



Meritocratic Situation in India, Its Implications and Scope for Future Research: A Review Study

Anupam Saxena, Dr Ali Asgar

Research Scholar, Assistant Professor

Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education
Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India

Abstract

Introduction: Meritocracy in India possesses a large number of questions starting from the introduction, implementation and the outcome. The situation is complex and literature is available that shows its impact on the various aspects of society in a huge way. Present study carried out exploratory research that results in insight about the future scope of meritocratic situation and compares the various social aspects with the developed countries.

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to review the status and implications of meritocracy policies in Indian context as compared to the policies adopted by the rest of the world (especially Europe and American continent).

Methods: The extensive and scientific literature review is done. Meritocracy affecting a large number of social issues like Law, Labor, economy, social structure, philosophy, anthropology, and government policies are analyzed using studies under literature review. The meritocracy in education in Indian and the European countries is also analyzed. The future research questions have been identified as the outcome of the research.

Implications: The review on meritocracy available in Indian context denotes the opportunities exist in the correction of policies and framework which is the need in the present scenario as the unemployment rate is all time high in India (2020). The research also provides the base in support of discriminatory actors like (quota policies) and also discusses that how these discriminatory factors are acting as hindrance in growth of the Indian economy. The New National Education policy has been introduced in India to counter the unemployment rate and making education relevant at global level, the role of meritocracy has to be explored in the same for weak students too.

Key words: Meritocracy, systematic literature review, future research in meritocracy

1. Introduction

'Let's make America great again' are the prime policies motive on which US government works from past few years and it was the sole motto of the US elections too. The opposite of globe is the India, where the trend of Atam-Nirbhar Bharat is identified as a single solution of many problem. China, Russia, Korea so on and so forth, all policies are towards the individualize and centralize power of the world. As the globalization is making its mark in world, the focus has shifted towards the progress of individuality of nations in itself. There exist a global war not only in making a talent but also attracting and retaining a talent (Phillip Brown & Stuart Tannock, 2009). This global war enhanced the role of education institutions, to make talent available, relevant to the industry not only at local level but at global level too. Education policies play an important role especially in developing country like India where the human resources are available in plenty but unutilized. There exists a scope of improvement in education system to make it relevant at local level and futuristic ready for global level. The factories need skilled workers but despite the largest population of youth present there exist a dearth of skilled labor because it has not been channelized in right direction using education and some societal issues. The reason of unemployment can't only be blamed only on education, there exist many other factors like caste, creed, gender, discriminatory and connections/ reference (Deepa Kurup, 2019). This entire stated problem has one stop solution known as the meritocracy system given by Young in 1958 in which merit is defined as sum of ability and effort. Indian societal system is still far from a meritocratic system in reality. Biasness on basis of caste, gender exists. Recruitments are not fair and hence become an obscure system. It lacks social cohesion, fairness and transparency. Although some efforts have been made time to time like the inclusion of RTI (right to information) Act but by and large the situation is far from progressive approach that makes a meritocracy a timeless idea. The research questions that are addressed by researches in meritocracy context are not even required to interrogate in Indian context because of established social facts. The issues of existence of meritocracy (Saunders, 1995; Breen, 2003; Breen & Goldthorpe, 2001), achievement of meritocracy (Goldthorpe, 1997, 2003), and desirable of meritocracy (Themelis, 2008) are the questions that answered in US, Europe and got the good amount of achievement as far as the economies are concerned. US did slightly better than the Europe as far as applicability of meritocracy is concerned (citation). As far as India is concerned it has been found that very few sectors like IT did really well because of existence of meritocratic system (Raghunath, 2010). In study of Raghunath (2010), it has been found that IT sector is doing well because it broke the irrational form of social discrimination. This is possible because of competitive global pressure. Other government owned sectors are still under social discrimination results in far below performance than potential. The Indian labor market is still not doing well because of long history of caste, gender, social and religious discrimination; all these have

great impact on the performance of the same (Das and Dutta, 2008). Due to all of these social issues it is mandatory to relook into the meritocratic system and policy framework and the implementation. The issues which are changing with respect to time is also to be considerate and new venues for the research must be explored. To keep this in mind, the present study analyzes the various meritocracy based issues of other countries, how issues have been tackled and what's the future scope of research in the Indian context.

Review Methodology

The present study provides the summary of literature available in recent times on meritocracy as it is difficult to summarize such a huge amount of the research which is already being conducted in this field. Research journal portal JSTOR has been searched to collect the literature available on meritocracy. The keyword used in order to search is 'meritocracy in education'. Figure 1 shows the steps followed to carry out review methodology.

