

**STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTE
STUDENTS OF CHITRADURGA CITY**

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ABSTRACT

Much has been talked about. Many steps have been taken through different plans for the disadvantaged student. Still inequality exists in the classroom performance. Some come out with excellent results, others with good. There is also a class of low achievers. Socio-cultural factors contribute to their poor performance. To eradicate these barriers strategies have been suggested by the educationists. Among them enriched curriculum engaging students in the authentic work, creating Network of Supports, Co-curricular, Extra-curricular Activities etc. are highlighted in this paper. Honest attempts have been made towards affirmative action to dissolve the causes contributing to performance inequality between the student of General Castes and Scheduled Castes at foundation level.

KEYWORDS: *Disadvantaged students. Low Achievers. Government Activities. Extra Curricular Activities. Affirmative action*

INTRODUCTION

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Historically, general caste students have a head-start over the scheduled caste students in terms of awareness, academic orientation and drive for academic fulfillment. Unequal college has limited the educational opportunities of disadvantaged scheduled caste student in India. In addition, these students sometimes have problems outside colleges that interfere with their learning. The problem of these students may include drug abuse, delinquent gang membership, dysfunctional families, and family violence. Such students are also likely to live in neighborhoods characterized by poor social control, delinquent gangs, high rates of personal and property crimes, and widespread distribution and consumption of drugs. They also must confront a less tangible threat - the devaluation of their talents and potential. The scheduled caste student is labeled 'problem student' or the 'specific needs population', implying they are somehow intrinsically less intelligent, needier. Social marginalization becomes a problem only when we fail to tackle this problem honestly and fairly.

Perhaps more than at any other time in history, college is being asked to recognize and address the needs of disadvantaged student who suffer from various problems, abuse and neglect. Colleges are also increasingly aware that low social status may depress scheduled caste students performances regardless of family income. Academic mediocrity may place all scheduled caste students of being unable to compete in global markets. In order to give justice to scheduled caste students, this is high time when colleges must engage themselves in contextually sensitive organizational development, which includes maintaining standard procedures, fostering staff development, improving communication, providing high quality teaching, and establishing monitoring procedures.

Many students are more motivated to work hard if they view classroom learning tasks to be useful in the adult world of work. Plans must be made to

introduce vocational education that will provide students with a combination of essential academic skills and rigorous vocational training. Asserting that ‘learning to know and learning to do are linked’, colleges must encourage students to use academic materials to perform ‘real-life’ tasks or address ‘real-life’ problems in order to increasing students’ motivation for learning.

Alternative forms of assessment and reward structures must be proposed and developed. These alternative assessment strategies should be designed to have students demonstrate what they have learned rather than how well they take a test, and to motivate rather than discourage students who start out well below average. Although such approaches are not widely used at this time, there is growing interest in them.

‘Alternative’ or ‘authentic’ assessments have become catchwords of the current educational reform in India. Forms of evaluation that test how much students know at a single point in time are being challenged by those arguing for assessment procedures that demonstrate how well students think and how well they articulate their ideas in a variety of media. Examples of potentially better assessment methods include oral interviews, sincere experiments, and portfolios of students work over an extended period, public exhibitions where students defend their projects, performances of skills in simulated situations, etc. Such alternative forms of assessment may offer new opportunities for success to scheduled caste students for several reasons.

In addition to restricting the ways in which students demonstrate what they have learned, traditional assessment methods can be insensitive to the actual achievement or progress of individual students, particularly scheduled caste students. As traditional evaluation systems often do not adequately recognize the progress that educationally disadvantaged students make, because even dramatic progress may still leave them near the bottom of the class in comparative terms or

far from the 'percent standard' needed for a good grade. Individualized incentive and reward structures that value students' incremental improvements can motivate students to try harder, foster an intrinsic interest in the subject matter, and improve performance.

Overview of Literature

Though barriers are many in the field of education, particularly these do not escape from the hawk's eye of the educationalist. They do suggest strategies for overcoming barriers to repair and reconstruct the system of education for the disadvantagement. A good deal of research has already been done on the effectiveness of various college components. Mallenkipf and Mallville (1956: 40) opine that college facility measures to be significantly related to pupil's achievement. These are (a) number of special staff in the college. (b) Ideal class size and (c) ideal pupil's lecturer ratio and instructional expenditures for the pupils. Martin Katzmah (1968: 40) Govindra (1992: 17-35) Das and Dave (1974: 81) and Dave (1988) have examined the relationship between the college service and students' achievement and found relations to be positively co-related.

