ABSTRACT

Education is a lifelong process which helps to achieve the path of development. India being the second largest populated country in the world, without sophisticated education system its different culture, religion, geographical territory, regional variety and flora and fauna become unworthy hence not utilizing human resources in developing the country’s infrastructure. Higher education is the backbone of the modern society. It is treated as specialization in all the branches of education, inquiry as well as search of knowledge and integration and regional cohesion. In India majority of the higher educational institutions are urban centric. Even most of the higher educational institutions in rural India lack quality. Presently, all the regions of the country including South-eastern region are facing numerous challenges in higher education in vocational, technical, engineering, humanities etc. In Odisha pseudo-environment, socio-economic instability, lack of proper utilization of educational policies, unprecedented growth of population, unavailability of adequate educational institutions are the main causes of backwardness of higher education system in rural areas part of the state.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the status of higher education in rural areas of Ganjam district with the help of convenient comparative studies covering educationally conscious citizens, students, guardians & inhabitants of those areas. The paper also highlights all the problems that the rural population is suffering in regard to Higher education, along with possible remedies to overcome those barriers..

Keywords: Higher Education, Rural Areas of India, Problems and Prospects

INTRODUCTION

Education is an indispensable for the development and prosperity of both a nation and society. It acts as a pillar of support and hence provides skills and development for effective employment in the future. Apart from primary and secondary education, higher education is the backbone of the contemporary society. The Indian higher education system has exhibited remarkable development over the last decade to become one of the world’s largest systems of higher education. Around 65% of the state’s population lives in rural areas. The higher education system in rural areas of developing and underdeveloped countries are facing many challenges. The limited accessibility and challenges to education are attributed mainly to political, economic and social issues. The current status of higher education in rural areas is characterized by low enrolment, poor completion rates, poor physical infrastructure, and high drop out. There also, Majority of the India’s population belongs to rural areas and from poor family background; it’s a major challenge to ensure their access to quality education. The lack of learning capacity and opportunities is both a cause and an effect of rural poverty.

Now, majority of the higher educational institutions are urban centric in India and higher educational institutions which are belongs to rural areas are of lack quality and are lacking in the implementation
of best practices in higher education. As a result of this rural and poor people are deprived. Rethinking education in rural areas requires first reviewing the characteristics of the rural sector, particularly in developing countries, and then considering the place of education in the current sustainable rural development debate. To a large extent, rural areas have been neglected in development policies. The acceptance of higher education as a developmental force will lead the advancement of rural areas. Rural people are often unaware of their rights and here is when education comes into play. Proper education related to awareness of rights, schemes, facilities available for the betterment of the rural areas and development of those areas. These will led to better understanding of the situations demand resulting to which the standard of living will raise and also the economy of our nation will improve.

SCENARIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN GANJAM

The Ganjam is one of the most populated districts of Odisha, situated in the South-eastern part of Odisha. There are different religions, castes, communities, languages and mixed cultures seen in the district. As per 2011 census figures, Average literacy rate of Ganjam district is 71.09. If things are looked out at gender wise, male and female literacy were 80.99 and 61.13 respectively. The present scenery of educational institutions in Ganjam as per reports, there are 2,129 government primary schools and 2,093 private schools, 733 Middle schools, 512 High Schools, 404 Higher Secondary Schools, 85 junior govt., private and self financings colleges are in Ganjam district and 50 degree colleges including two degree colleges having post graduation and three Teachers’ Training Colleges. Most of the educational institutions situated in urban area. The private institutions established by the NGOs, Semi-organizations in urban and rural areas are playing a vital role in imparting primary and secondary education only in the district of Ganjam. Till the independence the government actions policies unable to spread the lime light of education in rapid pace in such area. Only a few numbers of LP and UP schools are seen where is no assurance of primary education in remote areas having the declaration as fundamental rights for every children of India. There is overcrowding of students which are out of modern facilities like- infrastructure, lavatories, practical instrument, devoted teachers, playground etc. Except the sufficient number of lower and upper primary schools there is a few higher secondary schools in such remote area so it is impossible to think about any improvement in higher educational institutions. After independence, government established Berhampur University in 1967 from where the path of new higher education for Ganjam and other people of Odisha came to the light. Now, there are more numbers of colleges affiliated to Berhampur University established in different places of the district. All higher institutions in Ganjam district enroll large numbers student every year beyond the intake capacity. In Ganajm, Open Distance Mode of Education is also introduced by IGNOU in the different colleges. There are only few study centers for post graduation which is unable to cover all disciplines.

