



LITERACY PERSPECTIVE OF INDIA IN THE CHANGING SCENARIO: AN EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

Literacy in India is a key for socio-economic progress. Since Independence, the literacy rate has been changed throughout the country. It is result of directed and undirected changes, taken place from time to time. The present paper examines the 'cause-effect relationship' of literacy growth and development in India which has been taken place during different successive periods. In this context, various historic past, education reforms, literacy missions and education policies have been formulated and executed for increasing the literacy rates in the different regions of the country. The paper also touches the areas and related literacy issues including new education policy, literacy mission, and national adult literacy programme which have been proved conducive to boost up the literacy rates in India. The paper also gives an insight to the institutional factors, which has given rise to inter-regional, inter-religious, male-female and schedule and non-scheduled caste variability in literacy rates in India. Keeping in view the literacy perspective, it becomes imperative to focus on qualitative education, so that the country may attain the position, not only in number, but in quality too. In this way, every number of human populations will ensure to become human resources, and ultimately lead to TQM, the total quality management to achieve the desired multiple objectives for development of the people belong to different rural and urban society in the changing scenario of India.

Key words: *Literacy perspective, education policies, regional variability, literacy development programmes, Total Quality Management, multiple objectives changing scenario.*

INTRODUCTION

According to census of India the definition of Literacy is –A person who can read and write a letter with understanding in any language, is considered as ‘*Literate.*’ According to this definition, even after 66 years of independence 26 per cent of the people, live in different parts of India, cannot do justice with a letter. A person who can merely read but cannot write is not defined as literate. The children below five years are considered as ‘*illiterate.*’ The literacy rate would be more meaningful if one were to exclude the population within the age-group 0-4 years from the total population. This definition of ‘Literacy’ reflects only the quantitative aspect of demographic attribute, but the quality aspect of literacy phenomenon is still away from the reality. The literacy which increases one’s knowledge and understanding against exploitation, injustice and help in decision making and getting better employment opportunities, play a crucial role in socio-economic well being. Literacy in India is a key for socio-economic progress and Indian literacy has grown to 74.04 percent in accordance with 2011 census. At the eve of Independence it was merely 12 percent. Although this was greater than six fold improvement, the level is well below the world literacy average rate level of 84 percent, and all nations, India currently has the largest illiterate in the world (UNESCO Report Jan 29, 2014). The numerical strength of the illiterate people of India is 287 million people, which is 37 percent of the global total. The rate of growth of literacy in India has been “*Sluggish*” and 1990; a study estimated that it would take until 2060 for India to achieve universal literacy at then-current rate of progress. The 2011 census however indicated a 2001-2011 decade literacy growth of 9.2 percent, which is slower than the growth seen during previous year (Census 2011). The schedule caste population which constitute one sixth of total India’s population indicate relatively lower figure of literacy rates as compared with the population, belong to general castes (Chand Ram, 2011)

Keeping in view the historic past of various censuses, enumerated during different successive periods, indicate some of inferences which could be drawn in accordance with changing scenario. One of the paradoxes in the Indian literacy perspective is that while the percentage of literacy has been increasing in every decade, the total number of illiterates has also been increasing (*Hassan, I.M, 2007*). Comparing the two censuses of 1971 and 1981 years, We find that there is considerable growth of 7 per cent of ‘illiterates’, reflects the absolute figure of 82 million population, the total number of growth of the ‘illiterates’ have been 48 Million in the different parts of India. Same is the case with the censuses of 1991 and 2011 years which indicate a percentage growth of millions of army of the ‘illiterates’ as elaborated by both these censuses.

