



INCLUSIVE NATURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION: MYTH OR REALITY

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ABSTRACT

Globalization and Higher Education show an intrinsic link that is reflected through the current demands for newer forms of knowledge, skills, and performance across the world. The creation of knowledge, skill, and performance show direct dependence on higher education as the nature of the demand for goods and services has seen a change like never before. Higher Education is found to be diverse both structurally and functionally in different countries depending on the social and economic structure of a given society. The issue of inclusion has become a global agenda due to several contemporary reasons and needs, most importantly the principle of equality that is the pillar of modern societies. Indian society is known to be diverse and complex, based on the social hierarchy. These factors directly influence social and economic development which is tied to education. At the same time, higher education is structured following such a society, reflecting these factors. In the Indian society, it plays a less positive and more negative role due to its inherent characteristics based on caste, tribe, gender, and religion, besides the colonial remnant of a strong bias in favor of the English language. This results in unequal access, inequality, and poor performance due to deterrents in access and continuation of higher education. Thus inclusivity of higher education gets restricted to a few who have been traditionally and historically accessing it. After independence, the constitution of India has ensured that the government adopts several special measures for inclusion especially for traditionally deprived sections such as SC, ST, OBC, and minority. However, the set goal of bridging the gap in higher education falls short of the expectations from these measures. The newer was the problem of globalization and privatization of higher education has further exacerbated the situation. The different sections from the majority of our society have no tradition of education in the family and community. It is observed that there is a market performance for general education and enrolment in government institutions where they can access affordable education. Privatization pronounces the quality caters only to the rich who are generally not from the deprived sections and do not suffer from traditional social barriers towards the attainment of education. So despite the expansion of higher education, deprivation continues to exist.

INTRODUCTION

India's higher education system is the world's third-largest in terms of students, next to China and the United States. In the future, India will be one of the largest education hubs. India's Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since independence. The 'Right to Education Act' which stipulates compulsory and free education to all children within the age groups of 6-14 years, has brought about a revolution in the education system of the country with statistics revealing a staggering enrolment in schools over the last four years. The involvement of the private sector in higher education has seen drastic changes in the field. Today over 60 percent of higher education institutions in India are promoted by the private sector. This has accelerated the establishment of institutes that have originated over the last decade making India home to the largest number of Higher Education institutions in the world, with student enrolments at the second-highest (Shaguri, 2013). The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in

1950 to 677 in 2014. Despite these numbers, international education rating agencies have not placed many of these institutions within the best of the world ranking. Also, India has failed to produce world-class universities. Today, Knowledge is power. The more knowledge one has, the more empowered one is. However, India continues to face stern challenges. Despite growing investment in education, 25 percent of its population is still illiterate; only 15 percent of Indian students reach high school, and just 7 percent graduate (Masani, 2008). The quality of education in India whether at primary or higher education level is significantly poor as compared to major developing nations of the world.

As of 2008, India's post-secondary institutions offer only enough seats for 7 percent of India's college-age population, 25 percent of teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57 percent of college professors lack either a masters or Ph.D degree (Newsweek, 2011). As of 2011, there are 1522 degree-granting engineering colleges in India with an annual student intake of 582,000 (Science and Technology Education, 2009) plus 1,244



polytechnics with an annual intake of 265,000. However, these institutions face a shortage of faculty and concerns have been raised over the quality of education (Mitra, 2008). Despite these challenges higher education system of India equally has a lot of opportunities to overcome these challenges and have the capability to make its identity at the international level. However, it needs greater transparency and accountability, the role of universities and colleges in the new millennium, and emerging scientific research on how people learn is of utmost importance. India provides highly skilled people to other countries therefore; it is very easy for India to transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation.

Inclusion has become a major active movement in the educational world in the 21st century. Through an inclusive educational approach, it is assumed that quality and equitable education can be accessible for learners (Tilstone & Rose, 2003) irrespective of their ability or disability. In other words, inclusive education can reinforce the idea of social justice in education. To include all learners in the educational process, it is essential to recognize the diverse needs of learners and address those needs through appropriate educational provisions. In that sense, inclusion has emerged as an ideology for looking after the needs of all children according to their level of ability irrespective of age, sex, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic or disability background. Therefore, this has become increasingly a process of awareness to be able to meet the diverse needs of children.

