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Email. jig_har@yahoo.com

**The Issue of Inclusion in Education India: A Diverse Regional Picture****Sheetala Prasad Anan**

Assistant Prof. in Education

Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad

Ashok Dansana

Assistant Prof. in Education

Ravenshaw University, Cuttack

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Introduction

The issue of inclusion is quite inclusive. It has several noticeable dimensions and there are dimensions which yet to be noticed and addressed. This paper deals with the some provisions of the constitution of India categorically the idea of 'equality' which otherwise implies inclusion of individual in the public spheres so that there can be maximum possibility in form of individual growth and development. Initially this paper looks at the derivation of the term inclusion with some conceptual frame and then it gives an outline of various dimensions of inclusion. This paper throws certain light on the regional issue of inclusion, particularly the picture of south-eastern Odisha, followed by conclusive remarks to deal with issue of inclusion in more meaningful and constructive manner.

Derivation of the term Inclusion

The term 'inclusion' originally conceived from the term 'equality' alongside other terms such as 'liberty, justice and fraternity' has got place in the Preamble of the constitution of India. The Preamble declares Equality as the third objective of the Constitution. Equality means two basic things: (i) Equality of status i.e. natural equality of all persons as equal and free citizens of India enjoying equality before law. (ii) Equality of opportunity i.e. adequate opportunities for all to develop. For securing the equality of status and opportunity, the Constitution of India grants and guarantees the fundamental Right to Equality (Article 14).

As stated above the term equality has two meaning. Nevertheless, it is negatively directed on one hand and positively on the other in concept and practices too. The negative concept implies absence of special privilege. That is equality before law. Every individual irrespective his/her background shall be treated equally by the laws of the land, India. The positive

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concept implies equal protection of law. In the other words wherever there is judicious right there is protection. It further implies that equal treatment in equal situations and different treatment in different situations. As the concept followed by the practices, protect the diversity of needs in the forms of rights and hence it is interpreted as positive, which is not uniformly applied to the negative concept, equality before the law (Basu, 2008).

Equality in Education

Now, when the concept applied in the sphere of 'education' which comes under the concurrent lists, among the various other subjects of governance in India, it gets equal weightage in interpretation and practices. One of the latest developments in the constitution is bringing amendment (86th) in Article 21, Right to Life, 2009, henceforth, expanding the sphere of the Article 21, by aiding clause 'A' to it. Hitherto elementary education is made free and compulsory (fundamental right) for children. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (or RTE) came into force in India with effect from 1 April 2010 (GoI 2009). Prior to this provision Directive Principles of State Policies (Art. 45) were there whereby State had to endeavour for providing free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age group (Basu, 2008).

However, in simple understandable term equality in education implies equality of educational opportunities to all without bringing any form of discrimination in it on the basis of individual's background such as caste, color, creed, gender and religion etc. It should be made clear here that this provision (Right to Equality) does not keep it purview confined to elementary education rather it goes beyond that. Ideally the provision of equality of educational opportunity has been a welcome phenomenon in the different spectrums of people. But, practically the paths of pursuit have been difficult, which clearly reflect from the ongoing debate, discourse, discussion and legitimate fight over the issue equality in educational practices in the country, often seen in other nations too.

The issues related to equality and inclusion in education can be categorically captured in major four inclusive dimensions those are such as **access, recognition, participation and representation**. So, let look into the aforesaid issues in possible details in the succeeding sections.

Access

It implies access to educational institution and resources of comparable quality of teaching and learning. The expected resources should constitute adequate physical infrastructure, teaching learning materials, lectures, guidance, counseling etc. However, access to these resources in India has not been equal in nature due to several identified reasons. There is

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situation which makes easier to get access to educational institutions especially in the semi-urban, urban and even in rural areas but the situation is quite different especially in geographically difficult areas where children do not get easy access. Although this factor does not appear to be paramount due to proactive measures of the regional governments and Central Government it still has been concern for the immediate stakeholders, students, teachers and parents. Going beyond access to educational institutions the most conspicuous issue here is the access to comparable standard of support systems for teaching and learning, particularly adequate guidance of the teacher to the needy students.

