ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND MARGINALISED SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY: INFLUENCING FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT :
     Marginality is an experience that affects millions of people throughout the world, as well as in our country. People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives, and the resources available to them. This results in making them handicapped in accessing benefits from the society and delving contribution to society. A vicious circle is set up whereby there is lack of positive and supportive relationships. They are prevented from participating in local life, which in turn leads to further isolation. This has a tremendous impact on the development of human beings, as well as on society at large. As the objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy a productive, healthy, and creative life through education, it is important to address the issue of marginalisation. Development is always broadly conceived in terms of mass participation of people of different sections. Hundreds of millions of children live in slums, many deprived to basic services. Slums are highly unhygienic and disease prone. These areas are also breeding ground for various anti-social activities like crime, theft, burglary and drug-addiction and so on. This leads to different kind of problems in children living in urban slum. Many of these problems are of transient nature and are not even noticed or sometimes neglected or unaccompanied. The most important problem of them is access to Education in General and Higher Education in Specific terms. The problems of access to education faced by slum dwellers are fundamental. There are substantial areas lacking access to education. Urban migration is exacerbating the problem. About 33% of the urban population of developing countries resides in slum. The proportion of students who never entered Higher Education in urban is double that of the rural people. Hence this study aims to find out the problems of the slum students in accessing Higher Education among the marginalised group. Normative survey method was adopted with face to face interaction and Educational Enrolment Senses also taken as secondary data. Cluster sampling method followed for the sampling. The sample population are slum Households, Higher Secondary students, Higher Education Students and NGO's involving in the slum development. Tools to be used are Observation Schedule, Interview Schedule for slum households, and Questionnaire on Problem to access Higher Education for students of slum, and Awareness Model which is prepared and standardized by the investigator and it is validated by the experts. For data analyses Mixed Method found more appropriate for this study i.e., Qualitative and Quantitative analyses. Hence the competitiveness of the country depends on the productivity of this work force. Thus there is a strong Economic Growth argument, as well as a Social Justice argument and a Human argument, not to neglect education for the urban poor. The result of this survey can be used to understand the Problems of marginalised group with special reference to Slum Dwellers in Accessing the Higher Education.

KEYWORDS : *Marginalised Group, Higher Education, Slum Dwellers, Unaccompanied Learners, Access to Education.*

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INTRODUCTION

The role played by education in human development can never be underestimated. Education is fundamental to every constituent of the society, irrespective of gender, physical, racial, economic, geographical, cultural, or linguistic differences. Education is Nation's Strength. A developed nation is inevitably dependent on its educational resources.

India as a developing nation has been systematically progressing on the educational front, since its independence and has seen an appreciable flow in reaching out to all the classes of its society. The improvement on the country's economic front, the up scaling of communication technology and the advent of the internet, have vastly leveraged the promotion of education across all verticals. The accelerated growth of the educational sector in last decade is a sparkling testimony to this fact, with facts and figures showing an unprecedented improvement of education in India.

Marginality is an experience that affects millions of people throughout the world, as well as in our country. People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives, and the resources available to them. This results in making them handicapped in accessing benefits from the society and delving contribution to society. A vicious circle is set up whereby there is lack of positive and supportive relationships. They are prevented from participating in local life, which in turn leads to further isolation. This has a tremendous impact on the development of human beings, as well as on society at large. As the objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy a productive, healthy, and creative life through education, it is important to address the issue of marginalisation. Development is always broadly conceived in terms of mass participation of people of different sections.

Marginalisation deprives a large majority of people across the globe from participating in the developmental activities. It is a complex problem, and there are many factors that cause marginalisation. This complex and serious problem need to be addressed at the policy level, considering education as priority in it. This research deals with the problems and challenges associated with the people suffering from marginalisation, especially with those who live in slums of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry with respect to accessing Higher education. The study also aims to chart out certain ways to reduce them in order to create a balanced situation.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA - AN OVERVIEW

India's higher education system stands third in size in the world after the US and China with nearly 26 million students in over 45,000 institutions in the country. In the last decade the country has witnessed a particularly high growth rate in student enrolment at *Compound Annual Growth Rate* (CAGR) of 10.8% and institutions at 9%. The University Grants Commission (UGC) which enforces its standards towards academic stipulations is the main governing body at the tertiary level and advises and coordinates the governments, both at centre and state levels. Accreditation for higher learning is monitored by twelve autonomous bodies established by the UGC.

