

An Analytical Study on the Role of Media in Promoting Higher Education among Rural Students

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Abstract

India during the last two decades has seen substantial improvements in social, economic, education and other sectors. There is a tremendous growth in education fuelled by Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. Education a sector which is essential for development is confronted with regional divide towards access in the benefits more so towards higher education. Indian higher education system is facing four broad challenges as of now; the supply-demand gap, the low quality of teaching and learning, constraints on research capacity and innovation and uneven growth and access to opportunity. The researchers strongly believe that media has a potential to bridge the gap in a right way. The current study aims to analyse the level of understanding about higher education among the rural parents. And also tries to identify the role of media in aiding rural students for accessing higher education and its role in promoting higher education. The study uses survey method through structured questionnaire where 160 respondents from three taluks of Bangalore Rural District were selected for the purpose.

Key Words: *Higher Education, Mass Media, Perception, Rural Parents*

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INTRODUCTION

India during the last two decades has seen substantial progress in social, economic and education fronts. India has been experiencing tremendous growth in education in urban areas owing to the impact of globalization, liberalization, and privatization. However, there is no level playing field for people from low income groups and as a result the percentage of rural students getting access to higher education is still alarmingly low.

Media intervention in removing inequalities and regional imbalances in education has paid rich dividends. As a matter of fact the advent of Radio in the early 1930s popularized the concept of Radio literacy with its innate capacity of touching all lives irrespective of literacy. The process of development of higher education has the great potential of communication technologies and their integration in mass media leading to identifying remedies of the current shortcomings. The study therefore, focuses on the rural approaches towards the access to higher education and with that to analyse the role of media in promotion of higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

The Indian higher education system is on the verge of undergoing unprecedented transformation in the next decade. Driven by economic and demographic change, India will be the world's third largest economy by 2020, with a correspondingly rapid growth in the size of its middle classes. Currently, over 50 percent of India's population is young below 25 years and India will outpace China as the country with the largest tertiary age population. Despite significant progress over the last ten years, Indian higher education is faced with four broad challenges.

India has a low rate of enrolment in higher education, at only 18% compared with 26% in China and 36% in Brazil. There is enormous demand for higher education in India. By 2020, the Indian government aims to achieve 30% gross enrolment, which will mean providing 40 million seats in the university, an increase of 14 million in six years. The higher education today is riddled with the crisis bolstered by chronic shortage of faculty, poor quality teaching, outdated and rigid curriculum and pedagogy, lack of accountability and dearth of academic research by the teachers. With a very low level of PhD enrolment, India does not have enough high quality researchers. Problems like few opportunities for interdisciplinary studies, lack of early research culture in social sciences, management and humanities coupled with dearth of funds for innovative studies and low level of industry engagement. Socially, India remains highly divided as access to higher education is uneven with multidimensional inequalities in enrolment across population groups and geographies (British Council, 2014).

There is not even a single university or institution in India that is one of the ten top ranking institutions in the world. Most of the Indian colleges and universities lack state of art research facilities. Under investment in libraries, information technology, laboratories and classrooms make it very difficult to provide top quality instruction or engage in cutting edge research. This gap has to be bridged and imbalance in enrolment among urban and rural population should be balanced for a sustainable growth. Hence the concerned people with policymaking, planning, administration and implementers of Higher Education should revitalize the very thinking on the subject and promotion of Higher Education and design a right model for all levels. (Singh, 2011).

Government has framed legislations to stem the crisis. The Higher Education and Research Bill, 2011, The National Academic Depository Bill, 2011, The National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2010. The Educational Tribunal Bill, 2010 and Foreign Educational Institutions Bill, 2010 are visible initiatives that the government has undertaken. 'Equity is at the heart of a good educational system. Kapil Sibal, the former HRD Minister, said "We don't have equity Indian Higher Education system is characterized by a large rural urban and gender divide. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in rural India is estimated to be about 7%, while urban areas have a GER of about 23%. India's GER shows significant variability across regions" (Chakraborty, Nitu & Subhadeep, 2013).

NEED OF THE STUDY

The information technology has the potential to revolutionize education. It has been proved in the past that media intervention can influence the learning needs of a society poised for a change. The use of media in education can maximize effectiveness as countries like India have limited options to explore amidst technological and economic constraints. Higher education can be a (potential) major catalyst towards social and economical development. The review of contemporary literature on media and higher education will enable one understand the role of media in its sustainability transition. Hence the study was undertaken to analyse the level of perception of higher education among the rural people. Further, there is need to identify the role of media in empowering rural students by facilitating access to higher education.

