

Rural and Urban Inequality in Access to Education among Scheduled Castes in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Even though India has gained independence, the Scheduled Castes have been denied even the most basic rights from the historical context and contemporary reality. The Constitutional provisions and welfare policies support the advancement of the SC people to promote their development. In spite of many attempts by governments, the benefits of welfare policies and developmental policy are being used by urban SCs population. The fruits of welfare policies and developmental policy are not equally distributed among rural and urban SCs population in Tamil Nadu. The study attempts to make a brief analysis in the following manner; why are the benefits of welfare policies not reaching rural SCs? Why are rural SC people socially and economically at the bottom level to urban areas?

Keywords: Rural urban inequalities • Access to education • Scheduled caste • Discrimination

Description

Education can make a man a virtuous man and bring about social change through them. It can play a vital role for social and economic change to everyone. Fundamental education is the only way to uplift civilized society. It leads to increasing the awareness and social consciousness of the people and provides responsible leadership of the nation. Every citizen of the country has the right to access basic education and development rights and to improve his or her social status. In India, caste based discrimination has been practiced for a long time. Due to this reason, opportunities of access to education are not reached in certain communities like SCs/STs. Equality of educational opportunity is closely related to the social and economic development of society. The main objective of the Constitution of India is to provide equal education opportunity to the people irrespective of castes, sex, religion, and color and socio economic status. Therefore, the government has been launching from time to time several programs and policies for education development of all communities ever since the commencement of the Constitution of India. However, education policy has not yielded good results in achieving literacy. Inequalities in educational opportunities are a major obstacle to economic progress and access to education is not evenly distributed among communities.

There are vast inequalities in access to education (including primary to higher education) among the Scheduled Castes (SCs). Education Policies are central to an understanding of how aims, provisions, institutional mechanisms, and processes of education take shape in specific contexts. Some of the key questions that will

be explored through this study are: What are the contexts in which different policies relevant to education have been formulated and mediated? What have been the influences of these policies on shaping the various institutions, in particular schools, colleges, universities and their structures, functions, responsibilities, and linkages, within the education system and society? How have different issues such as accountability, quality, choice, and exclusion/inclusion, academic mentoring and capacity building, pertaining to the functioning of education institutions, been framed and understood in the context of these education policies? How has education policies dealt with more macro issues of provisioning, funding, regulation, and governance? What have been the roles of different factors such as the private sector, civil society, and international agencies in the formulation, implementation, and mediation of education policies?

Inequality may be different from community to community, region to region, state to state, and country to country. Nevertheless inequality is being happening everywhere by every minute to threaten just social order. In Tamil Nadu, there are a number of inequalities such as; gender inequalities, caste inequalities, residence inequality, and so on. The present study tries to discuss rural and urban inequalities among SCs communities with reference to education.

As per my concern, SCs have been discriminated against based on caste and geography location (rural and urban). First I can discuss how SCs have been discriminated against based on caste. They have been denied even the most basic rights from historical context as well as contemporary reality. Scheduled Castes have been treated as untouchable and those communities are out of Hindu Caste System. To overcome these problems, The Constitution of India

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assures fundamental rights of equality before the law and equal protection of the law to all its citizens. The part IV (DPSP) of the Constitution of India under articles 46 directs "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 the scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation" (Constitution of India: Art. 46). Based on this article, the government is enacting special laws in favors of SCs.

On the other hand, Literacy is a fundamental indicator of the level of development achieved by a group and society. In Tamil Nadu, the total literacy rate of Scheduled Castes population is 73.3 percent which is lower than 80.1 per cent reported for the state as whole. The literacy rate of rural Scheduled Caste population is 69.9 percent which is lower than 73.5 percent reported for the rural state as whole. The literacy rate of urban Scheduled Caste population is 79.6 which is lower than 87 per cent reported for the urban state as whole (Census of India: 2021). It is observed that the literacy rate of Scheduled Castes is gradually decreasing when compared to non-Scheduled Castes. As we know that rural communities are always away from the mainstream literacy programs. In this scenario, how will rural SCs approach basic education? (Table 1).

Census year	Rural	Urban	U-R differences
1961	8.9	21.8	12.9
1971	12.8	28.7	15.9
1981	18.5	36.6	18.1
1991	33.3	55.1	21.8
2001	51.2	68.1	16.9
2011	62.9	76.2	13.3

Sources: Computed from Primary Census Abstract Data for Scheduled Caste, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. 1961 to 2011.

Table 1: Trend in literacy rates of SCs by residence, India.

The pointed out that there are vast variances between rural and urban population among SCs in India. Urban and rural disparities increased from 1961 (12.9) to 1991 (21.8). Urban and rural differences have been declining since the 2001 (16.9) census and the 2011(13.3) census. It shows that rural SCs still do not have access to

literacy rate. It is observed that educational policy has not been properly executed to rural SCs and they are not benefited and urban SCs are benefited from educational policy. This imbalance of educational attainment affects all types of development. According to Census of India, 2011, the majority (68.8%) of the people lives in rural areas but their literacy rate is very low. Numerically less population is living in urban areas and they have gained more educational opportunities. Numerically high population is living in rural areas and they have gained less educational opportunity [1-6].

Conclusion

The educational policies should be relooked based on rural Scheduled Caste's needs. Otherwise, their right to access education for life will be denied. No one is ready to help the upliftment of rural SC people and rural communities. As you read this study you may understand that one of the SCs people as well as rural SCs people is denied access to basic education rights.

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