



A STUDY OF REDUCTION IN GENDER INEQUALITY WITH RESPECT TO ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION - A CASE STUDY OF TAMIL NADU AND KERALA

*Piyush Prakash Yadav

Abstract

Gender Inequality in Higher education is a major concern for India but some states are successful in reducing it. Kerala and Tamil Nadu state ruled by regional parties in states that have focused on education for decades. The study analyzes the growth in gross enrollment ratio and gender parity. It studies the development of higher education and policies for it. It studies the role of economic growth in the enrollment of women in higher education. It studies the establishment of subsidized higher education institutions widely in the states has helped in reducing gender inequality in the state. It studies the regional state parties' role in setting agenda.

Key word: Gender Inequality, education decades, economic growth, Status of Higher education in India, education policy etc.

Introduction

India has achieved remarkable numbers in education since Independence. Higher education in India is the third-largest in the world. Higher Education in India has grown wider in every aspect from a number of enrollment in higher education to a number of colleges and universities in the country. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019¹ the gross enrollment in higher education is increased up to 37.4 million with gross enrollment rate at 26.3% (Age group between 18-23) and colleges and universities education has increased significantly to 39931 and 993 universities in the country.

India has large socio-economic differences in society from age-old history. These differences still affect the disadvantaged group in accessing Higher Education. It is well established that education directly helps to uplift the disadvantaged group and simultaneously contribute to the economy. Education doesn't only improve the economic condition of people but it has an overall impact on the life of a person. As India has a patriarchal social system in which the man dominates in every sphere of the lives of family members, this creates large differences between the male and female members of a family. From providing the male member with higher education to giving all freedom to the male member to do anything and grow up female member to be house makers. Although this biasedness and differences have been reduced in society. The economic conditions of the family are the major force in increasing a chance to pursue education. As social and economic conditions are interlinked in contributing to inequality to access higher education, these inequalities have been much reduced in the southern states in past years.

India has a single policy for education which consists of a comprehensive framework for primary to higher education. In early post-independence, higher education was the responsibility of the central government but after the 42nd amendment of the constitution in 1986² the responsibility of higher education can be shared between the state and central government. This means the responsibility of the central government but after the 42nd amendment of the constitution in 1986 the responsibility of higher education can be shared between the state and central government. This means that the state has the power to frame their change, allocate the budget, and implement the policies with the national education policy, etc. The

* MA (Pursuing at Charles University), LLB, B.COM).

¹ Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2019. *All India Survey on Higher Education 2018-19*. [online] New Delhi, pp.8-10. Available at: <https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/AISHE%20Final%20Report%202018-19.pdf> [Accessed 14 March 2021].

² Sen, D., 2016. Higher education policies: The Indian experience since independence. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Education and Research*, Volume 1;(Issue 10), pp.15-21.



gross enrollment and education attainment of the disadvantaged group in some states is significantly more from other states in India. From this, we can also assume that the state policies of a particular state for the disadvantaged group in reducing inequality can be more effective than other states.

Kerala

Kerala has a population of 34 million which comes in 13th rank in most populated states in India whose economy is based on agriculture and fisheries. Kerala is the first state in India to achieve a 100% enrollment rate in primary education in 2016. Kerala is a matriarchal society in which female dominates the family. Kerala has 23 universities and 1348 colleges. Kerala was successful in achieving gender equity to a large extent. Kerala has a high proportion of girls studying in school education. In higher education in Kerala, the girl's representation in professional courses as their representation is higher in arts and Sciences colleges both at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. The female teacher's presence in schools was 70% in Kerala as compared to all countries at 50%.³

Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is the 6th most populated state with more than 72 million inhabitants which is one of the most industrialized states. Tamil Nadu's higher education has 59 universities and 2466 colleges in the state. The gross enrollment ratio in higher education is higher than the national average. One of the factors is usually considered of labor market pushed the parents to send their girls for higher education as Tamil Nadu's economy is mainly based on Industrialization and Manufacturing unit.⁴

Analysis

Kerala is one of the few states in India in which the percentage of women participation in higher education institutions is higher than men for decades as we can from the below chart that the gender parity was increasing until 2012 after that it fluctuated between 2012 and 2019. The gross enrolment of women in higher education was significantly increased after 2010 from 14.2% to 43.2% which was an important time period for higher education.

Years	% of Female students and (Gender Parity)	Gross Enrollment Ratio(both male and female)	Gross Enrollment Ratio(Female)
2007-08	(1.13)	13.3	14.1
2009-10	(1.18)	13.1	14.2
2011-12	58.63 (1.44)	21.8	25.6
2014-15	59.9 (1.38)	28.7	33.3
2018-19	58.19 (1.40)	37.0	43.2

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2018-19, Annual Report, UGC 2018-19⁵, 2014-15⁶, 2011-2012⁷ and Statistics of Higher and Technical Education 2009-10⁸ & 2007-08⁹.

