



Educational Awareness among Scheduled Caste Parents: A Case Study on Amguri Block of Sibsagar District, Assam, India

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge that prepares a thriving present and leads to a stable future. It improves social status, cultural and intellectual qualities- the means of generating civic society. Some sections of the Indian society are still struggling to attain education. The accessibility of quality education to all sections of the society is still a dream in the country. Scheduled caste population form a large section of the Indian population who are often marginalised and deprived of social, educational, economic and health benefits due to ignorance and socio-cultural milieu (Asha et al., 2024). Though the literacy rate among the Scheduled Castes increased 10.27% in 1961 to 63.89% in 2011 in national level but some Scheduled Castes communities still continue to remain educationally backward. Lack of educational awareness among the parents especially in rural areas is the prime problem in this regards. The poor economic condition of SC parents is also one of the barriers for their educational development (Kaur & Verma,

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2017; Jain, 1981; Premi, 1974; Deka, 2016 & Das, 2017). The study is significant to know about the awareness of SC parents of Amguri block under Sibsagar district towards education. Descriptive method was applied to conduct the preset study. Total 45 Schedule Caste parents have been selected out of total 170 by using purposive sampling technique. A self constructed interview schedule was used to collect the required data for the study.

Keywords: Schedule caste; education; awareness; Amguri block.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Education is the process of acquiring knowledge that prepares a thriving present and leads to a stable future. It is a necessity and therefore we count it as a right” (Keshvi & Tammana, 2021). “Education brings equality, stability and modernity in human society. It enhances the skills and knowledge of the peoples. It is vehicle through which one can achieve success in life. Education improves social status, cultural and intellectual qualities- the means of generating civic society” (Kurmi, 2014). “Indeed, education is a process of human enlightenment and empowerment for the betterment and quality of life. It not only enhances man’s knowledge, skills, competences, potential, values and attitudes but also transforms his belief and thoughts”. (Dongaonkar & Negi, 2009). In today’s society education is much more important than other elements like instruments, machineries, medicines and even language. Without education, man would still have been living an uncivilised life. Education is one of the most important elements in the development of any community or society.

“Education being the most important instrument for empowering weaker sections of the society. Some sections of the Indian society are still struggling to attain education. The accessibility of quality education to all sections of the society is still a dream in the country. Whatever may be the reason, the socially disadvantaged communities of the country are struggling to access quality education. Most of the education takers of these communities are first generation learner.

In this context, utmost care needs to be taken to bring the socially disadvantaged community into the mainstream of Indian education system. Education has special significance particularly for the weaker sections of the Indian society” (Dongaonkar & Negi, 2009).

“Scheduled Castes (SC) are viewed as the most deprived and suffering section of the Indian society. The Schedule Castes are the worst victim of social inequality (Trivedi, 1996). In all over the country, the Scheduled Caste occupies the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy. Initially they were known as backward class of the Hindu society” (Clause 1 of Article 341 of the Indian Constitution). They are the educationally excluded sections of Indian society. Since independence, Government of India has been trying for inclusivity in education irrespective of caste, creed and religion. But, unfortunately inclusiveness in education is not attained. Along with some common problems, children belonging to Scheduled Caste face a very high degree of Social Discrimination” (Keshvi & Tammana, 2021). The problem of illiteracy was more acute with Scheduled Castes. Though the government has allotted seats in educational institutions including professional courses under reservation quota, the literacy level of SCs is comparatively lower than others. As per 2011 census report, the literacy rate of Scheduled Caste population of India was 63.89% against 74.04% of general literacy rate” (Census report 2011).

The following Table 1 shows the literacy rate of Scheduled Caste people and Non-Scheduled Castes people’s progress from 1961-2011.

Table 1. Progress of scheduled caste’s literacy in India from 1961-2011

Census Year	Scheduled Caste	Non- Scheduled Caste
1961	10.27	28.3
1971	14.67	34.45
1981	21.38	42.57
1991	37.41	52.21
2001	54.69	65.38
2011	63.89	74.04

Source: Various Census of India from 1961-2011

According to Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) Annual Report, 2002-03, "total number of SC students' in all stages of education is 32,407, 378 which accounts for less than 20% of total SC population while they constitute more than 16% of country's total population (16.66 core in 2001). However, majority of SC population (i.e., almost 80% are still away from educational accessibility" (Kumari, Hymavathi & Priya, 2010). The reasons behind this low education are due to:

- Poverty and backwardness,
- Social discrimination and exploitation,
- Lack of aspiration and awareness,
- Marginalization in the Society,
- Lack of Political will,
- Faulty education system,
- Absence of balanced, sensible and realistic approach,
- Negative approach in handing educational programmes, and
- Non- implementation of education policies for the progress of SC students level.