METHODOLOGY

Survey method was found to be more appropriate to undertake a study of this nature. The study was carried out in Bangalore Rural District in three Taluks of Nelamangala, Doddaballapur and Devanahalli. A sample of 160 respondents was selected by selecting 80 households consisting of parents and students studying in colleges and universities. The sample consisted of students and parents of 80 each. Only the students of higher education were purposively selected. A well designed questionnaire was used for data collection. Two different questionnaires were pre-tested and administered for both parent and student respondents.

Findings

Table-1

Distribution of Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Age in years | f | % |
|--------------|----|----|
| a) 18-22 | 18 | 23 |
| b) 22-25 | 44 | 55 |
| c) 25-28 | 18 | 23 |
| d) 28-38 | 30 | 38 |
| e) 38-48 | 44 | 55 |
| f) 48 > | 5 | 6 |

Education

| Education | Father | Mother | Child-1 | Child- 2 |
|---|--------|--------|---------|----------|
| a) 0 -7 th std. | 15 % | 3 % | 0 | 8 % |
| b) 7 th -10 th std. | 30 % | 75 % | 4 % | 6 % |
| c) 10 th - PUC | 49 % | 23 % | 5 % | 20 % |
| d) Degree | 6 % | 0 % | 55 % | 23 % |
| e) PG &Above | 0 | 0 | 36 % | 11 % |

| Annual income | f | % |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|
| 1. < 40,000/ | 14 | 8 |
| 2. 40,000/- to 1,00,000 | 39 | 49 |
| 3. 1,00,000 - 3,00,000 | 18 | 23 |
| 4. 3,00,000 > | 9 | 11 |

| Occupation of Parents | % |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Administrative | 3 |
| Home maker | 8 |
| Technical expert | 13 |
| Professional | 18 |
| Agriculture labour | 41 |
| Animal Rearing | 10 |
| Others | 6 |

Table-1 presents a profile of the demographic and socio economic characteristics of the respondents. The analysis of demographic features shows that the majority of the parent as well as student respondents (55%) are in the age groups of 38-48 years and 22-25 years respectively. The parents are less educated with less than 6 percent have the highest level of education of PUC to Degree. On the contrary, over 55 percent of their children are students of PUC to Degree level of education. Over 47 percent of children of these parents are Post graduates. The study shows that majority of the parent respondents (49%) belong to lower middle income class earning less than Rs.1 lakh per annum. Around 18 percent earn less than Rs.40,000 per year who belong to the poorer section is a significant factor as their children have taken to higher education. The profession of the parents shows that majority (41%) of them are labourers in agriculture and less than 4 percent are in academics illustrating the

importance given to education by these parents. Children of less educated parents have enrolled in degree and post graduate courses.

Table-2 Parent's Attitude towards Education

| Attitude towards Education | Yes | | No | |
|--|-----|-----|----|-----|
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. Do you think that education is necessary for children? | 78 | 98% | 2 | 3% |
| 2. Do you think that higher education is necessary for children? | 74 | 93% | 6 | 8% |
| 3. Do you have any children pursuing higher education? | 76 | 95% | 4 | 5% |
| 4. Has Mass Media inspired you to send children for higher studies | 23 | 29% | 54 | 68% |

Data in Table-2 shows that distribution of respondents according to their attitude towards education. An overwhelmingly 98% of the parents have understood the importance of education and are aware of how crucial it is in defining the life of their children. A significant 93% of parent respondents opine that higher education is essential and absolutely necessary. Remarkably 95% of parents have children who are pursuing higher education. The interesting and noteworthy fact is that the majority (68%) of the parents who have sent their children to higher education were not influenced by mass media. They do not attribute their decision to join colleges to mass media.

Table-3 Influence of Media on Parents

| Influence of Media on Parents | Yes | | No | | Undecided | |
|--|-----|-----|----|-----|-----------|-----|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Do you think that Mass media provide enough information on higher education? | 20 | 25% | 25 | 31% | 36 | 45% |

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| Media with Education Content | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|
| Radio | 24 | 30% | 21 | 26% | 5 | 6% |
| TV | 45 | 56% | 28 | 35% | 7 | 9% |
| Newspaper | 36 | 45% | 12 | 15% | 4 | 5% |
| New media | 28 | 35% | 20 | 25% | 12 | 15% |

Data in Table-3 shows that only 25% of parent respondents agree that mass media provide adequate information on higher education indicating the low exposure. Regarding mass media which carry more information on education, the study shows that parents feel that TV (56%) gives more information on education than newspaper (45%), new media (35%) and radio (30%).

Table-4 Educational TV/Radio of Programs & Channel Viewing/Listening Pattern

| Programs | Yes | | No | |
|-----------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| | f | % | f | % |
| a) Science | 34 | 42% | 31 | 39% |
| b) UGC Programs | 29 | 36% | 33 | 41% |
| c) Literature | 29 | 36% | 31 | 39% |
| Edu. Channel | f | % | f | % |
| a) GyanVani | 26 | 32% | 54 | 67% |
| b) GyanDarshan | 35 | 44% | 19 | 24% |
| c) Any other | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 |

Data in Table-4 illustrates that 42% of parents have viewed programs related to science, 36% of them have seen UGC programs and the same percentage have watched literature programs. Regarding educational radio and tv channels, a high percentage of 44% have seen *Gyan Darshan* whereas 32% have listened to *GyanVani* radio programs denoting the awareness among rural parents about educational media.

