

## Book Reviews

*Beyond Inclusion: The Practice of Equal Access in Indian Higher Education* edited by Satish Deshpande and Usha Zacharias, New Delhi, Routledge, 2013; 356 pages, ₹ 415 (hardback) ISBN 978-0-415-83207-6.

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The editors of *Beyond Inclusion* are Satish Deshpande and Usha Zacharias. Former is a Professor and the Head of the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi. Usha Zacharias is the Associate Professor of Communication, Westfield State College, Massachusetts. This book compiles ten scholarly articles written by academicians and scholars in the field. This compilation gives a vivid account of the engagement of higher education in India by providing first-hand accounts, experiences and research by those involved in the implementation and evaluation of the inclusion programmes necessitated by the new 'Pathways to Higher Education.' In this regard, the articles scrutinise the inclusion policies and attempts by the agencies of higher education in India to bring in the marginalised and the question of reservation quotas is assessed and commented upon. As diverse are the needs of higher education in India, this book points out the challenges of inclusion especially diversity in terms of gender, caste, economy and religion. The question of social justice and higher education is the theme that runs through all the chapters of *Beyond Inclusion*.

The introduction of the book orients the readers to look at the two main features that more or less form the overall perspective of the book and they are the policies being put to practice and the commitment to look and to think beyond formal inclusion, justifying thus the title *Beyond Inclusion*. The book contains four broad thematic divisions where the first part contains two essays on the history and philosophy of policies of inclusion in higher education in India. Second part explains about the practical models of inclusion in medicine and engineering education in India. Part three of the book assesses the question of reservation category, its angsts, issues and prospects. The last part details the innovative efforts to bring in more accessibility to inclusion where maximum beneficiaries of higher education can partake in education.

The opening chapter discusses in detail about the 'Caste Quotas and Formal Inclusion in Indian Higher Education', where Satish Deshpande contours his claim about the historical grounding of the caste quotas and formal inclusion, its successes and problems. The Second chapter is titled 'The Polarity between the "Few and the

Many'' in Indian Higher Education'. Mrinalini Sebastian explores the historical and conceptual frame work of the agenda of inclusion from the colonial times where the beneficiaries were 'few' to the arrival of the state to embrace the slogan, 'education for all.' GN Devi traces explores the 'Affirmative Action in Three Dream Institutions' - in Gujarat and Maharashtra, highlighting their educational vision and philosophy, their expansion and growth.. Similarly, the following chapter scrutinises medical education in Maharashtra where Vandana Dandekar presents an empirical study of institutions providing detailed comparison between 'reserved' and 'general' categories of student population who avail higher education in the institutions under review. Chapter five focuses on the engineering education in the state of Punjab and is titled as 'Bridging the Urban-Rural Gap: Experiments in Engineering Education in Punjab.'

The sixth chapter entitled 'Defying the Odds: The Triumphs and Tragedies of Dalit and Adivasi Students in Higher Education'. Anoop Kumar Singh notes that though Dalits and adivasis get access to higher education because of the reservation, they face numerous challenges as they enter the higher education in India. This chapter details the struggles of the victims and narrates the success stories of the achievers against all odds. Similarly, the seventh chapter harmonises with the previous chapter as it cues the theme 'Quota's Children: The Perils of Getting Educated.' N Sukumar elucidates that the first generation learners of the reserved categories go through perils to get educated because they have to face many pedagogical prejudices which are long standing. 'Beyond Contested Categories: An Experiment of the Ford Foundation International Fellowship Programme' is the title of the eighth chapter by Sony Pellissery, Vivek Mansukhani, and Neera Handa. While the success stories of this programme are recounted the programme itself is also critiqued by the authors. The ninth chapter details the question of social exclusion based on the study by Centre for Research and Education for Social Transformation (CREST). Steering the case, Damodaran Nampoothiri reflects on the paradox presented by the state of Kerala where literacy is higher than many states in India and yet manifests caste related exclusions to bridge the gap among the beneficiaries of higher education. Finally, in the concluding chapter, Usha Zacharias explores the empowerment of Dalit students through soft skills development programmes by the multinational companies' initiatives and campus recruitment drive. This chapter is titled as 'To Race with the Able? Soft Skills and the Psychologisation of Marginality.'

The blurb very aptly scrutinises this compendium of articles in the light of the themes discussed in the book, stating that social justice and higher education have witnessed unprecedented expansion in the recent years. State has played an important role in creating access points for equal inclusion to all the potential beneficiaries of higher education. "Focusing on the concrete experiences of these programmes, this book explores the difficulties and dilemmas that follow formal inclusion, and seeks to redress the disproportionate emphasis on principles rather than practice in the quest for equal access to higher education in India." A detailed reading of the book offers a

new perspective on the dilemmas and debates on social justice, equity, equality, access of inclusion and exclusion in higher education on a broad spectrum of educational courses comprising of engineering, medicine, sciences, social sciences and humanities ranging from undergraduate studies to post-doctoral studies. Indian states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have been the matter of research by the academicians and authors under review. The articles present a cross-sectional perspective on the national, elite, subaltern and sub-regional institutions of India. On the whole *Beyond Inclusion* makes for a good reading for all the researchers, academicians, teaching professionals in higher education and students alike.

