

**SURVEYING THE NEED FOR BACKWARD CASTE INCLUSIVE SKILL
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES AND STRUCTURES IN HARYANA,
INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

Majoritarian and purely revenue-based economic growth often ignores and leaves behind minorities and marginalized communities, with their value in the economy being underestimated and ignored. It is in such a climate that concerns arise for the importance of skill development that affects the livelihoods of millions across the country, in a manner that is inclusive of marginalized communities. This paper picks one particular community and geography – Schedule Castes, Other Backward Castes, in Haryana, India. The study includes a vast collection of analyzed and summarized secondary research, that is used to provide a background to the state of Haryana, the need for skill development for the reserved castes, the existing policy initiatives and schemes, their efficacy, and policy recommendations for the future. Reviews, studies, and existing scholarship have been perused for insights into a solution for the inclusion of backward castes in the journey towards economic and skill development. Finally, the study hopes to inform students, academics, and policymakers of the existing situation, and utilizes a comparative approach using models of caste-based inclusion in states such as Bihar, to highlight the need for future initiatives.

Keywords: Backward Castes, Skill Development, Minority, Haryana

INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of minorities, until recently, has not been viewed as a significant focus point for improving the growth of the Indian economy. Women and lower castes, in particular, have been underrepresented in policies, schemes, and other initiatives. While a corpus of literature detailing the importance of the care economy and its integration into the dominant discourse has gained traction over the past half-decade, a similar focus on caste-inclusion for skill development, with realistic and pragmatic policy implementation pathways have not taken hold in the economic policy literature.

Governments have two primary drives for ensuring economic growth – i) changes in the international relations and policy atmosphere, leading to pressure on governments to either withdraw from a cohort of countries that seek common goals, or else to agree with, sign, and ratify conventions that mandate particular policy paradigms; ii) internal pressures for election campaigning, vote banks, and the garnering of popularity for a continued reign of power.

India in particular is more likely to ascribe to the latter force of pressure than the former, where while the former can be circumvented through a notion of masculinized governance that rejects the imposition of external and/or Western views, the latter could result in a political party losing out on opportunities to be voted back to power. The largest concern in this circumstance lies in the fact that both incentives for policies and implementation that effects economic growth do not result in inclusive models. When economic growth is purely revenue-based and majoritarian, minorities and marginalized communities are often left out, with their value in the economy being underestimated and ignored.

It is in such a climate that concerns arise for the importance of skill development that affects the livelihoods of millions across the country, in a manner that is inclusive of marginalized communities. This paper picks one particular community and geography – Schedule Castes, Other Backward Castes, in Haryana, India. The study includes a vast collection of analyzed and summarized secondary research, that is used to provide a background to the state of Haryana, the need for skill development for the reserved castes, the existing policy initiatives and schemes, their efficacy, and policy recommendations for the future. Reviews, studies, and existing scholarship have been perused for insights into a solution for the inclusion of backward castes in the journey towards economic and skill development. Finally, the study hopes to inform students, academics, and policymakers of the existing situation, and utilizes a comparative approach using models of caste-based inclusion in states such as Bihar, to highlight the need for future initiatives.

BACKGROUND

Haryana:

As of the 2011 Census of India, of the approximately 25 million population of Haryana, 5,115,615 people are of scheduled castes, accounting for 20.17 percentage. Of the total population, about 16.5 million people are considered literate, and 16, 434, 954 people come under the category of non-workers, while the number of workers (both main and marginal) is approximately 9 million people. This amounts to a staggering 64.83 percent of the population that is unemployed, not even having access to marginal work (Census, 2011).

