



# ACCESSIBILITY TO QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN DELHI: A STUDY OF SCHEDULED CASTE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN DELHI UNIVERSITY COLLEGES

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## ABSTRACT

Today, illiteracy and a low level of education is a widespread issue across the nation that is problematic regardless of caste, religion, or area. Education has been shown to be the most effective tool for bringing about social and psychological changes among various communities in India, including scheduled castes, despite the fact that this is a matter that is of concern on a national scale. Despite this, it is a fact that education is the most powerful instrument. It is necessary to conduct research on the socioeconomic situation of students from Scheduled Castes who are enrolled in colleges affiliated with the University of Delhi, as well as an in-depth understanding of issues connected with the different kinds of difficulties and challenges that are experienced by students. Because the process of globalization has resulted in a reduction in the role that government-funded institutions and other forms of higher education play in India, this study will be pertinent to the topic at hand. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the data that was gathered. Quantitative data are evaluated using statistical methods, while qualitative information is gleaned via open-ended questions, interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and case studies. The findings of the study can be broken down into six distinct categories due to the breadth of the research. The present study was an attempt towards participation of SC students enrolled in technical higher education. The basic assumption drawn from the survey of related literature was their low enrolment in engineering courses, and poor performance of those enrolled. In such a scenario, several participatory dimensions were identified with the help of three models, i.e. Interactionist, student integration, and social reproduction.

**KEYWORDS:-** *Scheduled Castes, education*

## INTRODUCTION

In the first millennium, the universities of Nalanda, Takshahila, Ujjain, and Vikramshila were the first in India to implement a formalised higher education system for their students. The majority of the topics that were covered in the courses offered at these universities included: art, architecture, painting, logic, grammar, philosophy, astronomy, literature, Hinduism, Buddhism, Arthshastra, law, and medicine (Ayurveda), among other topics. Each university was distinguished by its expertise in a particular field of research; for example, Takshshila was known for its medical studies, while Ujjain was known for its astronomical research. When it came to education, the most comprehensive offering could be found at Nalanda University, which was the largest of these institutions (Ponmelil, 2015).

Professor Sanjay Dhanda, who is the director of IIT-Kanpur, believes that the very same Nalanda University should be regarded as a Model University (Ugra, 2010). The explanation for this is quite simple, and it has to

do with the university's reputation in India as well as in other countries, like China, for its inter-disciplinary teaching technique, which is something that is still very much needed even in this day and age.

The current educational system was implemented in the 20th century, while the country was still under British control, based on the recommendations of Lord Macaulay. It was, in every sense of the word, the western education in terms of both style and content. The old education system in India progressively fell into oblivion as a direct result of the British government's refusal to acknowledge the traditional, more conventional framework of education that had been in place for centuries. In another analogy, Mahatma Gandhi likened the traditional educational system to a magnificent tree.

The University Grants Commission was formally established in November 1956 under the act of Parliament in 1956, as a statutory body of the Government of India by the first Education Minister Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad to develop and modernise India's education system and at the same time to promote the advancement of scientific research. This was done by first Education Minister Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad. IIT and IIM were both founded in 1961 by Jawaharlal Nehru, who was then the Prime Minister of India.

### **A CONCISE OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA**

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### **OBJECTIVE**

1. To find out the socio-economic profile of Scheduled Caste Undergraduate Students in colleges of University of Delhi.
2. To know the main reasons and difficulties faced by SC students in Delhi for admission in colleges.
3. To analyse the measures for improvements in studies irrespective of their background.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Population and Sample for the Study

For the present study, I have chosen population comprising of SC students enrolled in two central institutions for Engineering learning situated in Delhi. Here, the students enrolled in first year were deliberately left as their academic output as well as experience at other crucial dimensions was unavailable. The selection of site of Delhi was done with an intention to capture the diversity of SC students being represented by different states of India. There were two major reasons for such an assumption. First is the administrative importance of Delhi being capital of the country. And the other reason is about the status of Delhi having multitude of engineering institutions differing on management and structural aspects. There are central institutes like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Netaji Subhash Institute of Technology (NSIT). Some other government institutions in Delhi are under the aegis of Delhi state government like Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU), Delhi Technological University (DTU), and Indira Gandhi Institute of Technology (IGIT). Initially the plan was to undertake study in all these institutions. However my preliminary visits to these places have forced me to alter all comprehensive choice and restrict my study to two central institutions, i.e. IIT, and NSIT. Such restriction was made in the view that other government institutions were relatively new where not even a single batch of students has graduated. This would have a serious implication in the purview of making generalizations.

