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cpnhe **POLICY BRIEFS**

on

Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education

Policy Brief 1

Equalising Access to Higher Education in India

Policy Brief 2

Achieving Academic Integration in
Higher Education in India

Policy Brief 3

Developing Socially Inclusive
Higher Education Campuses in India

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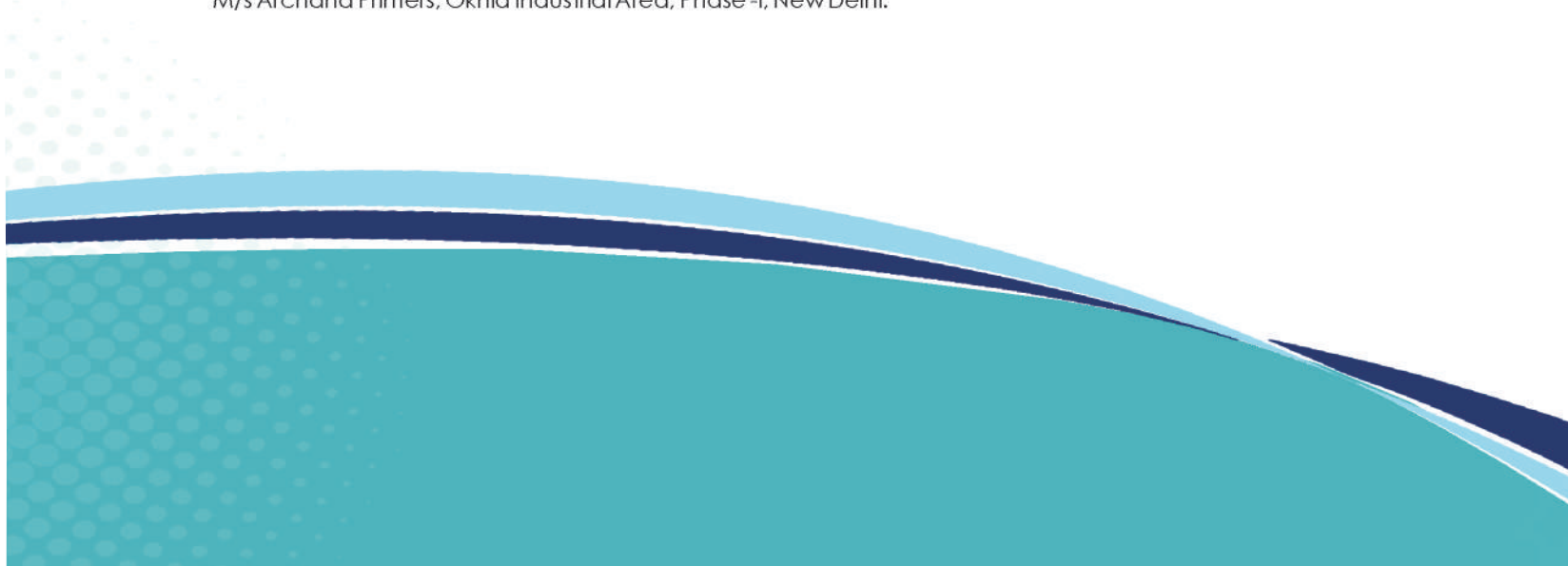
Policy brief are based on the issues emerging from the empirical studies carried out by the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE), NUEPA, New Delhi. These policy briefs are addressed to the policy makers and higher education managers.

Disclaimer: The views in the publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi.

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Equalising Access to Higher Education in India

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that acquisition of higher education helps one in overcoming many professional and personal 'disadvantages' by facilitating lifelong career opportunities. The lack of equal educational opportunities not only reinforces the transmission of disadvantage from one generation to the next but also constrains a country's economic growth by preventing optimization of its human potential. For these reasons, equal opportunity for acquiring higher education is a necessary condition for achieving inclusive growth and a fairer society, wherein a person's birth circumstance and social origin do not determine his/her life-chances and career potential.

The recent increase in the social demand for higher education has been leading to massification of the sector. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India stands at 24.5 per cent (MHRD, 2016). Equity in higher education has been an important concern in the expansion of the higher education system. Reservation policies, relaxation in admission criteria and other positive measures to encourage diversity on campus have been important factors in improving the GERs of the disadvantaged groups. However, empirical evidence points to the persistence of economic, locational, regional and social disparities in access to higher education. Furthermore, the available evidence also suggests that there are wider socio-economic inequalities in terms of access to admissions in elite institutions.

