

# INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION AND SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION: A STUDY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN UTTAR PRADESH

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## ABSTRACT

The Article 45 (Part IV), in Indian Constitution; under the Directive Principles of State Policy, contains provision for free and compulsory education for all children below 14 years of age within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution. Article 46 points out that the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic Interests of the weaker sections of the people particularly of the SCs and STs and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. The study has Identified the cluster of socio-economic and educational inequalities in terms of community, native place, levels of parents' educational as well as socio-economic background on the one hand, along with the socially patterned inequality pertaining to the sex variable and the educational opportunities In terms of the school system management and medium of instruction and distribution of groups at the Plus One level along with the level of academic performance In both positive (percentages In public examination) and negative (Incidence of failure) aspects on the other. The present study has brought out that social inequalities do have their consequences on the life chances of individuals, reaffirming similar conclusions of earlier studies, and so in this light the study calls for a reviewing and reformulating of the merit paradigm so that the reckoning of merit becomes holistic, realistic and Just without any social group claiming monopoly over it. Hence, In the light of the main thrust of the study and the theoretical perspective adapted to understand the hard realities presented by the data It Is found appropriate to call for an alternative education model radically different. In content, form, methods and purpose which could provide an effective answer to the question of equality.

Key Words: Inequality, Stratification, Educational Opportunity, Educational Discrimination.

## INTRODUCTION

In certain vedic texts and other such sources, that equality and brotherhood prevailed in Vedicperiod, when the four varnas were nothing more than occupational categories or classes (Kumar, 1982: 27)<sup>1</sup>. However, It Is generally agreed

that once the varnas got hardened Into castes, around 500 B.C. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1985: 14)<sup>2</sup>, Inequality got institutionalized in society, with religious sanctions, which mainly consisted of social segregation and physical untouchability based on the belief of purity and pollution. Even walking In daylight was prohibited lest the shadows of the lower caste can pollute the higher caste (Ghurye G S; Caste Class and Occupation, 1957: 166-67)<sup>3</sup>. The varnashrama, dharma, supposedly authored by Manu prescribed not only the occupations for each varna, but also distributed its status and opportunity. It

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may therefore be concluded that the varnashrama dharma is synonymous with Inequality of status and opportunity.

Accordingly the first three varnas (Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas) were conferred the 'dwijas' or the twice-born status, and they alone were eligible to undergo the 'upanyana' or the Initiation ceremony and to receive formal education." Of the various kinds of discrimination imposed by the varnashrama dharma on the 'avarna' or the other caste groups, nothing could be worse than that of an outright denial of education and any violation of this rule was most severely dealt with including mutilation of limbs and cruel torture.

The extreme rigidity of the system and the exclusive domination it afforded to the Brahmins gave rise to two new religious orders which were essentially protest movements Buddhism and Jainism, founded by Buddha and Mahavira.

Neither of them recognized the authority of the Vedas and both challenged the exclusive claims of the Brahmins to education in general and to priesthood in particular. Both these movements, made education accessible to all, irrespective of caste, creed or sex and taught through the common language of the people.

Government of independent India had to transform democracy not only as a form of government but also as a way of life. This had to be achieved in terms of equality of status and opportunity in the various spheres of social life, particularly in the sphere of education. Article 45 (Part IV) under the Directive Principles of State Policy, contains provision for free and compulsory education for all children below 14 years of age within a period of ten years from the commencement of the

constitution. Article 46 points out that the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people particularly of the SCs and STs and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Innovative educational policies in India have been a huge success. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2001 for elementary education and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) launched in 2009 for secondary education produced great results in the educational developments.

Dutta M.L. (1985)<sup>4</sup> in his study of the workers in the teagarden of Assam. Dutta maintains that even where education is likely to have better nexus with employment, educational opportunities are not found to be adequate. A similar observation is also made by Bhatt B.D.(1993)<sup>5</sup> in the study of educational development and man-power development in the Marathwada region. Special mention must be made of Shirwadkar S. (1987)<sup>6</sup> who in their inequality in Education-A socio-economic perspective, presents a comprehensive review of thinking in this field. As a contrast.

