

Equity, Inclusion and Social Mobility of Other Backward Classes in Jammu and Kashmir: An Introspect of different Educational Policies and Schemes.

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ABSTRACT

Education generally has been identified with progress and prosperity. In fact, the spread of education is treated as an effective solution to all the problems like social, cultural, economic, political etc. faced by people in society. So education appears as a core area of concern in governmental policies for the wellbeing of public in national as well as international circles. Different countries throughout the globe have many common historical, geographical, climatic and socio-economic features and also common disadvantages of educational backwardness. In recent years there has been a considerable expansion of educational opportunities and significant scientific and technological advancement all over the world. However, there are disparities between and within countries in terms of urban, rural, gender, class and ethnic consideration. India not to its exception, also confronts such problems of disparities in terms of educational equality, inclusion and mobility. To eradicate the disparities and impart education on equalitarian basis, government of India has framed different policies and programs for the development of education among the masses of the country and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals set by United Nations Development Program. Under Article 45, the constitution of India has kept the provisions of free, compulsory and equal access to education for all and especially the promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and other weaker and marginalized sections of the society. In this paper an attempt has been made to introspect the implementation of few educational policies and schemes which were implemented to fulfill the educational need of different sections of population of the country and examine its role in educational equity, inclusion and social mobility of Other Backward Classes in Jammu and Kashmir.

Key Words: Equity, Education, Inclusion, Mobility, Other Backward Classes.

1. Introduction

Education is widely assumed to play a vital role in enhancing a person's chances of social mobility. It is the primary channel of mobility as it has higher relationship with the income and occupations in the present society, the higher the educational status, the more prestigious the occupation, leading to higher income and higher social status/mobility in the society. Though education has always been a crucial factor for social mobility, but different government reports (like NSSO, Census, AISHE, etc) on education shows that all sections of society in India has not got equal access to it, same reports show great disparities and inequality with respect to education among different cross sections of castes and classes like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Due to the unequal distribution of resources and access to education to its entire population, India at the global level too did not have succeeded to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2005 and then by 2015. Important among the Millennium Development Goals were: to eradicate the extreme poverty, achieve universal primary education, and eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary schooling etc. All these characteristics can be seen among

different sections of population especially OBCs, which constitute the major portion of population in India. Since independence the state of Jammu and Kashmir has achieved significant growth and development in reducing poverty and improving crucial human development indicators such as levels of literacy, education and healthcare. However there are indications that all communities and social groups have not equally shared the benefits of growth process, among them the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) which constituting the major portion of population are seriously lagging behind in terms of human development indicators, and it seems that they are excluded from the basic necessities of life at gross root level. To include them and make equal partners with respect to the developmental processes, government of Jammu and Kashmir has initiated many educational schemes for their socio-economic upliftment. Any developmental initiative for the alleviation of socio-economic underdevelopment cannot achieve the desired objectives, unless it is effectively implemented. The past experience shows that the benefits of all the poverty alleviation schemes have not yielded the desired results. In fact the benefits have not reached the concerned population. The success or failure of any developmental strategy largely depends on its effective implementation, rather than its mere introduction. In this paper an attempt has been made to introspect the implementation of the educational policies and schemes which were implemented to fulfill the global and local needs of country and examine its role in educational equity, inclusion and social mobility of Other Backward Classes in Jammu and Kashmir.

2. Educational Inequity

Equitable opportunities denote opportunities that are both equal and fair (C. Nicholas 1982:177). India being the largest democracy on the earth, having the longest written constitution, which gives the provisions of equal opportunities, equal access to free and compulsory education shows great disparities on ground level. These disparities are not only found on the basis of sex, but in India one can find the disparity and discrimination to this basic need at caste, class, and region or religion basis too. Different census reports show the strides in literacy rate, but with disparities. According to 1951 census only 18.33 percent of the total population of India was literate while as according to latest 2011 census report 74.04 percent population is literate with a difference of (16.68 percent) between male (82.14 percent) and female (65.46 percent) and in Jammu and Kashmir the total literacy rate of the State is 68.74 percent with difference of (20.25 percent) between male (78.26 percent) and female (58.01 percent) literacy rate. As far as the educational status of different communities is concerned, large disparities are evident. According to the National Secondary Education Report 2010-11 the total enrolment at different levels of education is 5,47,01,288 with a higher enrolment at Higher Secondary level 3,20,08,718 followed by Secondary level with 2,04,94,322. The same report shows a differential access to education among different stratum of population in India, for instance, only 17.32 percent of Scheduled Castes, 7.95 percent of Scheduled Tribes and 39.55 percent of OBC's are enrolled in the formal educational institutions. The picture of Jammu and Kashmir is not different; it also shows a great disparity with respect to education among different stratum of population, the figures of the enrolment are as 7.42 percent, 8.89 percent and 11.68 percent for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) respectively. Due to unequal access to education and related resources, here is inequity among the cross sections of population regarding modern occupations, economic upliftment, political participation etc. which has left these sections of population at the margins of society, hence excluded from the progress and growth.