Indian higher education has been progressing at a fast pace adding over 20,000 colleges and about 8 million students between the ten year periods from 2001 to 2011. As of 2011, Indian higher education system is spread over 42 central universities, 275 state universities, 130 deemed universities and 90 private universities. Additionally 5 institutions were established functioning under the State Act, along with 33 Institutes of National Importance. Nearly 33,000 institutions function as Government and Private Degree Colleges which also include 1800 exclusive women's colleges. Today the number of private higher education institutions stands at 64% and enrolments at 59% from the total number of institutions and enrolments in the country. This is a significant jump from the statistics of the decade before where private institutions stood at 43% enrolments at 33% and is an obvious index to an improving educational system through private participation.

While figures convey a positive picture of the growth of higher education, in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio - GER, India remains at a dismal 16% only against the global average of 26%. Though the government has undertaken several initiatives for inclusion of all communities in its educational

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front its success has largely been questionable. Delivery of quality higher education has become a severe shortcoming in governance with several issues posing an overwhelming challenge.

At the end of the XI Five Year Plan 2007-2012, India has achieved a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) 17.9% upward from 12.3% from the beginning of the Plan period. The XII Five Year Plan of the Indian government for 2012-2017 envisages several revolutionary initiatives to improve the quality and reach of higher education exponentially across the length and breadth of the country.

There exists a significant difference in the GER of urban and rural India
❖ GER in rural India has increased from 3.95% in 1983-84 to 7.5% in 2004-05 while in urban India GER has increased from 17.68% to 23.79%
❖ Though GER in rural India has increased, the gap between GERs in rural areas has only widened
❖ The GERs for females is very low especially in rural India

The XII Five Year Plan (2012-2017) confronts the challenges facing India's higher education system and has proposed several initiatives to resolve them. These include increased funding for disadvantaged groups, imbibing cutting-edge technologies, faculty improvement programmes, improved governance and provision of incentives for advanced research. The Government has laid out plans to achieve enrolment of 35.9 million students in higher education institutions, targeting a GER of 25.2%, through these initiatives towards the end of the plan period. It also intends to improve the quality of the system significantly, while encouraging the co-existence of multifarious, research-centric, teaching and vocation-focused institutions.

India is a great Nation, marching towards Equity, Access and Quality in Higher Education. The GER is also increased nearby 23% which is a drastic enrolment in Higher Education. Among the 23% of the enrolled, only 2% constitute the deprived society / community and Slum dwellers etc.

Hence the researcher attempts to identify the challenges and issues faced by the marginalised group and slum dwellers and to find out the major problems to access education in general and higher education in specific. The outcome of the study may help to improve the deprived society in the near future.

STATUS OF SLUM DWELLERS IN INDIA

In India roughly 1.37 crore households or 17.4% of urban household live in slums which means nearly 1 in every 6 urban households live in slums as per Census-2011. Over one third of India's slum population lives in its 46 million plus cities. Of the four metro cities Mumbai has the highest proportion of slum dwelling households (41.3%) followed by Kolkata and Chennai (29.6 and 28.5 % respectively). Delhi, the capital of India has 14.6% of its households living in slums. Among other million plus cities, Vishakhapatnam has the highest population of slum dwellers (44.1%). Decadal growth over the period 2001-11 shows that population has increased by more than 181 million, % of growth is 17.64, literacy has gone up from 64.83% to 74.04% and slum population has increased from 75.26 million to 93.06 million. *(Census 2011).*

Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and ill-health are the basic problems of the developing countries in general, and India in particular. These are the root causes of all the global problems stagnating and degrading both the development of the country and its citizens. It is rightly recognized that, "Poverty is not only a problem of low income; rather it is multi-dimensional problem that includes low access of opportunities for developing human capital and to education" *(World Bank, 1994).*

On the other hand education is an important form of human capital that improves productivity, health and nutrition of the people of a country and slows down the population growth. The concept of slum and its definition may slightly vary depending upon the socioeconomic condition or local perception prevailing in the society but the general physical characteristics of most of the slums are found to be essentially same world-wide. Slums are usually a cluster of hutments with dilapidated and unstable structures having common toilet, lack of basic amenities, inadequate arrangement of drainage and disposal of solid waste and garbage (GOI report on Slum Population, 2005). Slums are highly unhygienic and disease prone. These areas are also breeding ground for various anti-social activities

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like crime, theft, burglary, drug-addiction and so on. When urban area on one hand is characterized by modern life-style, having access to latest technologies, higher level of educational attainment, high income, more opportunities, fashion and health conscious, better communication facilities on the other hand the urban poor and marginalized group suffers from adequate standard of living and access to health, education and meaningful and well paid employment opportunities.