A country cannot make progress when sizable section of its population remains. It is true that children belonging to the Scheduled Caste enjoy certain facilities, but considering the magnitude of the problem, these are not enough for finding an easy and quick solution to it deprived (Das, 2017). Moreover unless the machinery employed to implement the various plans and programmes for the educational development of the Scheduled Caste are to work with a Missionary zeal. So far as the secondary section of education is concerned, the state provide certain facilities to a section of the population, broadly categorized the Schedule Castes (Barma, 2014).

1.1 Importance of the Study

"The importance of the study is a written statement that explains why the research was needed. It's justification of the importance of the work and impact to new knowledge and how others will benefit from it. It is important to convey to the reader why the research work is important. The Scheduled Caste people are known as the backward class of our society in respect to their socio-economic condition, education political and in others aspect from the very beginning of the Indian history" (Biswas & Roy, 2014)). "Scheduled caste population form a large section of the Indian population who are often marginalised and deprived of social,

educational, economic and health benefits due to ignorance and socio-cultural milieu" (Asha, et al., 2024). "They are unprivileged, marginalized, and backward with a higher rural presence having significant regional disparities in terms of socio-economic indicators" (Prakash & Kumar, 2024). "Education is the main instrument to bring social changes and to develop the nation as a whole. Education is the process of acquiring knowledge that prepares a thriving present and leads to a stable future. Education is a cornerstone of sustainable development and economic growth. It empowers individuals with essential skills and knowledge, facilitating their participation in the workforce and enabling societal progress" (Aggarwal, et al., (2024). "To bring progress in social status, education plays a crucial role. But the picture of education attainment and educational status of Schedule Caste people is not satisfactory. Jain (1981) in his study found that the Scheduled Castes have little access to education which is the main instruments for self-advancement. Though the literacy rate among the Scheduled Castes increased 10.27% in 1961 to 63.89% in 2011 in national level but some Scheduled Castes communities still continue to remain educationally backward" (Deka, 2016). Chitnis (1975) revealed that, generally the Scheduled Caste students enrolled at schools and college come from the literate families. Premi (1974) found that the poor economic background is the major reason to dropout in Schedule Caste. Singh (1989) found that majority of the educational problems of SCs students are of socio-economic nature.

With other problems lack of educational awareness among the parents especially in rural areas is the prime problem in this regards. Therefore, an attempt has been made by the investigator to study on the awareness of SC parents of Amguri development block under Sibsagar district towards education. The present study is significant to know about how much the SC parents are aware towards education as well as to know some measures for the educational development of SC people of Amguri block particularly and the SC people of India as a whole.

1.2 Research Questions of the Present Study

The research questions of the present study is-

1. How much the Scheduled Caste parents of Amguri block are aware about education?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are on follows-

1. To study about the awareness of Scheduled Caste parents of Amguri block towards education.
2. To suggest some measures for educational development of SC students.

1.4 Delimitations of the Study

The present study has the following delimitations-

1. The study is limited to only three Scheduled Caste village of Amguri block.
2. It is limited only 45 Scheduled Caste family of Amguri block.

2. METHODOLOGY

Methodology of the Study comprises the following heading-

2.1 The method of the Study

The method of the study was drawn on the basis of the formulated objectives. The present study comes under the domain of descriptive research.

2.2 Population of the Study

All the Heads of Scheduled Caste families under the three sampled SC villages of Amguri Block comprised the population of the study. There are total 170 SC families in these sampled villages. Hence, the population of the study is 170.

2.3 Sample & Sampling Technique of the Study

The investigator has selected 45 SC parents (15 parents from each village) the sample for the study by using purposive sampling technique.

2.4 Tools used in the Present Study

The investigator used a self constructed interview schedule consisting of 30 questions (both open ended and closed ended) to collect the required data for the present study. The content validity of the interview schedule was established by seeking the opinion of experts in the field of education with the nature of content covered by the items. The experts approved on validity of the content of items.