Persisting Social Inequalities in Educational Opportunities

Even as more and more students are opting to go in for higher or professional education, many continue to be left behind and inequalities persist. Inequalities persist in access to higher education, in subject areas and in admissions to elite universities. The higher education system offers a 'stratified structure of opportunities', with the dominance of hierarchy in institutional prestige and field of study, which in turn, determines earnings and social outcomes. It has been observed that those from the privileged backgrounds have greater access to select institutions and programmes of study vis-à-vis the disadvantaged backgrounds.

Inequalities in educational opportunities are manifested by under-representation of the socio-economically disadvantaged and first-generation learners in elite institutions, and in the science and engineering streams, and a progressive loss of representation as one moves up the academic ladder. The educational levels of parents, specifically in terms of graduate education, significantly impact the students' chances of participation in higher education, controlling for household economic status, region (state), location, gender, and socio-religious affiliation. These factors are discussed in detail below.

Manifestations of Inequalities in Educational Opportunities

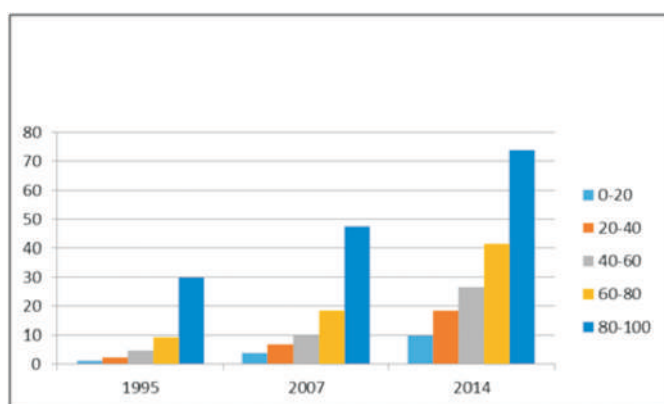
Inequalities in educational opportunities are manifested in the form of enrolment by income levels, regions and social categories. Socio-economic status and parental educational levels, high-school experience and admission

policies also affect access to college, and the choice of college and subjects.

Disparities in Access to Higher Education by Income Levels:

Economic status continues to have a significant bearing on the likelihood of gaining access to higher education: the enrolment ratio is the lowest for the relatively poor vis-à-vis the rich, with access to higher education progressively increasing in every quintile (Figure 1). For example, in 2014, the GER for the lowest monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) quintile (0-20 per cent) was seven times less than that in the top quintile (NSSO, 2014).

Figure 1: GER for MPCE Quintiles across NSSO Rounds



Source: Various National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) Rounds.

Regional Disparities: The evolution of higher education development in the country exhibits a classic example of uneven development. While many states have achieved impressive growth in enrolment (GER), some states are falling behind. Consequently, higher education opportunities are unevenly distributed across the country's population. Empirical evidence points to a substantial variation in institutional density (the number of colleges per population of one-hundred thousand) leading to the concentration of higher education institutions (HEIs) in some states and unavailability of HEIs in other states.

This kind of uneven distribution of institutions across states fuels regional inequalities in access to higher education. These regional inequalities in GER are closely associated with the spatial distribution of unaided institutions, as states with a high concentration of unaided institutions register

higher enrolment figures. On the other hand, states having predominantly public universities and colleges have a lower density of institutions. This scenario thus highlights the need for careful regional planning for establishing HEIs.

Rural-Urban Disparities: Students in rural areas have much lower access to higher education as compared to their counterparts in urban areas. The NSS data (2014) reveals a GER of only 24 per cent for rural areas while the corresponding figure is 44 per cent for urban areas. Rural-urban disparities in enrolment rates are thus linked to the availability of higher education institutions, which are found more often in urban areas. For students living in remote rural areas, commuting long distances becomes a social disincentive and economic burden, and further deprives these students from the disadvantaged groups of access to higher education opportunities.

Social Disparities: The level of access to higher education for disadvantaged social and religious groups continues to be below the national average. Socially disadvantaged groups, such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), continue to have lower enrolment ratios vis-à-vis those belonging to other social groups. As one moves up the caste hierarchy from low-caste to middle- and upper-caste groups, the GER also rises, providing evidence of graded inequalities. Muslim community lags behind all other religious groups.

Many factors cumulatively lead to disadvantages for SC and ST students in obtaining access to opportunities for higher education. These include: (i) their low socio-economic backgrounds; (ii) their status of being first-generation learners; and (iii) the location of their residences in rural areas with poor learning infrastructure in schools and family. In addition, due to the high dropout-rates from school amongst the socially excluded groups, only limited students from such backgrounds are able to seek entry in HEIs, which reinforces the persistence of social group disparities in higher education.

