

Education as a Means of Social Change – Study with Regard to Dhankut, a Group Living In District Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT Present study has been done on a group called Dhankut to analyse whether education is a means of social change with regard to them. Dhankut are mainly illiterate and economically poor residing in Dhankuttyapura, surrounded by Brahmins, Kayastha, Muslims and Vaish. This group is mentioned as Dhankut in district gazetteer and voter's list without any caste description of SC/ST/OBC. It is neither agricultural, occupational nor service class group. They are engaged in retail work of cereal selling, betel selling and thela pulling. Dhankut women are engaged in cow dung collection and making of cow dung cakes. Social change is influenced by many factors, education is one of them. Education helps in eradication of poverty, class discrimination and gender biasness. It promotes equality and justice in the society. It provides opportunities for progress and mobility but with regard to Dhankut Education itself is increasing social segregation and class discriminations. Study reveals that though Dhankut are aware of importance of education for improving their social status but still they are not promoting their children to take education. They feel that education is waste of time and money as it does not provide them with jobs. Thus with regard to Dhankut Education has not accelerated the process of social change.

"Education is the very foundation of good citizenship... It is principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment"

- Brown v. Board of Education 98L Ed 873 at 880; (1953) 347 US 483 at 494

Social change means a change in social structure, in the size of society, in the composition or balance of its parts or in the types of its organization (Ginsberg, 1958).

Social change is an incontestable feature of cultural reality. It is another thing that its pace varies from age to age, culture to culture and from one area of culture to that of another. For a variety of reasons the pace of social change has been rather slow in earlier cultures, chief reasons being the hold of authoritarianism, religion, illiteracy etc. With the decline of authoritarianism and religion, with the rise of science, technology and industry, with the attendant fast means of communication and travel, the process of social change has been accelerated. It can be said that social mobility comes through education.

Social change is influenced by so many factors such as historical, cultural, geographical, biological, demographical, political, economical and ideological factor. Education is also an important tool for social change (Biersteadt, 1957).

Education is concerned with learning. Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge or skills by instruction, study or experience.

Education refers to the methods by which a society attempts to direct and accelerate the learning process of its members (Pater, 1984).

In the widest sense, education includes every process, except the solely genetic that helps to form a person's mind, character or physical capacity. It is life-long, for we must learn new ways of thought and action with every major change in our lives (Malinowski, 1947).

Therefore, every society should supervise the education of its members. At some point in his childhood, everyone is formally educated, though not necessarily in a school.

Education belongs to the general process known as enculturation, by which the growing person is initiated into the way of life of his society. As one sector in the great network of culture, education reacts to events in other parts of the culture and may on occasion affect these events itself.

Education in India is the new caste and is even more effective than the old ones. Education seems to provide the solution for all problems that arise on the social and individual level of a society. Education has been increasingly regarded as a major instrument of social change. The deep foundations of inequality of the sexes are built in the minds of men and women through

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a socialization process which continues to be extremely powerful. The only institution which can counteract the effect of this process is the educational system. If education is to promote equality for women, it must make a deliberate, planned and sustained effort so that the new values of equality of the sexes can replace the traditional value system of inequality.

Education is a means for development or social change in the desired directions (Banks, 1968). Education together with caste and religion is of an utmost importance in partner selection within the arrangements of marriages by the families (Eckensberger et al. 2000). Marriage patterns are only one example for the interwoven relations of education and social structure (Clemens, 1984).

Functionalists have often viewed the educational system as offering opportunities for mobility for individuals. "Education is helpful in solving poverty and creates social mobility" (Weinberg, 1971). Conflict theorists have generally stressed the role of structural inequality. Social class background of individuals is positively and strongly related to their educational and occupational aspirations and achievements. It is the responsibility of the educational system to bring the different social classes and groups together and thus promote the emergence of an egalitarian and integrated society. But at present, instead of doing so, education itself is tending to increase social segregation and to perpetuate and widen class distinctions. Scholars elsewhere (Freire, 1972; Illich, 1973) have also expressed serious doubts about the effectiveness of education as a mechanism for equitable development.