3. DEFINITION OF THE KEY TERMS

3.1 Educational Awareness

Awareness is the ability to directly know and perceive, to feel or to be conscious of events, objects, thoughts, emotions, or sensory patterns. In this level of consciousness, sense data can be confirmed by observer without necessarily implying understanding. It is relative concept. Educational awareness makes awareness or conscious feeling among the people towards their education.

In the present study, the investigator is trying to find out the educational awareness of SC parents of Amguri block under Sibsagar district, Assam.

3.2 SC Parents

Parents means a father or mother; one who begets or one who gives birth to or nurtures and raises a child; a relative who plays the role of guardian.

In the present study SC parents refers to the parents of SC students of Amguri development block of Sibsagar district, Assam.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- It is found that all the 100% respondents opined that education is the most important element of life like other element.
- It is found that majority of the respondents i.e.77.78% sending their children to the educational institutions and the rest 22.22% do not sending their children to educational institution.
- It is also found that 73.33% respondents interested to open new educational institution in their locality and the 26.67% respondents are not interested to open new institution in their locality.
- It is interestingly found that only 37.78% respondents enquire regularly about their children learning and the remaining 62.22% respondents do not observed regularly about their children learning.
- Only 31.11% respondents motivate their children to participate in co-curricular activities and the remaining 68.89% respondents do not motivates their children to participate in co-curricular or any others activities.
- It revealed form the study 55.55% respondents participate in different kinds of educational programmes organized by

schools and any other organizations and the rest 44.4% do not participate in such kind of educational programmes.

- The study also interestingly show that only 35.55% respondents interested to spend money for their children education. But the maximum respondents i.e. 64.44% are not interested to spend money for their children's education.
- Out of total 45 respondents there are 60% consider that parents have equal responsibility like teachers regarding their children's education. But the rest 40% respondents do not consider the same.
- It is observed that out of the total 45 respondents only 80% respondents prefer girls' education. The remaining 20% respondents do not prefer girl education as boys.
- Only 40.27 % respondents want to continue education of their children up to class X standard, 30.84% consider up to HS standard and only 28.89% consider more than HS standard.

5. MEASURES FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SC STUDENTS

- The government should provide more financial assistance for the economic development as well as educational development of SC people. All the government facilities should be distributed equally among the SC students.
- The SC parents should not engage their children in domestic works instead of sending them to schools.
- Local NGO's and educated people should organize awareness programme among the SC students and their parents regarding the improvement of their educational picture and also organized extra coaching classes in free of cost for the deficient students during week-ends and holidays.
- The environment of schools located in SC areas should be more attractive for the children, so that they may prefer to go the schools than stay at home. The school authority should take proper steps to increase the rate of attendance with the help of local bodies; parents and NGO's.
- Government should introduce new scholarships and should provide sufficient financial assistance for the SC students.
- Government may made provision for summer school, winter school and special

coaching for scheduled caste students at completely free of cost and should arranged compulsory system of education up to high school level.

- Government should introduced special scheme to make more enrolment of rural Scheduled Caste students in the school.
- Educated SC people should frequently visit to schools where the SC students are studying to understand their overall academic picture.

6. CONCLUSION

The Scheduled Caste people are known as the backward class of our society. It has been seen that the picture of Scheduled Caste people in all their aspects; such as - socio-economic status, education, rural development etc. are comparatively not good. Especially in rural area, it is seen that majority of them are not aware about education of their children. Although today's society is very advanced society, but still there are lot of people who don't know what is going on in the society, what are the steps taken by government for their upliftment etc. The educational attainments in terms of enrolment and retention in rural India generally correspond to the hierarchical order. While the upper castes have traditionally enjoyed and are enjoying these advantages, the Scheduled Caste and other backward castes children have lagged behind in primary schooling. An important reason for withdrawal of children from school is the cost and work needs of poor households. Income and caste are typically correlated with lower castes having lower incomes and higher castes having better endowments in terms of land, income and other resources. Scheduled caste people are the part of our society and we can't ignore them because they also cover the total population of India. To create awareness among the Scheduled Caste people those who leave in the rural areas we should organise some programmes, workshop, short term courses etc and make them to realize that education is much more important than other element like instruments, machineries, medicines and even language.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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