

Higher Education in Maharashtra

Addressing issues of Unequal Access, Academic deficit and Social Distance

Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat

**Chairman, Indian Council of Social Science
Research, Delhi and**

Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

20th Convocation Address

**20th Convocation of North Maharashtra University,
Jalgaon (Maharashtra) ,**

May 26 ,2012

Higher Education in Maharashtra:

**Addressing issues of Unequal Access, Academic
deficit and Social Distance**

Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat

Prof. Sudhir Meshram Vice-Chancellor of the University, Deans, Registrar,
Management Council Members, Academic Council Members, Senate members,

Chairman of institutions, Principals, Directors & Head of the Departments, faculty members, Non teaching staff, students , persons from media and ladies and gentlemen.

I thank Professor Sudhir Meshram, Vice-Chancellor of the University for inviting me to participate in the event and give the Convocation address.

I begin with my hearty congratulations to all students who have earned the degrees and to the faculty and non-teaching staff who ultimately made it possible .As a teacher I know ,how teachers feel happy when they see the fruits of their efforts being realized.

I understand that this University besides providing access to higher education to all the students in general, is particularly serving the students from tribal, ,backward rural area with one fourth of tribal population. It is helping to realize the goal of inclusive education, in so far as the weaker sections have been provided an environment to enhance their human capabilities.

Friends, given this back ground, I wish to delve on one of the important issues, namely of “Inclusive Education”- providing equal access particularly from the weaker sections to higher education in Maharashtra. I would also like to discuss relevant policy issues, particularly those related to the academic needs of the students and those related to diversity.

Inclusive Education as a Goal

The prime goal that has guided the policy on higher education includes expansion, expansion with inclusiveness (equal access to all) ,quality and relevant education. The Inclusive education was brought at centre stage in the 11th Plan (2006-2012). The focus on inclusive education has continued in the 12 th plan as well (2012-2017) .Inclusive education with equal access to those who desire and deserve is based on the understanding that the State should develop a policy in a manner such that ,it provides equal opportunity to all to realize their capabilities and potential individually and collectively ,so that they can participate in economic development and also benefit out of it.

What does Inclusive policy involve? Inclusive policy involves strategies that increase access to higher education to those groups who lack access, both in absolute and relative terms (compared with the others). Among other things, the identification of such groups with their group specific constraints is critical for developing policy of inclusive education. The exclusion from access to higher education occurs for number of reasons and reflects in the disparities not only between poor and non-poor ,but also on caste, ethnic, religious and gender lines .Besides economic factors

,the social belonging in terms of caste ,ethnic ,religious and gender lines also matters for lower access to higher education.

Therefore, I wish to first to share with you the nature of unequal access to higher education in Maharashtra .Let us first discuss the access rate ;overall level and then the various economic and social groups ,namely poor and non-poor ,occupation groups and for Scheduled castes scheduled tribes, OBC and other castes, among religious groups for Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain and Buddhist in rural and urban areas during 2004/5 based on the National Sample Survey on Employment and Unemployment Survey .(NSS) and also the NSS survey on Education for 2007 /08 .

The extent of higher education is generally measured by enrolment ratios in higher education. Usually, three alternative methods are employed to estimate the extent of access to higher education, namely, (a) Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER); (b) Net Enrolment Ratio (NER); and (c) Enrolment of Eligible (EER).

Generally the GER is used for measuring the access to higher education, which is a ratio of total post higher secondary students of all ages enrolled in undergraduate/post-graduate/ diploma courses to total population in the age group of 18 to 23 years.

Nature of Unequal Access in Higher Education

Rural –urban Disparities -At over all level in 2004/5 the GER was 20.50 % ,with 11.50% for rural and 31% for urban .Thus the GER was three time lower in rural areas ,compared with urban areas .In 2007/8 the GER rate was 23 % at overall level , and 14% and 33% for rural and urban area respectively ,the GER being lower in rural areas by two and half times.(table 1)

Inter caste –disparities

While the GER at overall level during 2007/8 was 23 % .But the GER was much higher for higher caste (29%) followed by 22% for SC, 18% for OBC and 9% for ST. Thus STs lagged far behind the other social groups.