In India since independence, several initiatives have been taken for qualitative and quantitative expansion of elementary education like Operation Black-Board Scheme (OBS), DPEP, SSA, Mid-Day Meal Scheme and many others , one of the latest being RTE. The RTE Act 2009, provides a justifiable legal frame work that entitles all children between the ages of 6-14 years to an education of reasonable quality, based on the principles of equity and non-discrimination. It provides children right to free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education. Standing at this juncture it is absolutely necessary to understand and evaluate the present scenario of slum children in regard to access, retention and completion of elementary education, high school and higher secondary education of satisfactory quality.

In this context the researcher would like to study the prevalent problems to access Higher Education among the marginalised groups of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry with special reference to slum dwellers.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Education plays a pivotal role in laying a proper foundation for the over-all socioeconomic development of any region. Education is considered as one of the principal means to foster deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war (Dellor Commission, 1996).

It is important to focus on slum population for the following three reasons. Firstly, inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation in slum can affect the advantage of living in urban areas, thereby making slum dwellers a disadvantaged group. Secondly, the population growth rate in slums is higher than in other urban locations. Thirdly, among the Millennium Development Goals, the one that explicitly focuses on urban area is Goal No. 7 (Ensure Environmental Sustainability) of which target No. 11 states that "By 2020 we need to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers".

The children and youth from slum areas lack proper nutrition, good health, physical fitness, emotional stability and lag behind confidence. Young minds who are the future pillars of the country have to be trained to respond and adjust with social changes satisfactorily by equipping themselves with desirable qualities with academic coat.

Educational Institution is the place for acquiring values next to home. Several behavioural problems of students, which threaten our society, can be regulated, controlled if he/she gets education.

Under this context, it becomes necessary to identify the challenges and problems which make slum dwellers not to access Education in General and Higher Education in specific.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
- To study the socio-economic condition of the marginalised groups with special reference to slum dwellers in Chennai Metropolitan City. The study includes the demographic Characteristics like type and family size, whether migrated or not, gender, age, education, occupation of the family and income,
- To find out the problems of the marginalised groups with special reference to slum dwellers such as households, students and youth in accessing Higher Education.
- To create awareness among the marginalised groups about the Education for better living.

MARGINALISED GROUPS AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Most vulnerable marginalised groups are in almost every society. The identified marginalised groups of the slums are Women, People with disabilities, Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward

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Classes, Most Backward Classes, Elderly or Aged people, unaccompanied Children's, Low income families, Sexual minorities etc., All these have consequences on their nutrition intake, access to healthcare, environment and education. Poverty has a direct impact on the mortality and morbidity among the slum dwellers with special reference to Children.

METHODOLOGY
The research design of the proposed study is given in the following table.

Table 1: Research Design

S.No.	TYPE	SOURCES
1	Nature of Research	Normative Survey, Field Visit & Face to Face Interaction
2	A)Variables :	Access to Higher Education, Marginalised Section, Influencing Factors and Challenges.
	Demographic Variables	Gender, Type and Family Size, Whether Migrated or not, Age; Income, Education and Occupation.
3	Research Tools	Personal Details Proforma. Questionnaire for assessing the Problem Level to Access Higher Education will be constructed, standardised by the Investigator and validated by the Experts.
4	Sampling Technique	Cluster Sampling
5	Method	Mixed Method (Qualitative and Quantitative)
6	Data	Primary and Secondary Data
7	Population	Slum Children (Secondary & Higher Secondary School Students)
8	Place of the Sample	Selected Cluster Slums of Chennai Metropolitan City
9	Size of the Sample	250 samples (50 Samples from 5 Different Slums)
10	Statistical Techniques	Percentage Analysis

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA
Percentage Analysis was established to know about the Challenges and Influencing Factors among the Slum dwellers of the Chennai Metropolitan City.

Table-2 shows the Percentage Analysis of Challenging and Influencing factors responded by the Secondary and Higher Secondary School going Slum Children of Chennai City.

Table-2

S.No.	STATEMENTS	YES	NO
1	My family members supports my educational expenditure	62%	38%
2	My family members encourage me for my higher studies	27%	73%
3	My parents are aware about the governments schemes available for students	36%	54%
4	I am able to communicate effectively in English	29%	71%
5	I have difficulty in clarifying my doubts in the class room	56%	44%
6	My institution is organising remedial classes for low achievers	17%	83%
7	I am able to access computer and online facilities from my institution	13%	87%
8	I am able to access newspaper, journals and books etc from my institutional library	8%	92%
9	I am unable to comprehend the concept taught by the teachers quickly	71%	29%
10	I am provided with the learning materials by my institution	83%	17%
11	Educational institutions in my area are at accessible distance	86%	14%
12	I am aware about the government reservation policies followed in educational	37%	63%