Under-Representation at the Post-Graduate Level of Study:

Empirical evidence shows that students from the disadvantaged socio-economic groups, first-generation learners and those belonging to rural backgrounds are unable to progress beyond the undergraduate level even if they manage to enter HEIs. Thus, at the post-graduate level, a majority of the students are from



privileged social groups and urban backgrounds. This clearly reflects the educational and social disadvantages confronting students from the under-privileged groups and first-generation learners, compelling them to drop out at the higher education level or end up with poor grades. The low enrolment of such students in post-graduate programmes, in turn, impacts their ability to enter professions requiring post-graduate degrees, such as teaching at the higher education level, research and other professional courses.

Under-Representation in Elite and Prestigious Institutions:

The process of institutional diversification accompanying the expansion of higher education contributes to a situation where in the elite institutions primarily enroll the socio-economically advantaged students and traditional learners whereas the less prestigious institutions of higher education mainly serve the less privileged groups and first-generation learners.

Studies have shown that cultural capital and habitus (tastes/preferences) impact the selection of colleges by high school students from varying socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, students from privileged backgrounds are more likely to attend prestigious institutions, which they are conditioned to view as simply the next logical step or corollary to their school education. In contrast, students from disadvantaged groups are constantly told that these colleges and universities are inaccessible to them. It has also been observed that families with strong social networks help develop social capital formation among their children, which, in turn, positively impacts human capital formation.

The admission policies followed by HEIs also have a direct impact on the level of representation enjoyed by students from the disadvantaged groups. Elite institutions often impose an additional screening stage for prospective candidates seeking admission. Empirical evidence also shows that since they resort to tough admission procedures based on competitive examinations, elite institutions very often end up enrolling a disproportionately large number of students from the privileged groups. Further, it has been seen that the socially and economically disadvantaged students are under-represented in privately managed government-supported colleges (private-aided colleges) as compared to government colleges. The existence of a 'management quota' in private-aided colleges, which

may not always be based on 'merit', distorts the social composition of their rosters in favour of students from privileged groups.

In situations where admissions are not based on selection tests or in the absence of a management quota, the representation of disadvantaged students in the college enrolment is much higher. Consequently, non-elite state universities and government colleges, wherein admissions are based on the students' performance (scores) at the qualifying level of education, have a far greater representation of disadvantaged groups vis-à-vis elite institutions. The state universities also account for a higher proportion of students residing in rural as compared to urban areas. Thus, these institutions largely serve students from the socially-excluded groups, rural populations, women students, and those who are among the first in their families to attend college and university.

Under-Representation of Students from Disadvantaged Social Groups in STEM subjects:

It has also been found that students from privileged backgrounds usually opt for the STEM (sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects while students from the socially marginalised groups, rural residents and women opt for arts and social sciences courses.

Family background and the pre-college credentials of students also affect their choice of subjects. Students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and first-generation learners (who are more likely to have studied in government schools with the regional language as the medium of instruction) most often study less rigorous courses at the school level, a trend that carries on even at the higher education level. Moreover, the use of a regional language as the medium of instruction acts as a barrier for students aspiring for higher education as it does not equip them for competitive examinations that decide selection for higher studies.

The private institutions have significantly contributed to such disciplinary distortions as most of these have been established in the subject areas of engineering, medicine, and management. Empirical evidence shows a larger proportion of students from disadvantaged groups studying in government institutes and social sciences vis-à-vis private unaided institutions.

Effect of Under-Representation on Access to Educational Opportunities

Disparities in access to educational opportunities adversely affect the ability of young people to acquire relevant skills for entry into the labour market, which, in turn, limits opportunities for inter-generational mobility and reinforces the pre-existing social inequalities in society, thereby impacting overall economic growth. Inequities in access to educational opportunities thus make it impossible to realise the promise of 'Equality of Opportunity' and the goal of inclusive development laid down in the Constitution.

As mentioned earlier, distance between the residence and place of study also acts as a constraint and has a significant effect on the choices made by students in pursuit of higher studies. The non-availability of HEIs offering high-quality education closer to home, coupled with their economic and social compulsions, leads under-privileged students to either drop out of education or compromise on the choice of both subjects and institutions even if they decide to pursue higher studies. Moreover, the potential of academic institutions to impact the society around them by encouraging more responsible social behaviours is also curtailed by their non-availability.

Inequality of access to post-graduate level also has wider societal implications and it seriously impacts disadvantaged students. Since post graduate and research qualifications are essential for entry in teaching and research careers, lower participation of disadvantaged students in post-graduate programmes pose barriers to the achievement of a higher quality of personal and professional life. Inequalities in access to prestigious programmes and institutions continue to reflect inherited social privileges. Moreover, disparities in access to educational opportunities impacts nature of diversity in campuses. The campuses remain less diverse, offering limited opportunities for students of inter-group interactions and learning from diverse peers.