Types of Skill Development Initiatives:

Employment, while it exists in large levels, is unsustainable and/or seasonal for unskilled labourers in India. Skill development can occur through a variety of ways. The most direct of this is direct training in specific professional skills that make persons more employable – the skill is specific to the sector and depending on the type of work required, the physical demand will vary. The second way is via early empowerment through inclusive education schemes that allow younger citizens from such marginalized communities and backward castes to access education up to the higher secondary level, following which they possess a basic general skill set that is useful for employment. The third method is through the access to capital – individuals can begin their own enterprises even in rural areas with access to loans and financial services that are collateral-free and with associated mentorship and support systems that help incubate such initiatives. Finally, through social welfare policies and macroeconomic reform, there is the possibility of creating new jobs in the market that actively include members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, through affirmative action.

Skill India Mission:

The Skill India Mission is a result of the National Policy on Skill Development issued by India in 2009 with the aim of skilling 500 million people by 2022 (Mallapur, 2017). There are multiple schemes through which it operates, including the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). However, there has been severe criticism regarding its effectiveness, stating that untenable targets were set which could not be reached, since there was no properly formulated sectoral labour market information system and sectoral skill development plan (Mallapur, 2017). There was a large incidence of arbitrary allocation of targets by the National Skill Development Corporation, due to which the quality of training, certification and more suffered greatly (Mallapur, 2017).

Access to Capital:

The Stand-Up India Scheme facilitates bank loans between 10 lakh rupees and 1 crore rupees to a minimum of one SC or ST or one woman borrower for every bank for setting up a first-time enterprise – either in manufacturing, trading, or in services. The interest rate would be the lowest rate of the bank applicable ("Stand - Up India", n.d.). While this initiative seeks to do the bare minimum, it in fact fails at doing even that, with a variety of ways to circumvent this minimal, and extremely singular minimum requirement that is met by either just 1 SC, or 1 ST, or a single woman borrower per bank – something that can be managed extremely easily, without at all empowering those of lower castes or classes. Furthermore, the loans still require either collateral

or the guarantee of the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Stand-Up India Loans ("Stand - Up India", n.d.).

This does not provide particular financial mobility or empowerment to those in marginalized communities, nor does it provide them with the education or support to efficiently utilize the access to capital. It is hence an unsustainable policy that on the topmost surface seems empowering yet is doing little to create effective change. Skill development is further based on the foundation of primary, elementary, and secondary education.

However, the MESFC collaborates with the National Backward Class Finances and Development Corporation (NBCFDC), promoting socio-economic and developmental initiatives for the backward classes and castes, assisting them with skill development and self-employment ventures. Through this, members of backward classes can receive loans through banks for various initiatives by NDCFDC, and those under the poverty line receive further financial assistance (National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation).

Education:

With respect to education in particular, two programmes which have received publicity for their vision of universal education are the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, seeking to ensure that all children completed 8 years of education by 2010. Further, it included a specific section to ensuring that gender, class, racial and caste hierarchies are bridged at elementary and primary education levels (NCERT, 2019).

A chapter of a module by the National Council for Education, Research and Training, for the National Institute of Entrepreneurship, concludes stating:

“It may be summarised that educational progress of Scheduled Castes is inadequate. Millions of marginalised SCs are not provided the basic equality of education. There have been specific efforts by central, state governments and voluntary organisations for improving conditions of education of these sections to suffer inequalities in educational opportunities. Economic deprivation, cultural prejudices, social practices and lack of easy access to school, lack of provision of infrastructure, teachers and teaching-learning materials have contributed to the educational backwardness of SCs. Numerous schemes and programmes have been launched for their educational upliftment but the implementation aspect seems to be lacking.” (NCERT, 2019)

Further, another report studying constitutional rights of Indian citizens and marginalization of backward castes from skill development concludes stating that it is not important merely to consider the implementation and formulation of these policies and programmes, but that it is crucial to “evolve strategies to neutralize the ideological, structural and familial impediments so that the educational facilities are fully utilized.” (Alam & Halder, 2018)

