

Access to Education for Underprivileged Students: Revisiting Strategies and Policies in the Context of Globalization

Dr. Aakuthota Srinivasulu

Assistant Professor

Department of Public Administration & HRM

Kakatiya University, Hanamkonda – 506009

Cell: 9848073582, E-mail: dr.aakuthota@gmail.com

Abstract: Access to education for underprivileged students remains a critical global issue, particularly in the context of rapid globalization. Despite significant advancements in technology, infrastructure, and policy frameworks, educational inequality persists, exacerbating socio-economic disparities. This paper examines the challenges and opportunities associated with providing equitable education to underprivileged populations, especially in developing and underdeveloped regions. The study explores the impact of globalization on educational systems, highlighting both positive and negative implications. On one hand, globalization has facilitated access to knowledge, digital tools, and international collaborations. On the other hand, it has widened the gap between affluent and disadvantaged groups due to unequal resource distribution and systemic barriers. Challenges such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, gender discrimination, and social exclusion are analyzed in detail, with a focus on their impact on enrollment, retention, and academic performance. Additionally, the paper reviews existing strategies and policies implemented at local, national, and global levels to address educational disparities. Case studies of successful interventions—such as community-based initiatives, digital learning platforms, and conditional cash transfer programs—are presented to highlight best practices. The role of public-private partnerships, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies in bridging the educational divide is also examined. The study concludes by proposing a reimaged framework for ensuring inclusive and quality education for underprivileged students. Key recommendations include leveraging technology to democratize learning, adopting culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches, and fostering policy coherence across sectors. The importance of community engagement and sustained financial investment is emphasized to create long-term, impactful change. In the context of globalization, this paper calls for a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach to re-strategize policies and practices that empower underprivileged students and promote social equity through education.

Keywords: Educational inequality, disparities, infrastructure, globalization, social exclusion technology,

Introduction:

Since Independence, the government, both the centre and the state, has accepted the significant role of education in all-round development of the Indian economy because uneducated, illiterate Indian mass would be proved an extra-load to the society and so the economy too. In social, economic, Political transformation, education is the most important lever by which we could transform the undeveloped Indian economy to the developing and so the one of developed super power economy of the world. For India's inclusive equitable development a well educated population equipped with the relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills is needful. For rapid accelerated economic and social development in the 21st century it is opined. "Education is the most potent tool on which we would be successful to build an equitable and just society with the feature of dynamic social-economic mobility as education provides skill and competencies for economic well-being for whole society and so for the whole nation too. Education also acts as an integrative force in society, imparting values that foster social cohesion and national identity. Moreover, Education should play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalances, empowering women and in securing rightful place for the disadvantaged and minorities. Realizing the significance of education in national development, since the inception of first five year plan to the twelfth five year plan, the public spending percentage has gone

up rapidly which touches 3.3 percent of GDP in 2004-05 to over 4 percent of GDP in 2011-12, to 6 percent to GDP in 2016-17 of the central government. The bulk of public spending on education is incurred by the state government their spending grew at a robust rate of 19.6 percent per year during 11th plan and upto 30% in the current year. In the state sector, about 75 percent of education expenditure is for school education of which 44 percent is on elementary education and 30 percent on secondary education.

In Indian context, meaningful access requires high attendance rates, progression through grades with little or no repetition and learning outcomes that confirm that basic skill are being mastered. To provide the universal access to all boys and girls irrespective of caste, gender or location the responsibility lies jointly on the Central and the state governments both. Those government schools managed controlled, financed and administered by either central or the state governments are wide-open to provide qualitative elementary education as per prescribed curriculum. The general pattern of education at present, adopted at the -, national level, commonly known as the 10+2+3 pattern, envisages a broad based general (''), education to all pupils during the first 'ten' years of schooling. The elementary education which has now been made free and compulsory for children of 6-14 years age groups includes primary (I-V) and upper primary/middle (VI-VIII) stages. For

universalization, a policy of automatic promotion has been introduced at elementary stages to encourage children to continue their education to at least grade 8 while minimizing repetition and dropout. For the improvement in access, the National policy on education suggested some important guideline such as the district primary education programme (1994), Involvement of bilateral and Multilateral donors, village education committee Parent-teacher Association and Mother-Teacher association for looking after the implementation of universal access to unprivileged groups of society. Legislative moves to bring elementary education under Panchayati Raj institutions (Local-self governments) have given further impetus to community mobilization at the grassroots level.

The sources of income are highly dependent on the level of educational attainment under teteris Paribas conditions. The low level of education is highly correlated with engagement in unskilled jobs and they are mainly engage in primary sector. As the level of educational attainment improves people become able to participate in secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. As per the records of census data 1951 India's literacy rate was about 18 percent which improve to 74.04 percent in 2011 (Census, 2011). The impact of this improvement in literacy rate can be clearly seen from the change in structural composition of employment opportunities. There has been continuous shift in labour force from primary sector to secondary and secondary to tertiary sector. This movement of labour force from one sector to another is always in a good direction which leads to engagement of labour force from low proactive work to high productive work and improves the level of income of people. If this shift of labour may take place in specific region i.e. rural areas, the standard of rural people may be raised.

