

**Issues Related To Higher and School Education of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**

**Shashikala**

Assistant Prof. of Sociology, Govt. First Grade College, Yelahanka, Bengaluru, Karnataka

**Introduction**

Over time, there has been an improvement in the enrolment rate of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in higher education. However, these groups continue to suffer from low access to higher education as compared to high castes. The extent of enrolment is low in rural areas as compared to urban areas. The enrolment rates remain low for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in comparison to higher castes. Further, the enrolment rates predictably remain low among the females than among the males. The enrolment is particularly low among those engaged as wage labourers in rural and urban areas, and particularly poor among them are the females compared to the males.

**Issues Related to Higher Education**

The issues which need attainment under SCSP and TSP relates to the following.

- a) Low enrolment among the social groups, enrolment rates are lower for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as compared to others. The enrolment rates are still lower in rural areas as compared to urban areas. The enrolment rate is lower among female as compared to males both in rural and urban areas. The gap is particularly is high in rural areas. The enrolment rate is quite low among the poor. Among the livelihood categories, the enrolment rates are quite low among farm and non-farm wage labourers as compared to the self-employed in farms, those engaged in non-farm production and business, and those with regularised salaries.
- b) Among those who complete higher secondary education, a low proportion joins post-higher secondary education. A high proportion drops out and resorts to diplomas of various durations.
- c) There are problems possibly related to English language and some core subjects which lead to poor performance and drop out. Therefore, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes need further attention, as lack of suitable support through remedial teaching in English language and core subjects are one of the reasons for poor performances, repeated failure and drop out.
- d) The discrimination of SC/ST students may be another reason for their poor performance in their studies in higher education institutions.
- e) Financial problems faced by the poor students also affect their access to education, particularly in professional institutions.
- f) Lack of necessary physical infrastructure such as hostels, study rooms, etc., particularly for the poor students reduce their access to private institutions as they cannot afford private accommodations.

Education being a social need for everybody, in a majority of countries, efforts have been made to provide education by public or private providers in a manner such that everybody gets fair access and an opportunity to develop their human capabilities, so that they are able to participate and benefit from the gains of economic development. The economic opportunities in terms of access to resources and income may be unequal, but equal access to higher education and skill to all persons, poor and non-poor enable the use of economic opportunities on an equal footing. It is in this sense that education serve as an equaliser in unequal societies by offering equal opportunities to everyone to develop their human capabilities. The low access of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to higher education reduces their chances of expanding their human capabilities and eventually places them in a position of disadvantage to use the opportunities offered by economic growth.

Unfortunately, the groups with low access to higher education constitute a sizable section of India's population. Unlike many countries where education has served as an instrument of equal opportunity, in India, by offering unequal access to higher education to poor and marginalised social groups, education has turned out to be the prominent source of economic inequalities. This is a disturbing feature of our higher education system which has been growing at a great pace, with less inclusive privatisation of higher education since the mid 1980s.

In 2009-10, of the total students in professional courses such as agriculture, engineering and medicine, about 44 per cent were in private unaided institutions, and the remaining 53.5 percent in non-private institutions which included government, local body and private-aided institutions. This revealed the magnitude of privatisation of professional education in the country. However, due to the cost factor, the proportion of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in private institutions was lower compared to Other Backward Classes and higher castes. The percentage enrolled in private-unaided institutions was 28 per cent for Scheduled Tribes and 27 per cent for Scheduled Castes as compared to 44 per cent for Other Backward Classes and 49 per cent for higher castes. The low access to private-unaided institutions is reflected in the lower share of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the total number of students enrolled in private-unaided institutions.

Therefore, we have to give a serious re look at our higher education policy of inclusive education. The state has to own the responsibility to provide higher education to those who deserve and desire, and the participation of private sector should be such that it provide access to education to the poor and disadvantaged sections in society. Policy interventions should recognise the constraints that these groups face in accessing higher education. Therefore, while addressing these constraints, we must develop group-specific interventions and supportive schemes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under SCP and TSP.

Thus, the issues which need to be addressed under the SCSP and TSP include: increase in enrolment in post-higher secondary level; support to poor students from wage labour households; support to students in their studies for language improvement and some core subjects in college and universities so that the dropout rate is checked; Vocational education support for those who drop out at the higher secondary level; steps to check discrimination in higher education institutions and financial support through scholarships/fellowships, hostel, and study centres.