DISCUSSION

The Government of Haryana has specifically implemented particular policies such as the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Medhavi Chhatarvarti Yojana, the Mukya Mantri Vivah Shagun Yojana, the post-matric scholarship scheme for the students of scheduled castes and backward classes, the incentive scheme for higher education for scheduled caste girl students, pre-matric scholarship to children of parents engaged in cleaning occupations, Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawar Yojana, and skill training for typing and data entry for unemployed youth of Scheduled and Backward Classes (Bedi, 2015). In 2015, Haryana Minister of State for Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes Krishan Kumar Bedi further issued directives to ensure the effective functioning of such schemes, stating that the aforementioned skill development for data entry was progressing with centers opened in all 21 districts of Haryana (Bedi, 2015).

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has a proposed scheme on entrepreneurship development with a special focus on underrepresented castes and scheduled tribes in India, enrolling incubators and mentors to cater to them in Haryana ("Ministry of Skill Development And Entrepreneurship", 2019).

However, multiple reports and studies (including the Sharda committee report on the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana) suggest that the Skill India mission has failed to meet its set goals and has under-performed. The existence of various loopholes and limitations to comprehensive implementation has resulted in a compromise with respect to skill development and training, as well as low placement rates (Kundu, 2017). Another survey of youths trained under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDUGKY) mentioned further challenges for skill development in India, particularly for the backward castes (Chakravorty & Bedi, 2017) (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, 2016).

Analyzing the effectiveness of such schemes, one can use inputs gained as a part of a study 500 young citizens were surveyed in Bihar, all of whom were trained under the DDUGKY, where the study found that while they had a 29% better chance of achieving a non-farm profession compared to those who didn't take up training under the scheme, after 2-6 months these employment effects of the program dropped to zero (Chakravorty & Bedi, 2017). The authors of the study say, “A third of the placed graduates leave their jobs due to caste-based discrimination

(such as denial of access to kitchens and toilets) and another third leave due to a mismatch between the salaries offered and their living costs...The upshot is that while the training program enhances job market prospects, other labor market factors undo the positive effects." (Chakravorty & Bedi, 2017)

Further, general statistics from the 2011-12 NSSO survey demonstrate that members of Scheduled Castes are normally employed for fewer days than upper caste individuals. Various other studies have demonstrated a clear presence in discrimination in the labour market (Thorat, 2018). Another primary survey by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies showed that out of 1992 households in villages across Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh in 2013, as well as another study of 441 farm-wage laborers, showed results that an alarming 41% were denied work based on discrimination against lower castes (Thorat, 2018). Further, 71% of SC farm wage workers reported losing an average of 43 days of work due to hiring discrimination, where such discrimination even existed with Scheduled Caste non-farm wage labourers. These problems are not limited to rural areas, where a study by the economist Ashwini Deshpande showed discrimination faced by Scheduled Castes in urban areas with interviews, skill development and hiring (Deshpande & Newman, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Existing scholarship has discussed that it is not merely skill development and poverty alleviation that must be the intention of these schemes, but to invoke voluntary participation and the importance of access to different castes, genders, and other social differences in different manners – access to training, job placement post-training, increased government expenditure, and the augmentation of the supply of trained individuals. Ashwini Deshpande in a paper speaks of the unanimous support for affirmative actions for higher education, skill training and work, yet the effectiveness of such affirmative action is questionable, with most Dalits also joining their non-Dalit counterparts in demanding for more effective and targeted policy schemes, where the creamy layers of Backward castes cannot take up positions intended for the lower-class individuals of such castes who cannot otherwise access such schemes and opportunities. She further states the need to search for the “truly disadvantaged” and the need for reservation to be accompanied for appropriate amounts of financial aid.

The study has surveyed the effectiveness of existing skill development initiatives, while broadly stating the need for caste-inclusive skilling policy. This should involve the presence of collateral-free loans to access skill development separately or begin enterprises, or else via the identification of the “truly disadvantaged” class of people, where skill development and related affirmative action truly empowers the poor Dalit woman in the Haryanvi village.

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