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted to the following objectives:

1. To determine the status of higher education in selected rural areas of Ganjam district.
2. To study the area and find out the problems of higher education.
3. To find out best possible remedies to cope out those problems

METHODOLOGY

The methodologies commissioned in determining the data are based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected from the selected areas of Ganjam district. A total of 250 samples have been collected randomly from 5 villages of the district. Out of the 250 samples 50 each have collected from 5 villages. The methods implemented for collecting primary data were Observation, Interview, Telephonic communication and Unscheduled Questionnaire. The secondary data has been collected mainly from various publications of Government of India, Government of Assam, Journals, Newspapers and web etc.
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

During our survey a Based on several variables of observation like Age, Educational Qualification, Marital Status, Annual Income etc. and we have collected the data accordingly. The data collected from the field are analyzed to assess the status of higher education and sustainable development of rural areas. Lot of things about the present condition of higher education in rural areas are coming in to light.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>15-20</th>
<th>20-25</th>
<th>25-30</th>
<th>30 and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Respondent</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study

During the study most of the respondent who come forward with their view on higher education and development of their locality are from the age group of 15-20 years and the people from the age group of 30 years are not that much interested in answering any question on higher education and sustainable development.

Table 2: Educational Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Qualification</th>
<th>No. of Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below HSLC</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSLC</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study
Figure 2: Number of Respondent and Qualification

Source: Field Study

It is observed from the study that qualification of major part of the respondent are HSLC and HS and they have not enrolled themselves for higher education due to various reasons and engaged themselves on what their families done or continuing. Only a few portion of that locality are Graduate and no one has enrolled themselves for Post-Graduation. From the above table it is observed that only a few people of that area have gone to higher education and it’s automatically leads to that locality to downward development due lack of highly qualified people.

Table 3: Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Unmarried</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Respondents</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study

Figure 3: No. of Respondent & Marital

Source: Field Study

From the above tables, it is observed that majority of the respondent are unmarried, even then also they have not or unable to enroll themselves for higher education and contribute their knowledge for the development of the locality. So, it’s a great matter of concern for us.
Table 4: Annual Income of the Respondent and Their Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income</th>
<th>Family income of Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Rs.50000</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs.50000 – 70000</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs.70000 – 90000</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs.90000 – 120000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study

Figure 4: Family Income of Respondent

It is observed from the table that the total annual family income of Majority of the respondents was below 50000 and in between 50000-70000. So, due to high cost of higher education they are unable to enroll their kids to higher educational institutes. So that they are unable to create themselves up to the mark of globalized economy and their locality remains backward.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Most students of these areas are belonging to the level of first generation learners especially in my study. The guardians/parents are far backward in education hence not aware of higher education for their offspring.
2. The guardians/parents generally come across the school teachers who are most cases not higher educated. In that case the guardians cannot realize the necessity of higher education.
3. In comparison to the number of higher education institution present in urban areas i.e., cities or towns, there are very few institutions in rural areas of India. Technical higher educational institutions are very rarely established in the rural areas.
4. The rural people have no easy access to the electronic and print media due to various reasons. They cannot become aware of opportunities of higher education.
5. In rural areas of India the school drop out rate is more than normal. As a result of this very few students taste the sweetness of higher education. Even during college life also because of family burden, poor infrastructural facilities, lack of monetary support, apathy towards education etc. we can see high percentage of drop out among rural students.
6. Economically the rural people are not sound; they mostly depend on agricultural income. They cannot afford the all cost of higher education. The financial hindrances most significant for creating problem for higher education.