Similar pattern is observed in rural area .As against 14% GER at over all level ,the rate was 19% for higher castes, 12% for OBC, and SC and 6 % ST.

Similar graded inequality is observed in urban areas. The GER rate was 34% for higher castes, followed by about 30% for OBC/SC and 18% for ST.

Thus the higher castes did much better compared with OBC/SC/ST in accessing the higher education . The ST falls much behind the rest of the caste groups. The SC did better than OBC in rural area, while both did similarly in urban area .

Inter- Religion disparities

Table 2 gives the GER for three main religions . In 2007/8 as against the over all GER of 23% ,the GER for Hindus and Buddhists was close to overall average (23%) ,but it was about half for Muslims (13%). In urban area, the GER for Hindus was highest at 37% followed by 34% for Buddhists and 15% for Muslims.

Table 3 gives the GER for social groups among the religious groups

Pertinently, the STs from among the Hindus lagged far behind .The OBC comes the next, followed by SC .The higher castes among all religious groups did better in gaining access to higher education. Among the OBC the Muslims lag far behind compared with Hindu OBCs. In case of SC (Hindu & Buddhist) the GER was somewhat higher than the Hindu SCs.

Gender disparities

In 2007/8 the GER for male and female was more or less similar, with slight edge for the male. This was also the case for SC, OBC and higher castes .In the case of STs however; the GER was much lower for female. In the case religious groups, the GER was somewhat lower for Hindu and Muslim females compared with males. In the case of Christians and Buddhists the reverse was true, female GER was higher than male. (Table 4 and 5)

Poor –non poor Disparities

Occupational Groups -Differences in GER are also equally visible across occupational groups in the rural and the urban areas. In the rural areas, GER is generally higher among the self-employed farmers and non-farm household engaged in non-farm production and business –the GER ranges from 11 % to 14 %.The GER was quite low for farm (7%) and nonfarm labour households.(9.50%) .In urban the GER was higher for self-employed (those engaged in production and business) and regular salaried households (32% to 35%) ,compared with casual labor households .(11%) (table 6 and 7)

Thus, both in the rural and the urban areas the enrolment rates for the casual wage labours were the lowest as compared with self-employed and regular wage and salaried workers. Similar pattern was observed for the social groups.

In urban areas the regular salaried from ST,SC and Muslim had less access to higher education compared to higher caste .The GER was also low for casual labour from Muslim religion .

Poor and Access to higher Education-There is close connection between income and enrolment rate .The table 8 shows GER by income classes in 2007/8 .It indicates that GER was 46% in the top income bracket and it reduced successively with the decline in the income group . As against 46% and 25% for first top two income groups, the GER is only 6% and 11% for the bottom two income groups, indicating a clear inverse relationship between income and access to higher education. Same relationship is observed in rural and urban areas .In fact in urban area in the highest income bracket the GER is 62% as against only 7% in the lowest income bracket. In rural area the GER in top and bottom income group is 13% and 5% respectively.

Privatization and unequal access to higher education-

We are aware that for various reasons the government has liberalized the entry of private sector in higher education which has implications for access to higher education to the poorer sections in the society . In 1995/6 the percentage of students in the government institutions was 20 % and that of private aided was 62 % .Together government, local body and private aided accounted about 92% and the remaining 8% by private unaided educational Institutions. Twenty years later in 2007/8 the share of government /local bodies /private aided declined to 76% and that of private aided increased to 22% .The major decline has come in private aided ,which indicates the switch over to private self-financing institutions. This also indicates the decline in the philanthropic initiative in education sector, which has been the strong tradition of Maharashtra. (Table 9 and 10)

In fact in the private un-aided institutions the share of students has grown at highest rate of 17% in rural and 8% in urban area. The share of government institutions increased at per annum rate of about 3%.