The issue of access to resource is further aggravated among students in the sphere of higher education, although it seems to be very least concern on the part of policy makers and executives. Here in this context some stakeholders feel privileged to have access to institutions obsessed with well equipped teaching and learning supports, especially the institutions run by corporate and Central Government barring some regional governments. However, the condition of the non-aided, semi-aided and even aided institutions regulated by regional governments is quite far away from satisfaction in providing minimum supports for maintaining a comparable standard of education.

However, to deal with the disparity in accessing resources and assets of education at school level the idea of Common School was initiated by Kothari Commission (1964-66) which was further reiterated and accepted by National Policy on Education (1968). In the context of the national system of education, NPE, 1986 restated the determination of the Government to take effective measures in the direction of the Common School System. The concept of national system of education would imply, according to NPE 1986, that, up to a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location, or sex, have access to education of comparable quality. However, the Common School System still remained a concept even though mooted by the Kothari Commission over a quarter of a century ago and expressed the view that the educational disparities are being further accentuated by the failure to implement the Common School System. More recently just before the onset RTE Act, 2009, one of the leading antagonists against the multifarious institutional arrangements for school education which distort considerable evenness in accessing resources, Anil Sadgopal (Member, CABE, 2005), looking at the given situations agreed with the idea of common school system. But, again it was overlooked which eventually had brought desolation among certain academics.

The existing disparity, whatever may be the level, invites arguments from many fronts especially looking at the idea of equality of status and opportunity vis-à-vis the theories of justice . The prevailing features of disparity in accessing resources of education at the

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elementary level, call upon the John Rawls (1997) idea of 'primary goods', which are all-purpose means such as income and wealth, powers and prerogatives of offices, the social bases of self-respect, and so on. The disparity as a matter of fact at the level of higher education also contrasts the idea of *freedom* (Sen, 2009) as the capacity of reasoned values. Because freedom may be there but there is compromised capacity to choice which would serve the reasoned values. So, visible disparity, which needs to be established and levelled through considerable scale of survey and research, cannot keep the stakeholders pleased rather that creates a sense of deprivation and dependency.

Recognition

- Mental attributes (ability and disability)
- Psychological attributes (interest, emotion, love, affection, anger etc)
- Socio cultural background (language, beliefs, habit etc)
- Physical background (appearance, ability and disability)

The concept of equality and inclusion of status and opportunity for the development of an individual unequivocally linked with recognition of his/her background of miscellaneous nature. In other words it implies acceptance and appreciation of individual differences while facilitating him/her during teaching learning process. This might happen in the class room or off the class room set up. This has been one of the matters of great concern in the academic discourse and debate and which has greater stake in the shaping of NCF 2005 and policies of inclusion in India. But, despite having constructive policies the nation is crippled to deal with the situation effectively due to various understood reasons. Linguistic and cultural resources in the classroom lead to higher cognitive and meta-cognitive skills and better learning outcomes among children. However, the schooling experiences of tribal children are characterized by non-comprehension, predominant experience of failure, non-acceptance of one's self and identity, recurrent feelings of diffidence and inadequacy of own culture and language (GoI, 2011). This does not confine to tribal people rather it is quite frequent in the mainstream schooling and institutions of higher learning. Students feel excluded either mainly due to the language deficiency, comprehension inability or deliberate utter disregard of the interest and emotion.

