

## **Higher Education and Society: Some Issues**

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### **Introduction:**

Sociology is the study of social relationships and institutions. Sociology's subject is diverse, crime religion, from the family to the state, from the divisions of race and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture, and from social stability to radical change in whole societies. Unifying the study of these diverse subjects of study is sociology's purpose of understanding how human action and consciousness both shape and are shaped by surrounding cultural and social structures. There is a close link between higher education and development. Education is a social process, and individuals participate in social activities of a community. The objective of this paper is to explore those factors and to analyze them in order to see their distinctive impact on students' achievement in higher education.

**Research Methodology :** This Article is based on secondary sources and it is part of my Ph.D work.

### **Impact of Social Factors on Higher Education**

Students who have been well trained in sociology know how to think critically about human social life, and how to ask important research questions. They know how to design good social research projects, carefully collect and analyze empirical data, and formulate and present their research findings. Students trained in sociology also know how to help others understand the way the social world works and how it might be changed for the better. Most generally, they have learned how to think, evaluate, and communicate clearly, creatively, and effectively. These are all abilities of tremendous value in a wide variety of vocational callings and professions. Gender inequalities hindering the woman participations in getting higher education and women has no property & political right in the area, which is negatively affecting development and higher education. Most of the female are totally dependent on men economically, which is also the reason of their exclusion from getting higher education because they cannot afford expenses of higher education on their own behalf. Gender discrimination and inequality hinders poverty alleviation and female education helps in poverty alleviation. Women fertility right helps in poverty alleviation while discrimination in higher education and jobs, distribution of resources affect poverty alleviation. The element of choice involved in decisions to progress on to higher education means that a range of factors, can be influential, and over a number of years prior to entry.

### **Promoting Social Mobility**

Promoting increased social mobility requires reexamining a wide range of economic, health, social, and education policies. Higher education has always been a key way to find opportunities to transform their economic circumstances. In a time of rising inequality and low social mobility, improving the quality of and access to education has the potential to increase equality of opportunity for all. Modern universities can urge ministers to increase the number of university places to ensure poorer students can get better jobs and earn more money. Social mobility is a key government policy and ministers are keen to widen participation in higher education. Mostly it is expected the nation's colleges and universities to promote the goal of social mobility to make it possible for anyone with ability and motivation to succeed.

Sharply rising college prices during the 1980s and 1990s, together with the growing inequality of family income, have raised the cost of attending college far more for low-income students than for well-to-do students. Financial aid has risen more slowly, and the share targeted on low-income students has been falling. The authors offer bold policy recommendations to increase educational opportunities for low- and middle-income students. These involve the development of financing structures that will increase access for students from lower income families. Public institutions could price tuition close to real costs and use added revenues to provide direct student aid for students from low-income families. Federal subsidies to students who attend wealthy institutions could be capped, with the savings redirected to students attending less well-endowed colleges, both public and private. Finally, federal and state governments could redirect to lower-income students the financial support they now provide colleges and universities.

The role of higher education in promoting social mobility is among the central issues in contemporary sociological and political debate. In modern societies, education has become an increasingly important factor in determining which jobs people enter and in determining their social class position. This has led some scholars to believe in the advent of open and meritocratic societies but the empirical evidence has cast doubts on this. In many countries the relationship between family background (i.e. social origins) and educational opportunity is still strong: people from more advantaged social classes have higher chances of embarking on a long educational career and gaining higher level qualifications than those from less advantaged classes (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993)

### Issues in Higher Education

**Access to college:** The percentage of girls who complete secondary education determines or influences the proportion of girls accessing higher education. The location (urban/rural, remote/hilly/desert) of institutions affects girls more than boys, where roads and public transport have not penetrated rural and remote areas. Availability of institutions/universities within reach is an important determinant. Travelling long distances in public transport is an important security issue and this is particularly significant in societies where girls are not permitted to travel alone or have to be escorted. Early marriage, household responsibilities, pressure to work, family honor and related issues inhibit girls and women from access to college.

**Class, race and gender based difference:** Class, race and gender based differences and occupation-related identity issues exert a huge but differing influence on the abilities of young boys and girls. Cultural and religious norms governing gender relations exert a strong influence on access to higher education.

**Efficiency and Quality:** Teachers are perhaps the most critical component of any system of education. How well they teach depends on motivation, qualification, experience, training, aptitude and a host of other factors, not the least of these being the environment and management structures within which they perform their role. Schwille et al. (1991) presented a detailed causal model to explain grade repetition. They hypothesized that student characteristics such as gender, family influence, place of residence, age, prior repetition, national policies regarding language, school entrance, quality of instruction, and school characteristics such as management policies, coverage of syllabus, etc. act to influence repetition. They observed that these in turn affect student learning, student motivation, and self-esteem, the examination success rate, the enrolment rate, the dropout rate and the mean time required to produce a graduate.

**Relevance of Higher Education:** Policy makers have been preoccupied in seeking ways of making the content of higher education more meaningful and the methods of delivery more cost-effective within the context of nation building and economic development. The attention has been on the role of higher education in preparing youth to participate actively and productively in national building. The literature is full of such attempts at making education more relevant. The lack of social demand for education is related to the fact that families and communities do not value or are ambivalent about formal education. Serpell (1993) pointed to the parental disillusionment with the present education systems and expressed support for more relevant

curricula; more closely related to the daily lives of students and providing practical skills for students. **Odaga** and **Heneveld** (1995) contended that the problem is even more acute with girls where gender bias in subject choices together with cultural factors limits girls' chances of progress.

#### **Inadequate Research Activities:**

Research gives rise to curiosity and a desire to look for, and find, better solutions to our everyday problems or better explanations for whatever happens. Over the years, numerous manuscripts have written about a lack of research. The issue is discussed frequently in academic institutions too. In nearly all such discussions, lack of European funding and of adequate facilities are presented as the major reasons that research has not been conducted. Perhaps the single most significant impediment to research, and also quality higher education, is the near-zero tolerance for dissent in educational institutions. We have in place a hierarchical system, which operates at every level of society at the home, school, college, university and workplace. Research thrives best where there is a group with which one can interact a 'critical mass' of critical thinkers. Ideally, the group should not comprise people from the same narrow field but from different areas. This promotes cross-fertilization of ideas. This is where universities have an edge over single-discipline institutes. Now that the government is providing substantial research funds to public-sector universities, a major hurdle has been removed. The step is long overdue and thus commendable. It is now up to the universities to produce the desired results.

#### **Conclusion**

Sociology offers a distinctive and enlightening way of seeing and understanding the social world in which we live and which shapes our lives. Sociology looks beyond normal, taken-for-granted views of reality, to provide deeper, more illuminating and challenging understandings of social life. Through its particular analytical perspective, social theories, and research methods, sociology is a discipline that expands our awareness and analysis of the human social relationships, cultures, and institutions that profoundly shape both our lives and human history. Higher Education is the best way to economic prosperity and a safer and more progressive path for overcoming the challenges of the rapidly changing technological and political world. A better higher education system is, among other things, a powerful tool to alleviate poverty and improve understanding, enhance mutual respect, and encourages tolerance and the peaceful resolution of cultural, social, ethnic, religious, and political conflicts. In higher education our academic programs and our revenue streams have changed with social mobility. Comparative analysis can allow us to tackle the social issues in higher education and to identify best practices, reinforcing our systems' strength and higher education should be equally distributed through society and should be used to cease the differences of class, gender, or race for the progress and prosperity.

#### **References:**

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