

Equal Opportunity Cell

Equal Opportunity Centre in Colleges.

1. Introduction

India is a country of diversity. It is a hub of different religions, castes and cultures. However, the Indian society is characterized by a highly entrenched system of social stratification. It is these social inequalities that created the barriers of denial of access to materials, cultural and educational resources to the disadvantaged groups of society. These disadvantaged groups are SCs, STs, women, OBC (non-creamy layer), minorities and physically challenged persons. It is clear from the demographic factors that a large section of population of our country is still disadvantaged and marginalized.

Rigid compartmentalized caste system forced SCs to be socially deprived to render services without any claim on returns. The deprivation of dignity, identity and rights resulted in their dehumanization and humiliation. The toils and tears of STs were not very different from those of SCs. The STs were isolated, neglected and exploited. Both SCs and STs continue to suffer from social disabilities even today.

Women, victims of the past traditions and customs of the Indian society, were considered to be unequal and inferior. Even today women are being oppressed. Since gender disparity is known to lead to serious social imbalance, it is essential to neutralize these distortions of the past. The minorities including Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and others collectively constitute about 19% of the Indian population.

The recent report of the Prime Minister's High Level Committee on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India has clearly indicated that the Muslim community exhibits deficits and deprivation in practically all dimensions of development. The same may be true with some variation in case of the other minorities. The physically challenged persons deserve due place and attention in the demographic setup of the nation. To ensure the same, the Parliament has passed the Act called the Person with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, Protection of Right and Full Participation) Act 1995.

On achieving independence, the nation took a conscious decision to undo the social and historic wrongs. For eradication of social disparities, various provisions were made in the Indian Constitution. Our Constitution enshrined democratization as one of the main objectives of education and anticipated the democratic expansion of education to serve social and economic upward mobility.

The Indian education system seems to have been oriented only to meet the requirement of one-third of the population, ignoring the interest of the rest. Indeed, historically education was confined to certain sections of the society and did exclude large sections of the population, making it highly undemocratic in matters of access. This exclusion in education created ever expanding disparities that adversely affected the disadvantaged groups of the society.

Since higher education is a tool for social and economic equality, the UGC has been addressing national concerns of access, equality, while ensuring the standard of quality and relevance of education by implementing policies of the Government of India and promoting several schemes and programmes for the disadvantaged groups that would help in eliminating social disparities.

India is potentially rich in human resources. To harvest the same and make the present

education system inclusive, the degree of democratization of higher education has to be increased to a large extent. Further colleges should become more responsive to the needs and constraints of the disadvantaged social groups.

2. Aims and Objectives

To oversee the effective implementation of policies and programmes for disadvantaged groups, to provide guidance and counseling with respect to academic, financial, social and other matters and to enhance the diversity within the campus.

3. Functions

- i. To ensure equity and equal opportunity to the community at large in the college and bring about social inclusion.
- ii. To enhance the diversity among the students, teaching and non-teaching staff population and at the same time eliminate the perception of discrimination.
- iii. To create a socially congenial atmosphere for academic interaction and for the growth of healthy interpersonal relationships among the students coming from various social backgrounds.
- iv. To make efforts to sensitize the academic community regarding the problems associated with social exclusion as well as aspirations of the marginalized communities.
- v. To help individuals or a group of students belonging to the disadvantaged section of society to contain the problems related to discrimination.
- vi. To look into the grievances of the weaker section of society and suggest amicable solution to their problems.
- vii. To disseminate the information related to schemes and programmes for the welfare of the socially weaker section as well as notifications/memoranda, office orders of the Government, or other related agencies/organizations issued from time to time.
- viii. To prepare barrier free formalities/procedures for admission/ registration of students belonging to the disadvantaged groups of society.
- ix. To establish coordination with the Government and other agencies/organizations to mobilize academic and financial resources to provide assistance to students of the disadvantaged groups.
- x. To organize periodic meetings to monitor the progress of different schemes.
- xi. To adopt measures to ensure due share of utilization by SC/ST in admissions, recruitments (teaching and non-teaching posts) and to improve their performances.
- xii. To sensitize the college on the problems of SC/ST and other disadvantaged groups.

4. Advisory Committee

There shall be an Advisory Committee with the Principal as Chairperson and three other members including an Adviser, to review the implementation of various schemes and programmes for the welfare of the disadvantaged and marginalized groups of the society and other related activities undertaken by the college as well as implementation of reservation policy in admission and recruitment for SC, ST, PH, OBC (non-creamy layer) and others, if any. The Committee should meet at least once in four months and action taken on decisions is to be

reviewed in the subsequent meetings. The Principal shall nominate one of the teachers, who has an innate interest in the welfare of the disadvantaged social groups, as an Adviser.

(a) The Adviser in the college shall:

- i. Oversee/monitor various welfare schemes/ programmes sponsored by the Government of India/State Government, UGC or any agency/ organization as well as those devised by the college/affiliating University for the Disadvantaged Groups for their effective implementation
- ii. Be responsible for the effective functioning of SC/ST Cell and other such Cells/Centres dealing with the problems of different socially disadvantaged groups.
- iii. Convene the meetings of incharge of other Committees/Programmes dealing with social issues such as Gender Sensitization Committee against sexual harassment (GSCASH), National Service Schemes (NSS) etc. to review their activities.
- iv. The Advisor shall submit the progress/review report to the Principal. The Coordinators of SC/ST Cell, Remedial Coaching and other schemes/ Women's Study Centre, Population Education Cell etc. shall be closely associated with the Equal Opportunity Centre.

1	Principal	Chairperson
2	Teacher	Member
3	Teacher	Member (Female Teacher)
4	Teacher	Adviser/Coordinator