### Sample

From the above mentioned population of SC students, a representative sample of more than 25 per cent was chosen for the study (Table 3.1). Although it is well established that random selection method to determine sample is best among all, the queer nature of the present study made it impossible to do so. The selected institutions though formally gave permission to conduct study on SC students of their institution; it was not possible to identify SC students there as due to several apprehensions these students disguised their identity. After spending time in this struggle, I decided to follow snowball sampling technique to draw my sample. Even though the possibility of making generalization is less, snowball sampling technique is an effective method in a specific research like this where non-revelation of the identity is a major fact. I tried to convince few of SC students who took me further to their known students from SC community who were ready to become part of the study. In total, I've drawn a sample of 320 students where 157 students were from IIT and 163 from NSIT. Individual proportion of the SC students in the sample out of total population was 32.9 per cent for IIT and 35.9 per cent for NSIT. The last reference year for the present study starts from 2011 onwards for those in 2<sup>nd</sup> year of their study as the first year students were deliberately left due to initial insignificant experience in the institute. Due to very less and non-uniform number of SC students in different branches of engineering in the institution, and for the reason of non-universality of the branches in two institutions, distinct categorization is not followed.

### Table 3.1 Distribution of Sample (Reference Year: 2004-2011)

	Population	Sample Size
Institutions	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Caste
IIT, Delhi	316	157 (32%)
NSIT, Delhi	305	163 (35%)

Source: IIT, Delhi & NSIT, Delhi

### Research Tools

The primary means of data collection for the study were a self-constructed questionnaire and a semi-structured interview schedule. Both of these methods were used. The components of the tools were constructed with the "participation" of students from lower-income schools in higher education serving as their primary inspiration. This was accomplished by conducting a literature evaluation on a selection of works that were relevant to the subject of the study. In this part of the research, we determined that there are fourteen different dimensions. These are presented as examples-

- *The economic and social standing of the parents*
- *Location*
- *Pre-enrolment education*
- *Performance in academics at the college level*
- *Cultural factor*
- *Aspects of a person's psyche*
- *Hostility toward students who identify as Dalit*
- *The influence of one's peers*
- *The influence of one's parents*
- *The standing of the organisations*
- *Academic Cost*
- *Accommodation in a hostel*

- *A greater loss of potential profit*
- *Desperate search for work opportunities*

After conducting a preliminary test on forty (40) students enrolled in technical higher education institutions, the items of the questionnaire were refined until they reached their current form. In conclusion, the questionnaire contained 96 questions in addition to those that asked about the background information of a student. The majority of the questions in the questionnaire were designed to gauge the information and opinion of the students through the use of likert scale responses. On the other hand, some of the open-ended questions were included to elicit more in-depth information from the students about certain dimensions. Because the entire process of total building is carried out on the basis of existing literature, the literature was used to determine whether or not the questionnaire's content should be considered valid. A literature research questionnaire matrix was built in order to provide supporting evidence for the content validity of the questionnaire.

In order to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the significance behind the engagement of SC students in each institution, a further four semi-structured interviews were conducted. It was decided to pick four pupils from each educational setting using a standardised set of criteria. Two SC students who were easily accessible for the interview were taken into consideration, and one was chosen based on their high performance, while the other was chosen based on their low performance. In addition to this, one case study of a former SC student who dropped out of IIT has been completed, as well as a Focus Group Discussion with a group of four former SC students.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the data that was gathered. Quantitative data are evaluated using statistical methods, while qualitative information is gleaned via open-ended questions, interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and case studies. The findings of the study can be broken down into six distinct categories due to the breadth of the research. In the first part of this article, I will provide an overview of the enrollment scenario of SC students in higher education, with a particular focus on their admittance in technical higher education in India during the course of the past 10 years. Additionally, the enrollment trend of students from SC in the selected institutions for this study will be presented in this part. The other five sections plan to convey the (specified) features of "participation" for the students of the SC who are enrolled in one of the two central technical colleges that are located in Delhi. In these parts, the quantitative aspects of the main data are presented and examined, and this is done in conjunction with the substantiation achieved by a better comprehension of the qualitative data.

### The Situation Regarding Higher Education for SC in India

**Table No.1 In India, the population of those classified as Scheduled Castes**

Sr. No.	Census year	India (% to total population of India)
1	1991	16.48
2	2001	16.20
3	2011	16.60

Source: Statistical abstract for India for the years 1991, 2001, and 2011

The table that you can see above illustrates how the population of Scheduled Castes has been steadily growing between the years 1991 and 2011. In 2001, the proportion of India's population that was classified as belonging to the Scheduled Castes was at 16.48 percent; in 2011, this figure had risen to 16.60 percent.

