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Editorial

We are very happy to publish our issue in the month of October-December 2023. It has included total 40 articles on the following different themes that are very relevant to the contemporary educational aspects which will helped to be education dynamic.

Digital Technology for Teaching, Copying Strategies among Mothers and Fathers, Student Well-being, Strategies for Implementing NEP 2020, CSR in Education Sector in India, Reference Management Software, Significance of the UGC CARE List 2023 Journals, Learning Style and Educational Reference, Role of Academic Libraries in Implementing NEP 2020, Digital Inclusion in the Context of Education 4.0, Decolonization of Indian Education System with reference to NEP 2020, Challenges to Data Privacy in India, Scheduled Caste inclusion in Higher Education, Ethical Challenges of Online Psychotherapy, Digital Marketing and its Impact of Indian Economy, Impact of Mitra Upakram on School Teachers and Students and etc.

In this issue there are 74 authors contributed with their dynamic and intellectual views through their writings. We are very thankful to all the authors for the same. We are expecting the writings on New Technological and Philosophical innovative terms for our upcoming issues. So, we appeal all the authors please write of innovative and enlightened pedagogic terms which will be help to develop the insight learning of the learners.

We apologies for the delay in publication of the said issue. We are committed to the quality of the Journal and because of some technical crisis; we are publishing this issue very late. We assure that our next issues will publish in time.

Thanks for the cooperation and patience, Thanks to the authors and subscribers and all the related academicians and readers.

Executive Editor,
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Beyond Enrolment: The Reality of Scheduled Caste Inclusion in Higher Education in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract:

India has experienced a substantial growth in both the number of higher education institutions and the participation of SCs in higher education, with the aim of fostering social transformation. Despite this, the successful completion of higher education remains a significant challenge for young people belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC) community. Therefore, it is essential to analyse the engagement of SC youth in higher educational institutions. A study conducted in four districts of Tamil Nadu selected 319 respondents using a multi-stage sampling technique. The study examined three aspects of student involvement: a sense of belonging, individual engagement, and collaborative engagement, using the Student Involvement Scale (2014). The findings indicate that SC students do not feel included in higher education. Therefore, there should be a rigid monitoring mechanism to ensure educational opportunities for SC youth in higher education institutions when developing policies.

Keywords: Engagement, Higher Education, Inclusion, Scheduled Caste, Youth

Introduction:

The role of education in shaping an individual (Bansal, 2020) and contributing to a sustainable future (OECD, 2018) cannot be overstated. It is crucial for overall development and enables individuals to reap the benefits of their education. In order to ensure equal access to quality learning (Education Advanced, Inc., n.d.), education should be based on an inclusive approach that takes into account social, physical, and mental abilities. While higher education is available to Scheduled Caste (SC) youth in India, the extent to which higher educational institutions provide an enabling environment for them to access quality education and engage productively is an area that has not been thoroughly explored. This article aims to articulate the experiences of SC youth in higher education in India, drawing on empirical evidence, and proposes suitable policy interventions to promote inclusive education in higher education.

Education for promoting career advancement and social progress:

The Global youth development report of 2020 emphasizes the transformative power of education in creating opportunities and improving life chances. In order to fulfil this purpose, higher educational institutions have a crucial role to play in fostering human development and capabilities. It is imperative that these institutions offer equitable and high-quality education to all individuals, regardless of any differences they may have. By doing so, students will be able to acquire not only knowledge and skills but also values and positive attitudes that will empower them to actively participate in higher education, career advancement (Anand & Shrimali, 2016) and contribute positively to society as a whole (Boni & Walker, 2016). It is crucial for higher educational institutions to break the cycle of social inequalities and not contribute to their perpetuation. Instead, these institutions should strive to promote equal participation and social justice. By integrating the principles of social justice into their teaching and learning methods, these institutions can ensure that all students have equal opportunities to critically analyse, question, and reshape knowledge. This inclusive approach not only empowers students but also paves the way for societal transformation, as they actively contribute to the creation of a fairer and more equitable society (de Kadt, 2019).

