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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EDUCATION AMONG THE DALITS AND OTHER BACKWARD CATEGORIES A STUDY OF NEW DELHI

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is an attempt to address the questions of educational accessibilities in case of dalits (scheduled caste) and other categories in New Delhi. During the fast growing economy of India it has been observed that the enrolment ratio of young cohort of population has gone up drastically. It may be regarded as one of the development outcomes of an economy. The various linkages can be found as the reason of such phenomenon such as increasing income levels due to the increasing wage rates, increasing awareness

regarding education, aspirations, and urbanization. So it may be pertinent to examine how this positive change has provided opportunities across all the social groups in India. Since backward and disadvantaged groups are likely to gain more from educational upliftment (since their asset base is too low to give cushion for better standard of living). Although it is well established that education can prove its best to help disadvantaged groups move on an upper ladder of economic status. Even after the many schemes, any programme for improvement in the conditions of the Dalits (scheduled caste) and other Categories are lagging behind in social and economic perspective.

Keywords : *educational accessibilities, education, aspirations, and urbanization.*

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

Even after the six decades of the independence, the country is still unable to rise up to the challenge of universalisation of elementary school education. Despite the highest priority to universalize elementary education soon after independence, all India record of progress has been very dismal one. And also after

bringing up the sarva shiksha abhiyan in the 2001 and right to education Act in the 2009, the status of the elementary schooling has not changed much. The large proportion of the investment goes, for the salaries payments and also investment for the improvement of infrastructure (see Ramachandran, Rawal and Swaminathan 1997, Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2005, and Jha et.al. 2008). The elementary school education in Delhi includes the primary school education from class I to

V, and the middle school education from VI to VIII.¹ The goal of Universalising Elementary Education is that all children between the ages of 6-14 years have free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education. The situation of primary educational standards among the dalits, tribals and Muslim children is worse than the "Other" castes in India. As pointed out in a research on National Sample Survey data about elementary school education (Deshpande and

¹ The completed year of schooling for primary and middle school education varies across the states. But the elementary schooling is considered up to VIII standard.

Ramachandran 2013), the gap between the years of education gained by OBC and Others' in the last 40 years, "remains as large as 2.21 years of education," and on the other side the current gap between the SC-STs and Others' remain "as large as 3.70 years of education."² The study will be focusing on the elementary schooling among the Scheduled Caste and other Categories only for New Delhi.

A SURVEY OF EXISTING LITERATURE

The people are divided as per their caste and religion and also by the traditional occupation (Shukla 2002). Historically these deprived sections were discriminated against the upper section of the population as pointed out by Ambasht (2002) and Nancharaiah (2002).³ As Nancharaiah (2002), points out that in the first five years of planning education was given special emphasis on since it was one of important indicator of the development, he further writes,

Fifty per cent of the welfare funds meant for social and economic development of the dalits went to their education ... between 1961 and 1991, the literacy rate rose from 10 per cent to 37 per cent among the SCs (Scheduled castes), from 8 per cent to 29 per cent among the STs (Scheduled tribes), and from 37 per cent to 57 per cent for the rest of the population. Despite the increase in literacy, the gap between SC/STs and the rest has also been increasing.

The similar case was true for the women also.

POPULATION SCENARIO

- Schedule Caste Population: As per 2001 census, total population of NCT of Delhi was 138.50 lakhs, out of which the SC population is 23.43 lakhs which comes to 16.92%. Whereas as per 2011 census, this figure goes to 20.1%.
- Scheduled Tribes population :- In Delhi no scheduled tribes has been notified since none of the ST originally belong to Delhi but a small population migrated for service and other purposes from the other states.
- Other Backward Classes Population:- The RGI is not collecting data in respect of OBC in the census. As such population of OBCs as per census record is not available. However, Govt. of NCT of Delhi constituted a state level commission for other Backward Classes in 1992 to identify the OBCs in Delhi. The Commission in its report has opined that about 48% of the Delhi population belongs to OBC.