The share of the students in bottom income groups is about 12% which is lower compared with 28% for top income groups .The percentage share is nearly same for the middle income groups. The poor section thus depends more on the government educational institutions than the relatively non poor sections.

Policy Issues that need consideration

Issue of unequal access

These findings indicate that the problem of multiple disparities in access to higher education remains at the core of higher education in Maharashtra .The overall

enrolment rate of 23 % is higher than all India rate .In that sense Maharashtra is doing better than some of the States .But there are large disparities across social/ethnic/religious and economic groups in access to higher education. And increasing privatization through self-financing institutions and simultaneous decline in the ratio of students in private aided institutions with slow increase in government institutions has led to the problems of unequal access to some groups in Maharashtra.

There are certain economic and social and religious groups which suffered from lower access to post-secondary education.

The extent of enrolment is particularly low in the rural areas as compared with the urban areas. Both in urban areas and rural areas among economic groups the **poor (in terms of monthly per capita consumption expenditure) casual wage farm and nonfarm wage labour, small and marginal farmers** , suffered from less access compared with higher income groups and self-employed farmers and non-farm producers and those engaged in businesses.

Among the caste, ethnic and religious groups, the **access is much lower for ST, Economically backward OBC, Muslim and SC (Hindu and Buddhist) in that order, compared with higher caste (non/ST/SC/OBC) and other religious groups.**

Among each of these economic groups the GER is lower for persons from ST, SC poor OBC, female (particularly SC, ST, OBC) and Muslims compared with their counterparts from higher caste and religious groups.

Education being the social need of every body, in majority of the countries, efforts have been made to provide education, by public or private providers, in a manner such that everybody gets fair access and an opportunity to develop their human capabilities, so that they can be able to participate and benefit from the gains of economic development. The economic opportunities in terms of access to resources and income may be unequal, but equal access to higher education and skill to all persons, poor- and non poor help to use economic opportunities on equal footing. It is in this sense that in unequal societies, education serves as equalizer by offering equal opportunities to all to develop their human capabilities.

The low access to higher education in India to certain social groups, like ST, SC, poor OBC ,female (particularly from rural area), Muslim, wage labour and finally the poor (irrespective of their social/religious/gender status) reduces their chances to expand their human capabilities and eventually places them in disadvantaged position to use the opportunities offered by economic growth. Unfortunately the groups with low access to higher education constitute a sizable section of India's

population. The unequal access to higher education to poor and marginalized social and religious groups, the education turns out as a prominent source of economic inequalities. This is the most disturbing feature of our higher education system. Therefore, the Maharashtra government should give a serious relook at our higher education policy.

The State has to own the responsibility to provide higher education to those who deserve and desire, and the participation of private sector should be allowed only in a manner such that it provides access to education to poor and disadvantaged sections in society. The policy interventions should recognize the constraints that these groups face in accessing higher education. Therefore, while addressing these constraints, we must develop group specific interventions and schemes for ST, SC, OBC and Muslim and poor (farm and nonfarm wage labor), and poor in general and particularly from these groups.

Vocational Education –Affordable in new skill

The one issue that needs attention at policy level is the reform of vocational education in the State for making the education relevant and inclusive of the poor. The new entrants in the higher education system will necessary come from rural area and economically and social disadvantaged background. Bulk of them will be first generation learners. It emerged from the data that in 2007/8 (table 15 and 16), of the total student who completed higher secondary, about 57% joined various higher education courses, which means 43% go to other courses and get drop out from upward movement in higher education. (measured by Eligibility enrolment ratio) The proportion of drop outs at higher secondary level is higher among the lower income group. It is also low for ST, OBC and Muslim. It is for these groups that the government should reform the policy of vocational education, with a provision for up-ward mobility. The vocational education will have to be affordable and relevant which will enhance their employability. The vocational education should necessarily be in the skills which are in demand in current and medium term period and also suits the needs of farm and non farm wage labor in rural area, and small and marginal farmers households in general and, particularly from ST, SC, economically weak OBC and Muslim and Buddhist. The MHRD has taken initiative for skill education which State government could follow.