Constitution of India has given democratic right to education to all its masses. Under the 93rd Constitutional Amendment, the Government of India has made education free and compulsory for all belonging to the age group of 6-14 years. These constitutional and legal

provisions have neither been able to provide equal chances to education nor created the space for fast social mobility for all sections of people. This is again to emphasize those SCs, STs and OBCs are homogenous categories. Differential access to education has produced difference in the space and pace of mobility among these people. Against these backdrops focusing on Jammu and Kashmir, in this paper an attempt has been made to introspect the implementation of the educational policies and schemes which were implemented to fulfill the global and local needs of country with respect to the inclusion, and educational equity of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Jammu and Kashmir.

3. Equalization of Educational Opportunities

Since after independence, Government of India has taken many steps to equalize the educational opportunities through different educational policies and commissions. The Education Commission 1964-66 empathetically observed that “the education of the backward classes in general and the tribal people in particular is a major programme of equalization and of social and national integration. No expenditure is too great for the purpose”. National Policy on Education (1968) recommended that strenuous efforts should be made to equalize educational opportunities among backward classes and especially the tribal people. Draft on National Policy on Education (1979) while recognizing the imbalances and inequalities in all sectors of education among girls, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Landless Laborers, Backward Classes and urban slum poor, recommended that serious efforts should be made to identify the problems in these cases and to bring all such people into the fold of education. Similarly National Policy of Education (1986) in Part III insists for national system of education which implies that all students irrespective of caste, creed, color, location or sex should have access to education of a comparative quality. It further recommended that suitable incentive will be provided to all educationally backward sections of society, particularly in rural areas (NPE, 1986). Promotion of education among backward classes was also under the provisions of the Program of Action 1992. This program took measures for their free education, reduction in other costs, scholarships, transport facilities, day care-study centers and lodging houses earn and learn facilities, special facilities for girls, special assistance to the backward areas of states, compensatory and remedial education and common school system.

4. Evaluation and Assessment of Educational Policies

The inclusive approach of common school system was recommended by Kothari Commission and then accepted and given proper weight age in National Policy of Education (1968 and 1986), till date the same concept has not been implemented into action. This can be counted as one of the reasons for the development of exclusiveness in the school and educational system from the perspective of poorer and backward sections.

In order to bring the common school system into practice and make it functional following actions are required:

- a) Ensuring increased outlay for primary education at elementary level.
- b) Improvement in school system especially in backward areas.
- c) Making mother tongue as the medium of instruction for all and especially for linguistic minorities at primary level.
- d) Time bound implementation of common school system in a phased manner.
- e) Exploring the ways and means to include the private schools into the common school system.

5. Regional Disparities

The country being large with population of diverse languages, culture, and resource endowments the policy options, strategies, investment patterns and targets do not help in tackling the problem of regional and sub regional disparities. Although in past efforts have been made to deal with such kind of problems relating to interstate disparities by special planning and allocation of funds for educationally backward states/union territories, but not adequate. It is need of the hour to identify the backward areas at the district and sub district levels and prepare the impressive planning for educational development at district, block and village levels.

6. Other Backward Classes

Other Backward Class (OBC) is a collective term used by the Government of India to classify castes that are educationally and socially disadvantaged. The term 'Backward classes' finds its place in the Constitutional Articles 15(4) and 16(4) wherein the State is empowered to make special provision for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs) of citizens. Yet unlike the clear definitions of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), the 'Backward Classes' remained ambiguous. The term had come into usage in British period. It was used as far back as 1880 to describe a set of groups, also called indigent classes, entitled to allowances for study in elementary schools (Sachar Report 2006).