The people with the religious identities (the minorities), have also arisen in their educational level, from the specific circumstances in different areas. The educational level and literacy rate varies across the different state in country. Kerala and Tripura are the states which have had highest rates of literacy rate as shown by the Census of India and on the other side the states which have had lowest literacy rate, are Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh (Thorat 2009). According to the census of India, 2011, data the lowest literacy rate among women, is in Rajasthan (45.8 per cent).

According to a survey conducted by Samajik Suvidha Sangam Society under the aegis of the Delhi govt, New Delhi, the capital city has 2.42 lakh children out of school. Only 71% of Delhi's children attend school against the national figure of 94.5% and 100 % for the states like Tamil Nadu. There is no doubt that the city has failed to implement alternative modes of education for school children. The survey also found that among the people surveyed 25.4% were illiterate. Another 9.1% or 2.42 lakh people were out of school. Among the poor of the capital, about 83.3% were found to be Hindus, 14.3% Muslims and 1.4% Sikh while the poor among other religious groups was less than 1%. Among Hindus the scheduled castes constituted over 30% of the poor followed by 14.1% from the other backward classes and 7.8% from the scheduled tribes. The educational disparity between the rich and the poor in Delhi can be judged from another finding of the survey conducted on 12,000 households in slums

² Here SC: Scheduled Caste, ST: Scheduled Tribe, OBC: Other Backward Classes, and Others' includes the Himdu upper castes (see Deshpande and Ramachandran 2013, p. 2-3)

³ See also Ramachandran and Swaminathan (2014)

clusters which found that only 4.7% of the people were graduates. Only about 20% were found to have completed elementary education, 15.2 % primary and only 7.9% higher secondary.

A study by Dreaze and Kingdon (2001) on PROBE findings of 1999, explains that in case of literate parents the children are more likely to be motivated for attending schools.⁴ According to the Athreya and Swaminathan's (2012) report, based on the data of 14 villages, "ten out of the fourteen villages, half or more of the female population aged 16 years or older had not completed even one year of formal school".⁵ The report further explains that the situation was even worst among the Scheduled caste (except in one the village in Maharashtra) and scheduled tribe (where they were present in the population) women.

In the developing countries the research on the educational inequalities, is focused on the two factors, first is "the lack of access to school" and the second is "family factors including poverty, lack of parental motivation, or labour demand from children" (Desai, Adams, and Dubey 2010).⁶ Another study (Desai and Kulkarni 2008) points out that the elementary schooling is where the student face inequalities most, if they finish their primary schooling there are higher chances of their finishing out the middle school as well. Jayachandran (2007) writes that the dropout rates reported in official data could be misleading as the secondary data is unreliable.

The students from the deprived section, apart from economic and social phenomenon, face two kinds of problem: a) the one the poor quality of education, because of not having proper infrastructure and the availability of teachers, in many primary and middle schools (Rawal 2011), and b) the students from dalit and tribal sections, face discrimination from upper caste students and teachers (Nambisaan 2010 and Desai, Adams, and Dubey 2010).

CONCLUSION:-

We can see from the above study that backward classes in our society are still deprived with basic education and there are various question that are still unanswered which are:-

1. What extent the Economic Weaker Section (EWS) and Disadvantage groups (DG) family benefitted from 25% quota of entry level admission in private schools of Delhi.
2. What has been the scale of improvement in enrolment and attendance among the dalits and other backward categories, after the introduction of SSA (sarva shiksha abhiyan)?
3. How much the economic constrains of Dalits (Schedule caste) students, are attributed for their completion of elementary schooling?
4. Proportion of students from the deprived sections who are attending the private schools (for elementary education)? How does the learning differ from the government institutions?

The Government has to find the answers of these questions because without knowing the facts they cannot conclude whether the current policies are improving their situation or not.

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⁴ PROBE: Public Report on Basic Education

⁵ For states wise report are available at <http://www.agrarianstudies.org/pages.asp?menuid=5>.

⁶ See also Ramachandran, Rawal and Swaminathan (1997)

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