Bridge and Catching up academic support

Besides the fact that bulk of the new entrants will be from rural areas and from economically and socially disadvantaged background, they will also come from diverse social, religious and cultural backgrounds and would take education in the

company of the relatively better off groups ,who would be from socially advanced background .Although we recognize the need for remedial support to academically weak students ,we do not have comprehensive schemes in place for ‘Bridging and catching up academic support” .The universities and colleges need to develop schemes for academic support both in languages and core subjects for catching up with the advanced courses .

Multi-cultural Education to enhance knowledge and skill to deal with diversity and prejudices for harmonious student Community and campus life

There is also need to enhance understanding and skills of students who come from diverse social/cultural/religious background to deal with diversity and for reducing cultural barriers. Recently the issue of social distance and discrimination of students from certain caste, ethnic, religious and regional background has surfaced in major way and some efforts are underway to develop policies, legal and positive to deal with discrimination and social distancing in the universities and educational institutions. The countries like USA, South Africa, U.K and others have developed multi-cultural education, including courses at undergraduate and post graduate level to enhance the understanding of various cultures ,so students recognize and respect diversity of culture and develop participatory community life on university and campus which is socially inclusive and mixed and harmonious .The State of Maharashtra can take lead in this matter and develop a policy for multi-cultural education to create attitudes among the students which is secular ,mixed and harmonious ,so that all can learn from each other and from their diversity of experiences.

Table 1: Percentage of Enrolled (GER) in Post Higher Secondary Education by Social Group

Social Group	2007-08			1995-96		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
ST	6.14	18.40	8.78	NA	NA	7.53
SC	12.16	30.29	22.46	8.27	13.97	10.42
OBC	11.98	30.22	18.24	NA	NA	NA
Others excluding OBC	19.38	36.62	29.46	NA	NA	NA
Other including	15.49	34.76	24.84	8.01	22.28	15.38

OBC						
Total	13.85	33.31	23.06	7.49	21.33	13.89

Source: NSS round on Education: 1995-96 & 2007-08

Table 2: Enrolment Ratio in higher education by Religion

Religion	2007-08		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Hindu	14.56	37.31	24.12
Muslim	5.16	15.39	12.76
Christian	NA	49.98	36.28
Jain	NA	86.55	79.65
Buddhist	12.82	33.73	23.37
Total	13.85	33.31	23.06

Source: NSS round on Education: 2007-08

Table3: Enrolment Ratio for social group by religion

Religion	Social Group	2007-08		
		Rural	Urban	Total
Hinduism	ST	6.23	18.55	8.75
	SC	11.53	28.57	21.72
	OBC	11.90	32.56	18.66

	Other	22.37	45.31	34.08
	Total	14.56	37.31	24.12
Muslim	OBC	11.30	9.59	10.20
	Other	3.99	16.04	13.16
	Total	5.16	15.39	12.76
Jain	OBC	50.01	NA	50.01
	Other	NA	86.55	83.98
	Total	41.55	86.55	79.65
Buddhist	SC	13.21	34.73	24.07
	Total	12.82	33.73	23.37
Total		13.85	33.31	23.06

Source: NSS round on Education: 2007-08; Note- estimates may suffer from problem of sample size

Table 4 : Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education for social Group by Gender

Social Groups	2007-08			1995-96		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total

ST	11.55	5.57	8.78	10.85	3.01	7.17
SC	22.82	22.05	22.46	13.79	6.52	10.28
OBC	20.01	16.15	18.24	NA	NA	NA
Other excluding OBC	29.42	29.52	29.46	NA	NA	NA
Others including OBC	25.58	23.95	24.84	18.94	11.59	15.23
Total	23.95	22.00	23.06	17.33	10.08	13.72