³ KUMAR, N.& GEORGE, K.(2009). Kerala's Education System: From Inclusion to Exclusion? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(41/42), 55-61. Retrieved May 11, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25663680>.

⁴ Geeta Rani, P., 2010. Changing Landscape of Higher Education in India: The Case of Engineering Education in Tamil Nadu. [online] Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/48139845_Changing_landscape_of_higher_education_in_India_the_case_of_engineering_education_in_Tamil_Nadu> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

⁵ University Grant Commission, 2019. *Annual Report 2018-19, UGC*. [online] Ugc.ac.in. Available at: <https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/Annual_Report_2018-19_English_Final.pdf> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

⁶ University Grant Commission, 2015. *Annual Report 2014-15, UGC*. [online] Ugc.ac.in. Available at: <https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/Annual_Report_2014-15_English_Final.pdf> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

⁷ University Grant Commission, 2012. *Annual Report 2011-12, UGC*. [online] Ugc.ac.in. Available at: <https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/Annual_Report_2011-2012_English_Final.pdf> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

⁸ Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2010. *Statistics of higher & technical education 2009-10*. [online] Available at: <https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/Abstract2009-10.pdf> [Accessed 11 May 2021].



In Tamil Nadu, the gender parity of the state was fluctuating from 2007-2019 as we can see from the chart. The gross enrollment of women in Tamil Nadu has seen significant growth between 2009 and 2019 from 17.2% to 48.3%.

Years	% of Female students and (Gender Parity)	Gross Enrollment Ratio(both male and female)	Gross Enrollment Ratio(Female)
2007-08	(0.90)	16.9	16
2009-10	(0.75)	19	17.2
2011-12	46.45 (0.85)	40	36.8
2014-15	51.32 (0.92)	45.2	43.4
2018-19	49.13 (0.97)	49.0	48.3

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2018-19, Annual Report, UGC 2018-19, 2014-15, 2011-2012 and Statistics of Higher and Technical Education 2009-10 & 2007-08.

Development in Higher Education and Policy

Kerala

Kerala which is the most literate state in India has achieved universal literacy in 2016. The achievement was possible because of its long back history as in Kerala all the religious groups like Church Mission Society, Nair service society, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP), Muslim Education society along with Royal Travancore family put an effort to improve school education. As stated by Kumar and George (2009) that the primary education is provided to more than 94% rural population within 1 km and 98% rural population were given primary education within 2km. More than this the approximately 96% of rural have been served with upper primary schools within 3 km while 98% of the rural population was provided with secondary education with 8 km. Likewise, Higher and Technical education was also available to rural students within a reasonable distance. Also, the widespread presence of public transport all over the state with a highly subsidized rate was facilitated the rural students` accessibility in higher education.

The Political balance of left-led LDF and UDF with liberal tried to achieve providing higher education to the students. As both political groups tried to manage between the privatization of education and control the private institution in providing very less expensive education by providing them aid as compared to other states. Better policy implementation is only possible when the problem is identified clearly. Kerala state government`s better problem identification of particular educationally backward community and the policy formulation while focusing that group was one of the major steps inaccessibility to education. The setting up of government higher education institutions in the educationally backward community in order to reduce the educational disparities was a remarkable step. Apart from this, the state government`s priorities for the disadvantaged group helped to achieve its milestone. Kerala`s success in gaining gender equality and reducing it was contributed to the inclusive growth of the state with the three aims of expansion, excellence, and equity. The positive discrimination in admission to female candidates and providing financial support for the female candidate was the ingredient of Kerala`s Higher education equality.¹⁰

In India, the gross enrollment ratio in higher education of rural women and urban women has a wide gap but this is not the case in Kerala the gross enrollment of the rural women is not much lagging behind. Although the disproportionate

⁹ Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2008. *Statistics of higher & technical education 2007-08*. [online] Available at: <https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/Abstract2009-10.pdf> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

¹⁰ Mathew, A. (2019). Balancing Social and Regional Equity: Higher Education Policy Trajectory in Kerala. *Higher Education for the Future*, 6(2), 207–225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347631119857836>.



concentration in non-technical education is more as the female students wish to pursue non-technical education while male population is much concentrated in technical education who is usually the bread earner in the family.¹¹ Apart from this, there are some scholarship schemes to help female students in need like Higher education scholarship scheme in which meritorious student who wishes to pursue non-professional courses in universities and government-aided colleges in the state. This scholarship is for the first-year student and will continue till he or she studies post-graduation every year. This scheme started in 2009 which is provided to 1000 students.¹²

Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu which was recently applauded for the most number of quality higher education institution. The report published by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) in 2019 in which out of 860 higher education institutions 182 higher education institutions were named from Tamil Nadu which accounts for 21%. As NIRF measures the performance of institutions Tamil Nadu left behind all the states and accounts for the total of 5 big states of India. Some research suggests that the success of Tamil Nadu in higher education is because of its welfare policies of populist nature. It is also suggested that regional political parties are dominant in states who came to power with populist agendas. They formulated the welfare policies with populist nature and with the idea of identity-based reservation in education in the state.¹³

As the regional parties mainly ruled the state their intervention for subsidized education was the major improvement towards the disadvantaged group, subsidized education must be widely provided to all the people. Also, a key reformist of state history like Periyar who was known for the social progression of backward classes had the agenda of gender equality which was related to education and another aspect. Also, the economic growth after the 1980s in the state had motivated the governments to invest in higher education and the increase of Higher education institutions in the state to meet the demands by creating supplies. The data shows in 1978-79 that less than one-third of students in arts and science colleges were women by 2000-01 this proportion increased to half of the total number in arts and science colleges because of the economic growth. The economic growth surely increased the awareness towards education for girls and higher education was seen as the investment making a young woman more competent for marriage.¹⁴

In Tamil Nadu, the welfare schemes and policies are made mainly for the backward classes other than Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) and these backward classes are divided into three types Backward Class (BC), Most Backward Class (MBC), Denotified Communities unlike rest states of India who have no further distinction in Backward Classes other SC and ST. And the reservation in higher education is divided into all these backward groups which account for 69%, unlike other states where the reservation should not be more than 50%. So the scholarships or schemes which are provided are widely divided into these backward classes and some scholarships are widely divided into these backward classes as well as particularly for girls.¹⁵

Conclusion

¹¹ Raju, S., 2010. *THE KERALA STATE HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL More unequal than others: Gender disparities in Higher Education in Contemporary Kerala Acknowledgement*. [online] Academia.edu. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/8495990/THE_KERALA_STATE_HIGHER_EDUCATION_COUNCIL_More_unequal_than_others_Gender_disparities_in_Higher_Education_in_Contemporary_Kerala_Acknowledgement> [Accessed 12 May 2021].

¹² Kshec.kerala.gov.in. 2021. Higher Education Scholarship. [online] Available at: <<http://www.kshec.kerala.gov.in/index.php/scholarship-read-more>> [Accessed 13 May 2021].

¹³ Jose, S. and Reddy A, B., 2019. Tamil Nadu's success in education underlines empowering, assertive populism. [online] The Indian Express. Available at: <<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/nirf-tamil-nadu-colleges-education-welfare-for-quality-5703565/>> [Accessed 13 May 2021].

¹⁴ Pande. R. P., Namy. S, & Malhotra Anju (2020) The Demographic Transition and Women's Economic Participation in Tamil Nadu, India: A Historical Case Study, *Feminist Economics*, 26:1, 179-207, DOI: 10.1080/13545701.2019.1609693

¹⁵ Department of Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, and Minorities welfare, 2021. Schemes for the Welfare of Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities. [online] Bcmbcmw.tn.gov.in. Available at: <<http://www.bcmbcmw.tn.gov.in/welfschemes.htm#Incentives%20for%20Rural%20MBC/DNC%20girl%20students>> [Accessed 14 May 2021].



The research has shown that the Gender Parity and Gross Enrollment ratio in Higher education of both the state have increased remarkably between 2009 and 2019 as it can be seen as the effect of good economic growth and large investments inflow in India between 2005 and 2008¹⁶ which motivates the people to invest in the higher education of the girls. One more important common ground between the states was found in the state was governed by the regional parties which were having agenda of improving and increasing education. In Kerala's case of the matriarchal society, the strong presence and bargaining power of the religious groups, the establishment of higher education in the particular backward communities, and low tuition fees and more government-aided institutions helped the state to reduce gender inequality in high education. In Tamil Nadu's case the big reform movements for the upliftment of disadvantaged group, welfare policies with the populist nature, subsidized education, distinction in reservation for backward classes in higher education with policies for women, and the wide expansion of the higher education along with the economic growth was the main factor for reducing the gender inequality in higher education. It is found that the enrollment rate of women was increasing in higher education when there is the demand of the labor in the market as well as there was not many policies or benefit like the scholarship that directly benefited the women. The study also found that with the overall expansion of the subsidized school and higher education institutions the enrollment rate of the disadvantaged group can be increased.

¹⁶ Nagraj, R., 2013. *India's Dream Run, 2003-08 Understanding the Boom and Its Aftermath*. [online] Igidr.ac.in. Available at: <<http://www.igidr.ac.in/images/stories/India-Dream-Run.pdf>> [Accessed 14 May 2021].