It is particularly doubtful that education helps to improve the position of the poor and powerless, to increase equality and justice in the society (Clemens, 1984). Economic and social transformations come by education (Chitnis, 1978). But educational opportunities, as is now widely recognized, can't be equalized, nor can education equalize opportunity unless society is reasonably equal (Ahmad, 1978).

Present study has been done on a group of people called Dhankut, residing in Dhankuttpura of district Bahraich of Uttar Pradesh. It is a small, neglected, unobserved group by the academicians and researchers. It is neither agricultural, occupational nor service class group. They are engaged in different retail works. They are listed

in voter's list with the name of Dhankut without any caste or sub-caste description, nothing is known about their history, origin or fore fathers. Their living place is surrounded by Brahmins, Kayastha and Vaish community. Dhankut is almost an illiterate group. The spread of education is either very low or absent amongst them.

METHODOLOGY

It is a primary data based work with the help of participant observation and schedule based interview. Dhankut are 2687 in number (2001 census), 1097 (582 boys and 515 girls) are children i.e. below the age of 18 years. Therefore out of 1590 adults Dhankuts (791 males and 799 females) only 300 respondents above the age of 18 years have been chosen on the basis of random sampling for the present study. Participant observation revealed that out of 300, 156 are illiterates, 100 are educated upto 5th standard, 19 up to 8th, 10 up to 10th, 10 up to 12th, whereas 3 are graduates and only 2 are post graduates.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to analyse effect of education on the social life of Dhankut a number of questions were asked regarding their opinion about education, meaning of education, number of persons educated in their family, importance and benefits of education, and impact of education on their children's progress. Analysis of data revealed following facts:

Opinion about Education

Education exists since the evolution of man on this earth but at that time education was verbal and was communicated from one generation to another. In course of time man became civilized which created an environment of specialization and many educational institutions came into being. Today education is concerned within the culture and outside the culture. The latter is concerned with different types of institutions, but what Dhankut think about it, is given in table 1.

Table 1 shows that all the respondents 300 (100%) have a clear vision regarding the meaning of education. They all have similar opinion that education means that which is taught in schools and colleges. Dhankut did not opt for other two options.

Meaning of Education

Education can be understood in wider and in narrower sense. In the wider sense education is concerned with overall development of the personality whereas in narrower sense education means bookish knowledge or that concerned with reading and writing. Dhankut understand education in its narrower sense only.

Table 2 shows that all the respondents whether males and females have same response. All 300 (100%) respondents say- 'yes', education is concerned with reading and writing.

Education in Family

The growth and development of a group, society or culture is dependent upon the kind of education it receives. Education provides the standard by which we can judge the quality of people. It also helps in understanding development and progress of a group. So far as Dhankut are concerned in order to judge their standard in society it was asked whether anyone is educated in their family?

Table 3 shows that all the respondents 157 (52.3%) males and 143 (47.7%) females say that 'yes', at least one person is educated in his/her family. Majority of Dhankut are almost illiterate, hence the responses are mainly of the respondents who are educated upto the 5th standard. How many people are educated in a family is shown in table 4.

Situation of Education in Family

For the maintenance of culture education requires no attention because every member of a culture knows its rule and regulation and can survive with in the culture without education, but otherwise education is very important. The availability of education depends upon opportunities, circumstances, financial support etc. So access to education is not uniform in every society. Dhankut know the importance of education and its significance but how many are educated in a family is explained in the table 4.

Table 4 shows that 158 (52.7%) respondents say only one, 93 (31%) say only two, 38 (12.7%)

Table 1: Opinion about education

S.No.		What do you understand by education?						Total	
		Which tells about culture		Which teaches about livelihood		Which is taught in school and colleges			
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1.	Males	-	-	-	-	157	100%	157	52.3
2.	Female	-	-	-	-	143	100%	143	47.7
	Total	-	-	-	-	300	100%	300	100.0

Table 2: Meaning of education

S.No.	Sex Ratio	Is reading and writing education?				Total	
		Yes		No			
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	157	100	-	-	157	52.3
2	Female	143	100	-	-	143	47.7
	Total	300	100	-	-	300	100

Table 3: Education in family

S.No.	Sex Ratio	Is anyone educated in your family?				Total	
		Yes		No			
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	157	100	-	-	157	52.3
2	Female	143	100	-	-	142	47.7
	Total	300	100	-	-	300	100.0

say- only three, 10 (3.3%) say four and 1 (0.3%) says- five people are educated in their family. Thus mainly one or two persons are educated in a family. These educated persons are almost from children groups.