In the present context the system of education is primarily on interaction activity between the lecturer and the students. The class room teachings are based on prescribed curricula and students are to ascertain that the students perceive in proper context through the method of drilling.

Siberman (1970: 40) observes monotonous curricula works as a source of failure to disadvantaged students. The same fact is reflected in a study conducted by Joshi (1997: 24-25). Castaneda (1974) points out that the students who confuse with the curriculum develop inferiority and insecurity within themselves.

Objective

The study suggests various strategies for overcoming the barriers to educational development of the scheduled caste students.

Methodology

Though 10 colleges are situated in the study area which is coming under chitradurga city, P U colleges are selected on the basis of high concentration of scheduled caste students. Students from these colleges were selected as sample respondents. All elderly scheduled caste students (above 16 years of age) who were reading in class – first and second year students for data collection. However, 50 scheduled caste students interviewed for data collection. Accordingly 150 general caste students from the educational grades with the gender break-up were selected on a random basis for comparative analysis. Parents of both caste categories and lecturers of the sample colleges are also consulted for data collection.

Strategies for Overcoming the Barriers

In recent time a number of innovative strategies have been undertaken to bring in improvement in the educational performance of the colleges going scheduled caste students. These approaches typically have focused on strong parent involvement, on high expectations for students, on providing challenging learning activities, and on delivering integrated human services at or near college to address families' need on a comprehensive basis. An attempt has been made here to suggest some strategies for the better educational performance of college going students in general and scheduled caste students in particular.

Enriched Curriculum

First, colleges must find ways to introduce an accelerated and enriched curriculum that will provide the scheduled caste students with the learning experiences that will enable them to reach P U C. A challenging curriculum engages those students in college by drawing clear connections between learning and the world beyond colleges. Often college makes these connections explicit

through career and college awareness programmes. In addition, colleges must find ways to make challenging and high-quality teaching and curriculum available to all students, including scheduled caste students. Colleges must find ways to create a network of support that ensures each student's success. This network might include peer tutoring and mentoring programmes, improved partnerships with families, and comprehensive support systems that include health and other social services. Finally, organizational arrangements ensure that all students, including low achievers (scheduled caste students), have access to high quality, academically rigorous subject matter.

Engaging Students in Authentic Work

Students are more likely to be engaged in learning when they perceive that their work significant, valuable, and worthy of their efforts. When students are truly engaged in academic work, they apply the concentration, effort, and thoughtfulness needed to master knowledge and skills in the major disciplines. Students who are engaged in college work invest themselves in learning to improve their competence, not just for the sake of completing assignments or earning good grades.

Successful colleges emphasize authenticity in learning activities. Students have the opportunity to ask questions and study topics they think are important, and they are allowed to influence the pace and direction of their own learning. Lecturers frame tasks to have some connection to the world beyond the classroom, making them more than academic exercises.

Creating Networks of Support

Networks of support that address students' academic and personal needs can enable at-risk scheduled caste students to persist and succeed in college. Strong support can foster students' sense of belonging, thus encouraging them to adopt the mission of the college. For at-risk students in particular, successful colleges take an

active role in responding to personal, emotional, and basic survival needs that frequently go unmet in traditional college environments.

Government and Extra-curricular Activities

Colleges are more than just place where academic learning occurs. Depending on many factors, they are also complex social environments that can be inviting or alienating. Successful programmes for at-risk students attempt to create an environment that helps students develop a sense of commitment to the college.

Students who do not identify, participate, and succeed in college activities become increasingly at risk of academic failure and dropout. In order to improve student achievement and persistence, it is suggested that the college climate must foster “investment” behavior – colleges must encourage students involvement in academic and extracurricular activities by stimulating their interest, increasing their personal resources (e.g. remediating skill deficiencies), and rewarding their efforts. Co-curricular activities such as academic or special interest group, theater and music groups, and sports teams have traditionally enhanced students’ sense of college membership by providing them with a special “niche” in the college. Students involved in these kinds of co-curricular activities find opportunities to shine and are less likely to become disengaged from college. Many studies have indicated an association between extra-curricular activities in general and positive academic outcomes. For example, one survey showed that college social participation is positively correlated with college educational achievements. Another study of reading skills development showed that the students ‘level of involvement in organized extracurricular activities, the reading achievement.