Sharma (2007) in "Indian Social Structure and Change" by tracing the background of the term 'backward classes' says that it has been used for the weaker sections of society, particularly the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). In the beginning, after independence the term had a less fixed and definite reference. Earlier the term 'depressed classes' was used for so-called 'untouchables' and other backward classes. It is certainly a fact that backward classes are above the un-touchable groups and below the twice-born castes. Further Sharma says that the reference of this term has been found in 1917-18, but it was more specifically used in 1930-31. In 1937, the State of Travancore used the term 'backward communities' to include all educationally and economically backward communities. The term 'backward classes' was used and referred differently to different categories of people in different States of India. Thus it had no uniform meaning at national level. Defining 'backward classes K.L. Sharma says 'backward classes are backward because they have been lagging behind in education, government services, professions, business etc.' (Sharma, 2007: 213-214)

6.1 Other Backward Classes in Jammu and Kashmir

The state of Jammu and Kashmir being a Muslim majority state has a major portion of the OBC population from among Muslims. The census did not count the Other Backward Class population as a separate category like that of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population. As per the notified list of Other Backward Classes in Jammu and Kashmir by the Ministry of Social Welfare under Resolution No. 12011/7/95 dated 24th May 1995 there are following twenty Communities as Other Backward Communities in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Bahach Hanjie and Shikar wallas excluding houseboat (owners); Bangi, Sweepers Bhangi (excluding those khakroobs in Scheduled Castes); Barber (rural); Bhand; Dambal Faqir; Doom (excluding those in Scheduled Castes); Fishermen (including Gada-Hanz); Grati (rural); Jhewar; Kul Faqir; Kumar Khumar (rural); Madari, Bazigar; Mirasi; Sansi; Shaksaz; Shoe repairers (working without the aid of machine); Shupri waatal (excluding those in Scheduled Castes); Sikligar; Teeli, Teli (rural); Village washermen. Under Resolution No. 12015/9/2000-BCC dated 6th September, 2008 the categories of 'Lohar and Tarkhan' have also been included in the Central list of Other Backward Classes making the total number of twenty one communities as Other Backward Classes (OBCS) in Jammu and Kashmir. (General Administration Department, Govt. of J&K). Under Notification No. 12011/6/2014-BC-II, State Government of Jammu and Kashmir has also recommended for inclusion of two

more castes/communities Labana and Sheer Gojres in the Central List, making the total number of Twenty Three (23) castes/communities as Other Backward Classes for the State of Jammu and Kashmir (The Gazette of India).

6.2 Social Status of Other Backward Classes (OBCs)

Despite the enhancement in the growth of education in India, large disparities are still evident in the social, educational and other sectors among different communities in India. According to the National Sample Survey (NSS) 2000, in rural areas literacy rate among adults of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) stood at 60 percent and for others it stood at 80percent. In urban areas 86percent of OBCs and 93percent of other categories are literate. This disparity is also present at the higher educational levels like Graduation and Diploma level the percentage of 4.55percent and 13.37percent for OBCs and others respectively. Similarly there were stark differences between OBCs and others at various levels of attainment like intermediate and below (25.08/38.19percent), agriculture (18.18/53percent), engineering and technology (17.18/51.1percent) and medicine (27.89/34.05percent) (NSS, 2000).

As the Census did not count OBCs as a separate category, however there are other sources of data which give an account of the state of OBCs. Such two large all-India data sets are National Sample Survey (NSS) and National Family Health Survey (NFHS) that have added OBC category to their surveys after late 1990s. Both of these show clear disparity between OBCs and others. According to second round of the NFHS, caste disparities in occupational attainments are clear. As 61 percent of OBCs and 47 percent of others are agricultural and manual laborers. Among the professional, managerial and high level administrative jobs, the proportion of OBCs is 8 percent with that of upper castes over 13 percent.

Using National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data, Deshpande (2006) has prepared a Caste Development Index (CDI) that is based on five indicators namely land holding, occupational attainment, educational attainment, consumer durable ownership and asset ownership. It is only the second round of the NFHS data that allows for the OBC category and it turns out that in rural and urban India, in 1989-99 the CDI for the OBCs is less than that of others in virtually all States of India. An observation from the CDI shows that in Jammu and Kashmir the condition of OBCs is even worse than Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). (Deshpande, 2006:2444-46).