Issues surrounding social inclusion of SC students in higher education:

Research studies have shown that students from lower economic backgrounds, particularly those belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), face discouragement and lack of motivation to complete their studies due to a combination of their family's lack of education and their economic position (Pulla Rao, 2012). Additionally, discriminatory practices further contribute to the discontinuation of their studies. Furthermore, there has been a lack of emphasis on understanding the socio-economic conditions of SC students, the school environment, evaluating government schemes and facilities, and considering the aspirations of these students for education. The poor infrastructure facilities and the absence of effective pedagogic support to develop linguistic and cognitive competencies have a negative impact on the education of SC students (Nambissan, 1996). It is important to note that there have been insufficient efforts to systematically study the participation and performance of SC students compared to their counterparts from other backgrounds (Shah et al., 2020). Therefore, research studies should focus on these aspects to shed light on the realities and inform appropriate policy measures.

Methodology:

Descriptive and exploratory research design was utilized to examine the involvement of Scheduled Caste youth in higher education institutions. Data was collected using a multi-stage sampling method, which involved gathering information from 319 respondents who were in their final year of undergraduate and postgraduate programs in government colleges in Tamil Nadu. The participants were selected from four districts in the state viz., Chennai, Cuddalore, Kancheepuram and Vellore. The

primary objective of this study was to analyse three dimensions of student involvement, namely a sense of belonging, individual engagement, and collaborative engagement. To measure these aspects, the researchers employed the Student Involvement Scale developed in 2014.

Dimensions of Student Engagement of SC Youth: Empirical Evidence:

Engagement extends beyond mere participation and involvement, as it demands a sense of belonging to effectively complete a particular activity. Student engagement entails the active participation of students in activities within and beyond the classroom, resulting in positive learning outcomes (Trowler, 2010). In order to foster social inclusion, inclusive education is an essential requirement for a democratic society (Vallee, 2017). Inclusive education refers to the provision of education to every individual within the same educational settings and with equal learning opportunities. This approach not only fosters a sense of belonging among students but also strengthens their social connections, ultimately increasing their access to quality education (Creating an Inclusive Education, 2022).

For this study, the Student Engagement Scale (SES) was used in this study to statistically evaluate the characteristics of student engagement. The scale measures three components of student engagement: sense of belonging, individual engagement, and collaborative engagement. The emotional component known as "Sense of Belonging" refers to the positive sentiments that students have towards their educational institution. Individual engagement, on the other hand, encompasses a student's personal dedication to learning and the time and effort they invest in their education. Lastly, collaborative engagement focuses on the process of working together to complete activities within the educational institution's curriculum, co-curriculum, or extra-curriculum (A. K. Singh & Srivastava, 2014b).

The data obtained from the SES is carefully examined by utilizing statistical measures such as the mean and standard deviation. Upon analyzing the results (refer to table No. 6), it was observed that the dimension with the highest mean score for involvement is 51.4075, indicating that students from SC exhibit a greater level of personal effort in their learning process compared to their collaborative engagement. Additionally, both Individual Engagement and Collaborative Engagement have higher mean scores than Sense of Belonging, with a value of 28.4263. Moreover, SC students' collaborative participation is found to have a mean score of 37.8339. When compared to the other two characteristics, it is evident that respondents' engagement is higher.

Table 1 Dimensions of Student Engagement of SC Youth

Dimensions of Student Engagement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sense of Belonging	28.4263	5.25633
Individual Engagement	51.4075	7.74089
Collaborative Engagement	37.8339	6.72230

The results show that the SC youth's individual efforts in the learning process go beyond collaborative participation. These results are consistent with the observation made by Rathod (2021) that unpleasant campus experiences, overt and covert caste incidents on campus result in a diminished sense of belonging among SC students.

Table No. 2 Participation in NSS, NCC and YRC

S. No.	Organizations	Frequency	%
1	National Service Scheme (NSS)	24	8.4
2	National Cadet Corps (NCC)	3	1.1
3	Youth Red Cross (YRC)	7	2.5
4	Non engagement	285	100
	Total		

The low levels of extracurricular participation among SC adolescents at these four colleges are reflected in the engagement levels of their students. This result is consistent with study by Munir & Zaheer (2021), who found that increased participation in extracurricular activities at a student's college fosters a sense of belonging and improves retention, engagement, and the development of employable skills.

Table 3 t-test for difference between SC youth in Arts and Science with respect to dimensions of student engagement

Dimensions of Student Engagement	Arts		Science		t value	p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Sense of Belonging	28.2791	5.56493	28.7308	4.56290	-.719	.473
Individual Engagement	51.2512	8.16604	51.7308	6.80410	-.518	.605
Collective Engagement	37.5442	7.10710	38.4327	5.83389	-1.107	.269

There is no significant difference in student engagement between the arts and science students. The hypothesis is supported at a 5 percent significance level, as the P values for all three dimensions are greater than 0.05.