Participation and Representation

- Caste
- Gender
- Religion

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- Region
- Disciplinary interest

Understanding the concept and practices of equality would remain incomplete without looking at the nature of participation and representation of people in education from diverse background. Participation implies the level of participation of the people in education in terms of getting education, production in education and decision making processes. Whereas representation talks of how people from various background have their proportional share in education system. In reality participation and representation are the innermost features to judge the status of equality in socially, culturally, geographically and academically diversified situations given in India. The nature of participation and representation at certain level can be obtained from available statistical data. Whereas certain data that is of statistics on nature of people participation in decision making processes and channelization of allocated resources has been unimportant areas of concerns, although it requires to be statistically recorded for getting clear picture of people's participation. One of the vital criteria to understand the status of equality is regional factor. It tells about geo-educational status at the regional level. That is how education is geographically distributed and disseminated. Besides, this one of the emerging issues within the larger issue of equality is interest of the individual and discipline in the form of returns at the private and social level. Because, it is important to remember here that one of the fundamental rationale behind constitutional engineering of term 'equality' is providing equal opportunity for the development of fullest human. It implies each institutional delivery in the form of providing education to an individual should have returns at different level, closely associated with the idea of interest.

The level of participation from various social groups in education at the primary and higher level is clear from the table-1 and 2. Although there is consistent growth rate of participation across gender and groups over the last six decades there have been gaps among themselves. Within the gender around 20% differences and across social groups around 12% differences is there. There is difference in higher education level. The participation of STs, Muslims and other minority groups is quite lower than the rest of the social groups such as SCs and OBCs. There are also regional disparities in terms of literacy rate among the States and within the State. For example Bihar, Uttarpradesh and Jharkhand have 60% of literacy rate against all India average of 74%. If the single State is taken there is State like Odisha which has sub-regional differences. For example there are administrative units like **Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur Rayagada** mostly located in southern part of Odisha have around 50% literacy rate against the State average of 73%.

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**Table No-1 Literacy rates (%) of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Persons
– Sex-wise – All India - Rural**

Year	Scheduled Castes			Scheduled Tribes			Male & Female together (From all social background)		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Female	Male	Total
1961	15.06	2.52	8.89	13.37	2.90	8.16	15.35	40.4	28.31
1971	20.04	5.06	12.77	16.92	4.36	10.68	21.97	45.96	34.45
1981	27.91	8.45	18.48	22.94	6.81	14.92	29.76	56.38	43.57
1991	45.95	19.45	33.25	38.45	16.02	27.38	39.29	64.13	52.21
2001	63.66	37.84	51.16	57.39	32.44	45.02	53.67	75.26	64.83
2009-10	73.0	52.1	62.8	70.7	52.1	61.6	65.46	82.14	74.04

Source: GOI, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05 and NSSO. Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India.

Notes: 1. 1961 and 1971 relate to population aged 5 years and above whereas literacy rates for 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2010 relate to the population aged 7 years and above. 2. The 1981 literacy rates exclude Assam where the 1981 Census could not be conducted. For 1951, the population male, female and persons refers to effective literacy rates and the breakup of Rural, Urban and male- female components are crude literacy rates. 3. The 1991 literacy rates exclude Jammu & Kashmir where the 1991 Census could not be conducted due to disturbed conditions. 4. The 2001 and 2010 literacy rates exclude Mao Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur.

Table No-2 Level of Literacy and Higher Education in %- Rural Males and Females together (Persons of age 15 years and above) (2009-10) and GER 2011-12 of all Social Groups in India (18-23 years)

Level of Education	ST	SC	OBC	All social groups together		
Literate & up to Primary (2009-10)	24	24	23	-		
Graduate (2009-10)	1.5	3.8	6	-		
*GER 2011-12	4.17	12.47	31.65	Muslim	Other Minorities	All social groups
				4.47	2.51	20

Source: GoI, NSSO, Report No. 516, Employment & Unemployment Situation among Social Groups in India, 61st Round, (July 2004 – June 2005), October 2006 and NSSO, Primary Data (2009-10). *GoI. MHRD, Department of Higher Education. New Delhi. 2013.

Conclusion

In Indian context perfect equality and justice directed to inclusion has not been an easy affair. Provisions are not enough to claim democracy we need to look into the where the issues of inclusion are addressed, the overlooked demanded consequent requirements are

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positive attitude and cooperation of an individual towards others rights and duties. Strategic and constructive institutionalization of people participation in the education as consumer and producer should be high in the agenda of any constructive planning and decision making in near and distance future.

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