Intersectionality of Poverty, Caste, and Education: Pathways to Inclusive Development

Preeti Rohila
Phd Student, Sociology Department
Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Shekhawati University, Sikar
Corresponding Author: Preeti Rohila
Email: rohilapreeti@gmail.com
DOI- 10.5281/zenodo.14244245

Abstract

Caste, education, and poverty are all intricately entwined in contemporary society, and attaining inclusive development depends heavily on their interconnectedness. The purpose of this article is to examine how caste and poverty affect educational quality and access, as well as how these issues may be resolved to support inclusive development. First, this article looks at how poverty affects educational prospects negatively. One of the main reasons why kids from low-income households stop going to school is because of financial limitations that make education costly. Furthermore, the caste system impedes social mobility by restricting certain groups' access to education and perpetuating social hierarchy. This study explores how poverty and caste combine to compromise educational inclusivity and pinpoints particular pathways via which they impact educational achievement. According to the research, caste and poverty have a detrimental effect on educational quality as well as access, which is a key barrier to inclusive growth in society. It specifically implies that the negative impacts of poverty and caste may be lessened and a more inclusive learning environment can be established by combining structural changes to the educational system with financial assistance. This article concludes by highlighting the need of a multi-layered strategy to inclusive development and a thorough grasp of how poverty and caste connect with education.

Keywords: Poverty, Inclusive Development, Social hierarchy.

Introduction

The issues of poverty, class, and education are all closely related to social inequality and progress. These three have the combined ability to either increase or decrease social exclusion and prejudice both personally and via their interactions with one another. Comprehending these connections is essential for inclusive society and sustainable development, particularly in developing countries. This paper looks at the connections between poverty, class, and education and offers practical ways to promote inclusive development. One important factor that directly affects educational opportunities is poverty. Because it is difficult for children from low-income homes to get a quality education, intergenerational poverty persists. Tuition, transportation, and textbook costs are just a few examples of the immediate financial restraints that families often face when they must forego education in order to participate in the economy. By keeping the impoverished out of the educational system, this vicious cycle ultimately hinders social mobility. Education, however, is one of the best strategies to fight poverty. According to United Nations (UN) research, an additional year of primary school education may increase an individual's income by an average of 10%. For children from low-income households, government programs that provide free education and scholarships are thus essential to meeting their educational requirements. Education is largely responsible for the reproduction of class hierarchies. Utilising the networks and resources that provide access to high-quality education may help certain social and economic groups maintain or improve their status. On the other hand, the lower classes often have little or no access to these opportunities. In developing countries, the exclusion of some classes is even more noticeable. In countries like India, the caste system and other traditional class structures are still deeply embedded in the social fabric. As a result, there are significant differences in academic achievement and career opportunities, and prejudice against certain groups occurs even inside the public education system. These issues must be resolved by ensuring equal access throughout the educational system. A strategy that has been effective in certain countries is the quota system, which prioritises opportunities for specific populations. These systems must be carefully designed and implemented to avert social discontent (Sengupta 2014).

Historical context and structural barriers

A prolonged history of structural problems and historical background underlies the interaction of poverty, caste, and education in society. Due to

these causes, certain groups are continuously denied access to social, economic, and educational advantages, which furthers inequality. In India, caste, poverty, and education are all entangled by structural and historical causes. A social structure that dates back thousands of years, the caste system was closed and depending on a person's birth dictated their social standing and line of work. The system denied certain classes access to education and economic independence while favouring others by giving them exclusive access to resources and opportunities. During the colonial era, these disparities persisted. The caste system was utilised as a form of authority and was solidified by the British colonial government. While maintaining poverty and reliance for the lower classes, land ownership systems and labour exploitation mechanisms strengthened the economic standing of the upper classes. This led to the persistent exclusion of some groups from economic and educational possibilities, and these disparities were perpetuated over generations. The Indian Constitution established many programs to guarantee equality and abolish caste-based discrimination after independence. Affirmative action reservations for lower castes, for instance, were an effort to increase access to public service and educational possibilities. However, because of flaws in how these policies are being implemented, inequality is still a significant issue, particularly in rural and marginalised communities, where inequities still exist (Beteille 2003).