7. Joint and bigger family size is also a cause of hindrance in this matter. In a bigger family it is seen that brilliants do not get enough opportunity in getting higher education, because all the children deserve same opportunity.

8. Most of the families, nearly 85 percent people depend on agriculture (poor cultivators, petty traders). The guardians/parents assume that their higher educated wards will not extend their helping hands in their agricultural works.

9. Lack of Communication and Information Technology; Access of newspaper, radio and television found to be very poor in rural areas.

10. Early marriage hinders in getting higher education especially for minorities in my study area. Superstitious belief of religious fundamentalists sometimes barred to adroit higher education for girls students.

11. Lack of computer illiteracy is seen in rural areas; so students/aspirants of higher education unable to follow the e-learning facilities.

12. Language is barrier for higher education; in my study area it is seen that all the schools from Lower Primary to Higher Secondary follow the medium of instruction in Odia, but the medium of instruction of higher education is English in many disciplines.

13. Problem of road and transport communication: it is seen that maximum rural roads are very poor in transport and out of reach of the target area of educational institutes.

14. Lack of women higher educational institution is seen in my study area as well as government initiatives regarding its very poor.

REMA DIAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Equal importance in Rural Areas: To assess the availability of various policies programs and facilities in higher education, there is an urgent need to access and find out from the students their awareness and utilization of facilities, as also to cross check the availability of the facilities in institutions where they are enrolled.

2. Enhance Quality of Education: All plans for expansion must have a major thrust on enhancing quality of education. Hence due care must be taken for developing skills of teachers for enhancing teaching-learning transaction, creating conducive academic environment, improving the learning infrastructure, putting technology enabled learning into practice wherever possible.

3. Checking drop-out ratio: Higher education system should take interest in their feeder area or supply chain to improve quality and drop out as a priority need of the community and duty of higher education system and for their own growth i.e., higher education system.

4. Establishing Career Counseling Cells: Special career counseling cells must be set by the government in rural areas, so that students can also enroll themselves in other technical and professional courses apart from other general courses. Besides, the students can select subject according to their needs and capacity.

5. Adequate fund: To build a high quality education system, adequate funding must be made available by the Central and State governments to improve quality, at the same time, making higher education affordable to all specially for the families of rural areas where income level of the people is low and thus increasing access.

6. Checking proper utilization of grants: The grant provided by Central, State govt. as well as other bodies to the educational institutes is how effectively utilized is a matter of doubt. Administrative bodies of the uses the funds as per their own profitability rather than priority of the institute for greater social interests of the stakeholders. The regulatory bodies should ensure proper use of funds on the basis of priority in rural areas.
CONCLUSION

Education is the key which alone can prove a solution to multiple issues. It should be available in all corners of the country if we really want a self dependent society able to solve unforeseen troubles. There has been growth in the number of educational institutions, but the gap in rural-urban disparities, regional disparities, inadequate infrastructure etc seem to be widening. Thus a number of problems are inflicting our system of higher education. Resolving these issues is a Herculean but not an impossible task. Various Committees have been appointed in India to look into India’s system of Higher Education. If we start implementing these recommendations, a way can be initiated for moving higher education in the correct direction towards rural areas with the passing time.

Higher education and sustainable development in rural areas of Odisha is facing big challenge having them to compete with the global players especially after education becomes a marketable product and after India opened its market for global competitors. However, development of higher education in Ganjam district of Odisha, with crying need for basic amenities and infrastructure. The annual exodus of bright students from rural areas of the district in search of better education partially indicates the defeat of the institutions of higher education in Odisha. If the higher education is to be saved from becoming bane on economy of the rural areas of district, then a well thought policy for sustainable development and higher education combined with adequate Government funding and proper monitoring and control can bring much needed change in the area.

REFERENCES