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## Mini Review

# ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF SC/ST

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## Abstract

Globalization process has affected many aspects of human life. Education in general and higher education in particular is no exception to it. Globalization gathered momentum in higher education in the second half of 1990. Education as a service industry is a part of globalization process becoming commodity in the third world (TW) countries like India. Universities and higher education system in India and Asia have become the agents of both internationalization and globalization. Indian society which is historically characterized by high degree of social stratification and institutional in equally governed by caste system where a huge section of SC/STs population stand at the bottom of caste hierarchy and denied equal rights in education. The objective of this paper is to find out the role of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in promoting higher education among SC/STs and also to find out whether SC/STs are able to transform themselves to fit into the current education system and are they able to place themselves in this new knowledge economy which is the result of globalization and Information communication and Technology development in India. The findings show that SC/STs still remain discriminated in education and there are major constraints for them in taking up higher education.

**Keywords:** Globalization; Higher Education; Caste Hierarchy; ICT; SC/ST.

## Introduction

The higher education system in India is undergoing a dynamic change. Good education is always seen as a promoting factor for high career. Globalization has changed the education into a service industry (Hayward, 2000). The development of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) has brought a shift in the current education system in India. Higher education in India is considered as one of the most developed in the entire world (Bhattacharya & Sharma, 2007). The number of educational and research institutes both technical and non-technical like IITs, IIMs, B Schools, and number of Universities across the nation offer wide range of courses. The number of Universities is said to have doubled since 1990-91, the year which is considered as Landmark in Economic history of India. The Information Communication and Technology (ICT) enabled education has led to democratization of education. The issue here is to understand whether Information Communication and Technology (ICT) which is playing a very vital role in creating and producing knowledge in many aspects of Indian society has it promoted higher educational opportunities to the long time deprived people of SC/ST.

## Scope of the Study

After India adopted liberalization policies the revolution of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) entered into the arena of almost all the industries. The education system experienced a drastic shift. Information Communication and Technology (ICT) increased the flexibility of delivering education to the learners at both primary and higher education to easily accesses knowledge anytime and from anywhere (Mishra & Sharma, 2005). The purpose of this review is to understand the issues that when such accesses was provided with Information Communication and Technology (ICT) why the large section of population belonging to SC/STs still remain for from higher education.

## Objectives

1. To study and analyze the importance and role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in promoting Higher Education among SC/STs.
2. To find out why SC/STs continue to lag behind in higher Education.

The present study is based on secondary data. The information was collected from various books, journals, periodical, reports and internet resource.

### **Limitations of Study**

Attempts have been done to review the problem; but, due to time constraint not all available resources could be examined and analyzed.

### **ICT in Landless & Asset-less SC/ST**

Kumari Selja, Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment while delivering Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture on “Remedies to Racial and Ethnic Economic Inequality” said that despite improvements, SCs/STs continue to lag behind and the gap between them and others is still very wide. Their performance with respect to human development is much less than other groups. SCs continue to be landless & asset less by and large. In 2009-10, only about one third of SC households owned some assets. About 58 % of rural and 25% of SC urban households were wage laborer. Only 11% of SC rural households owned private enterprises, when compared to 54.5% others. The SCs also lag behind in access to civic amenities. In 2012, the housing shortage among SC rural and urban households was 55% and 32% respectively compared with 40% and 21% among others. Similarly 68% in rural and 38% in urban areas, the SC localities did not have proper drinking water facilities, compared with 49% and 20% for others. In 2008-09, about 41 % rural SCs and 7.5% urban SCs were without electricity in their houses, compared with 30% rural and 3% urban for others (Economic Times, 2013). Use of ICT is generally less landless & asset less SC/ST (World Bank, 2006).

### **ICT and Education in SC/ST**

Access to higher education is also low; enrolment rate being 10 % compared with 25% for the others, but dropout rate is high. Unemployment rate among SCs is as high as 17%, compared to only 9.50% among others. Navsarjan, a Gujarat-based Dalit organization that seeks to end caste discrimination, estimates that 62% of Dalits are illiterate, while the average Dalit household has an annual income about two-thirds India’s national average (Bajaj, 2012).

An official survey by All India Survey on Higher Education, conducted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development revealed that percentage of students enrolling to higher education from OBC has increased but that of SC/STs continues to remain low. Of the students in higher education OBCs comprise 27.1%, while Scheduled Castes comprise only 10.2% of and Scheduled Tribe just 4.4% (Annual Report, 2013-14).

