

Educational Empowerment through Higher Education Among Social Groups of Sheduled Castes and Sheduled Tribes (SCs & STs) in Uttarakhand



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Abstract

The role of education to bring socio economic change is well recognised. Education impacts both ways vis a vis on the one hand it helps in the reduction of disparities and vulnerabilities which in turn contribute to the educational empowerment. Among different level of education literacy is most fundamental as it provide the capacity to communicate in the society in addition to open the door for further education. Higher education due to its inherent role in productivity, development and growth is regarded the changing agent in modern globalised world where knowledge is a differentiating factor among individuals, social groups, states and nations. In India , there has been considerable improvement in the overall literacy in general and literacy of SC and STs in particular, however they are still way behind from the national average particularly in terms of female literacy. Rural Female literacy among SCs and STs in Uttarakhand is worse than the urban female literacy at the state and national level. Similarly , Female GER, GPI among SCs and STs in rural areas and representation of SCs in teaching and non teaching posts in higher education in the state are below national average and Himanchal Pradesh , the adjoining Himalayan state. The disparities in the regional distribution of colleges and lack of infrastructure adds fuels to the fire when it comes to the provision of environment in which these social groups could get the opportunities of higher education for empowerment. The present paper analyses various dimensions of systemic deprivation of SCs and STs in higher education and provide valuable insights and recommendations to reduce these inequalities further.

Keywords: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Net Enrolment Ratio (NER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), Undergraduate(UG), Postgraduate (PG), Sheduled castes and Sheduled tribes (SCs & STs)

Introduction

The role of education to bring socio economic change is well recognised. Education impacts both ways vis a vis on the one hand it helps in the reduction of disparities and vulnerabilities which in turn contribute to the educational empowerment. Within the social sector, the influence of education is most widespread and education impacts all types of human development outcomes(Mehrotra and Delamonica 2007)¹ vis a vis health , nutrition, income, employment , individual and social empowerment etc. Education expands social opportunities available to people. ² Access to education is critical to access emerging opportunities that accompany economic growth. ³ Though Literacy is the most fundamental social skill as the basis for further education and training , and therefore the literacy rate is considered an important indicator of human development, however , the ratio of enrolment , attendance, upward mobility, dropouts and quality of education etc. determine the capability of a society to avail various social opportunities. On the one hand spread of education helps to overcome the traditional inequalities of caste, class and gender and on the other, reduction of these inequalities contribute to the spread of education. ⁴

Higher education is a powerful enabler of economic or socio political empowerment and in the modern era of knowledge economy and knowledge society it has become a significant agent of development. It is

mostly from this system we get physical and knowledge workforce. The basis of the prosperity of advanced countries is not the area of land or natural resources, or the language they speak or the religion they follow. It is the productivity of the people that counts and that in turn depends on their ability to gain knowledge, create new knowledge and transform new knowledge into wealth.⁵ Despite tremendous potential of education to enhance access and equity, vast regional, social, gender and caste based inequality in every level of education can be observed. Inclusive education requires special focus on particular social groups such as scheduled caste(SC) and scheduled tribes(ST) because the inclusiveness is multidimensional⁶. Deprivation to the access of basic services such as health and education to vulnerable groups may be possible even if their poverty level has been significantly improved. Whereas economic empowerment aims to ensure the community economic independence and self reliance, social empowerment removes the socially induced inequalities and disparities besides providing access to basic minimum services⁷ to these social groups. It is therefore need to know whether the priorities of government policies for these social groups are translated into desired outcome and impact?

Objectives

The basic objective of this paper is to analyse the present status of SCs, STs in higher education in the state with a view to have insights into the problems of their access and various hindrances of opportunities of equity and quality of higher education in order to provide appropriate suggestions for their solutions.

Methodology

The field of this study is Uttarakhand the total population of which is 1.01 carore comprised of 51.54 lakh males and 49.62 lakh females. The percentage of population of SCs and STs in the total population is 15.17% and 2.56%. The projected population in 18-23 age group related to higher education is 1228491 of which 209351(17.04%) belongs to SCs and 37032(3.01%) comes in STs (Table 1.1). The study is based on secondary data collected online annually in AISHE portal prepared by MHRD and NIC. At present 21 universities, 400 colleges and 100 standalone institutions including public and private polytechnics not affiliated to any university have been identified out of which the actual response came from above three categories of institutions has been 85%, 45% and 70% respectively during the 2010-11 survey. In addition the secondary data from Uttarakhand Development report of Planning commission and Human development report 2011 of Oxford have been utilised. For making the study comparative the status and performance of the state has been compared with national average as well as the data

belonging to Himanchal Pradesh having the similar physical geographical, socio economic and cultural settings.