Importance of Education

We are not equal in every respect though we belong to same genetic pool when an individual thinks about it he finds some additional parameters which create differences between two individuals or groups. Education is a good parameter which very much affects one's life. Education is very important in modern context, what Dhankut feel in this regard is given in table 5.

Table 5 shows that 127 (80.9%) males and 121 (84.6%) females or overall 248 (82.7%) respondents say that education is necessary for their lives. But 30 (19.1%) males and 22 (15.4%) females or overall 52 (17.3%) respondents say that it is not necessary. Some Dhankut have gained money and prosperity even not being educated hence they feel that education is not necessary in life, but number of such Dhankut is not much.

Relation of Education and Service

Man worked with nature, with agriculture and interfered with culture but all these were free zones where man could do any thing. Today service is associated with education. An individual may be a peon, clerk, officer according to standard of his/her education. It shows a direct link between education and service but what Dhankut think about this is given in table 6.

Table 6 shows that all 300 (100%) respondents share the same opinion. They say that "Yes", education is co-related with service. They feel that other communities are different in many respect from them as they are educated and are in service.

Importance of Education in Service

Nobody will accept this fact that service can be obtained only by education and it is true that money can be earned even without having any education but it is also a fact that education makes a golden path for good services. In this respect what Dhankut think about access of service by education is given in table 7.

Table 4: Situation of education in family

S. No.	Sex Ratio	How many people are educated?											
		One		Two		Three		Four		Five		Total	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	78	49.6	52	33.3	20	12.7	07	4.4	-	-	157	52.3
2	Female	80	55.9	41	28.7	18	12.6	03	2.2	01	0.6	143	47.7
	Total	158	52.7	93	31.0	38	12.7	10	3.3	01	0.3	300	100.0

Table 5: Importance of education

S.No.	Sex Ratio	Do you believe in necessity of education?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	127	80.9	30	19.1	157	52.3
2	Female	121	84.6	22	15.4	143	47.7
	Total	248	82.7	52	17.3	300	100.0

Table 6: Relation between education and service

S.No.	SexRatio	Is education related with service?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	157	100.0	-	-	157	52.3
2	Female	143	100.0	-	-	143	47.7
	Total	300	100.0	-	-	300	100.0

Table 7 shows that all the respondents differ in opinion 119 (75.8%) males and 116 (81.1%) females or overall 235 (78.3%) respondents say that yes, education is quite necessary for job. But 38 (24.2%) males and 27 (18.9%) females or overall 65 (21.2%) say that “No”, education is not necessary for job. Some educated Dhankut are doing very low profile job and some are without any job, hence they feel that education is not necessary for getting job, though majority of respondents agree that education is the sole way to get a job.

Cause of Dhankut's absence in jobs

There are reasons for the lack of participation in govt. jobs - it may be due to poverty, due to illiteracy or due to lack of inclination. What is the cause of absence of Dhankut in job is explained in table 8.

Table 8 shows that all respondents have different opinion from different categories. 107 (68.2%) males and 120 (83.9%) females or 227 (75.7%) respondents say that only illiteracy is responsible for it. They think that when they will

be educated better opportunities will come automatically in their way. 50 (31.8%) males and 23 (16.1%) females or overall 73 (24.3%) respondents say that poverty is main cause of absence of government jobs. They think that money can provide better opportunities for jobs.

Benefits of Education

An illiterate cannot be a doctor, engineer or IAS, to acquire these statuses one should be educated. Education is not merely concerned with jobs it also gives better understanding.

Education helps in acculturation and sanskritisation. It also opens new avenues for progress and enhances the personality of the people. One can secure the future of himself/ herself or that of his community or country with the help of education. What Dhankut perceive in this regard is explained in table 9.