Since the first census which was conducted in 1881, indicate a steady growth in literacy rate in India. Though the British has not been shown any much interest towards raising the literacy rates for the people, belong to different segment of population. It has been observed that the dominance of agrarian society in India, the literacy rates has been low till the 1947. During pre-dependence period, the dominancy of agrarian economy which was based on rain-fed agriculture, was characterizes with mass-illiteracy. However, the 80 percent of the population, directly or indirectly engaged in agricultural activities. In 1944, the British government presented a plan, called the ‘*Sergeant scheme*’ for the educational reconstruction of India with the goal of producing 100 per cent literacy in the country within 40 years time

frame, was derived at the time by the leaders of the Indian Independence movement as being too long to achieve universal literacy. India had only just crossed the 74 percent level by the 2011 census. It is therefore, it has never been considered as '*occupational necessity*' before the independence. The other '*demographic character*' of Indian population was the high birth and death rate, disguised unemployment, high-dependency ratio, low levels of motivation for education and dominance of princely states in India have cumulatively given rise to the low literacy rates, particularly in northern India.

Though some of educational reforms have been done by the British and some of missionaries in India during in pre-independence period, but it was confined to few pockets of Indian territories. The impact of all these missionaries is still intact within these areas. All the north-eastern states have always been characterized with high level of literacy, because of dominance of some of missionaries within these seven sister states. The effect of these missionaries has been indicated by the each and every subsequent censuses of India. The higher rate of literacy in the north-eastern region of India is a result of the consistent efforts made by these missionaries. Same is the case with the southern state like Kerala, where the religious institutions like '*church*' has been playing a significant role to keep the literacy rate higher as compared to northern states of India (Chandna, R.C. 1994)

It is therefore, the state like Kerala has always been indicated by the highest literacy rates among all the states of India. Since in dependence, the government of India and the state governments are making consistent efforts to raise the literacy rates particular among the children belonged to rural areas. The national programme like '*Mid-meal*' programme was started mainly to mitigate the drop-out rate among the children, particularly the children belonged to rural areas of India (Sexena, Q.R and Mittal, 2004). In order to increase the level of literacy in India, since early 60s the education was made compulsory. As a result, a steady growth of *literacy* rates among the children of all the states have shown a steady progress in literacy rates (Ojha, G.K. 1966)

In order to promote '*Literacy*' and '*Quality Education*' among the people belong to different strata of rural and urban society, the National Policy on Education, formulated by Government of India to provide education amongst the India's people. The policy covers elementary education to college in both rural and urban areas. The first NPE was promoted in 1968, by Indira Gandhi and subsequently in 1986, by Rajiv Gandhi and then in 1992, and recently *Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan, Right to Education, National Programme for Education for Girls at Elementary level, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage, Saakshar Bharat/ Adult Education & Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan* for development of higher education, launched in 2013 (National Informatics Centre, Ministry of HRD, Government of India, 2015)

Keeping in view a considerable difference of '*Literacy rates*' among the Scheduled castes, male-female, religious groups, rural-urban areas, it has been observed that the difference is determined by the various socio-economic and cultural factors which has given rise to a considerable difference among scheduled and non-scheduled castes, religious groups, male-female, rural-urban areas in India. It is therefore, it become imperative to review the '*literacy perspective*' in relation to changing scenario in the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. The study is aimed at review the '*cause-effect relationship*' between the determining *factors in relation to literacy rates in India*;
2. The study is also aimed at review the inter-regional disparity in literacy rates in India;

3. The study is also aimed at review the schedule-caste and non-scheduled caste literacy rates, inter-religious variability in literacy rates and rural-urban difference in the changing scenario.
4. To make the suggestions to ameliorate the 'Literacy rates' in the changing scenario of India.

