

A brief report of the proceedings - 'Equitable and Inclusive Education'

Following were the members;

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| 1. Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan
Vice-Chancellor, MANUU, TS | Chairman |
| 2. Prof. T.V.Kattimani
Vice-Chancellor, CTU, AP | Panelist |
| 3. Dr. Ujwala Chakradeo
SNDTWU, Mumbai | Panelist |
| 4. Prof. Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit
JNU, Delhi | Panelist |
| 5. Prof. Sushma Yadav
Commission Member, Delhi | Intervention |

In the formative years of free India, a consensus emerged regarding the idea of education as the mantle which would drive progress in the country. Being aware of the need of the hour to set up public education institutes which would become instrumental in creating an arena of intellectual and comprehensive knowledge exposition, the leaders were equally aware of the challenges which lay forward that could hinder this experiment from achieving success. The gravest concern emerged from the fear of whether such institutes would be accessible to those who needed them the most, or would they remain, a bubble of self-perpetuating machinery premised on exclusiveness and inaccessibility. Thus, taking into account the challenges which existed in ensuring education to the masses, one needed to formulate policies which could ensure that the educational apparatus of the nation would emerge as a democratic experiment too which could ensure the dissemination of knowledge both as a means to a better life as well as an end in itself for improving the intellectual capabilities of students. However, every policy requires a theoretical background both in its philosophy as well as an empirically grounded understanding which would guide the policy to tackle the challenges which ensure education for all. Thus, emerged the guiding principle of inclusiveness along with the constitutional philosophy of equity. While these terms have become ubiquitous in our language, we often forget the debates and contestations which existed regarding such philosophies. Thus, over the years, the idea that education should not be limited to a

particular caste, class, religion, gender or creed of people took root within the constitutional ideals of the nation. Especially in the case of public education, the idea of the public sphere emerged as an arena consisting of people from all backgrounds enriching the intellectual comprehension of issues pertaining to society as well as becoming equal members of the education sector. However, one needs to realise that education is a dynamic process and the arena of public education continues to possess both external as well as internal challenges. One needs to realise the importance of acknowledging the external disadvantages that people face within their social, familial and economic environment which hinder one from dreaming of educational goals and attainment of dreams. While the former is more visible in debates and policy formations in terms of affirmative action and deprivation points, what is equally important to highlight is the internal challenges which students from diverse backgrounds face within public universities in terms of social, educational and linguistic discriminations and disadvantages, especially within the sphere of classrooms and engagements post-lectures or hostels or canteen spaces. Thus, as educators, the imperative ideal should be to intellectualise the idea of education as a dynamic and subjective process which requires active intervention on part of those who want to carry on the legacy of the formative years of free India to ensure an education that deals in an equitable manner and promotes equal opportunity to all regardless of their caste, creed, gender, religion or race, tackling the challenges which exist for such and ensure a sphere of education which enshrines the idea of justice.