**Table No. 2 Rate of literacy in India among those aged 7 and up**

Year	Total Population			Scheduled caste Population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	40.40	15.35	28.30	16.96	3.29	10.27
1971	45.96	21.91	34.45	22.36	6.44	14.67
1981	56.38	29.76	43.57	31.12	10.93	21.38
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21	49.91	23.76	37.41
2001	75.30	53.70	64.80	66.64	41.90	54.69
2011	82.1	65.5	74.0	75.2	56.5	66.10

Source: The Indian Census, 1961–2011

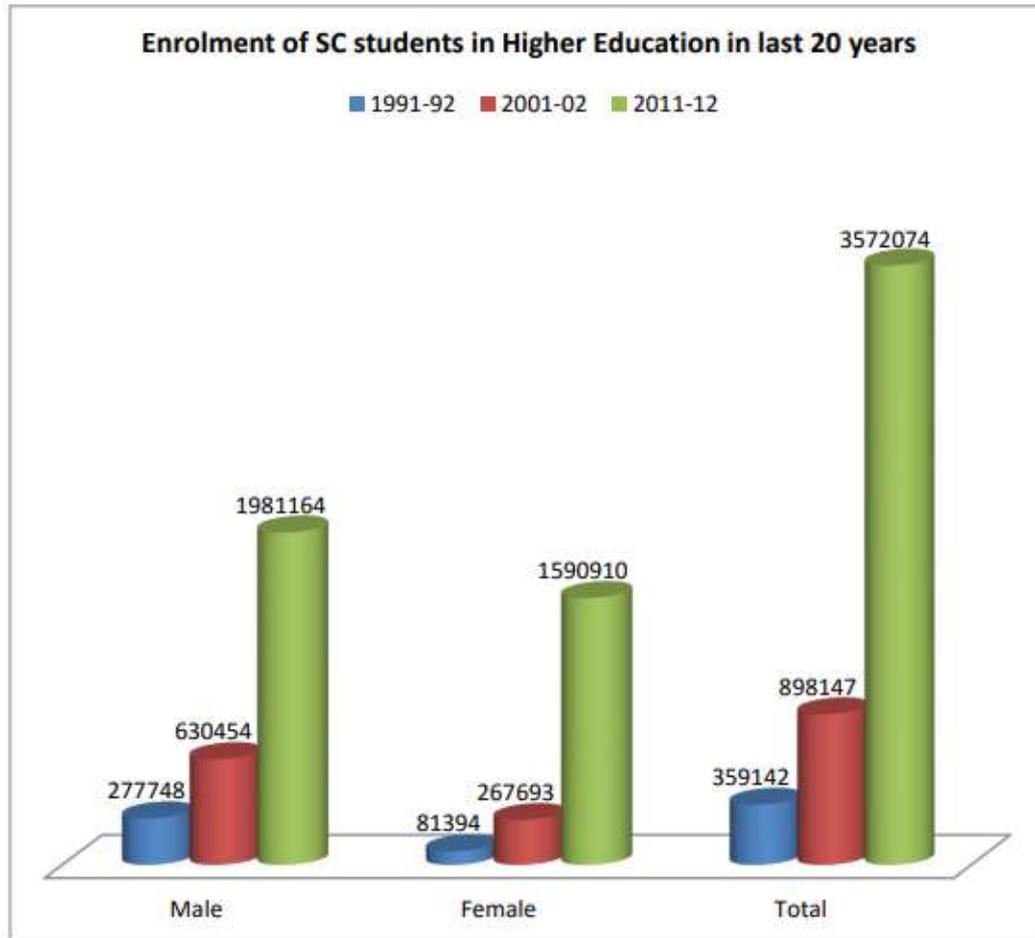
Table .2 demonstrates that the literacy rate among SC has been steadily climbing over the course of the past many years. The literacy rate is a measure of a population's ability to read, write, and compute basic arithmetic. The evidence indicates that there has been a progressive increase in the literacy rate among the whole population, and there has been a dramatic increase in the literacy rate among Scheduled castes, primarily after the year 1991. This increase in literacy rate has occurred after the year 1991. The literacy disparity between men and females of both scheduled castes and the overall population of India is larger than the literacy difference between males of both scheduled castes and the total population of India. Therefore, there are significant gender variations across the board in both of these areas. The ability to read and write alone is not sufficient to improve one's social and economic standing. The following table provides information regarding GER in higher education.