METHODS AND MATERIAL

In order to review the 'Literacy perspective' of India in relation to its historic past and changing scenario, various census and demographic profile of various states have been examines. The other sources of information were the annual reports of National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2015 have been referred. Apart from above mentioned sources, various books, articles and the papers presented in various conferences have been reviewed to highlight the various quantitative and qualitative aspects of literacy phenomenon in relation to changing scenario of Haryana.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The literacy rate is one of qualitative indicators of human development. The whole socio-economic dynamism depends upon the literacy rate of the population. Historic past indicate that the growth of literacy rate in India has been '*sluggish*' and also given rise to the *illiterates population* which is now highest in the world too. During the British period the 'Literacy rate' was very slow. However, in the year 1881, it was 3.2 percent, and subsequently, in the year, 1931, it was 7.2 percent. On the eve of Independence (1947), it was merely 12 percent. It has been observed that the literacy rate among the various segments of the populations is determined by some of historic, socio-economic and religious factors which have given rise to rural-urban, male-female, inter-religion , inter-castes and inter-region disparity. Despite the consistent efforts made by government of India and the state government, the disparities are still going on with the time. It is therefore, the present study throw an adequate light on the '*Literacy perspective*' and its related issues. In order to become a '*Human Resource*,' it is not adequate to raising the merely numerical strength of the *literate people*, but it become imperative to educate the people with quality education, so that the different segments of the population may become to understand their respective professional skill in an effective ways. The paper also includes some of suggestions which may be proved conducive to ameliorate the *literacy phenomenon* in relation to changing scenario in India.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to find the desired results, a '*cause-effect relationship*' has been established between the quantitative parameters and qualitative parameters on '*Literacy perspective*' in relation to changing scenario in different segments of population. This relationship reveals either positive relationship or negative relations among the various variables, taken for the study.

CAUSE-EFFECT RELATIONSHIP OF LITERACY PERSPECTIVE

With regarding to distribution pattern in India, the data of various censuses shows that the literacy rates have been shown a considerable growth in different successive periods. Keeping in view the growth rates of literacy in India, which indicate more or less same regional distributional pattern, as we have observed in past. Though there is considerable growth in number, but regional distributional pattern of literacy rates among the men and Women also more or less unchanged during different successive periods. On the basis of statistical figures of various states, it has been observed that the distributional pattern of literacy in India which mainly determined by the socio-

economic and demographic factors. All these factors which determine the literacy rates are the general economic and social status of the people live in a particular region. The other demographic factors which include level of *urbanization* and the *urbanism*, adopted in the rural areas. Apart from above mentioned factors the literacy rates have been determined by the occupational structure, religious composition, educational infrastructural facility availability in a particular areas and the mass - literacy awareness programs implementation. In this relationship the *urbanism* and *urbanization* have a positive co-relation with the literacy levels in India.

In the north-eastern states, where the higher literacy level is closely associated with the historical factors, where the missionaries, established by the British played a significant role for *sustainable growth* of literacy rates within this region. Similarly, the industrialization has also been positively co-related with higher literacy rates in India. For example, most of the metropolitan cities are characterized by the higher level of urbanization & Industrialization simultaneously, as a result given rise to higher level of literacy in India. In the rural areas, the higher level of '*urbanism*' is closely positively co-related with the '*Literacy phenomenon*' the *urbanism*, which is partly, induced by the spatial infrastructure, developed within the village itself, and partly depend upon the individual income of the villagers, live in the rural areas. The states like Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh are having a relatively higher levels of literacy rates, because of higher level of '*urbanism*' within the rural areas of these states (Satpal Singh, Dalbir Singh 2014).

Reviewing the '*literacy perspective*' in relation to distribution of tribal population and their proportionate figure to the total population indicate a negative correlation. This relationship may be justified with the states like odisha, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Nilgiri Hills, Kalpa valley of Himachal Pradesh, Andaman and Nikobar Islands, Panch Mehal and Kutch districts of Gujarat are some of the states and the regions, where a considerable proportionate figures of tribal population to the total population has given rise to low level of literacy in India. In this context, the isolated nature of topography and *non-integrated* dominancy of the tribal characteristics with an ample level of '*cultural-lag*' have led to lower level of literacy within these tribal regions of India (Azzazudin Ahmad, 1982). Reviewing the '*Literacy perspective*' in relation to religious composition, it has been observed that the states, where the Muslim population is in dominance, the literacy rates have been often lower, particularly among the women, where a strong prejudices against the women's education, always has been proved a '*wet-blanket*' for raising the literacy rates within these regions. For example Meerut, Moradabad, Aligarh, Azamgarh, Agra, Lucknow, Amroha, Deoband and Gazipur districts of Uttar Pradesh. The district like Mewat district of Haryana and Malerkotla of Punjab show the same kind of negative '*cause-effect relationship*.'