Table 9 shows that 79 (50.4%) males and 67 (46.9%) females or 146 (47.7%) respondents say that education can produce good money. 69 (43.9%) males and 58 (40.4%) females or overall 127 (40.4%) respondents say that their children

Table 7: Importance of education in service

S.No.	Sex Ratio	Is education necessary in getting jobs?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	119	75.8	38	24.2	152	52.3
2	Female	116	81.1	27	18.9	143	47.7
	Total	235	78.3	65	21.2	300	100.0

Table 8: Cause of absence in jobs

S.No.	SexRatio	What is cause of absence of Dhankut in govt. jobs?					
		Poverty		Illiteracy		Total	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	50	31.8	107	68.2	157	52.3
2	Female	23	16.1	120	83.9	143	47.7
	Total	73	24.3	227	75.7	300	100.0

Table 9: Benefits of education

S.No.	Sex Rate	Which type of benefits can you get through education?									
		Better understanding		Good future of children		Good future of community		Good source of income		Total	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	-	-	69	43.9	09	5.7	79	50.4	157	52.3
2	Female	10	6.9	58	40.4	08	5.6	67	46.9	143	47.7
	Total	10	6.3	127	40.4	17	5.6	146	47.7	300	100.0

can get a good future. They think that if parents are educated they can provide good knowledge to their children 9 (5.7%) males and 8 (5.6%) females or overall 17 (5.6%) respondents say that education can make a good future of the community. Only 10 (6.9%) females say that with the help of education they can understand others in a better way. It is striking that not a single male respondent thinks about this option. All male respondents think that education is not important for better understanding. Here majority of respondents feel that children's future and good money can be secured only through education.

Impact of Education on Dhankut

Table 10 is supplementary to 4.17. It shows impact of education on Dhankut, how it increases respect in the society and how does it affect career, marriage and personality of the Dhankut.

Table 10 shows that. 54 (34.3%) males and 75 (52.4%) females or overall 129 (43%) say that education increases status as educated are considered wise men. 57 (36.3%) males and 37 (25.9%) females or overall 94 (31.3%) respondents say that education increases social respect. 27 (17.2%) males and 23 (16.1%) females or overall 50 (16.7%) say that education gives good options for the marriage. 19 (12.1%) males and 08 (5.6%) females or overall 27 (9.0%) say that education provides opportunities for services. So majority of respondents connect education with respect and status rather than with marriage or service

because they know that many community persons are educated but they got neither good job nor good marriages.

Effect of Education on Role and Status

It has already been noticed that education has a positive effect on the personality. It helps in raising the standard of people of a group. Table 11 makes it evident that Dhankut also feel that education has changed their lives to some extent.

Table 11 shows that all the respondents 157 (100%) males and 143 (100%) females say that yes, their lives have been changed by education as education plays an important role in job arrangement, marriage settlement and enhancing social status and prestige(see table 10). It was due to absence of education that adjacent communities looked down upon Dhankut as inferior group, since they are getting educated now, other communities have stated interacting with them.

Education and Children's Progress

Future of a society or a group depends upon the progress of its children. Whether education improves children's progress and what Dhankut think about this correlation is explained in the table 12.

Table 12 shows that all the respondents have different opinion regarding progress of their children 69 (44.0%) males and 72 (50.3%) females

Table 10: Impact of education among Dhankut

S.No.	Sex	Rate	What is impact of education on you?								Total	
			Education increases respect in society		Education provides opportunities for service		Secures better marriage		Educated are considered wise man			
			Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	57	36.3	19	12.1	27	17.2	54	34.3	157	52.3	
2	Female	37	25.9	08	5.6	23	16.1	75	52.4	143	47.7	
	Total	94	31.3	27	9.0	50	16.7	129	43	300	100.0	

Table 11: Effect of education on role and status

S.No.	SexRatio	Do you find any change in your life by education?					
		Yes		No		Total	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	157	100.0	-	-	157	52.3
2	Female	143	100.0	-	-	143	47.7
	Total	300	100.0	-	-	300	100.0