Areas of Intervention

When educational opportunities are unequally distributed, they become an important source of inequalities, which necessitates corrective public policies and institutional strategies. HEIs can facilitate a more positive role of higher

education in social allocation in order to make societies more equal. The following strategies could be considered to promote equalisation of access to opportunities for higher education:

- Providing higher education facilities in large quantities that are spread and dispersed across regions;
- Expanding of government and private aided institutions, particularly in professional and technical courses;
- Offering professional and technical courses in higher education institutions in rural and under-served regions;
- Establishing hostels in urban areas to improve access to HEIs for students living in remote rural areas;
- Exploring the possibility of extending reservation policies in the private sector as it is largely private institutions that currently offer technical and professional courses;
- Identifying student groups that are under-represented in campuses;
- Finding pathways of access for students from the disadvantaged socio-economic groups and women, especially to technical, selective and prestigious institutions of higher learning;
- Encouraging girl students to opt for science subjects at higher secondary levels of education;
- Organising on-campus summer programmes for high school students that offer information about, and sharpen their skills for securing college admissions;
- Refining the mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of reservation policies in HEIs, particularly elite institutions.

Conclusion

Expansion of the Indian higher education sector in terms of student enrolment over the last two decades is commendable. However, despite an improvement in the overall GER, disparities persist in many forms including economic, regional, locational, and social group disparities, adversely affecting students from the poor families, marginalized groups and rural areas. Disparities in

Achieving Academic Integration in Higher Education in India

Introduction

With around 34.6 million students and a Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of 24.5 per cent (MHRD, 2016), India has the second largest higher education sector in the world. The last few decades have seen the transformation of this sector from a purely elite representation in the student body to one that enjoys much wider participation across social groups. As a result of this massification, the sector has experienced a significant increase in student diversity at the institutional level. The student population, which was earlier relatively homogeneous and elite, is now significantly represented by learners from the non-elite and non-traditional social groups, with varying academic grounding.

Accommodating a more diverse student population creates new tensions in higher education institutions (HEIs): while the point of entry has been 'relaxed', indicators of academic success at the point of exit call for significant academic support. The disadvantaged students thus need even greater support during their academic journey to be able to traverse the wide gap between the points of entry and exit. This policy brief discusses the academic challenges faced by disadvantaged student groups who enter HEIs with differentiated academic backgrounds, and the concerted institutional efforts that are required to achieve academic integration in campuses.

Challenge of Academic Integration in Campuses

A particularly pressing issue in the context of widening participation of under-represented student groups is their retention and academic success. The negative outlook of faculty members towards student diversity, the limited

social and cultural capital of students belonging to disadvantaged groups, and lack of preparedness among students at the pre-college level contribute to vulnerabilities in classrooms, thereby negatively affecting both the academic integration and chances of academic success for these students.

Manifestations of Academic Challenges

The lack of academic integration of disadvantaged students in the higher education system is reflected in various forms. It is manifested in through the academic challenges faced by students starting at the very outset of their entry to colleges and continuing until the completion of their courses. Since the pre-college academic credentials of students belonging to different social strata vary from each other, students from the disadvantaged socio-economic groups often fail to meet the demanding academic requirements at the higher education level. This is more so for first-generation learners those graduating from either government schools or schools where the vernacular language is the medium of instruction. Such students initially face difficulties in understanding the core subjects. The difference between what they studied in school and the curriculum of higher education further adds to their difficulties.

The language of instruction especially poses a major hurdle for students trying to cope with the academic demands of higher education. If enrolled in institutions where English is the medium of instruction, students from a vernacular medium find it difficult to understand the lectures or to actively participate in classroom discussions. The unavailability of books in vernacular languages makes their academic integration even more difficult. In fact,

what is really challenging for such students is not merely the lack of language competency, but the ambiguities of the new technical vocabulary of the English language, which prevent an understanding of the basic concepts in an altogether different language even though these students may have studied the same concepts in the vernacular language. This conflict between the vernacular and the English languages signifies one of the main obstacles to academic adjustment.

Classroom lectures are mostly one directional and there is minimal active participation from students. Teachers also make limited attempts to critically assess the competency levels of students and plan their classroom practices accordingly. Although the disadvantaged students require additional learning inputs as compared to their more privileged counterparts in order to be able to bridge the academic gap, prevalent practices are that they get less attention in the classroom from teachers. This negatively impacts their confidence and precludes their active participation in the classroom. Due to lack of confidence, students from the disadvantaged backgrounds ask fewer questions to clarify their doubts, as compared to their peers from the advantaged backgrounds.

