagerness to attain higher and premier academic qualifications is very much existent in the parents and the students who hail from predominantly rural and semi urban areas.

4. The parents of respondents to an extent of 60.33% own less than 2 acres of land which are primarily dry. Anantapur being a drought stricken place, they hail from poorest among the poor from the rural having fragile economic conditions yet they have exhibited yearning for it is fact that the educational inputs did help them to scale higher levels of education-Technological, Medical and Premier Post-graduate courses in the universities. The overall progress of the marginalized sections signifies the degree of social empowerment of the erstwhile social exclusives it is heartening in terms of getting the professional education, primarily from premier government institutions.

5. In terms of the quality of educational attainments, the respondents have shown consistency at VIIth class, Xth class and intermediate examinations at an average of 79.28%, which is quite remarkable considering their poor socio-economic background. It is clear from the table that the performance of Scheduled Students reveals their excellent level of performance right from their school level to intermediate level, the levels that are common for all the respondents. In all the three levels of education namely, 7th class, 10th class and intermediate a minimum of 88% of marks. At the Xth class public exams 82.33 percent have scored 60-90 per cent about 7.67 per cent of them scored more than 90 per cent or marks. The data clearly show that the academic consistency shown by the Scheduled Castes

respondents was no inferior to that of any other general students.

6. Analysis of the consistency in the professional course reveals that the marks range of 50-60 percent is attained by 91.67% of 1st year respondents, 84.72% of IInd year respondents, 82.48 percent of IIIrd year respondents and 93.17% of 4th year respondents.

7. The Scheduled Castes students academic attainments are excellent both level-wise and quality-wise. Even they show consistency of high second class to first class marks in their professional studies.

8. As far as their aims - 55.66% of the Scheduled Castes respondents wish to pursue Post-graduation in their respective courses, while those in post graduation courses want to go far a professional course like Bachelor of Education or research. This indicates how they are positively oriented and focused on future to acquire better skills. The level of confidence among the respondents was examined and was presented in the table 9 in terms of the capacity to match higher caste students. The data reveals that almost 85% said they can match the higher caste students. It was only 15.33% who expressed some hesitation.

9. The positive attitude that the respondents exhibit ranges between moderate to excellent levels. Aware of social problems, faith in hard work and the consistency they exhibit in their academic performance are clear evidences of their overall educational mobility both quantitatively and qualitatively.

10. The quantitative progress reflected in the enrolment of Schedule Castes from poorer sections of rural and semi urban areas is a clear case of excellent progress attained by them on par with other sections. Their levels of academic consistency and positive value orientation, mental makeup focused on better levels of learning are certain to lead them to better job prospect within the country as well as abroad. The Protective discrimination has certainly enabled the Dalits in higher education and they are quite confident of making much of the

opportunities, globalization can offer in term of job prospectus inside and outside India.

Table No. 1
Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	No. of Respondents	Percent
1. 18-20	65	21.67
2. 20-22	120	40.00
3. 22-24	97	32.33
4. 24-26	14	04.67
5. 26-28	03	01.00
6. 28-30	01	00.33
Total	300	100.00

Table No. 2
Distribution of Respondents by their places of birth

Place of Birth	No. of Respondents	Percent
1.Rural	116	38.67
2.Semi-Urban	90	30.00
3.Urban	94	31.33
Total	300	100.00

Table No. 3
Distribution of Respondents by Extent of Land owned

Extent of Land	No. of Respondents	Percent
1. 0-2	181	60.33
2. 2-5	61	20.33
3. More than 5acres	58	19.34
Total	300	100.00

Table No. 4
Distribution of Respondents by Educational inputs availed

Facilities	Availed facilities		Did not avail facilities		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
1. Residential School	132	44.00	168	56.00	300
2. Scholarships	233	77.67	67	22.33	300
3. Hostel	293	97.67	07	02.33	300
4. Remedial Coaching	165	55.00	135	45.00	300
5. Text Books	208	69.33	92	30.67	300
6. Note Books	190	63.33	110	36.67	300
7. Reservations	280	93.33	20	6.67	300

Table No. 5
Distributions of Respondents by the level of Education they wish to achieve:

Level of Education	No. of Respondents	Percent
1. M.S. & M.D	53	25.00
2. M.Tech	65	30.66
3. B.Ed	47	22.17
4. M.Ed	15	7.08
5. M.Phil	12	5.66
6. Ph.D	20	9.43
Total	212	100.00

Table No. 6
Consistency of Academic Performance of Respondents

Sl. No.	% of Marks	Class VII	Class X	Inter Ist Year	Inter IInd Year
1.	< 40	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.33)
2.	40 - 50	10 (03.33)	1 (0.33)	11 (3.67)	4 (1.33)
3.	50 – 60	28 (9.33)	29 (9.67)	34 (11.33)	25 (8.33)
4.	60 – 70	66 (22.00)	59 (19.67)	69 (23.00)	79 (26.33)
5.	70 – 80	83 (27.67)	79 (26.33)	64 (21.33)	91 (30.34)
6.	80 – 90	87 (29.00)	109 (36.33)	67 (22.33)	93 (31.00)
7.	90 >	26 (8.67)	23 (7.67)	55 (18.34)	7 (2.34)
8.	Total	300 (100.00)	300 (100.00)	300 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Table No. 7
Distribution of Respondents by consistency of academic performance

% of Marks	7th class		10th class		Intermediate	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
< 40	0	0.00	0	0.00	01	0.33
40-50	10	03.33	01	00.33	07	2.33
50-60	28	09.33	29	09.67	29	9.67
60-70	66	22.00	59	19.67	74	24.67
70-80	83	27.67	79	26.33	78	26.00
80-90	87	29.00	109	36.33	80	26.67
> 90	26	08.67	23	07.67	31	10.33
Total	300	100	300	100	300	100

Table No. 8
Distribution of the respondents by their levels of Attitude

Level of Attitude	Number of Respondents	Percent
Poor Attitude	0	0.0
Moderate Attitude	150	50.0
Fair Attitude	150	50.0
Total	300	100.0

Table No. 9
Distributions of Respondents by their perception of matching higher caste students in studies

Can the Scheduled Castes match higher caste students in studies	No. of Respondents	Percent
Certainly Yes	164	54.67
Yes	90	30.00
No	46	15.33
Total	300	100.00

Conclusion

The paper draws the conclusion that Scheduled castes enrolled in the institutions of Higher education have shown remarkable levels of achievement with high quality and consistent academic performance. Hailing from the poorest of the poor from predominantly from rural and semi urban areas the Scheduled caste students have tremendous levels of achievement. This achievement has certainly imbibed in them positive values, attitudes and excellent level of confidence, which is in other words, signifies a true social empowerment. The present generation of scheduled caste students, are not bogged down by the economic and educational disadvantage which once hindered the progress of their parents and grandparents. These academic achievers who had been working, successful and highly focused and motivated brim with confidence and stand empowered by the input of higher education making the best use of the privileges provided for their social amelioration.

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