### **ICT in Rural SC/ST**

Chapman and Slaymaker (2002) examined the role that Information Communication and Technology (ICT) have played in developing countries focusing particularly on the rural areas that are least affected by advances in digital revolution. The study aims to look beyond the current digital divide which focuses on information disparities to assess the role of ICTs. Prasad (2004) focuses on the application of ICTs for recasting development in India and

several other developing societies. World Bank (2006) addressed the critical role of ICTs in encouraging social and economic growth in developing countries around the world. Bhatnagar and Schware (2000) conducted 16 case studies and explained the successful use of ICT in rural development and social transformation. Mansell (1998) expressed that revolutionary information and communication technologies are contributing to dramatic changes in the competitiveness of global and local markets and in the way people conduct their business and everyday lives.

### **Dalit Media Network, Chennai**

This network media presents the realities that exist at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Chennai. The network informs that many students at this institute have to survive on a preparatory course and come out unscathed to enter B. Tech. It says IITs are like peethas of Adi Shanka which do not want Dalit instructors at an IIT in the Adi tradition. Though there is a case for the SC/ST prevention of Atrocities Act (1989), a person is punishable under section 3(1) (X) of the Act if he intentionally insults or intimidates with interest to humiliate a member of a SC/ST in any place with public view, but in IITs a public place many dalits students are insulted, intimidated and humiliated. This is also violation of Article 14 of the constitution. The leading English language magazine has another story to tell. 'These six engineering schools are perhaps the only truly free and fair centers of learning in India' (<http://www.pucl.org/reports/National/2001/dalits.htm>).

The high caste controlled media pays gushing tributes paid to IITs, and the civil society is indifferent to what really happens on these campuses to Dalits, Tribal, and women. In Chennai, of course, the IIT stands newly, and more aptly, abbreviated: Iyer-Iyengar Technology.

### **ICT as Power building Strategy in SC/ST**

Higher education has the power to build knowledge based society. It is the basis for development and empowerment of its citizens irrespective of whether they belong to this or that creed and gender. The constitution of India (1950) guarantees equality before the law under Article 14 it prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, sex or place of birth further Article 46 promotes educational and economic interest of the Dalits (Shukla, 1964). The knowledge era require people to perform multiple roles like new knowledge and new capabilities. The higher education system has its own global challenges when a large section of the population is not involved in achieving this creative and new capacity due to the fact that they belong to suppressed group. In the case of education, the provision relates to non-discrimination in educational institutions, equal representations, and measures for educational promotions. Article 15 (4) states that “Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally

backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes". Article 29(2) provides protection for admission and against discrimination in any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them (<http://www.legalservicesindia.com/article/article/protective-discrimination-846-1.html>).

In spite of all the constitutional and legislative measure to control such discrimination the society has not changed to provide an inclusive approach in higher education with such advanced technology. With legal safeguards against discrimination in employment, education and other spheres, the SC/STs continue to suffer from discriminatory access to the institutions of justices which are responsible for delivering justice (Suri and Rajaram, 2008).

The planning Commission with Ministry of Human Resource Development, UGC and other Experts has been providing developmental grants to higher educational institutes but still significantly high proportion of SC/STs have remained far from higher education. There are large segments of the populations in India which are underrepresented in higher education system (Chitnis and Altbach, 1993). The disparities between regions, social groups and gender are also very wide. India has the largest higher educational institutions in the world with around 430 Universities and 22,000 institutions of higher education. Only 7% of the Indians enter the higher education sector currently. The National Knowledge Commission constituted in 2005 has recommended opening 1500 Universities Nationwide to attain the gross ratio (GER) of at least 15% by 2015. In this the students of SC/STs enrolling for higher education is not only but dropout rate is very high (UGC, 2009).

## Conclusion

Social exclusion refers to inequality and social discrepancies of social groups as they are marginalized by lack of education, employment skills, systemic discrimination, undocumented status, illness, homelessness and family disruption. Social exclusiveness is rampant phenomena in the world and India being a traditionally caste stratified society is no exception to social exclusion of communities. The development of ICTs is understood to bring about social change. It is perceived as a factor that could widely ignite the social and psychological well-being of the citizens through empowering them with education and economic progress. However what has happened is the wider gap between regions and groups. There is in fact a greater 'Digital Divide' between communities, gender, and social classes. The ICTs social impact that had a rational forecast of social opportunities has failed to take account of the unpredictable social, economic, political and educational gap between the communities.

The higher education institutes that are powerful tools to build knowledge based society have created wide disparities enabling the SC/STs to remain as usual at the bottom of the social ladder. Higher education which is perceived as elitist pursuit should actually now become vehicle for enhancing equality in society.

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