The state of Kerala stands out as a model in the development of India. There has been wide appreciation for its achievements in social development, particularly for the spread of education, health, services, and implementation of land reforms. But these achievements have however not adequately filtered down to the weaker sections of the society especially the tribals. The tribal communities form 1.10 percent of the population of Kerala. The majority of tribal communities in Kerala remain outsiders to the development process. The literacy rate of the general population in Kerala stands at a high percentage of 93.91 per cent whereas the literacy rate of tribals is only 64.4 percent (2011 census). As far as the levels of education are concerned, as many as 33.5 percent of tribal literates in Kerala are either without any educational level or have attained education below primary level. The proportion of literates who have attained education up to primary level and middle levels are 29.3 percent and 22.9 percent respectively. Persons educated up to higher secondary have a share of only 12.4 percent of the total literate population. Graduates and above are a meager 1.2 percent while nontechnical and technical diploma holders constitute 0.8 percent only.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN KERALA

Kerala is the most socially developed state in India having good indicators in Human Development and Physical Quality of Life Indices with high life expectancy, a low birth rate, low infant mortality, higher than usual (for India) rates of literacy, and almost universal school attendance (UNDP Kerala, 2005). The state has achieved its 'total literacy status' during the 1990s. In addition, it is the only state in India having a higher female population than male population (1000/1084). Unlike

other parts of India, Kerala is a social welfare state providing free schooling, health care, financial support for unemployed people, and the working poor. Here education is considered as an important factor in ensuring a higher social status and better economic life for its citizens (National Council for Educational Research and Training-NCERT-, 2006).

Therefore some of the interpretations of inclusive education in India are not particularly identifiable in this state. For example, girls outnumber boys, and the majority of children with 'identified special educational categories' gain access to education. The state of Kerala has fewer numbers of out of school children than other Indian states. It has been reported that a 'zero percentage' of children within the state have never attended schools (NCERT, 2005). This study also showed that this state had the least number (0.55%) of out-of-school children (6-10 age groups) in India after Himachal Pradesh (0.54%). Additionally, a census report by the Kerala Government (2007) showed that there were 1.69% of out-of-school children in the age group of 5-18 years old. Both national and state surveys similarly reported that a higher percentage of boys than girls are in the out-of-school children category in Kerala. This is in contrast to the national level figures. In terms of social groups, the percentage of children out of school is 1.73 for ST, 4.83 for SC, 0.20 for OBC, 0.48 for Muslims, 0.27 for others in the 6-13 age groups. This also contrasts with national-level figures, most notably the educational achievement of the Muslim community in Kerala.

THE STUDY

The general approach undertaken in this study was qualitative and quantitative. The study aimed to identify the education pattern of the Kattunaykkan tribal women in Wayanad. Because the Kattunaykkan community is the highest populated PVTG tribal community in Kerala and which is in the lowest spectrum of socio-economic development. Noolpuzhapanchayath and Ambalavayalpanchayath is selected for collecting the sample. Because Noolpuzha has the highest Kattunaykkan concentration and Ambalavayal has the lowest Kattunaykkan concentration in Wayanad district. Total households in these two Panchayats formed 500 consisting of 440 in Noolpuzha and 60 in Ambalavayal panchayath. That means 88 percent of the Kattunaykkan tribal community formed in Noolpuzha panchayath and the remaining 12 percent consisting Ambalavayal panchayath. The study takes 30 percent of 500 households as sample size (150 is the sample size). From Noolpuzha, 132 households are selected (88% of 150) and from Ambalavayal 18 households are selected (12% of 150). The households are selected randomly from the list of households provided by the Panchayath.

LITERACY AND EDUCATION

The social and economic backwardness of the STs can be gauged from an array of indicators. Nevertheless, here we choose a limited number of indicators to show that the community has been deprived of many amenities and they have been excluded from participating in, contributing to, and benefiting from the economic policies of the government. Literacy and education



attainment deserves to be highlighted first. Kerala claims to have attained 95 percent of literacy rate as per the Census, 2011. Nevertheless the literacy rate of STs stands at 75.8 percent. More distressing is the fact that female literacy among the STs is just

71 percent. The male literacy rate is also low (80.7 percent) compared to the same for the whole population (95 percent).

Table 1
District wise literacy level among the STs (%) – 2011 census

District	Persons	Male	Female	Gender Gap
Thiruvananthapuram	89.2	91.4	87.2	4.2
Kollam	85.7	88.5	83.1	5.4
Pathanamthitta	89.6	91.6	87.7	3.9
Alappuzha	89.9	92.6	87.5	5.1
Kottayam	94.3	95.1	93.6	1.5
Idukki	76.6	82.2	70.9	11.3
Eranakulam	85.4	88.3	82.5	5.8
Thrissur	83.5	86.3	81.1	5.2
Palakkad	61.4	67.0	56.1	10.9
Malappuram	76.2	80.1	72.6	7.5
Kozhikode	85.3	89.1	81.7	7.4
Wayanad	70.5	76.9	64.3	12.6
Kannur	77.9	83.4	72.7	10.7
kasargod	73.1	78.5	67.7	10.8
State	75.8	80.7	71.1	9.6

Source: Census Report 2011

The tribal literacy rate is high in the districts, Kottayam, Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, and Pathanamthitta (above 85%) Whereas, in Palakkad (61.4%), Malappuram (43.93%), Wayanad (70.5%), Kasarkode (73.1%) it is relatively low.