Table-5: Student's Attitude towards Education

| Attitude towards Education | Yes | | No | |
|--------------------------------|-----|---|----|---|
| | f | % | f | % |
| Do you think that education is | | | | |

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| | | | | |
|--|----|------|----|-----|
| necessary for rural students? | 80 | 100% | 0 | 00 |
| Do you also think that rural children should go for higher education? | 72 | 90% | 2 | 10% |
| Did you experience any difficulty in meeting the requirements of higher education because of rural background? | 46 | 58% | 34 | 42% |

Data in Table-5 shows that distribution of student respondents according to their attitude towards education. 80% of the students are aware of the fact that education plays a crucial role in their life and 90% feels higher education is essential. 58% have admitted that they have faced difficulty in meeting the requirements of higher education.

Table-6 Influence of Media on Students

| Impact of Media on Students | Yes | | No | | Not able to decide | |
|---|-----|-----|----|-----|--------------------|-----|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Do you think that Mass media provide enough information on higher education? | 14 | 17% | 38 | 48% | 28 | 35% |
| Media Influence | | | | | | |
| Has mass media inspired you to pursue higher studies? | 26 | 32% | 54 | 67% | - | - |
| Do you think that media should play a more proactive role in promoting formal education among rural students? | 71 | 89% | 9 | 11% | - | - |

Data in Table-6 shows that 48% feel that media does not support students with adequate information on higher education and 35% are not able to justify the role of media in higher education. One can infer that media has played limited role in providing information on higher education. 67% respondents state media has inspired them to pursue higher studies. 87% respondents feel that media should play proactive role in the promotion of formal education.

**Table-7 Exposure of Students to
Higher Education Information in Mass Media**

| Media | Yes | | No | |
|-----------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| | f | % | f | % |
| Radio | 8 | 10% | 0 | 00 |
| TV | 2 | 03% | 4 | 05% |
| Newspaper | 4 | 05% | 4 | 05% |
| New media | 0 | 00 | 6 | 07% |

Data in Table-7 shows the poor visibility of information pertaining to higher education in mass media. TV too lags behind in providing education based content illustrating its commercialization to the hilt. Only radio has better visibility followed by newspaper. Surprisingly, new media absolutely has low visibility among students with regard to access to higher education.

Table-8 Influence of Media in Motivating Students for Higher Education (On a scale of 5-1)

| Level of Motivation | Scale | Ratings |
|----------------------|-------|------------|
| Highly effective | 5 | 10% |
| Effective | 4 | 39% |
| Neutral | 3 | 41% |
| Highly not effective | 2 | 00% |
| Not effective | 1 | 08% |

Data in Table-8 shows the distribution of respondents on the basis of the level of motivation received from Media. About 39% have stated that media are effective, followed by 10% saying highly effective and 8% say that media are not effective in motivating students.

CONCLUSION

College education opens the door to many opportunities that changes the lives of the students for ever. Higher levels of education correspond with more access to better jobs, good income, quality health care and better life. Highly educated people are more likely to engage in healthy behaviours, to be active and engaged citizens, and to be in positions to provide better opportunities to their children (Agarwal, 2006). Higher education is critical to India's aspirations of emerging as a major player in the global knowledge economy. The global competitiveness of Indian industry and also its employment

generation potential is clearly dependent on availability of required skilled and trained personnel. But as several recent studies have revealed the overall performance of Indian higher education is dismal posing a severe constraint in the supply of qualified manpower. Despite remarkable progress in reforms covering a number of sectors and sub-sectors of the economy, there is little informed debate on reforms in higher education (Ibid).

This study focused on both rural parents and rural students. It was found that most of the parents are aware of the need of education in present times. They feel that, it is also important to pursue higher education for the better living. But economic constraints, lack of facilities, lack of knowledge source and lack of awareness are the major bottlenecks in providing quality education in rural areas. The study shows that media in its present form does not play any significant role in influencing parents. The findings of the study denotes that the students are aware of the importance of higher education and the personal motivation helped them to pursue higher studies. Because of rural background, uncompetitive syllabus and lack of skills, rural students are less competitive in the highly competitive world. Their perception of media as a tool of education is really not satisfactory and they find media insignificant in bridging the gap between rural population and higher education. All media including television and new media have low visibility with regard to educational content in general and higher education in particular. The study concludes that media intervention in higher education in rural areas is highly insignificant.

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