Scheduled Castes in Post-Independence Period

Table 1: Literacy Rates of SC and ST population

		2001	2011
1	Male Literacy rate	75.3	84.14
2	Female Literacy rate	53.7	65.46
3	Gender Gap in Literacy	21.6	16.68
		1991	2001
4	Literacy rates for SC	37.41	54.69
5	Literacy rates for SC (Male)	49.91	66.64
6	Literacy rates for SC (Female)	23.67	41.9
7	Literacy rates for ST	29.6	47.1
8	Literacy rates for ST (Male)	40.65	59.17
9	Literacy rates for ST (Female)	18.19	47.1

Source: Human Development Report, 2000 and 2011.

Gross Enrolment Ratio in secondary and Higher Secondary Education:

Table-4 provides data on enrolment of SC Adolescence boys and girls in secondary and higher secondary

After independence, the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) received special attention through the Constitution of India with special provisions in education, employment and political representation. Article 46, for instance, declares: "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." Untouchability was declared abolished under Article 17. Consequently, avenues had been opened to these people to enter into modern and secular sectors of development which are based on rationality as against the tradition and religion. As a result, the philosophy of equality and equal opportunity was cherished during the period. However, as revealed by many studies, restricted access to education has been a matter of great social concern ever since the notion of equality of educational opportunity gained recognition as a basic human right. Studies have established that access to and performance in education continues strongly to be a function of social background-caste, class, race and sex are the major factors that operate. The UNICEF and UNESCO (2014) have reported that Dalit girls have the highest primary school exclusion rate in India. The report also indicates that half of the pre-school aged dalit children are not attending school and the contributing factors to higher rates of exclusion are deep-rooted social inequalities and poverty among dalits (Scheduled Castes). The report also stated that, humiliation, harassment and abuse by upper caste teachers towards children from scheduled castes de-motivated the children to stay in school. Child labour was identified as another key hindrance to children attending school. According to the ILO, India has the highest number of working children in the world. Most of these children belong to the poorest, most marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."

classes for the year 2004-05 to 2013-14. The data shows substantial rise in GER. For the secondary classes, in case of boys, it rose by 27.3% points but in case of girls in increased by 32.0% points more than double of that of boys. The higher secondary classes have showed still better result. The enrolment

of boys has increased by 23.4% points and the enrolment of girls increased by 32% points again more than double of that for boys. As such investment in expansion of the school system

level substantially for all students including the SC ones. More importantly this enrolment growth has been substantially higher for girl students than boys.

Table 2: Gross Enrolment Ratio in secondary and Higher Secondary Education for the Scheduled Cast Student for the year 2004-05 to 2013-14 (%)

Year	GER in secondary education in Adolescence (classes 9-10) (Age 14-15 years)			GER in higher secondary education in Adolescence (classes 11-12) (Age 15-17 years)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2004-05	52.2	37.6	45.4	26.6	19.1	23.2
2005-06	54.8	40.3	48.1	27.9	20.9	24.7
2006-07	58.3	44.6	51.9	29.2	21.8	25.8
2007-08	55.8	48.9	52.6	30.1	25.3	27.9
2008-09	57.4	51.8	54.8	30.9	26.6	28.9
2009-10	71.2	63.5	67.6	37.4	33.5	35.6
2010-11	74.0	67.5	70.9	40.3	36.1	38.3
2013-14	78.2	79.4	78.7	50.0	51.1	50.5

Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2011, MHRD, GoI; U-DISE, NUEPA

Challenges: There are various challenges for the Schedule cast or Dalit, for their education status one of the major challenges is drop-out rate in adolescent.

Drop-Out Rates in Scheduled Caste Adolescents: Drop-out rate in Schedule Caste group student is very unexpected. In the first year of their enrolment in School, it remains very high gradually in coming year it goes down. As we have found that in upper primary education level total Gross Enrolment Ratio is 98.3%, but in secondary education GER is low with 78.7%, higher secondary education GER is more poor with 50.5%.

Discrimination in Education: Education represents one way to break out of cycles of poverty and distress, but it is also a by-product of such economic condition. Even when Dalits are allowed access to school, Dalit students face substandard condition. Ninety-nine percent of Dalit students comes from contrast, it is common for non-Dalit children to seek private tutoring or to access private education of generally better quality. The motivation to do so comes from the fact that most primary government schools are considered low quality. Few Dalits are able to access such supplementation to their education, this furthers the education gaps. Once enrolled, discrimination continues to obstruct the access of Dalit children to schooling as well as to affect the quality of education they receive.