Source: NSS round on Education: 2007-08 & 1995-96

Table 5 : Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education for Religious Group by Gender: 2007-08

Religious Groups	Male	Female	Total
Hindu	25.66	22.30	24.12
Muslim	13.42	11.95	12.76
Christian	31.72	45.78	36.28
Jain	49.29	115.31	79.65
Buddhist	20.38	26.30	23.37
Total	23.95	22.00	23.06

Source: NSS 64 Round on Education: 2007-8

Table 6 : Enrolment Ratio for Household type by social group

Sector	Household Type	2007-08
--------	----------------	---------

		ST	SC	OBC	Others	Total
Rural	Self employed non Agriculture.	NA	NA	10.99	21.97	14.38
	Agricultural labour	3.21	8.71	6.52	8.91	6.85
	Other lab	0.00	33.66	8.68	4.34	9.56
	self employed agriculture	9.88	4.24	11.30	13.30	11.76
	Others	38.30	19.22	40.66	87.77	57.01
Urban	self employed	38.77	23.86	26.18	35.09	31.90
	regular wage	11.01	28.70	34.85	39.12	34.94
	casual lab	25.45	24.26	2.51	3.82	10.71
	Others	5.75	92.78	96.07	117.30	94.44
	Total	8.78	22.46	18.24	29.46	23.06

Source: NSS round on Education: 2007-08

Table 7 : Enrolment Ratio for Household type by Religion

Sector	Household Type	Hindu	Muslim	Buddhist	Total
Rural	Self Employed in non Agriculture	15.80	9.84	NA	14.38
	Agricultural labour	6.57	5.70	10.92	6.85
	Other labour	9.68	NA	21.97	9.56
	self employed in agriculture	11.97	NA	12.94	11.76
	Others	62.57	NA	21.89	57.01
Urban	self employed	36.55	16.31	5.30	31.90
	regular wage	37.29	17.96	30.36	34.94
	casual labour	13.94	1.79	21.49	10.71
	Others	98.94	57.55	141.43	94.44
	Total	24.12	12.76	23.37	23.06

Source: NSS Round on Education: 2007-08; Note: Estimates may suffer from the problem of sample size

Table 8: Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education by Consumption Expenditure Class

CEC	2007-08			1995-96		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
0-20%	5.20	7.31	6.18	0.52	4.33	2.53
20-40%	5.66	17.93	11.13	0.94	5.74	3.00

40-60%	5.77	26.04	17.34	3.28	13.91	8.17
60-80%	9.83	41.65	24.94	5.91	17.02	11.03
80_100%	33.36	62.27	45.80	16.06	42.06	27.92
Total	13.85	33.31	23.06	7.49	21.33	13.89

Source: NSS Round on Education: 1995-6 & 2007-8

Table 9 : Type of Institution - Percentage of enrolled

Institution	2007-08			1995-96		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Government	24.63	31.38	29.25	16.58	21.18	19.98
Local body	3.78	1.94	2.52	18.85	8.07	10.89
Private aided	48.20	42.20	44.10	61.18	61.75	61.60
Govt., local body, Private aided	76.61	75.52	75.87	96.62	91.00	92.47
Private unaided	22.82	22.25	22.43	3.38	9.00	7.53
Not known	0.56	2.22	1.70	NA	NA	NA
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: NSS Round on Education: 1995-6 & 2007-8

Table 10 : Growth in percentage Enrollment across type of institutions between 1995-6 & 2007-8

Institution	Rural	Urban	Total
Government	3.35	3.33	3.23
Local body	-12.53	-11.20	-11.47
Private aided	-1.97	-3.12	-2.75
Govt., local body, Private aided	-1.91	-1.54	-1.64
Private unaided	17.24	7.84	9.52

Source: NSS Round on Education: 1995-6 & 2007-8

Table 11 : Type of Institution by Social Groups – Percentage of enrolled: 2007-08