Analysis and Discussion

In India there has been considerable improvement in the literacy of SC and STs, however they are still way behind from the national average particularly in terms of female literacy. Overall Literacy rate in India has improved from 64.8% in 2001 to 74% in 2011. The literacy in both rural and urban areas was most pronounced among SCs, STs however, in urban areas it is higher than that in rural areas where close to 60% females belonging to SCs, STs were illiterate. Rural Female literacy among SCs in Uttarakhand was 58.8% in 2007-08 which is greater than national average of 49.9% but far below of urban female literacy in Uttarakhand (63%) and national average (66.1%). Similarly, Rural Female literacy among STs was 46.7% which was slightly below national average of 47.8% but worse than the urban female literacy at the state (91.2%) and national level (69%).

Literacy is the basic to elementary and secondary education which further provide input to higher education. In terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) which reflects actual enrolment as the percentage of population in the target age group, the state has recorded better performance than the national average among students of both general and vulnerable social groups at primary and secondary level.

Access and Equity

The share of SCs and STs in the projected target population in 18-23 age group is 17.04% and 3.01% respectively which is lower than HP but slightly higher of SCs share at all India level. The SCs share in the state is the lowest than HP and national average. As regards number of HEIs, HP has greater number of colleges than Uttarakhand and therefore number of colleges per lakh of population is only 28 in Uttarakhand than 38 in HP leading to average number of students per college much higher in Uttarakhand (1224) than HP (535) and all India (700). This clearly shows the overcrowding of colleges compromising the attendance and quality of education which ultimately reduce the opportunities provided to vulnerable social groups particularly women among SCs and STs. Moreover, equity is further compromised by uneven distribution of colleges in the state skewed in favour of developed districts. It can be observed that 06 districts in the state has less than 10 colleges as compared to 03 districts in HP whereas the number of districts having more than 100 colleges in the state is 01 as compared to none in HP. (Table 1.2 and 1.3)

Table 1.1 Projected population (18-23years) 2010-11

Category/ state	Total			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Uttarakhand	639539	588952	1228491 (100.00)	110979	98372	209351 (17.04)	18972	18060	37032 (3.01)
Himanchal Pradesh	405414	378553	783967 (100.00)	97964	91883	189847 (24.22)	15416	15182	30598 (3.90)
All India	74378914	67302819	141681733 (100.00)	11780469	10717811	22498280 (15.88)	5319347	5459967	10779314 (7.61)

Note: Figures in Parentheses Denote Percentage.

Source: AISHE 2010-11

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Table 1.2 Statewise Distribution of Districts in Different Ranges of number of Colleges

No. of colleges	No. of districts		
	Uttarakhand	Himanchal Pradesh	All India
Less than 10	6	3	156
10-19	3	2	87
20-49	2	6	191
50-99	1	1	110
100-199	1		70
200-299			16
300-399			2
400-499			4
500-599			2

Source: AISHE 2010-11

Gender Parity Index (GPI)

The enrolment in higher education in the state is dominated by females in contrast to HP and national average. Obviously the Gender Parity Index (GPI) which is computed by dividing female enrolment by male enrolment is more than unity for the state. However ,

Table 1.4 Estimated State-wise Enrolment in various social categories

Category/ state	Total			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Uttarakhand	166979	174217	341196	19388	17731	37119	8003	8365	16368
Himanchal Pradesh	105180	98440	203620	13252	12762	26014	4561	4502	9063
All India	15466559	12033190	27499749	1725080	1320045	3045125	688690	519745	1208435

Source: AISHE 2010-11

Table 1.5 Gender parity index in higher education (18-23 years)

Category/ state	Total	SC	ST
Uttarakhand	1.13	1.03	1.10
Himanchal Pradesh	1.00	1.03	1.00
All India	0.86	0.84	0.74

Source: AISHE 2010-11

Table 1.6 Gross enrolment ratio in higher education (18-23 years)

Category/ state	Total			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Uttarakhand	26.1	29.6	27.8	17.5	18.0	17.7	42.2	46.3	44.2
Himanchal Pradesh	27.2	20.7	24.1	16.5	11.5	14.2			
All India	20.8	17.9	19.4	14.6	12.3	13.5	12.9	9.5	11.2

Source: AISHE 2010-11

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

The state has registered a remarkably higher GER(27.8) than HP(24.7) and national average(19.8) which is as good as some of the developing countries. The female GER is highest in the state but in terms of male GER the state stands second to HP. GER among STs has been phenomenal at 44.2 dominated by females. However , the total GER and female GER among vulnerable social groups of SCs is much lower at 17.7 and 18.0 respectively than GER of other social groups but it is of course higher than the national average.(Table 1.6)

Representation of SCs and STs in teaching and non teaching services

Under representation of teachers and other non curricular staff belonging to SCs and STs in educational

Table 1.3 Number of College per Lakh Population(18-23YEARS), Average Enrolment per College

particulars	Uttarakhand	Himanchal Pradesh	All India
No. of Colleges	346	297	32974
College per lakh population	28	38	23
Average enrolment per college	1224	535	700