In light of these great disparities among different communities, an attempt has been made in this paper to introspect the implementation of the educational policies and schemes which were implemented to fulfill the global and local needs of country and examine its role in educational equity, inclusion and social mobility of Other Backward Classes in Jammu and Kashmir.

7. Objectives of the study

The basic objectives of this study are:

- 1) To examine and evaluate the impact of various educational policies/schemes in the up gradation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir.
- 2) To access the implementation and awareness of these policies and schemes among OBCs in Jammu and Kashmir.

8. Data and Methodology

This paper is based on the data collected from OBCs and Non-OBCs of one village of district Anantnag Tehsil Kokernag. A total sample of 100 households belonging to OBCs and Non OBCs (50 households from Kumhar community, 50 from Non OBCs) were selected with the help of stratified sampling technique. Data was collected from the respondents with the help of a structured interview schedule.

8.1. Educational Status of OBCs in Selected Village (Akingam)

District Anantnag Tehsil Kokernag		Village Akingam	
Total population of the Village Akingam (census 2011)		5007	
Total Households of Village Akingam (census 2011)		755	
Total population Surveyed (Field Study)	556	OBCs	Non OBCs
		302	254
Total number of Households Surveyed (Field Study)	100	50	50

In India the census is conducted every ten years, which count the total population of the country. Population among different castes and classes constitute the total population of the country. The census of India count the population as male, female, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes etc. but it did not count the OBC as a separate category of population. The table above shows that different sections among OBCs differ in the literacy rate. During the field work for the research purpose, survey was conducted for the total population of OBCs in the Village Akingam of Anantnag. It was found that most of the OBC population falls under the low literacy rate as compared to the general population. Table below depicts very low literacy rate across different sections of population in the surveyed village.

Literate/Illiterate	Non-OBCs	OBCs
Literate	63.27	55.15
Illiterate	36.37	44.85

9. Results and Discussions

The Government of India in collaboration with Jammu and Kashmir State government has initiated various schemes and programs through various educational policies to fulfill the constitutional obligations and national aspirations with respect to education and make it available on equalitarian basis to all its masses irrespective of caste, creed, color, sex, region, and religion. Some of the programs so far launched in Jammu and Kashmir are as:

9.1. Policies and schemes for the inclusion of OBCs

Articles 15 (4), 16(4), 38,46 and the set of Articles in Part XVI clause (i) of Article 38 makes it obligatory for the State 'to strive and promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may in which justice, social, economic and political shall inform all the institutions of the national life'.

Before independence, provincial governments implemented different policies/ schemes with special provisions for the upliftment, betterment and welfare of backward classes especially in the field of education. After the independence from colonial rule, welfare measures continued for backward classes in one or other form through various Five Year Plans and other policies.

Only)		sample
Households getting grant-in-aid under Voluntary Organization Scheme	5	10 %

9.3.Awareness among OBCs about their Reservations

The selected sample in the table 5 shows that major portion of the surveyed population falling under the Other Backward Class communities don't have the OBC certificate due to their unawareness about their being reserved categories in the country and State. Only 6 percent of OBC population does have the authentic OBC reservation certificates. Most of the people stated about the bribery approach of the higher officials for issuing the reservation certificates. Lack of socio-economic condition of this community becomes a big hurdle for them to get their reservation certificates issued in their favour. It depicts the lack of education among OBCs on one hand and on the other hand the indifferent attitude of government agencies towards such communities. Government had not done anything to make them aware of their reservation and other schemes that are meant for their educational and socio-economic development.

9.4.Operation Blackboard Scheme

The Operation Blackboard scheme was started in 1987-88. The main aim of this scheme was to improve the classroom environment with the good infrastructural facilities, teachers and teaching-learning material to primary schools and by provision of a third teacher to schools where enrolment exceeded one hundred (100), has been extended to upper primary schools. 5,23,000 primary schools in total and 1,27,000 upper primary schools have been provided funds for the academic infrastructure development. On the other hand 1,50,000 and 76,000 additional posts of teachers for single teacher primary schools and upper primary stage respectively have been sanctioned so far (10th FYP).