Maya, Shah (1987)<sup>7</sup> Investigating the variations in literacy rate in the rural areas of Gujarat, brings out the importance of economic disparities on the distribution of educational opportunities. Rural economic factors like size of holdings, access to irrigation facilities and improved formal practices are found to exercise significant influence on literacy levels. MAITRA, T. (1997)<sup>8</sup> basing on a survey of public education in West Bengal in terms of the regional distribution of educational opportunity, concludes that despite serious efforts education in the rural areas of the

state is far below the level observed in urban areas, highlighting thereby the disadvantage of the rural communities with regard to educational opportunity as well as the definite advantage enjoyed by the urban community in this regard.

#### ASSUMPTIONS:

This study proceeds on the assumption that,

1. Education is a sub-system of society and that education is basically a social process.
2. The education system represents a parallel stratification
3. Education is basically a social opportunity at the entry level.
4. Academic performance and career options ought to be understood essentially in relation to the kind of opportunity at the entry level.
5. There is a real need to view the whole system of education from the perspective of the dynamics of institutionalized inequalities.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To find the stratification in society and its impact on school education.
2. To find the co- relation between the factors of inequality and educational opportunity.
3. To understand the concept of inequality of educational opportunity in the light of relevant educationalist perspectives.
4. To identify the threats of inequality as found operative in society.

#### DEFINITIONS:

Equality of Opportunity

Some level of inequality in every society is inevitable and is tolerated (Beteille, 1983: 12). But this tolerable level of inequality must be the logical outcome of equality of opportunity, implying equal access and equal conditions of success (NPE, 3.6). As regards education, ensuring of equal access at the entry point and providing the equal chances of success may be referred to as quality of opportunity.

#### Equality of Educational Opportunity

Arthur Wise (1968: 143 - 159) summarizes some of the major definitions of equality of educational opportunity which may be presented as follows Indicating the thrust of each definition.

The negative definition seeks to de-link educational opportunity from parents' Income, level of education, place of residence and other such social deprivations.

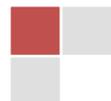
The full opportunity definition implies opportunity to reach the maximum development irrespective of one's capability.

The foundation definition limits equality of opportunity to a prescribed, satisfactory minimum for every individual.

The minimum attainment definition seeks to allocate resources to everyone until a specified level of achievement is reached.

#### Dynamics

Generally the term 'dynamics' may refer to the 'modus operandi' of certain select forces and their consequences for the overall system in terms of some observable indicators. In the context of present study, the 'dynamics' refers to the operation of the select factors of inequality as determinants of educational opportunity.



**DESIGN:**

As the study is concerned with describing the school as a social sub-system and the inequalities as part of the wider social system and is also focused on finding out the possible association between the two sets of variables, (school and society) the study may be identified with the descriptive diagnostic design (Kothari, 1990: 46).

Regarding to the nature of the study DIGNOSTIC research design is opted for the purpose. 60 parents (120 respondents) from district Mathura (block Maant) are selected for the study, purposively. In which 30 parents (60 respondents) belong to the students from government schools and remaining 30 parents (60 respondents) belong to the students from private/convent schools.

**HYPOTHESES:**

Based on the factors of inequality taken for the study, the following hypotheses are proposed for verification:

1. Lower the class strata, lower the levels of opportunity in formal education.
2. The level of parental education determines the level of educational opportunity for children.
3. The socio-economic background of parents is a deciding factor of children's educational opportunity.
4. The order of social stratification correlates with the level of academic performance.

**DATA COLLECTION:**

Information relating to the select factors of inequality and educational opportunity at various levels of formal school education has been collected from individual

respondents through a questionnaire, revised and finalized after a pilot study and pre-testing.

The questionnaire besides collecting information on the select inequalities and other particulars, seeks also to reconstruct retrospectively the type of educational opportunities to which the respondents have had access, right from the pre-primary level so as to identify the type and level of the inequality met with and to study its academic and other implications.

Relevant secondary data have also been collected from various sources including the Census Books, District Statistical Hand Books, Office of the Chief Education Officer of the district and the Directorate of School Education.