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	institution		
13	At home my parents are helping for my studies	22%	88%
14	Lack of subject teachers in my institution creates a low achievements in my studies	76%	23%
15	My teachers prepare and give study materials for examination point of view	14%	86%
16	I am aware about the 'Right to Education' act	7%	93%
17	I don't know the scope of my subject of interest	21%	79%
18	My institution is equipped with modern teaching and learning materials	29%	71%
19	I am satisfied with the reservation policies followed in India	38%	62%
20	I am not getting proper guidance from my teachers	69%	31%
21	My parents are not aware about the 'Right to Education' act	87%	13%
22	My siblings are helping for my academic growth	21%	79%
23	I am not aware how to operate the computer	84%	16%
24	My teachers spend extra time after class hours to coach us with more potential.	26%	74%
25	I am not having any idea about pursuing my higher studies.	73%	27%
26	My institution provides government scholarship to me.	81%	19%
27	My teachers teach me according to my level of intelligence	56%	44%
28	My parents need my help in domestic work after my study hours	93%	7%
29	My institution is not organising any extra-curricular activities	66%	34%
30	My principal monitors every teachers in the class	72%	28%
31	Due to domestic work at home, i am unable to allot much time to my studies.	89%	11%
32	Incompletion of syllabus makes me to fails in my subjects	72%	28%
33	I am going to part time job to support my family	41%	59%
34	I take lunch provide by institution in the Noon meals scheme	77%	23%
35	My peer members distract my studies	69%	31%

RESULTS

Slum children's where asked about the educational support given by their parents, 62% students responded positively and 38% students responded that their parents not able to support their educational needs. Only 27% students said that their parents encouraging them for pursuing higher education and 73% students lack such support. 36% of parents only aware of government schemes for educational purpose, rest of the 64% parents unaware about the schemes. 71% students feel English language is the difficult one and 29% of student accept that they can understand conversation in English. 56% students says that they hesitate to clear their doubts aroused in class and 44% said that they clear their doubts with the teachers inside the class. 83% students says that their school not conduct remedial classes for slow learners, this shows that 90% of students undergo their studies in government schools. 87% students unable to access computer and computer aided instruments for their study purpose. 92% students says that they are unable to access newspaper, journal and books etc., 71% says they unable to understand the daily teaching learning events. 83% students said that learning material like books and learning materials are provided by the institutions. 86% students access the educational institutions near by the residential area. 63% of students unaware the government reservation policy that are followed in the educational institutions. Only 22% of students accepts that their parents help for their studies after the school hours and 88% of parents not helping for their wards. This shows that the parents are not educated and most of them are illiterate and daily wages workers. 76% students say that they are having shortage of teachers in their institutions for subjects. 86% of students say that their teachers do not provide any specialized materials for study purpose. 93% students and 87% parents are unaware about the Right to Education Act and its benefits on teaching and learning. 79% of students says they are not known about the scope of the academic and career. 71% students said that their school has not equipped with computer and modern teaching aids

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for teaching and learning purpose. 62% students not satisfied with the reservation policies followed in India. 69% students feels that they are lacking in proper guidance and counselling for their academics and carrier. Only 21 % of siblings helping for their brothers and sister in study purpose outside the school hours. 79% of siblings are unable to help due to lack of time to spend with their siblings or either dropouts from schools and working as labourer or on daily wages bases. 84% of students not aware of handling computers. 74% of students says that their teachers do not spend extra time for coaching the slow learners after school hours and 26% of teachers only spends their time after the school hours. 73% of students have no idea about their future studies and higher education. 81% of students receives state government scholarships. 56% of students says that their teachers teaches the lesson according to their level of knowledge. 93% of students accept that their parents gets help for doing domestic works. 66% students not participate in extracurricular activities since it is not conducted in their schools. 72% of students accepts that their principal or head masters monitor their teachers and students. 77% students take mid day meals provided by the school, this shows that the children's family economy and social conditions. 89% students feels that domestic or house hold work is a burden and distraction for them in concentrating their academic work. 69% of students feels that they have high distractions from their peer group members with respect to academic.

CONCLUSION

The above study shows that the slum dwellers and marginalised sectors of the society face critical problem in access education as well higher education. There is a lack of support from siblings, parents, teachers for reaching the higher education level. Families in the slum area in Chennai cities are occupied by the seasonal migrants. Families are observed as low income group and under below poverty line. Parents of such slum children's were uneducated or illiterate. Most of the youth of this community is observed as school dropouts and uneducated. The peer group of this marginalised society influenced negatively with the other group children. The turn of the 21st century has brought about a revolution in technology alongside tremendous changes across the education system of the country. Though the community divide exists still and perhaps may continue to be, it is visualised that equity in higher education and a healthy economy for the marginalised section of people who are unaccompanied and slum dwellers are not at too far a distance to be achieved.

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