The lecture method is a leading method of imparting education in universities and colleges, and limits the opportunities for collective learning. Feedback on individual assignments, which is known to provide opportunity for improvement and further learning, is very minimal. Since students from disadvantaged backgrounds may be reticent and less confident to take part in discussions, group-based learning methods such as group assignments can help students to actively engage in the learning process. Unfortunately, group assignments and opportunities for collective learning and peer learning are also limited.

Since large classroom sizes prevent students from clarifying their doubts during classroom transactions, personal meetings in the staff room and outside the classroom have an important role to play in academic integration. The evidence suggests that out-of-classroom discussions and personal engagement with the faculty is generally not encouraged for students, and even less so for disadvantaged students. Peer support on academic

matters is similarly limited for students from the disadvantaged groups.

Although many campuses offer remedial coaching classes to help bridge the academic gap, there is very little awareness among the target groups about such remedial teaching. Students do not receive adequate information from colleges and universities about the organization of remedial classes. This limits participation from students in bridging their gaps and standing at par with advanced peers.

There is also a caste stigma attached to remedial coaching classes, which are largely perceived to be designed only for students from the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). This further prevents active participation of students from disadvantaged groups in the learning process.

Furthermore, the lack of awareness about library resources and methods and their usage also impacts opportunities for academic adjustments. Special provisions meant for disadvantaged students, such as book banks, are also not functional in many HEIs. Hence, the lack of opportunities for academic integration in campuses compels disadvantaged students to rely on support from outside the college and university. Consequently, they lose opportunities to learn from their teachers and peers.

The prevalence of negative teaching-learning conditions and processes in HEIs and the lack of institutional support constrain students from the disadvantaged groups from making academic adjustments with the demands of higher education. This leaves them with a sense of loss and deprivation with regard to institutional support, and cognitive and academic engagement with their teachers and peers, which in turn, negatively impacts students' gains in academic competencies.

Effects of Academic Exclusion on Disadvantaged Students

Academic inequalities at the points of entry and limited institutional initiatives for addressing such inequalities are responsible for lack of academic integration, lower levels of academic success, and high attrition rates among students from the disadvantaged groups, including first-



generation learners. The lack of academic integration also has negative implications for students, for institutions, and for society at large.

Lower levels of academic integration and success have immediate and long-term implications for the students. These are manifested in many ways such as failure to pass papers, low academic scores, and high repeat and attrition rates in the form of drop-outs from or delay in the successful completion of programmes.

The consequences of academic under-preparation and institutional apathy towards the disadvantaged students become visible as early as in the first semester of most courses. This severely impacts the gains that students are expected to make in knowledge and cognitive skill development in the first year itself, which has long-term consequences for academic competencies. Since first-year papers constitute the basics on which the subsequent courses are based, under-performance in the first year also impacts their future academic trajectory and adjustments. Difficulty in making academic adjustments during the initial semesters also leaves a feeling of alienation in the classroom among the affected students.

In addition, when students fail in their papers in the first semester, these accumulate as 'back-papers' to be cleared before successful completion of the programme of study. Un-cleared back-papers increase the time taken in completing a degree or course. The accumulation of such 'back-papers' over multiple semesters also keeps demotivating students from the disadvantaged groups, increasing the risk of their dropping out completely from the programme of study.

Meanwhile, those who continue in the programme find it difficult to simultaneously cope with both the back-papers and papers of the current semester. This process of a lower education performance trap negatively impacts academic motivation and becomes a source of disinterest in studies. This, in turn, leads students to engage in academically non-supportive campus activities, thus taking even longer to complete their programme or alternatively dropping out.

The stress of the pending back-papers also has a psychological impact on the students. Psychiatrists refer to

this as the 'back-paper syndrome', which, according to them, adds to mental stress, lowers confidence levels and triggers undesirable social outcomes (like suicidal tendencies) among the students concerned.

Low academic scores not only cause loss of confidence among students both as learners and as individuals, but also affect the access to opportunities for higher studies and to lucrative jobs, in the course of their transition to the labour market. This also has larger implications on access to different types of jobs and levels of earnings. Access to lucrative jobs gets restricted due to lower grades for the students from disadvantaged groups. So, their job opportunities are limited. The consequence is the perpetuation of inter-generational inequities and social inequalities based on academic differences between the privileged and under-privileged students.

Low levels of academic success and non-completion (of the programme) by the enrolled students also has financial implications not only for the students and their families, but also for the HEIs. High attrition rates have negative consequences for the performance and reputation of HEIs, which, in turn, get reflected in the squeeze in funding and loss of funding resources for these institutions.