Caste discrimination and poverty combine to make the issue worse. Lack of educational possibilities brought on by economic hardship contributes to the continuation of poverty. Women in particular endure more hardships due to the combined tyranny of gender and caste. Change movements have existed in spite of these historical injustices. Social reformers like B.R. Ambedkar and Jyotirao Phule challenged the caste system and pushed for equality and education for the lower classes. Although institutional obstacles still exist, their efforts have changed Indian society. The first step in tackling the interaction between caste, poverty, and education concerns is to comprehend the historical background and structural elements. This should result in measures to advance towards a society that is more inclusive and fairer (Rao 2009).

Social inequality and Education

In actuality, educational institutions often have structural issues that perpetuate or replicate social inequality, despite the fact that education is crucial for fostering social mobility and overcoming poverty. These result from a number of things, such as geographical, class, and economic inequalities. Access to high-quality education is restricted for those from less affluent and social backgrounds. An excellent illustration of the disparity in quality

between public and private schools is the fact that wealthier families may afford more costly tutoring or better education at private schools. However, the performance gap is widened since the impoverished are sometimes forced to attend schools with subpar infrastructure and little educational resources. Another element of structural inequality is the disparity in educational opportunities between urban and rural communities (Deaton and Dreze 2002).

Rural locations have poorer quality education because to problems including underfunding, teacher shortages, and distance to schools, while metropolitan areas often have better schools and more qualified teachers. Intergenerational inequality is sustained by these geographical disparities.

Disadvantaged groups may be excluded or subjected to discrimination when the curriculum itself places a higher value on the cultural capital of certain classes. For instance, with parental assistance, middle-class and upper-class children find it easier to adjust to the academic environment and school culture, but students from lower-class families find it more difficult since they don't have the emotional and physical support they need. Paying for tuition and living costs is a major strain for low-income families when they decide to continue their education. These financial limitations increase the opportunity gap with higher-income groups and lower the rate at which low-income students enroll in college (Bhalla 2007).

Poverty and Educational Disparities

In Indian culture, poverty and educational disparities create a vicious cycle that reinforces one another. Opportunities for education are restricted by poverty, and poor educational achievement exacerbates intergenerational inequality and economic suffering. Many youngsters in rural India either only have access to subpar government schools or drop out of school for financial reasons. For instance, a youngster from a low-income household who chooses to work early in life rather than attend school is likely to spend the remainder of his life in a lower-paying job without a formal education (Colclough 2012).

That family's financial circumstances are not improved, and the offspring of that generation are destined to suffer the same fate. This issue is made worse by the difference in educational resources between urban and rural locations. While certain Indian cities have top-notch private schools, the quality of education in rural government schools is severely hampered by a lack of instructors, inadequate facilities, and a lack of instructional resources. Due to limited access to high-quality education, impoverished children in rural regions are much less competitive in the job market. India's poverty and educational disparity are exacerbated by the caste system. Lower caste students experience

Preeti Rohila

prejudice and discrimination, and their efforts to use education as a means of escaping poverty are often unsuccessful. Students from lower castes, like Dalit, for instance, often face prejudice and do badly academically. In a Dalit household, the children's generation would either forgo school or take low-paying occupations to support their parents if the parents' generation lacks formal education and depends on day employment or informal labour to make ends meet. The cycle of poverty persists because of this intergenerational education disparity, which has no effect on income levels (Vaidyanathan 2001).

The Need for Inclusive Development through an Intersectional Lens

There is no one reason that can account for inequality in contemporary countries. The intersection of variables including poverty, gender, class, race, and location makes it worse. We must adopt an intersectional perspective on inclusive development in order to overcome these problems. In order to develop integrated solutions, an intersectional lens focusses on comprehending the interactions between many causes of inequality.

The concept of intersectionality highlights the multifaceted nature of the social injustices individual's encounter. For instance, a woman in poverty can be subjected to both economic status and gender discrimination at the same time. More inequality is produced by the combination of these causes than by any one of them acting alone. There are instances of intersectionality in our own culture as well as around the world. For instance, migratory women in rural regions face geographic marginalisation, economic insecurity, and numerous forms of gender discrimination. They deal with problems including restricted access to healthcare, prejudice in the workplace, and a lack of educational possibilities, all of which feed into one another and prolong the poverty cycle. From an intersectional standpoint, inclusive development necessitates attempts to address inequity holistically.