**TOOLS OF ANALYSIS:**

To verify the hypotheses of the study, Chi-square significance at 5% level has been applied using the SPSS. Multiple Regression Analysis has been applied to identify those variables which as a whole influence the selection of groups at the Plus One level.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

By the analysis of primary data, we find that 60 pairs of respondents are selected purposively for the study, in which 20(33.33%) belongs to SC/ST category, 20(33.33%) to OBC and 20(33.33) to general category.

76.7% respondents prefer private /convent schools than that of government schools to educate their dependents. 65.0% respondents accepted that their dependents are studying in government schools at present.

51 (85%) respondents report that medium of instruction in government schools is Hindi while in private and convent schools it is English. All the 60 (100%) respondents accepted that the teachers in government schools perform other government duties, which affects their teaching. 58 (96.07%) respondents accepted that economic conditions and government aids are the constraints to choose government schools for their dependents, and it is the main reason for lower the levels of opportunity in

formal education. Parental education determines the level of educational opportunity for children. The socio-economic background of parents is a deciding factor of children's educational opportunity. The management and administrators of private and convent schools prefer educated and serving parents who has better economic status in society, in place of caste and class.

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Table1: Socio-economic status of respondents

| S/n | Variables                      | Frequencies and percentage (Husband and Wife) |                     |                                  | Total Pairs |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1.  | Caste(Category)                | General<br>20(33.3%)                          | O.B.C.<br>20(33.3%) | S.C./S.T.<br>20(33.3%)           | 60(100%)    |
| 2.  | Educational status             | Highly edu.<br>24(40%)                        | Edu.<br>24(40%)     | Un-Edu./only literate<br>12(20%) | 60(100%)    |
| 3.  | Age of respondents (in years)  | 20+<br>10(50%)                                | 35+<br>25(25%0)     | 50 +<br>25 (25%)                 | 60(100%)    |
| 4.  | Student category (Urban/rural) | Rural<br>30(100%)                             | Urban<br>30(0.00%)  |                                  | 60(100%)    |
| 5.  | Sex                            | Male<br>60(100%)                              | Female<br>60(0.00)  |                                  | 60(100%)    |



Table 2: Views of respondents “If they prefer government schools or private /convent schools to educate their dependents.”

| S/n   | Category  | Choice of school |                 |           |
|-------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|
|       |           | Government       | Private/convent | TOTAL     |
| 1.    | General   | 00(00.0)         | 20(33.3)        | 20(33.3)  |
| 2.    | O.B.C.    | 06(10.0)         | 14(23.3)        | 20(33.3)  |
| 3     | S.C./S.T. | 08(13.3)         | 12(20.0)        | 20(33.3)  |
| Total |           | 14(23.3)         | 46(76.7)        | 60(100.0) |

Table 3: Kind of schools in which the dependents are studying at present.

| S/n   | Category  | Type of school |                 |           |
|-------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|-----------|
|       |           | Government     | Private/convent | TOTAL     |
| 1.    | General   | 12(20.0)       | 08(13.3)        | 20(33.3)  |
| 2.    | O.B.C.    | 12(20.0)       | 08(13.3)        | 20(33.3)  |
| 3     | S.C./S.T. | 15(25.0)       | 05(8.33)        | 20(33.3)  |
| Total |           | 33(65.0)       | 27(35.0)        | 60(100.0) |

Table 4: Reasons, to prefer private schools and constraints to choose government schools

| S/n | Reasons   | Responses & percentage |        |          | Total     |
|-----|---|------------------------|--------|----------|-----------|
|     |   | General/20             | OBC/20 | ST/SC/20 |           |
| 1.  | Medium of instruction in government schools is Hindi.   | 18                     | 16     | 17       | 51(85.0)  |
| 2.  | Teachers in government schools perform other government duties, which affects their teaching. | 20                     | 20     | 20       | 60(100.0) |
| 3.  | Economic conditions and government aids are the constraints to choose government schools.     | 18                     | 20     | 20       | 58(96.7)  |