### **Trends in Student Enrollment at South Carolina's Higher Education Institutions, Breaking Down Enrollment in General and Technical Higher Education**

It is clear from an examination of the pattern of enrollment of students from South Carolina in technical higher education in particular and higher education in general that South Carolina has a notably low participation rate in relation to the size of its population. The information has been evaluated over a period of twenty years, beginning in 1991–1992 and continuing through 2011–2012. (Selected Educational Statistics & All India Survey on Higher Education). An interruption was made using the school year 2001–2002 as a point of reference so that the analysis may be improved. The selection of this year was made in order to draw attention to the increase over the past decade in the number of students from South Carolina who are enrolled in higher education in general and technical higher education in particular. For the purpose of enrollment in higher education, all undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes at India's higher education institutions that are overseen by the Ministry of Human Resource Development were taken into consideration. The degrees of Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech. ), Bachelor of Engineering (B.E. ), and Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch.) were noted as examples of technical higher education according to the operational description of this study. The enrollment numbers of pupils attending South Carolina schools during the past twenty years were examined using both absolute and relative scales. In order to do the comparative analysis, a reference category consisting of students from the General or Unreserved population was created. The number of students who fall into the General category was determined after the total

number of students enrolled in higher education was reduced by the number of students who belong to restricted communities (also known as SCs and STs). In order to ensure that the findings are consistent with one another, recent additions of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) were removed from the list of reserved categories. As a result, they were counted as part of the unreserved group for the purpose of the study that was conducted in 2011-12.

### Higher Education in a Broader Sense



*Source: The Ministry of Human Resource Development of India's Selected Educational Statistics and All India Survey on Higher Education*

### Figure .1 enrollment of students from South Carolina in higher education institutions over the past 20 years

Figure .1 provided a visual representation of the student enrollment data for the SC. It is possible to say that in absolute terms, there has been an impressive growth over the past twenty years, which is almost 10 times the enrolment figures in 1991-1992. This expansion has taken place in the last twenty years. In the year 2011-12, it was greater than 35 lakhs, which was equivalent to 3.59 million dollars at the time. This increase in enrollment also represents an inching-towards-attainment-of-parity-level-on-gender-within-the-SC-category progression toward achieving the level of parity. This is something that may be mentioned due to the fact that the disparity in enrollment of male and female students in the SC category was three times more in 1991-1992, but it has since decreased to 1.2 times greater in 2011-2012. It's possible that this is attributable to an increase in the literacy rate among men and women alike. And the recent rise in literacy has

also contributed to the expansion of the educated population in the country, which has led to an increased demand for higher education. In addition to this, a variety of women-specific incentives may have been responsible for bringing females into the foundation of higher education. It is possible that it is necessary to take note of the fact that there was a significant increase seen over the period of time spanning from 2001-2002 to 2011-2012. This coincides with the time period during which some affirmative action laws were vigorously enforced (Gautam, 2012), which would have likely led to significant expansion had it not been for this. Additionally, this may just be a reflection of the overall trend toward rising enrollment in higher education institutions across all subcategories.

### Socio-Economic Status (SES)

100 of the 320 students in the SC programme identified themselves as being from rural areas, while the remaining 220 students were from urban areas (Table .3). Students from IIT make up a significant share of the rural population in this area; in fact, their percentage makes up more than 63 percent of the overall rural population. On the other hand, more than 58% of the overall population of SC students enrolled in IIT have reported coming from urban homes. Urban areas are home to a disproportionately high percentage of South Carolina students who are seeking degrees in engineering. It's possible that superior coaching facilities are more easily accessible in metropolitan locations; after all, 88 of the total 320 SC students had received coaching in order to prepare for their engineering admission exam (response to Q.5 of the questionnaire).

**Table .3 Where You Come From: Countryside or City**

Background	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rural	100	31.2	31.2	31.2
Urban	220	68.7	68.7	100.0
Total	320	100.0	100.0	

### CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt towards participation of SC students enrolled in technical higher education. The basic assumption drawn from the survey of related literature was their low enrolment in engineering courses, and poor performance of those enrolled. In such a scenario, several participatory dimensions were identified with the help of three models, i.e. Interactionist, student integration, and social reproduction. These identified dimensions were then utilized to estimate and analyze the participation of SC students enrolled in two central institutions in Delhi offering engineering courses. An overall situation of SC students in higher education was seen for last fifteen years to acknowledge the trend existing about their enrolment pattern. The enrolment trend of SC students for the twenty years since 1991 shows that the increase in enrolment share for SC students is far from satisfactory and is low in relation to their actual population proportion. Also their position is relatively low when compared with the enrolment figures of unreserved category student both at general as well as technical higher education level. Surprisingly, the enrolment percentage for male students in SC category has declined in the last decade from 13.3 to 12.2 in case of general higher education.

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