Table 12: Education and children's progress

S.No.	Sex Rate	What do you think about your child's progress ?											
		Sufficient		Normal		Poor		Excellent		Don't know		Total	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Male	52	33.1	17	10.8	7	4.5	12	7.6	69	44.0	157	52.3
2	Female	37	25.9	18	25.9	9	6.3	7	4.9	72	50.3	143	47.7
	Total	89	29.7	35	11.7	16	5.3	19	6.3	141	47.0	300	100.0

or overall 141 (47.0%) respondents say that they “don’t know”. Dhankut is not a literate group hence most of them were not in a position to tell any thing about this question. 52 (33.1%) males and 37 (25.9%) females or overall 89 (29.7%) say that progress of their children is sufficient, 35 (11.7%) respondents say that normal, 16 (5.3%) say that it is poor and 19 (6.3%) say that it is excellent.

Thus we see that education is a good tool for social change. Education gives knowledge to an individual irrespective of his/ her culture. Culture has its limitation and it can fulfill only limited desire of its people but beyond it, desire can take its full shape with the help of education (Mead, 1943). Study reveals that Dhankut consider education as a device which is taught in school and colleges. Reading and writing are considered by them as main trait of education. At least one person is educated in every Dhankut family but all these educated persons are under the category of children. Maximum elderly Dhankut are illiterate. Most of Dhankut consider education as a source of money, service, prestige and knowledge giving device but some Dhankut don't consider education as a boon because they see that many youth are wandering for jobs even after having good education so they think that education is wastage of time and money. Apart from this divergence in their ideas about education, all accept that education is a good source of job and money. For Dhankut service means government jobs but they don't like to be either sweeper, goods carrier or servant in a shop. They prefer work related to writing though no Dhankut is engaged in writing work.

Participant observation revealed that only three Dhankut are in government jobs and all are fourth class employee. Poverty and illiteracy are the main causes of lack of jobs. Dhankut feel that they can lead good life with good service. Education gives better understanding, opportunities for jobs, secures good future for the children and for the community, Dhankut feel

that education can change their status in the society and also feel that good marriage proposals and respect, all are secured by education only. Reservation in educational institutions is a prime source to get education as many deprived caste groups are getting education with the assistance of reservation policy. Since Dhankut are not recognised as SC/ST/OBC their children lack reservation in educational institutions. They are not provided with free ship facility also due to non recognition of their caste. Influence of poverty is manifest on their children's education. Dhankut are not satisfied with their children's progress and community's children as well.

It is ironical that though they understand the importance of education but so far as preference for children education is concerned majority of them are not interested in children's education, but then again it is because of poverty that they are not able to provide education to their children. Instead of education children have taken up different occupations to supplement the family income. Dhankut feel that it is with government's financial support and reservation policy that their social conditions may be changed.

Living with adjacent communities, who are educated and in government jobs, Dhankut have realised that education is a tool for social change as it provides respect in society, decision making power and helps in getting government jobs. They have also observed that it is because of education that other communities are progressing in the society.

“Education produces social change but also social class which creates conflict in the society” (Corwin, 1974). Those Dhankut, who are educated and in service (only three), have interacted with other communities and their children, who are studying in academic institutions are in contact with the new knowledge and outer world as “education brings modernization”. It is creating a gap between educated and uneducated Dhankut. “Education creates cultural crisis in working class” (Jackson and Marsden, 1962).

That group of Dhankut who is uneducated and poor is still associated with original culture today and on the other hand the rich and educated Dhankut are adopting new cultural traits from higher caste group. So among the social structure of the Dhankut, two cultures are existing and creating a superiority and inferiority complex amongst them.

Education accelerates the process of social change, but in case of Dhankut this process has been slow due to illiteracy, lack of caste certificate, reservation policy and financial crisis.. Education leads to mobility which in turn leads to progress. Since majority of Dhankut are mainly uneducated they have little option for mobility and progress, hence they are trying to survive within their culture with given resources. It can be concluded that though education is a means of social change but with regard to Dhankut this is not very true.

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