

Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

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Reframing Ideas of Justice in Indian Higher Education

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Research Domain: Higher education policy (HEP)

Abstract:

Summary

Idea of Social justice in highly contested terms and it has different meaning for the different people at different location and in different contexts. The current study is part of PhD work done at National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration NIEPA New Delhi. The study retheorize the idea of justice in Indian higher education from the liberal perspectives. It uses the Amartya Sen's idea of justice in the context of Indian higher education which has world's largest distributive affirmative action policies. The study uses ethnographic work in higher education institutions in an Indian state called Bihar. The study finds that students are able to shape their aspirations and capability in and through higher education. Students from former untouchable groups are able to make presence through the educational, social and political activity in the higher education institutions which has been oppressive and exclusive historically.

Paper: Abstract

Social Justice has been highly complex and widely debated in academic discourses across the globe including India. Indian Social Justice Movement has been one of the longest battles in the mankind of history. Social Justice in general and Indian Higher Education in particular has a long history. Indian constitution architect Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who himself represented the former untouchables and finally incorporation of various Articles in Indian Constitution enabled Indian state to formulate specific policies to ensure the reserved seats in parliament and legislative assembly, public higher education institutions and in employment for its former untouchables. The policy has been termed as world's biggest distributive affirmative action policies by the educationist and there is need to understand the policy of justice in Indian higher education from fresh perspectives.

The current paper theorise the idea of justice within the liberal frameworks to understand the social justice in contemporary world. The higher education in India has been elitist in nature and institutions of higher learning have reproduced the existing inequalities and injustices in the society. Indian policy of positive discrimination has brought students from underrepresented groups in higher education institutions who have traditionally at the margins and excluded from social, economic and educational spheres. This has questioned the status quo in the university as higher education also the transformatory character and brings changes in students. In the words of Simon Marginson higher education brings self-formation in the students and they become the agent of change through their

social economic and political participation.

The issue of social justice in Indian Higher Education has been understood on the basis of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Gaya districts of Bihar, an Indian state at the bottom of in Indian Human Development Index. The city Gaya in Bihar has international relevance due to place of enlightenment of Budhdha. Qualitative data have been among the students from 'Mahadalits' a dalit within the dalits who are in higher education using Ethnographic methods including in-depth individual interviews, observations for period of a year with regular intervals. The author participated in their educational activity, political activity and their festivals especially the celebration of Dr. B. R Ambedkar Jayanti. The researcher also participated in their protest for the scholarship which has been stopped after the 2014 when the new government came in power in India. During these participations in various activities of everyday life of students the author engaged with in-depth conversations with the collective capabilities and their ability to do and be in organsied self, and it helped in understanding of studnets' vision, aspirations and to achieve their goals.

The study captures everyday functioning of higher education institutions and how the students from former underrepresented groups are able to do and to be in their everyday lives within the higher education institutions. The study captures that higher education institutions operate within the policy framework, and institutional goals, leadership roles, academic and non-academic interaction of the students. It captures that institutions are guided by rules and regulations which are not able to imazine the new aspiration of the students. It is important to comprehend the issue of access in critical ways in understanding the larger issue of social justice in higher education. Supply of the institutions varying quality that create hierarchy of institutions in terms of quality education within the context of higher education. Here the quality education implies functional institutional routines, regular teaching and learning, implementation of welfare schemes and policy of positive discrimination and also positive reputation among the local populations about the higher education. Access to higher education has become massified in Indian contexts where the students from non-traditional backgrounds are entering into the arena where they were scant. The study finds that how the identities are reframed and reconstructed by the state and the individual itself in everyday life in general and higher education in particular. Changing aspirations of different underrepresented groups have made it easy for the state to recategorise, divide and rule and perpetuate injustice. Thus, equality of opportunity in higher education is a trajectory of social justice appeared a policy 'a priori' rather than empirical reality even capable student from this mahadalit category could not access to higher education or better higher education institutions and fulfil their needs, values and aspirations. The study also supports the idea of self-formation propagated by the Marginson in higher education. Students are not only reshaping their aspirations in and through higher education but also redefining the campus of higher education as space.

Abstract: Social Justice, Self-formation, Higher Education, Bihar

References: Marginson, S. (2018). *Higher education as self-formation*. London: UCL Institute of Education Press.

Sen, A.K. (2009), *Idea of Justice*, Harvard Univeristy press