Source: AISHE 2010-11

GPI is lower in case of SCs and STs than other categories which suggests that the female among these social groups are enrolled in relatively less number which makes them vulnerable as compared to their male counterparts . (Table 1.4 and 1.5)

institutions is reported to be adversely effect the participation of SC and ST students in education system. ⁸ Not only Number of teachers belonging to SCs(4.38%) and STs(0.61%) in the state is observed underrepresented as compared to their proportionate share as per their percentage of state population but also it is far below as compared to HP and national average. The proportion of male teachers in all categories is higher than their male counterparts in the state . Besides, this gap widens in SC category. Similarly State-wise Number of Non-Teaching staff among SCs is under represented than their proportionate share in the state population except in case of STs who are remarkably over represented than their counterparts in HP and national level.(Table 1.7 and 1.8)

Table 1.7 State-wise Number of Teachers among various social categories(based on actual response)

Category/ state	Total			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Uttarakhand	5978	2939	8917 (100.00)	306	85	391 (4.38)	36	18	54 (0.61)
Himanchal Pradesh	4530	2892	7422 (100.00)	318	148	466 (6.28)	96	76	172 (2.32)
All India	480555	284794	765349 (100.00)	35084	17679	52763 (6.89)	10685	6517	17202 (100.00)

Note: Figures in Parentheses Denote Percentage.

Source: AISHE 2010-11

Table 1.8 State-wise Number of Non-Teaching staff among various social categories (based on actual response)

Category/ state	Total			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Uttarakhand	8441	1247	9688 (100.00)	1263	59	1322 (13.65)	1037	106	1143 (11.80)
Himanchal Pradesh	7040	1779	8819 (100.00)	1221	359	1580 (17.92)	469	145	614 (6.96)
All India	462853	153167	616020 (100.00)	54124	20517	74641 (12.12)	16900	5995	22895 (3.72)

Note: Figures in Parentheses Denote Percentage.

Source: AISHE 2010-11

Conclusions

1. Though increase in literacy rate is significant in rural Uttarakhand but literacy rate among rural female in SCs of the state is still lower. Considering the significant part of out of the school children among SCs in 6-17 years of age group, the male-female literacy gap in rural area still persists significantly, the consequences of which may be observed in low level of health and nutrition, higher fertility rate, lower representation of rural women in services, lower quality of life etc. among SCs .
2. The regional distribution of colleges in the state is skewed in favour of developed districts and colleges with number of students much higher than the national average in the state , have, by overcrowding, created disadvantageous conditions for vulnerable social groups in which empowerment process could hardly take place. This might be the Causative factor behind lower representation of SCs than their proportionate share in the state.
3. Despite higher GER among SCs and STs above national average, there might be the possibility of greater GER-NER gap due to student migration in the same segment from other states and inclusion of SC and STs in GER from beyond the officially targeted age group in the light of spread of technical education in the private sector. Presently NER is not being computed.
4. Though per student expenditure at all levels of education among SCs in the state is lower than the national average and average expenditure of other categories in the state, the lack of appropriate infrastructure and support services has resulted in increasing the vulnerability of these social groups with less than expected outcome of education and training.
5. Post Metric Scholarship(PMS) has positively helped increase the GER among SCs and STs in higher education , however lack of residential facilities in campuses adversely affected the

attendance ratio of these groups jeopardizing the desired empowerment.

6. Despite Higher Gender parity index (GPI) as compared to HP and all India average , the lower GPI among SCs and STs than other categories reflects that the female among SC and STs are still lagging behind in access to higher education.
7. Enrollment of higher education dominated by UG courses in general higher education through ill equipped government and private aided colleges may be observed in the consequent unemployability of the graduates without any significant provision of skill development and employment oriented courses .
8. Whereas lower representation of SCs and STs in teaching and non teaching posts adversely affected the participation of these social groups in the education system , it also reflect the need to remove the barriers responsible for incapacity of these groups to avail the opportunity.

Recommendations

1. Whereas dropouts among SC and STs might be monitored and checked by appropriate mechanism of incentives and assistance , the out of school girl children in rural areas must be brought in the education net through non formal education with the engagement of NGOs, VOs and PPPs.The return on investment(ROI) on this exercise must include the indirect opportunity costs and impacts.
2. New public colleges particularly for girls might be opened near crowded colleges and minimum number of colleges must be opened in backward areas with adequate subject options, appointment of faculty and appropriate in built infrastructure including in campus and off campus hostel facilities.
3. In order to ensure minimum student attendance ratio the students must be enrolled in compulsory add on skill development courses , aimed to enhance their employability through NSDC and other agencies.

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4. Vacant posts of teaching and non teaching cadre must be filled on a time bound process to check student absenteeism and provision of compulsory coaching might be made to give proportionate representation to vulnerable social groups.
5. Student counselling for SCs and STs particularly women among them , must be provided at the time of programme/course choice is done by the students. Similarly weaker section students might be given additional incentives to undertake PG and higher courses particularly in modern disciplines. Industry academia interaction and MOUs might be introduced for such programmes to ensure post programme employability.

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