Recognizing the Value of Student Contributions

For many scheduled caste students, especially those at risk of dropping out of college, developing a sense of college membership depends on how they perceive lecturer to be treating them. Students expect and want fair and decent treatment from lecturer; how the college administers discipline sends important messages about respect to students. When the college's disciplinary policies seem capricious and unfair, students are alienated and the college's mission wanes. When the college's rule enforcement is consistent and lecturer and student role are clearly defined, students identify more closely with the college.

In a college setting, harmonious interaction between students and lecturer requires substantial agreement about the expected norms of behavior. For colleges to enforce the rules accordingly, all students must know what their obligations are and how to meet them. Some colleges achieve this end by reviewing their rules in a formal meeting of the entire college. In addition, disciplined colleges respect and support appropriate behavior. They adopt rules for behavior that cover both formal and informal interactions, teach students how to observe those rules competently, and monitor compliance persistently. One way to ensure students' acceptance of the college's norms of behavior is to give them a voice in creating the government rule:

If a college's atmosphere is one of hostility and insensitivity in which students are continually subjected to criticism and failure, serious disciplinary problems and criminal behaviors are likely to erupt. Some lecturer' and administrators' preoccupation with punitive methods of controlling student behavior contributes to an atmosphere of conflict. Safe college are those where supervisory expectations. Faculty competence and staffing arrangements protect student from adult incivility.

Changing Role of a lecturer and Effective Teachings

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Lecturers seek to influence students' social and personal development, as well as their intellectual growth. To sustain a pervasive "ethic of caring," lecturers must maintain continuous and sustained contact with students, responding to the students as whole persons rather than just as clients in need of a particular service. Expanding their traditional role as transmitters of knowledge, lecturers help create networks of support that foster students' sense of belonging and support students to succeed in the college. Lecturers should develop a new approach that involves students as producers of knowledge, rather than as passive recipients. Students behave positively and respectfully toward lecturers their mental and physical effort in college asks to a level making their own achievement likely.

Through effective teaching, students learn and practice skills in substantively rewarding activities. Effective teaching also creates learning environments where each participant's contribution is valued, and anyone's absence is duly noticed. Appointed students to organize and direct academic activities events facilitate their development as participants in an orderly institution. The procedures used in college constitute a 'hidden curriculum' that either fosters students' engagement and general seriousness of purpose or, alternatively, undermines their confidence and sense of responsibility.

Involving Parents

Programmes should be designed to develop two-way communication between college and home, and to involve parents in decision-making, planning, assessment, and curriculum development. By creating a climate in which parents and families are regarded as partners in learning, colleges can make parent and family involvement a reality.

Creating Partnerships with Families

One of the most powerful contributions that families can make toward their students success in college is to learning. Scheduled caste families may foster home learning for students by encouraging them with their work and assisting student with decisions that affect their future. Family members can also exert a powerful influence not only on their student's course selection but also on their career options once they come out from college.

Assess Parents' Needs and Interests

Colleges can bridge the distance between families by surveying parents to find out their concerns and opinions about college. Colleges should begin planning parent involvement activities by asking parents of

Students what they need (e.g., information, training, decision-making opportunities) to support their student's academic achievement.

Encourage Family Learning

Traditional homework assignments can become more interactive ones by involving family members. For example, students might collect oral histories from family members for history classes.

Give Parents a Voice in college Decisions

College can include parents and other family members in decision-making bodies, college improvement teams, or steering that direct college restructuring efforts. By providing regular information and making seminars and workshops available to family members, college staff often facilitates the participatory decision-making process.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

After 67 years of independence, time has come to take stock of our goal fulfillment, turns missed and time wasted. It can be unequivocally asserted that scheduled caste parents have been unable to reap commensurate benefit from the government policy of universal education and the extended facilities of constitutional benefits. Of course, forces of modernization to a considerable extent have dissolved the socio-cultural of the scheduled caste, which have greatly contributed for their inward looking mindset. In the sweep of globalization, the world is fast shrinking to a global village. Given the fact that the exploitative social system which has been readjusting with the changing dictates of time by reinventing and redefining itself in different forms of social inequality, it will be presumptuous to foresee a total turn-around in the social paradigm within a specific time frame. However, it may be expected that juggernaut of globalization would go a long way to bulldoze the socio-economic and socio-cultural barriers confronting the scheduled caste population, to produce a level playing field for all.

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