### **Issues Related to School Education**

In the school education sector there are specific issues which need attention. Such issues are:

- a) Enrolment at the elementary level should be more or less at par with others.
- b) The enrolment ratio, however, drops significantly at secondary and higher secondary levels. Therefore, how to retain a high level of enrolment ratios at these two levels is an issue which needs to be addressed under SCSP and TSP.
- c) The dropout rate among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes children (in classes 1 to 10) is high.
- d) The attainment rate (reaching up to higher secondary examination) among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students is much lower than among the general students. Of the students who passed the higher secondary examination, about one-third of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students obtained below 50 per cent marks. About 30 per cent of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students obtained first division marks as compared to about 40 per cent for all categories of students. This means that many Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students do not have the required marks to be able to access higher education.

e) Another problem that Scheduled Castes students specially face is the Discrimination in School.

Thus, lower enrolment rates at secondary and higher secondary levels, high dropout rates at various levels in school, low attainment or achievement levels and discrimination in some spheres are some of the issues which need to be addressed under SCSP and TSP.

### **Recommendations for Effective Implementation of SCSP and TSP**

In the light of the above discussion we now make recommendations for effective implementation of SCSP and TSP. The recommendations are in three parts. These include:

- a. Clarifications on the concept of SCSP and TSP
- b. Recommended guidelines for implementation of SCSP and TSP
- c. Recommended guidelines for the administrative set up at the level of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and various organisations/councils

### **Concept and Purpose of SCSP and TSP are both Financial and Physical Plans**

It is necessary to reiterate that the SCSP and TSP are not only financial plans but involve planning for the achievement of education targets in physical terms with respect to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to the population and to reduce the gap in educational development between them and the 'rest' as suggested by the Planning Commission Task Force.

- a. The first principle of SCSP and TSP which is recommended by Narendra Jadhav Committee is that for higher education. Of the total outlay of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, 7.5 per cent for TSP and 15 per cent for SCSP must be earmarked. The percentage of school education sector under these plans is 8.25 percent and 16.20 per cent for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes respectively.
- b. The second principle is that the earmarked outlay should necessarily be spent on the persons from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The outlay under SCSP and TSP is non-divertible and non-lapsable. The beneficiaries should be necessarily from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. So in each of the educational schemes, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes beneficiaries are identified and required funds are spent on the schemes.
- c. The third principle relates to the schemes. The schemes developed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development may fall into three categories. These include:
  - Schemes developed specifically for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and hence the focus is on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
  - General schemes for all including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes where the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes beneficiaries could be clearly identified and a specific target could be easily fixed
  - General schemes which include Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes may not be easily identifiable in specific proportion.
- d. The fourth principle relates to the specific schemes that address specific problems of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in school and higher education. We make some general suggestions regarding the issues to be addressed through focus schemes. It is necessary to recognise that the problem of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is of dual nature. Low enrolment at higher secondary level, low academic attainment, inability to bear the cost are some of the problems which all the students face.
- e. The last principle is that in the Ministry of Human Resource Development and in the organisations/institutions under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, a separate unit to prepare the SCSP and the TSP plan and to monitor them should be set up.

In light of these general principles which are suggested by the Planning Commission Task, Force, we suggest the following guidelines for effective implementation of the SCSP and TSP by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

### **General Principles for both School and Higher Education Sector**

**Allocation of Outlay:** Minimum 16.2 per cent and 10.70 per cent of the Plan allocations under school sector may be earmarked for SCSP and TSP respectively. For higher education sector, a minimum of 15 per cent and 7.5 per cent may be earmarked for SCSP and TSP respectively. However, in order to utilise this allocated amount in full, judicious earmarking may be done among the schemes.

**Beneficiary focus:** As per the directives of the Planning Commission, only those schemes/components of programmes should be included under SCSP and TSP which ensure direct benefits to individuals or families belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Therefore, only those schemes/components or programmes (and outlays) would qualify to be included under SCSP and TSP which can ensure direct benefit to individuals or families belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and have the potential to bridge the gaps in educational development of these categories and to promote equity among them.

### **Spheres where New Schemes or Component of Schemes Could be Introduced**

In case of projects/schemes which are of a general nature and the expenditure is non-divisible on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, new schemes to meet the need of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students should be developed to bridge the gap between them and others. The new Scheduled Castes- and Scheduled Tribes-focused schemes/models should include construction of more girls' and boys' hostel for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in small towns, districts, metropolitan cities, hostel and financial support/fellowship for female students, for students from rural areas, from wage labour households; remedial coaching in English and some core subjects such as science and mathematics, self-enrichment programmes, communication skills, coaching for admission to professional courses (medicine, engineering, management and similar courses), supply of expensive books (e-books, e-journals) and instruments in professional courses such as medicine, engineering and similar courses; free ship and scholarship, fellowship/scholarship for overseas education, tuition fee waiver, pocket allowance, and positive steps to develop non-discriminatory atmospheres in higher education institutions/schools.