Apart from fostering loss of life-chances for students, academic failure also has harmful implications for society and the knowledge economy in terms of the loss of potential skills and knowledge required to meet the challenges of the global economy. In the context of these perspectives on higher education as a means of increasing the chances of inter-generational social mobility, augmenting the skills in the workforce required for the growth of the knowledge economy and ensuring overall social equality in the society, it is imperative for managers in HEIs to focus on improving student retention and successful completion, through academic integration in all forms.

Areas of Intervention

Providing academic support to students for facilitating their academic integration requires a multi-pronged approach since individual, peers and institutional factors collectively shape students' learning and development of academic competence. Higher education leaders,



academic support is crucial for ensuring the academic success of students who are at risk of exhibiting academic under-performance. Higher education institutions can

play a direct role in fostering the learning and development of academic competencies among diverse learners in the higher education space.

This policy brief is prepared by **Nidhi S. Sabharwal** and **C.M. Malish**, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE), National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi.

Policy briefs 1, 2 and 3 are primarily based on a large-scale CPRHE research study employing a questionnaire-based survey of 3,200 students, interviews with 200 faculty members, 70 focus group discussions with students and 50 diaries of students in higher education institutions across six states, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.



Developing Socially Inclusive Higher Education Campuses in India

Introduction

The massification of the higher education sector has led to a significant increase in student diversity in campuses. The implementation of affirmative action policies has contributed to the growing diversity in campuses. Empirical evidence reveals that students from the socially excluded groups, such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) now have a majority representation (63 per cent) in higher education campuses (NSSO, 2014).

While campuses have achieved student diversity, institutions remain exclusionary, rooted in tradition and elitist in approach. This contributes to the development of a new form of tension between massification and student diversity, adversely affecting the campus environment and the teaching–learning process. The non-inclusive nature of campus environments is reflected in discriminatory practices prevailing in higher education institutions (HEIs). This policy brief highlights the various forms of discrimination prevalent in campuses and the concomitant strategies that need to be adopted to promote greater inclusion in campuses across India.

Student Diversity and Discrimination in Campuses

The higher education system in India is increasingly serving a more diverse group of students. However, students from the disadvantaged groups do not feel welcome in campuses: such students are likely to be first-generation learners hailing from the rural areas, and belonging to poor families from 'lower' castes, who have studied in schools where the regional language is the medium of instruction.

The prevalence of prejudice along caste and ethnic lines, and differentiated academic grounding, result in the discrimination and social isolation of students from socially-excluded groups, both within and outside classrooms.

Manifestations of Discrimination

The discrimination faced by students from the socially excluded groups is manifested in the form of low teacher–student interactions, social divisions in friendship, and exclusionary behaviour perpetrated by the administration. Indirect forms of discrimination are more dominant as compared to direct forms.

Teacher–Student Interaction: Teacher–student interactions are considered to be critical for promoting learning processes and the holistic development of students. Unfortunately, prejudices and stereotypes stemming from the class, caste and ethnic backgrounds of the students often influence teacher–student interactions in both the academic and non-academic domains. The discriminatory behaviour of faculty members in this respect is reflected in the lower likelihood of socially excluded students getting sufficient attention and time during the question–answer sessions in the classrooms, or the opportunity for a one-to-one discussion with the teachers on academic matters. And in contrast to their more privileged counterparts, students from the under-privileged groups are also not encouraged to organise academic and non-academic events in the campuses.

Many teachers consider the former 'untouchables' as 'unteachable' in today's classrooms. Further, they believe that the increasing share of students from the disadvantaged groups stemming from their enrolment

based on reservation rather than merit is the reason for deteriorating academic quality and standards. Such beliefs and attitudes prevent the development of positive relationships between teachers and students, thereby constraining the process of engaged and active learning. The absence of a caring attitude on the part of teachers, low level of expectations and absence of responsibility towards the learning outcomes of disadvantaged students has a major negative impact on the progress of the disadvantaged students.

Teachers also fail to recognise the importance of their non-academic engagement with students. And instead advise students to seek the assistance of counselors who are 'trained' in resolving such issues. Hence, the role of teachers as guides and mentors is not valued across most institutions.

Student–Student Interaction: Students from the disadvantaged groups are also mocked, stigmatised, and labelled as members of the 'reserved category' by their more privileged peers. The latter believe in the ideology of merit and are opposed to the idea of reservation, which is often seen to be compelling universities to admit less-deserving students from the SC/ST/OBC categories. Such debates are also carried into the classroom, with students taking positions based on their own castes; the teachers too usually allow such polarised discussions, without highlighting the concepts of social justice, equity or diversity. The mannerisms, accents and dressing patterns of the disadvantaged students are also denigrated and ridiculed in campuses.