Reviewing the '*Literacy perspective*' in relation to scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes population, it has been observed that a wide gap as well as gender gap in literacy rates has been found in various regions of India. The main cause behind low literacy among the scheduled castes is their socio-economic and other general backwardness which have given rise to this inter-caste disparity in literacy rates in India (Sagar, P. 1990). Same is case with sex-disparity in literacy in various regions of India too. However, a systematic study has been carried out for variability of literacy in different states of India. The authors have uses various socio-economic parameters for showing this variability. (Sopher, D.E, 2014).

Reviewing the '*Literacy perspective*' in relation to religion, it has been observed that there is a considerable variability in literacy rates among the people, belong to different religious groups. There was much of variability in literacy rates of six major religious groups of the country. Their

literacy rates varied from 59.1 percent (among the Muslims) to 94.1 percent (among the Jain). The variations in their literacy rates largely an outcome of geographical positioning, economic activity, need for education and social structure. Moreover, their literacy rates were also product of certain historical factors such as socio-religious movement like *Arya Samaj Movement*, *Singh Sabha Movement*, *Neo-Buddhist Movement* and work for *Christian missionaries* (Divjot Kaur, 2012)

Keeping in view various problematic areas of 'Literacy phenomenon' in relation to changing scenario, it become imperative to suggest some of recommendations which may prove conducive to ameliorate the status of literacy in India. These suggestions may be proved effective devices to inculcate the right things in to the wrong minds. All these devices are to be used as an individual as well as at community level, so that we may get the desired results in relation to changing scenario in India.

These suggestions have been sum up as follows:

- The government should aware the people, particularly the people, belong to scheduled castes about the education of the girls, particularly in the rural areas of the states with the help of some of NGOs working on these issue;
- In case of religious minority groups, the religious leaders and preaches can play a vital role for promoting the literacy rates among the masses, particularly to the minor religious groups such as Muslims, Buddhists etc.
- The Government should provide more facilities to the students, belong to SC/ST and the minor religious groups;
- A special attention should be paid to the low literacy areas;
- There should be an advocacy and campaigning programme for creative awareness among the masses, particularly in rural areas of the country.

CONCLUSIONS

Literacy is a true yard-stick of progress of the nation. On the basis of 'cause-effect relationship' of literacy in India, it is obvious that the literacy rates have been showing a considerable inter-caste, inter-regional, inter-religious variability in India. The cause-effect relationship shows a +ve as well as -ve correlation among the various quantitative and qualitative variables, as studies by various authors and scholars, belong to different academic and professional streams. On the basis of various inter-censual and demographic reports of different successive periods indicate a considerable anomalies as reported by numerous of government and non-government organizations. Since independence, various National Education policies and literacy promoting programmes have been formulated and executed from time to time, but the varied anomalies are still exist among the people, belong to different religions, sexes, castes and the minor-religious groups. It is because of prevailing social flaws and prejudices against the women's education which has given rise to develop anomalies in literacy rates among the women, particularly in the rural and tribal areas. It is therefore, it becomes imperative to suggest some of recommendations which may be proved conducive to ameliorate the 'Literacy perspective' in accordance with changing scenario.

The policy formulation on literacy, should be in accordance with prevailing conditions at grass root level, so that the probability of the responsiveness of the literacy promoting programme may get total quality management position in rural as well as urban areas of the country.

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