### **Proposed Guidelines For Implementation Of SCSP and TSP:**

**Central Sector Schemes:** Under the central sector schemes (CSS) are the schemes which are directly funded and managed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

- These scholarship schemes are perfectly devisable as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes beneficiaries can be identified and a specific proportion of scholarship should be earmarked for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students including the scholarship for Jammu and Kashmir state. In case of scholarships, many students from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes may be excluded due to limited number of scholarships, and therefore additional provisions over and above 16 per cent for Scheduled Castes and eight per cent or Scheduled Tribes could be made.
- In ICT preference may be given to colleges which serve the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students.
- In case of interest subsidy schemes, additional relaxation could be given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students, which could be financed from SCSP and TSP. At present, the coverage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes being limited, the income limit of Rs 4.5 lakhs be waived in case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students.
- The Ministry of Human Resource Development (through University Grants Commission) has issued regulation preventing discrimination in higher education institutions, such as central and state universities, IIT, IIM, NIT and other institutions. The Ministry of Human Resource Development may develop schemes for promoting positive non-discriminatory best practices and other measures for implementation through Equal Opportunity Office.

**Overseas Scholarships:** The overseas scholarship scheme for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates should be introduced by the Ministry of Human Resource Development on the lines of schemes run by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Maharashtra government to the level commensurate with the total number of Indian students getting education abroad. There shall be no condition of annual family income ceiling for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students proceeding on overseas studies under this scheme. The amount provided under the overseas scholarship scheme should be revised to cover the entire cost including all fees and other mandatory payments, all maintenance expense and travel costs.

**Increase in Number and Facilities of Women's Hostels and Libraries:** The number of hostels for women's colleges and universities should be increased. These hostels should be provided with library and computer facilities. Each district should have independent women's hostels for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There is a need to scale up the existing schemes focusing on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes women.

**Hostels in Metros:** Special hostel complexes need to be built using SCSP and TSP funds in all metro and major cities for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and students from other marginalised groups who want to benefit from the educational services located in cities for facilities such as professional coaching, research degrees, etc. Fifty per cent of such hostel capacities must be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes women.

**Higher Education Student MIS and Database:** A database of all Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students needs to be prepared with a collaborative initiative of the Information Communication Technology and the equal opportunity centre so that benefit flow can be tracked and monitored.

## **Conclusion**

The funds being allocated as grants in the form of SCA to SCP, SCA to TSP have not been fully utilized in many States. Some states did not receive full amount due to non-production of utilization certificates, completion of projects in time, non-preparation of viable projects, and release of funds in time to implementing agencies etc., which indirectly shows the administrative bottlenecks, coordination problems between the Finance and nodal departments and administrative efficiency particularly at the field level. Special Central Assistance funds utilization by the States is also not being followed as per the guidelines issued by the Central Ministries of Social Justice & Empowerment and Tribal Affairs and only few States are setting targets and achieving the targets against the economic oriented programmes set by them. There is no uniformity in the utilization of funds for various schemes/programmes by the States for these funds.

Therefore, in continuation of its recommendations looked at the elements of such implementation framework. It was initially envisaged that a central legislation would be an ideal mechanism to institutionalize the planning process and ensure accountability at all levels for effective implementation of the Sub-Plan. Comments of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Planning Commission were obtained in this regard. Based on comments received as well as suggestions given by others it was felt that while a central legislation may *prima facie* be desirable, for the present, what is required is a fresh set of guidelines and effective implementation mechanism, backed up by consistent monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. The Working Group now enunciated a set of Essential Elements for the Implementation Framework of SCSP and TSP.

## **References**

1. Government of Karnataka: Special Component Plan (Revised), Seventh Five Year Plan 1985-90; Planning Department and Department of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes Welfare, Bangalore
2. Government of Karnataka: Annual Reports of Special Component plan

3. Government of India: Report of Parliamentary Committee on SC/STs,
4. [http://planningcommission.gov.in/sectors/sj/SCSP\\_TSP%20Guidelines.pdf](http://planningcommission.gov.in/sectors/sj/SCSP_TSP%20Guidelines.pdf)
5. Guideline for Implementation “Scheduled Caste Sub Plan”, Planning Commission (2006).
6. Scheme guidelines of IAY, SSA, Higher Education, NRHM, ICDS and JNNURM
7. Scholarship Schemes for Scheduled Castes/ Other Backward Classes- Eleventh Report of Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (2010-11), Fifteenth Lok Sabha, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, November,2010.