Hence, there is visible segregation that exist for the disadvantaged groups in terms of their access to extra-curricular activities and common spaces like mess halls. They are also separate hostels on the basis of their caste and ethnicity. It has also been observed that wherever, the disadvantaged students actively participate in extra-curricular activities, such activities and student participation is stigmatized, such as, in the National Service Scheme (NSS).

Student–Administration Interaction: Various institutional mechanisms such as 'special cells' have been set up to promote social inclusion and protect students from discrimination. It has, however, been found that despite the existence of such cells, many of these administrative arrangements do not function effectively. Most of the cells

function in isolation and without adequate support from the administration. The institutional administrators often exhibit insensitive behaviour towards the needs of disadvantaged students. In addition, these students are subjected to indignity and humiliation while interacting with the administration, which are reflected in the form of derogatory remarks in response to the students' queries such as on the status of their stipends/fellowships, and these fellowships are also often not released on time.

Gender Bias in Campus Interactions: Women students face gender bias both inside and outside classrooms. They are usually either singled out or ignored because of their sex. Further, gender biases are manifested in other ways such as the non-availability of leadership opportunities for women in curricular and extra-curricular activities; gendered assignment of tasks; women not being encouraged to participate in public programmes on the campus; implicit permission to the male students to 'talk over' and overpower their female counterparts in classroom discussions; and attributing women's achievements to other reasons rather than their competence and abilities. The perpetration of gender stereotypes such as differing perceptions of marriage and parental status for men and women also negatively affect the women students' morale and aspiration levels and ambitions. Such regressive experiences lead to self-censorship by women, who refrain from participation in discussions, retreat from the public sphere, and silently suffer the marginalisation they are subjected to in the campuses.

Women also face the issues of safety, sexual violence, and restriction on their freedom of movement and their liberty to wear clothes of their choice, with the male students in some colleges going so far as to impose 'dress codes' for women. Due to the lack of safety in the campuses, women often do not stay back after mid-afternoon hours, which adversely affect their participation in campus activities. Women in hostels face another challenge, that of patriarchal moral surveillance and intense scrutiny of their activities and movements both within and outside the campus. Women's hostels impose strict timings of entry in contrast to men's hostels that have no such policies. Restrictions in the timings of going out of hostels also negatively affect the women students' access to the library in the evenings, especially during exam time.



Women belonging to the SC and ST social groups are particularly vulnerable to both caste and gender based discrimination and derogatory over-tones. Derogatory comments, particularly towards SC and ST women, are used to embarrass and harass them in public. Derogatory remarks take the form of "quote se ai ho ya khote se ai ho" (are you from quota or from "kotha" – brothel).

The students are very often scared to lodge complaints against such harassment; while active engagement of individuals from women cells is devalued, made fun of by their peers and are derogatorily labelled as 'women activists'. Gender stereotypes and undemocratic behaviours that disadvantage women reflect socially accepted norms existing in the society are also institutionally accepted, thus making them appear 'normal'.

It has been seen that institutional mechanisms created to protect students against discrimination are ineffective. In fact, apathy towards the effective implementation of schemes and programmes targeted at students from the disadvantaged groups is a reflection of institutional discrimination. However, unlike other forms of discrimination, institutional discrimination is difficult to identify as it is deeply ingrained in the way in which institutions function.

Effects of Discrimination

Discrimination and exclusionary behaviours lead to alienation, social isolation, ghettoisation and the limiting of learning opportunities for students from the disadvantaged groups. This negative perspective towards student diversity reduces teacher–student engagement, which, in turn, affects the teaching–learning process, pushes the disadvantaged students into a low educational performance trap and widens the social distance between teachers and students from the socially excluded groups. Students finding it hard to adjust academically and socially, uncleared back papers, drop-out or other undesirable social effects are some of the consequences of discrimination in teaching-learning process.

The cumulative effects of the inequitable interactions faced by women include the lack of confidence among women about their abilities, their diminished self-esteem,

and stifled career aspirations. Campus experiences that impose disadvantages on women students preserve rather than weaken the stereotyped differences between men and women in terms of the aspirations and achievements of both.

Discriminatory student–student interaction also leads to identity-based peer group formation in the campus. In the case of higher caste students, the identity-based peer group formation emerges from same group preference. Among the SCs and STs, on the other hand, identity-based peer group formation is a consequence of alienation and the fear of discrimination by others. It also serves as a support mechanism against the non-inclusive institutional environment.