This scheme was started in 1987-88 in Jammu and Kashmir to improve the classroom environment, by providing additional infrastructure facilities, teachers and teaching material to primary schools. This scheme was implemented in one hundred ninety seven (197) educational blocks and two thousand four hundred fifty (2450) schools were constructed

Table 5: Reservation Certificates among OBC population in Study Area

Total Households selected for survey (OBCs Only)	50	Percentage to Total Selected sample
Households having OBC Reservation Certificates	3	6 %

Source: Field Survey

under this scheme. In the study village one educational institute has been built under this scheme, at the time of appointment of teaching staff no weightage was given to the reservation of OBCs and two teachers were appointed among the non-obcs.

9.5.Mid-Day Meal Scheme

To give a boost to Universalization of primary education, by increasing enrolment, attendance, retention and improving nutritional status of students, Mid-Day Meal Scheme was launched on 15th August 1995. Under this scheme students are provided with cooked, hot meals comprising a minimum of 450 calories and 12 gram protein content (Report on Education Sector in Jammu and Kashmir). The poor parents of OBC children of the study village complained that the food provided to children in the schools is unhygienic which has lead to health issues like diarrhea problems to the children. They also pointed out that the food was not served properly to the students, they are assembled in the school lawn and then are made to sit on the mats (taats) in the ground full of dust. There is not a proper arrangement in the school premises where the food can be served to the students in a proper way. Government agencies blame the irrational use of funds by the school teachers but keeping their ill-preparation with respect to the infrastructure and manpower available under

the finger. Due to some weaknesses this scheme has not been successful in achieving the goal.

9.6. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Coming under the global pressure and to fulfill the UN Millennium Development Goals to achieve 100 percent literacy rate Government of India launched the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Scheme in 2002. To achieve the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE), this program was launched towards the end of 9th Five Year Plan. It was a time bound integrated approach in partnership with the States. The programme is an effort to improve the performance of the school system and provide community-owned quality elementary education in the mission mode. The programme has a special focus on the universal access and retention, bridging the gender and social gaps in enrolment level and enhancement of learning levels of all children from Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other children in difficult circumstances. Keeping in view the objectives of this programme some major steps like; expansion of access, quality education infrastructure development has been taken. This scheme also has not been able to fulfill its set goal. Over the flawed and sluggish implementation of centrally sponsored SSA in Jammu and Kashmir, the centre has rejected the State Government's plan for opening of 573 new primary schools and upgrading 285 existing schools to upper level under the flagship Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program in the financial year 2012-13 (Greater Kashmir, 2012: 22nd July).

10. Conclusion

The inclusion of Other Backward Classes with the mainstream in India has been a major concern of the country. But even after decades of time we are no nearer to the solution of the problem. Rather these sections of population are day by day getting excluded and as such they have become the assets for the politicians to come to power. Schemes after schemes have conceived and implemented from global as well as local point of view but most of them have failed. The basic reason for the failure is irresponsibility and non-enthusiasm of the government agencies towards their education. In most cases their life has worsened and they are getting more and more excluded from the basic necessities of life especially education. Illiteracy and school dropout rate among them is on rise due to their poor social condition. The Mandal commission report in 1953 counted approximately 53 percent of population as OBC population in the country. Since then government doesn't bother to count their population through the census so that any concrete policy can be formulated for their upliftment and inclusion with the mainstream. This is the basic reason of their being economic and social exclusion. By excluding them on different fronts, our country is not able to put in use most of the manpower which can be used for the development of country.

Education as an enabling mechanism has always contributed to convert human population into human resources. It has also paved the way for social mobility, inclusion and upliftment. As the speed of education and its access has remained socio-culturally conditioned, the traditional social groups, who happen to be the victims of historical injustice, have not been able to get integrated into the wide process of inclusion. The Other Backward Classes (OBCs) especially OBCs in Jammu and Kashmir have remained socio-culturally deprived, penetration of education has not only made them stratified but has also widened the process of exclusion among them. The present study has suggested the possibility of integration, and inclusion of the OBCs with the momentum of socio-economic mobility. It shows the positive correlation between the educational expansion and inclusion.

Note: The Primary data used in this study was basically collected for PhD Thesis entitled, "*Social Capital, Educational and Occupational Mobility Among Other Backward Classes in Jammu and Kashmir: A Case Study of Anantnag District*" submitted to Indira Gandhi National Open University New Delhi in 2022.

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