In addition to lowering poverty, it also aims to guarantee that everyone has equitable access to social resources by promoting gender equality, balanced regional development, and increased educational opportunities. Social stability and sustainable growth are predicated on this.

A multifaceted strategy is needed to address intersectional inequalities, including: 1) implementing specialised support programs that target women and minorities experiencing poverty; 2) enhancing infrastructure to lessen regional disparities; and 3) establishing legal safeguards against discrimination on the basis of gender, class, and geography.

Conclusion:

Education policy must undergo significant adjustments in order to reduce socioeconomic inequality. Some of the realistic solutions include increasing funding, allocating educational resources fairly, and providing focused assistance for kids from disadvantaged backgrounds. Reducing regional inequities and establishing inclusive learning settings for students from a variety of cultural backgrounds are also crucial. Education ought to serve as a tool for establishing a just and equitable society rather than only imparting academic information. It is crucial to identify systemic issues and take steps to address them. Politicians and sociologists need to understand these connections and use them to find comprehensive solutions. This approach places a strong focus on improving individual potential via education and reorganising the social order in addition to decreasing poverty. Free education is essential for ensuring that individuals who are economically disadvantaged may access education.

However, free education is not enough on its own. High-quality education requires a safe and clean learning environment, up-to-date learning materials, and qualified teachers. Special support measures are required for vulnerable groups, including women, members of ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities. This includes, for example, providing minority language textbooks, improving facilities for people with disabilities, and providing scholarships to support women's education.

Poverty and class issues may manifest differently in each location. Policies created especially to address the needs and characteristics of the region may thus be effective. To increase educational accessibility in rural areas, for example, mobile schools or internet-based learning systems may be used. Fighting social injustice and discrimination requires a change in public perception. Public campaigns, media-based education, and community-based activities may all help reduce prejudice and intolerance. Poverty, class, and education are not only personal issues; they are also closely linked to society's long-term sustainability.

Understanding and fully addressing these three elements is the first step towards building an inclusive society. The government, non-governmental groups, and local communities must collaborate to solve this issue from a number of angles. One powerful tool that increases social mobility and unleashes individual potential is education. However, to really address the issues of poverty and class in this manner, more comprehensive and integrated policies are needed. Creating a society where everyone has fair access to opportunities is the ultimate aim of inclusive development.

Preeti Rohila

Bibliography

1. Beteille, A. (2003). Poverty and Inequality. Economic and Political Weekly, 38(42), 4455–4463. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4414161.

2. Bhalla, S. (2007). Inclusive Growth? Focus on Employment. Social Scientist, 35(7/8), 24–43.http://www.jstor.org/stable/27644229.

3. Colclough, C. (2012). Introduction: Education, poverty and development- mapping their interconnections. Comparative Education, 48(2), 135–148. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23265877.

4. Dandekar, V. M., & Rath, N. (1971). Poverty in India-II: Policies and Programmes. Economic and Political Weekly, 6(2), 106–146. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4381515.

5. Deaton, A., & Dreze, J. (2002). Poverty and Inequality in India: A Re-Examination. Economic and Political Weekly, 37(36), 3729–3748. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4412578.

6. Kanbur, R. (2007). Poverty and Inequality: Concepts and Trends. In Poverty and Conflict: The Inequality Link (pp. 1–3). International Peace Institute. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09599.5.

7. M. D. Ushadevi. (2001). Poverty Database in Education: Strategies for Monitoring Poverty Reduction. Economic and Political Weekly, 36(29), 2779–2783.http://www.jstor.org/stable/4410890.

8. Rao, C. H. H. (2009). Inclusive Growth: Recent Experience and Challenges Ahead. Economic and Political Weekly, 44(13), 16–21. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40278655.

9. Sengupta, J. (2014). Inclusive Growth in India: Myths and Realities. World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues, 18(4), 86–93. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48505123.

10. Vaidyanathan, A. (2001). Poverty and Development Policy. Economic and Political Weekly, 36(21), 1807–1822. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4410661.

Preeti Rohila