Another discriminatory practice is the lack of sharing of information by the administration on various student support programmes and cells. This is manifested in the lack of awareness among students about the existence of the special cells and the nodal persons to be contacted for registering complaints in case of discrimination or harassment. Students from the disadvantaged groups are less likely to attend orientation programmes or welcome parties or to participate in extra-curricular activities as compared to their peers from the non-SC/ST/OBC groups. The ultimate result is that students from socially-excluded groups are left with a feeling of not being welcomed in the institution; it is hard for them to adjust and unable to form peer groups.

The discriminatory practices that prevent the disadvantaged students from optimising their potential have several implications including the systemic denial of equal learning opportunities; lack of chances for improving their abilities; and restrictions on the democratic participation of disadvantaged groups in campus life, in both the academic and social contexts, all contributing to the possibilities of dropping-out or failing in examinations for the disadvantaged students. In this scenario of discrimination against certain members of the learning community, the broader goals of social transformation through higher education become unattainable. Socially non-inclusive campuses thus impact both inter-generational and intra-generational equity.

Areas of Intervention

- In order to realise the goals of social inclusion, there is a need for institutions to uphold the spirit of equity. Institutional leaders can significantly impact the culture prevalent in their campuses, by purposefully becoming agents of change. They can begin by:
 - Constituting a statutory diversity committee with the power to coordinate, monitor and supervise various institutional mechanisms such as the cells and committees designated to ensure the welfare of the diverse student body;
 - Making special cells more functional and effective in addressing the concerns and needs of target groups;
 - Revitalising women's cells with a yearly calendar of planned activities on gender sensitisation, providing information and professional counselling on career opportunities, and organising study circles around gender issues;
 - Organising well-designed orientation programmes for first-year students during the early days of the academic year as this is when students are most likely to encounter difficulties, specifically, in their struggle to catch up academically and adjust socially to the higher education culture;
 - Ensuring equal participation of students from diverse backgrounds in extra-curricular activities in order to make the social and cultural life of campus inclusive;
 - Assuring transparency, efficiency in the flow of information and wider dissemination of information about entitlements and opportunities for students from the disadvantaged groups;
 - Coupling of the academic and social programmes which bring together students academic and social experience for social learning and a more positive campus experience;
 - Monitoring and evaluation of student social support programmes targeting the disadvantaged groups;
 - Promoting mixed social group hostels and cross-identity peer groups as this would advance social inclusion in campuses;

- Undertaking periodic campus climate surveys that capture the lived experiences of diverse student bodies;
- Ensuring the creation of mixed stakeholder groups such as student and faculty associations, that encourage participation across diverse backgrounds to reduce identity-based fissures on campuses;

Example of a Good Practice: Coupling Academic and Social Programmes

The National Service Schemes (NSS) is one of the avenues for the students to engage with and learn from their diverse peer groups. However, in most of the campuses, participation in NSS is attached with a stigma as the disadvantaged students constitute the majority of the participants in this programme.

One of the case study institutions made conscious efforts to make NSS more attractive to diverse student groups. Its objective of coupling participation in NSS with representation in the student academic council helped in removing the social stigma attached to the NSS. This move helped in making the clientele of the NSS more broad-based, cutting across social groups and disciplines, as a result of which social separation and 'ghetto-isation' no longer exists in NSS activities.

- Organising training for sensitising educational administrators and faculty members on various aspects of diversity;
- Ensuring strict implementation of the guidelines in the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2012.
- Initiating programmes to cultivate civic learning that enables students to identify and eliminate biased and discriminatory thoughts and behaviour; and
- Developing a diversity action plan which specify areas where interventions are required and what strategy have to be adopted.



Conclusion

The massification of higher education, accompanied with changing demographics ushers in new challenges for higher education institutions, and of social reproduction of inequalities. The prevalence of discrimination is a

manifestation of the non-inclusive nature of higher education campuses. There is thus a need for institution leaders to be aware of various forms of discrimination on their campuses and to develop strategies for cultivating an inclusive campus culture in HEIs across India.

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Policy briefs 1,2 and 3 are primarily based on a large-scale CPRHE research study employing a questionnaire-based survey of 3,200 students, interviews with 200 faculty members, 70 focus group discussions with students and 50 diaries of students in higher education institutions across six states, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh.





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Policy Brief 1

Equalising Access to Higher Education in India
(Nidhi S. Sabharwal and C.M. Malish, 2017)

Policy Brief 2

Achieving Academic Integration in Higher Education in India
(Nidhi S. Sabharwal and C.M. Malish, 2017)

Policy Brief 3

Developing Socially Inclusive Higher Education Campuses in India
(Nidhi S. Sabharwal and C.M. Malish, 2017)



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