Table 4 t-test for significant difference between female and male SC

youth with respect to dimensions of Student Engagement Dimensions of Student Engagement	Female		Male		t value	p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Sense of Belonging	28.2889	5.45794	28.5272	5.11606	-.400	
Individual Engagement	51.4889	7.71688	51.3478	7.77896	.161	
Collaborative Engagement	36.9778	7.00902	38.4620	6.45105	-1.957	

The data from the table shows that there is no significant difference in the responses of male and female respondents when it comes to three aspects of student engagement.

Table 5 Karl Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Aspects of identity orientation and Dimensions of Student Engagement of SC Youth

Student Engagement Identity Orientation		Individual Engagement	Collaborative Engagement	Sense of Belonging
Personal Identity Orientation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.191** .001	.133* .017	.095 .090
Social Identity Orientation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.245** .000	.260** .000	.153** .006
Collective Identity Orientation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.188** .001	.173** .002	.136* .015

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between personal identity orientation and individual engagement is 0.191, indicating a significant positive correlation between these two variables at the 1% level. However, there is no connection between a sense of belonging and personal identity orientation, suggesting that a strong sense of self is not necessary for feeling a sense of belonging. In a college environment, a person's subjective evaluation of their own potential does not affect their sense of belonging, but rather, it is more influenced by how others interact with them. Social identity orientation and the three aspects of student participation were found to be associated at a 1% level. Both individual and collaborative engagement were linked to collective identity orientation at a 1% level, while the sense of belonging showed a correlation at a 5% level.

Discussion:

Previous research findings align with the current study, indicating that students from Scheduled Caste backgrounds exhibit limited engagement in their educational experiences, both in the classroom and on campus. Previous studies have also shown that the sense of belonging among SC students in college is lower compared to their individual and collaborative engagement levels (Maurya, 2018; Rathod, 2021). The sense of belonging refers to how much a student feels included, accepted, valued, and supported on their campus. It is closely connected to the development of social identity among college students. Additionally, the campus environment, interpersonal connections, and opportunities for participation all play a role in shaping this sense of belonging, in addition to the chance to excel academically and fulfil the student role. (Maestas et al., 2007).

Also, the study reveals that SC youth confront a variety of difficulties as a result of a lack of basic infrastructure amenities, including a computer lab, enough classrooms, lavatories, and sports facilities. Their overall college experience is seriously undermined by inadequate amenities. Active learning environments in higher education foster social connections and collaborations, while both formal and informal engagements within the university contribute to a stronger sense of belonging. Research suggests that this sense of belonging is influenced by various factors, including the environment, social interactions, and cognitive variables, which enable students to feel connected to their institution and motivated in their academic and career pursuits. Additionally, individual characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, as well as school practices, peer relationships, student-teacher interactions, institutional climate, and external circumstances an impact students' sense of belonging to their university (Dost & Mazzoli Smith, 2023). The lack of a feeling of belonging is frequently known as "alienation," exclusion, social seclusion, solitude, or "marginality," and has been associated with unfavourable short-term and long-term consequences such as discontentment, low self-worth, inadequate academic achievement, and even intentions to persist in college. Students who do not experience a sense of belonging in college are less likely to finish their education. (Strayhorn, 2018).

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The study reveals that while SC students in Tamil Nadu have been included in higher education up to the enrolment stage, their overall engagement in higher education has decreased. Policy-level measures, apart from post-metric scholarships and SC reservation in admission, are not benefiting the majority of beneficiaries. To tackle this issue, firstly, it is suggested that sufficient infrastructure facilities should be provided in government higher educational institutions. Furthermore, the higher education programs integrate co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to encourage collaboration among students, fostering a sense of unity and inclusivity within the college community. In order to better support SC students, colleges should also provide on-campus student support services. By offering counselling services, colleges can ensure that SC students have the necessary resources to overcome any obstacles they may encounter, thereby promoting their overall well-being and academic achievement. To address any academic challenges, colleges should also offer assistance such as tutoring and remedial courses specifically tailored for SC students. To ensure that socially disadvantaged groups, such as SC students, can fully reap the benefits of higher education, it is crucial to establish a robust monitoring system. This system will help identify any gaps or areas for improvement in the inclusivity and engagement of SC students, enabling targeted interventions and ongoing enhancements in higher education institutions.

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