The main reason for the slower spread of education among the STs is the peculiar nature of their habitations. Majority of the tribes are living in remote areas, far away from schools and other educational institutions. Moreover, the socio-economic circumstances prevailing in the tribal settlements are not conducive for their studies. Effective educational development is hindered, to a great extent, by poverty. In a way, the parents of tribal children, most of them are illiterates, are also responsible for the educational backwardness, because, they neither attach much importance to education nor insist their children attend classes regularly (Government of Kerala, 1999).

As education is the most effective instrument for promoting economic and social advancement, prime importance

had been given to their educational progress in all plans. Under various schemes, educational concessions, scholarships, and various other assistance are given to tribal students from primary education onwards. At post metric levels, the number of scholarships given to them has steeply increased during the period between 1985 and 2015 (Table No: 2). Apart from financial assistance, 5% of seats are reserved for the STs in every educational institution. For providing quality education to tribal students, 14 model residential schools have been established so far in the State. Likewise, 14 nursery schools and 104 pre-metric hostels are functioning in various parts of the State for their educational progress. Despite these, as well as special incentives, the dropout rate is higher, especially at the pre-metric level, among the tribal students compared to that of the general population (State Planning Board, 2002).

Table 2
Scholarships provided by the tribal students (lakh)

Period	Pre-metric scholarships	Post-metric scholarships	Total
1985-90	297.640	8.644	306.284
1990-95	325.734	12.313	338.047
1995-2000	291.585	16.918	308.503
2000-05	306.817	23.550	330.367
2005-10	322.51	31.072	353.582
2010-15	347.65	39.247	386.987

Source: Directorate of Tribal Development Department, the Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

LACK OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Education is a vital instrument to make a change in the patterns and cultural norms of tribal women's lives. It would help them to organize themselves to analyze their situations and living

conditions and be aware of their rights and responsibilities. Educated women will be able to face present-day society better than in earlier times.



The non-literate ST females in rural areas are alarmingly high, which is above half of the total ST rural females. The illiterates among urban ST females are also high (31.3), whereas the illiterates among urban males and rural males are only 12.7 and 35.8 respectively. Even though the number of illiterate male STs is higher than that of all social groups 'counterparts, the difference between male and female STs show the vulnerability

of female STs. This difference is visible in all levels of education. When comparing the educational status of ST females with that of the female of all social categories, there is a wide difference. It reveals the challenges confronted by the female tribes in accessing and continuing education. Thus they are in a vulnerable position when compared to their male counterparts and that of the general female population.

Table 3
Percentage distribution of persons of age 15 years and above by level of higher education

Social group	Non literate	Literate & upto primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher secondary	Diploma/certificate	Graduation and above
Rural male							
ST	35.8	26.4	18.3	11.1	5.7	0.6	2.2
All social group	26	25.3	20.5	14.7	8	1	4.5
Rural Female							
ST	58.3	21.7	10.3	5.7	2.7	0.3	0.9
All social group	49.8	22	13.5	8.2	4.2	0.4	2
Urban male							
ST	12.7	17.6	19.3	18.2	14.3	2.6	15.3
All social group	10.4	15.9	17.5	19.5	13.9	2.9	19.8
Urban female							
ST	31.3	16.7	15.3	14.7	11.1	1	9.8
All social group	23.6	17.2	15.3	15.9	12.1	1.3	14.7
Rural person							
ST	47	24.2	14.3	8.4	4.2	0.4	1.6
All social group	37.8	23.7	17	11.5	6.2	0.7	3.2
Urban person							
ST	21.8	17.1	17.3	16.5	12.8	1.8	12.6
All social group	16.7	16.4	16.4	17.7	13	2.1	17.3

Source: Report No. 543 of NSS round

Although literacy levels of the tribal population have improved, the gap in literacy levels between tribal men and women has not declined significantly. According to the data of statistical profile of Scheduled tribes in India, the male-female gap in literacy rate decreased from 24.41 percentage points in 2001 to 19.18 percentage points in 2011 for ST, and for the total population, it declined from 21.59 percentage points in 2001 to 16.25 percentage points in 2011.

THE EDUCATIONAL STANDARD OF THE SAMPLE FEMALE RESPONDENT

The extent and pace of development of any economy depend upon the participation of all segments of the population in the educational system. Many studies have highlighted the low participation of the tribal population in educational practices like delivery of education, imparting of education, and resultant socio-economic development. Most of the studies approached the

socio-economic issues of tribes from an underprivileged or marginalized perspective concerning socio-economic determinants. However, effective measures and policies are required to bring them at par with the other social stratum in society concerning educational and socio-economic development.