On the other hand, the acceptance of the ideology and practices of globalization by the Indian Government in the nineties led to the continual withdrawal of public funds from higher education. Under the influence of globalization, privatization and liberalization, the governments at the centre and the state giving green signal to expansion of higher

education. This lead to decline of investments in higher education and the total expenditure on education of the Union Government reduced from 32 to 24 percent between 1989-1990 and 1994-1995 and the corresponding figures relating to state budgets declined from 12.7 to 10.8 percent. The priority given in earlier plans to higher education in allocation of resources in the Five Year Plans has also fallen considerably. While 14 percent of the total expenditure on education in the seventh Five Year Plan was allotted to higher education, it decreased to 11 percent in the subsequent two annual plans and further to eight percent in the eighth Five Year Plan.. Government of India decided to reduce the subsidies on higher education from 90 percent to 25 percent with in a period of five years (Government of India, Discussion Paper, 1997).

The lessons from global scenario and hard Indian realities dictate that a sustainable agenda for higher education should indisputably be inclusive of equity and excellence. The Geneva conference of UNESCO (2004) claims this position and calls upon the world community to provide quality education for all young people. This cannot be done by merely opening up the higher education, sector to market players. In a country where 26 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and majority of the people in rural areas, markets will not be able to attract sufficient numbers of young men to higher education and even, they attract feeble economic background rural youth cannot have access to higher education at high prices. Moreover, market orientation will lead to skewed development, by patronizing only courses and programmes, which have immediate market value and which can mint money and neglecting theoretical, conventional traditional studies and fundamental research, which are important for long term sustained development. In fact commercialization of education

and marginalization of courses like social sciences and arts contributing for social unrest. Students and youth are kept out of knowing culture, tradition, human touch, caring, self-confidence and respect resulting these youth is attracted to westernization and contributing for deterioration of values and customs. This is very much evidenced from recent suicides, killings and acid attacks. As such, there is a greater responsibility on the part of the government and academicians to protect conventional and traditional courses for two reasons; one is to provide access to rural youth for higher education and another is informing and keeping touch with them about Indian traditions, customs and values. This move certainly controls indecent and deviant nature of teenage. This does not mean that job-oriented courses should be kept out of the purview of higher education. It aptly means that universities are meant to impart all kinds of education but ought not to act as placement centres.

Education, especially higher education, has never been the only responsibility of the state in India. The people and the Governments have always welcomed private initiative. But there is a lot of difference between private involvement in the earlier decades and the new wave of private investment. While the previous intervention was philanthropic in nature, the new mode is market and commercial oriented. This has lead to the mushrooming of higher education institutions, especially in the professional sector in which the courses have immediate market value and completely undermined traditional and conventional courses disturbing essential fabric of the society. With this untoward act, the Indian society is in peril. For example, both in terms of institutions and intake in engineering at the undergraduate level, the percentage of institutions and enrolment of the private sector in the total has gone up from 76 percent in 1999-2000 to 85 percent in 2003-04. Now there are 977 engineering and technology institutions in the country in the government sector and 764 in the private sector. Corresponding figures in the Medicine is 1349 and 1028, Management Courses at the Masters level 505 and 324 and Teacher Education 1541 and 1038 (NIEPA, 2008-2011). The system of higher education in India is more privatized than in most developed countries. While about 80 percent of the students in the United States attend public institutions of higher learning and only 20percentage depend on private institutions, the reverse figures are applicable to Asian countries.

The unprecedented growth of the self-financing sector as against the government and aided sector is socially divisive and academically cancerous. A system of access based on financial merit as against academic merit can accelerate the prevailing social tensions by inviting the wrath of those sections of the population who cannot raise the resources required for higher education, which is the stairway to success in a largely knowledge driven economy. A system of admission based on financial considerations could also exclude a vast majority of meritorious candidates and include mediocre aspirants on their financial strength, with its attendant adverse impact on the quality of higher education imparted. Both societal and academic considerations necessitate a reorientation of the

present strategies for development in higher education. Financially constrained state governments, local bodies etc. when they seek private participation in education are keenly aware that private players are interested only in private benefit. The challenge is to harness the benefits of a larger educational system while restraining the profiteering of private players. The role of higher education for enabling the learner to earn a decent living, either through wage employment or self-employment should not be lost sight of. We need experts in different disciplines who could serve the myriad requirements of a complex world. The job market also demands personnel trained to do a variety of jobs. However, this does not mean that higher education has to produce ready-to-serve knowledge workers who could be readily absorbed into jobs without any on-the- job training. While such a programme of specialized job training would suit the interests of the immediate employers, it will not serve the long-term interests of the learners. Since the pattern of future demand can neither be controlled nor foreseen, the only alternative available is to build up the-capacity to innovate which will require a balanced development of basic and applied skills.

Conclusion

It is our responsibility to ensure that globalization serves human interests and is of benefit to all. In Indian and Telangana context globalization can be welcomed if it helps last man of the society. So far, the impact of globalization has been unequal and favouring affluent society. For certain sections of the world community it has been a force for economic growth and social mobility, opening up new opportunities for participation and communication. For a majority of world population, however, globalization has led to deeper marginalization and impoverishment, widening disparities both within and between countries. In my view, higher education should made access to all by allocating huge investments. And it is the time to seek lessons from developed countries where majority students enrolled in public institutions. One thing is highly appreciable that present State Government as its serious commitment to spread higher education to all the corners of the state established many a number of universities in the state with government sector.

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