Institution	ST			SC			OBC			Others		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Govt.	4.5	21.2	12.0	12.8	43.3	36.1	39.4	32.6	35.6	19.5	28.2	25.8
Local body	NA	15.1	6.8	4.4	2.8	3.2	4.8	2.6	3.6	3.4	1.0	1.7
Private aided	61.6	53.5	57.9	64.4	39.4	45.3	34.9	50.2	43.6	52.3	39.8	43.2
Govt., local body, Private aided	66.1	89.8	76.8	81.6	85.5	84.6	79.0	85.5	82.69	75.2	69.0	70.7
Private unaided	33.9	10.2	23.2	13.1	14.5	14.2	21.0	14.5	17.3	24.8	27.4	26.7
Not known	-	-	-	5.4	-	1.3	-	-	-	-	3.6	2.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: NSS Round on Education: 2007-08

Table 12: Type of Institution – Percentage of Enrolled by Consumption Expenditure Class

CEC	2007-08				1995-95		
	Govt., local body, private aided	private unaided	not known	Total	Govt., local body, private aided	private unaided	Total
0-20%	85.43	12.87	1.70	100	100.00	0.00	100
20-40%	82.51	16.42	1.07	100	97.48	2.52	100
40-60%	80.06	17.82	2.11	100	97.66	2.34	100

60-80%	81.05	17.29	1.66	100	95.86	4.14	100
80-100%	71.12	27.81	1.07	100	90.20	9.80	100
Total	76.58	22.03	1.39	100	92.57	7.43	100

Source: NSS Round on Education: 1995-96 & 2007-08; CEC- consumption Expenditure Class

Table 13: Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education by NSS Region

Region	2007-08		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Coastal	5.45	29.75	24.94
Inland Western	17.11	38.57	26.21
Inland Northern	20.39	30.74	23.78
Inland Central	6.85	33.54	13.40
Inland Eastern	19.29	38.55	26.64
Eastern	8.68	33.00	14.73
Total	13.85	33.31	23.06

Source: NSS Round on Education: 1995-96 & 2007-08; **Regions:** Coastal areas- Thane, Mumbai Suburban, Mumbai, 2: Inland Western- Pune, Ahmadnagar, Solapur, 3: Inland Northern- Nadurbar, Dhule, 4: Inland Central- Nanded, Hingoli, Parbhani, Jalna, 5: Inland Eastern- Buldana, Akola, Washim, Amravati; 6: Eastern- Bhandara, Gondiya policies.

Table 14: GER for social groups by Consumption Expenditure Class

CEC	ST	SC	OBC	Others	Total
0-20%	3.54	11.96	4.74	4.99	6.18
20-40%	1.02	15.35	14.30	9.63	11.13
40-60%	9.45	18.69	13.36	21.48	17.34
60-80%	9.31	31.00	24.21	27.24	24.94
80-100%	29.54	46.22	29.46	56.17	45.80
Total	8.78	22.46	18.24	29.46	23.06

Source: NSS Round on Education: 2007-08

Table15 : EER for social group by Consumption Expenditure Class

CEC	ST	SC	OBC	Others	Total
0-20%	73.07	85.88	38.04	30.44	48.24
20-40%	13.31	60.99	46.91	36.20	43.30
40-60%	27.00	56.60	37.13	61.09	49.72
60-80%	54.39	67.96	66.82	55.60	59.94
80-100%	55.36	78.11	49.14	68.61	63.08
Total	43.68	68.30	49.37	59.66	56.86

Source: NSS Round on Education: 2007-08

Table16 : EER for religious group by Consumption Expenditure Class

CEC	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Buddhist	Total
0-20%	44.95	72.82	NA	63.70	48.24
20-40%	41.41	48.26	NA	49.84	43.30
40-60%	50.21	48.27	100	33.40	49.72
60-80%	61.24	49.10	52.72	66.61	59.94
80-100%	63.55	49.94	39.94	78.80	63.08
Total	57.34	50.01	48.45	61.03	56.86

Source: NSS Round on Education: 2007-08