Education plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of the individual. This part analyses and discusses the educational standard of the tribes particularly, the female sample respondent and the members of the family. Table 4 shows the educational standard of the female sample respondent in the study area. From the table, it is explicitly evident that 84 percent of the female respondents are still illiterate. It is observed that 10 percent of the sample female respondents completed primary education. 4 percent of the respondents completed upper primary education and only 2 percent of the sample respondents qualify high school.



Table 4
The Educational Standard of the sample female respondents

Education qualification of the sample female respondent	Number of household	Percentage
Illiterate	126	84.0
lower primary	15	10.0
upper primary	6	4.0
high school	3	2.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: field survey, September 2018

The majority of the respondents are illiterate. The main reason for the lack of education is the particular nature of their habitat.

EDUCATION STATUS OF THE FAMILY MEMBERS

Education plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of the family.

Table 5
Education status of the family members

Education qualification of the family members	Number of family members	Percentage
illiterate	210	44.3
lower primary	81	17.1
upper primary	102	21.5
high school	72	15.2
higher secondary	9	1.9
Total	474	100

Source: field survey, September 2018

This part analyses and discusses the educational standard of the tribals particularly, the members of the family. The above table shows the educational standard of the members of the tribal families in the study area. From the table, it is explicitly evident that 44.3 percent of the members of the families are still illiterate. It is observed that 17.1 percent of the family heads have completed lower primary education. 21.5 percent of the family heads completed upper primary education and 15.2 percent of the family members qualify high school. Only 1.9 percent of the family members qualify for higher secondary education.

DEPRIVATION BASED ON EDUCATION INDICATORS

Literacy and education are among the two important indicators in the Kerala Model of development. Visible inequality existed at the level of education and at the same time

quality of education as well. Scheduled Tribes in Kerala are one of the most deprived and marginalized groups concerning education and literacy. The socio-economic and cultural factors among tribes can be outlined as poverty and poor economic conditions, social customs, cultural ethos, lack of awareness and understanding which are the major reasons for the lack of formal education. The following table reveals the educational deprivation of the Kattunaykkan tribal community in Wayanad. The years of schooling indicator shows that household is deprived of education. No one in the house completed five years schooling. The deprivation score in this study shows that 18 percent of tribal households are deprived in the year of schooling indicator. All household members are considered deprived if any of their school-age children are not attending the 1 to 8 grades of school. The table 5 shows those 2 percent of households are deprived of this indicator.

Table 5
Deprivation of Tribal Communities based on Education Indicators

Indicator	Number of household	Percentage
Years of schooling *	27	18
School enrolment**	3	2

Source: Field survey, September 2018

* no household member in a household has completed five years of schooling

**any school-aged child in a household is not attending school in years 1 to 8



CONCLUSION

Tribal communities in Wayanad are heterogeneous communities and this aspect needs to be taken into consideration while planning and implementing educational programs. They have utilized the benefits of higher education for development, yet they are severely deprived in many aspects of development. The higher education system generates several crucial capabilities necessary for the tribes to have a valued and dignified life. Tribal students feel alienated in our educational institutions and to overcome these feelings institutions need to foster a culture that is convivial to all students. Support services should be provided to sustain these students at the college level. Tribal students need structures that will help them to build the social and cultural capital, necessary for engagement and success in and beyond the classroom. Higher education can cultivate such feelings and offer learning that is useful beyond the workplace.

The financial support provided by the government is quite inadequate and often the payment is delayed causing constraints to tribal students to continue their higher education. There is a need for enhancement of the amount of scholarship and as well as measures should be taken for prompt payment of the scholarship on time to continue their studies. There is a need to establish community colleges to design courses relevant to tribal communities and getting employment. The role of NGOs is critical in spreading higher education among tribes. They can provide career guidance, support admission; help in securing bank loans, and assist in placement after their higher studies.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has become an integral part of higher education globally. It is an effective tool for the provision of education to a heterogeneous group of learners as well as an alternative channel to democratize education all over the world. Tribes who are unable to join formal higher education due to financial constraints or failure at the school level and also those who complete equivalency courses can be brought under the purview of distance education. Distance education programs should be popularized among tribal communities of Wayanad.

The study reveals that the present higher education system falls short in providing quantitative and qualitative improvement in the lives of tribal women in Wayanad. There is a need for inclusive strategies to promote and retain tribes and other disadvantaged groups in higher education. Higher education can help them to overcome poverty and deprivation. In dynamic societies, it is the role of higher education to equip individuals with the skills and attitude necessary for them to adapt to changing conditions and for constructive participation in the task of social change.

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