- On JSTOR number of studies on meritocracy in education is, 11318 (as of December 2020).
- Filter on time period has been applied to get the research from last decade i.e. studies from 2010 to 2020 only, the studies are reduced to 4389.
- Further filter is applied to get the research paper only, and rest of the documents like preface, industrial publications, books and book reviews are dropped. The study is now reduced to 1825.
- Screening of papers is done to get the relevant papers which are specifically related to meritocracy in education. The relevant papers are extracted out using the Mendeley software.
- The number of papers came out to be 413, which is a tedious task to study. The sampling method (for the proportion) has been applied on the 90% level of confidence, i.e. at 10% level of significance and that came out to be a minimum of 41 papers (Levin and Rubin, 1994).
- To further reduce the sampling error (type II) the number of papers reviewed is 50.
- The selected papers are studied thoroughly, and using reference the second phase of search of literature was carried out.
- Final studies are found to be 63 in number, published in 30 refereed international journals.

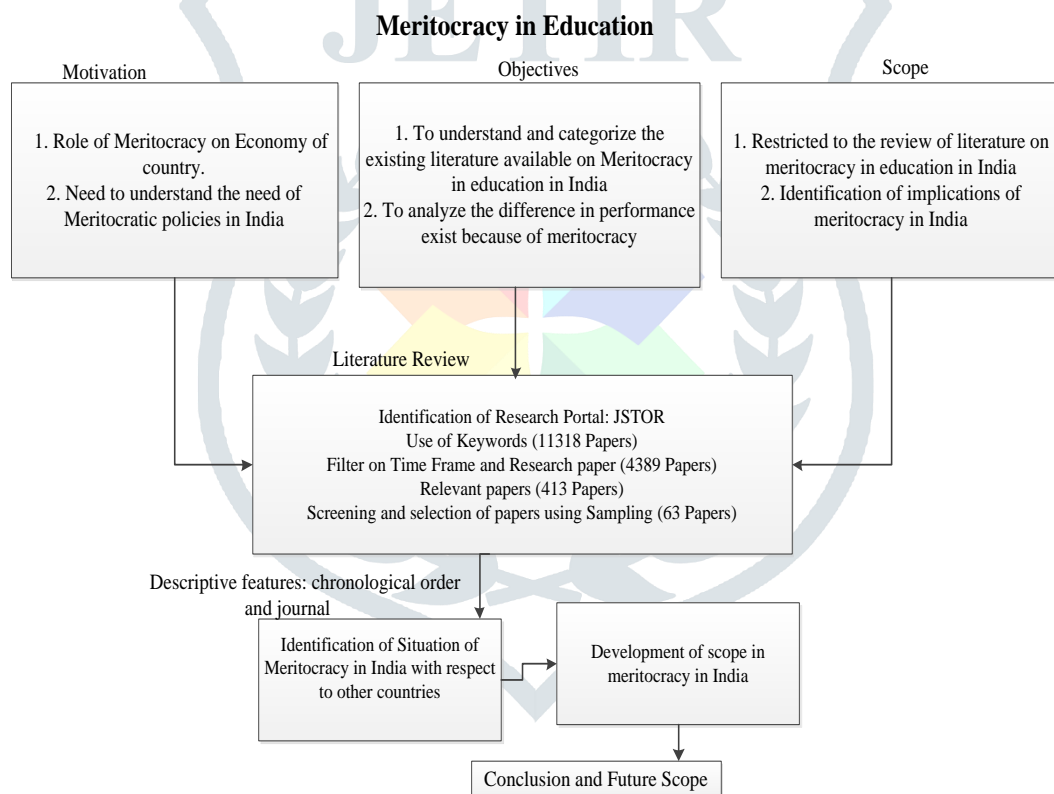


Fig. 1: Review methodology

Meritocracy is affecting large number of social issues besides the education. Some of the issues like Law, Labor, economy, social structure, philosophy, anthropology, and government policies are addressed in various studies. The journals considered are related to a wide variety of disciplines suggesting the impact of meritocracy on society. The various studies identified during the literature review process is further analyzed on the basis of various issues that are related to meritocracy and the journals which are dealing with these issues.

Table 1: List of journals with issues related with meritocracy

| S.no | Issues related with Meritocracy | Journals |
|------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Philosophical | American Philosophical Society |
| 2 | Sociological | American Sociological Review, British Journal of Sociology of Education, Discourse & Society, European Sociological Review, Polish Sociological Review, Sociology, Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia |
| 3 | Education | British Journal of Educational Studies, Comparative Education Review, Education, meritocracy and redistribution, Higher Education, Journal of education policy, The Journal of Negro Education |
| 4 | Anthropology | Critique of Anthropology |
| 5 | Economic | Economic & Political Weekly, Journal of Economic Issues, Review of Social Economy, Studies in Business and Economics |
| 6 | Law | Law Dev Rev, Minnesota Law Review, Social Justice Research |
| 7 | Miscellaneous | Asia research institute, Brookings Institution Press, Change, global networks, India International Centre Quarterly, Knowledge, Journal of basic writing |

Fig 2. Shows that concept of meritocracy visualizes as a field of Education and sociology is more than any other field. The impact of meritocracy has also been found in fields of law and economics.

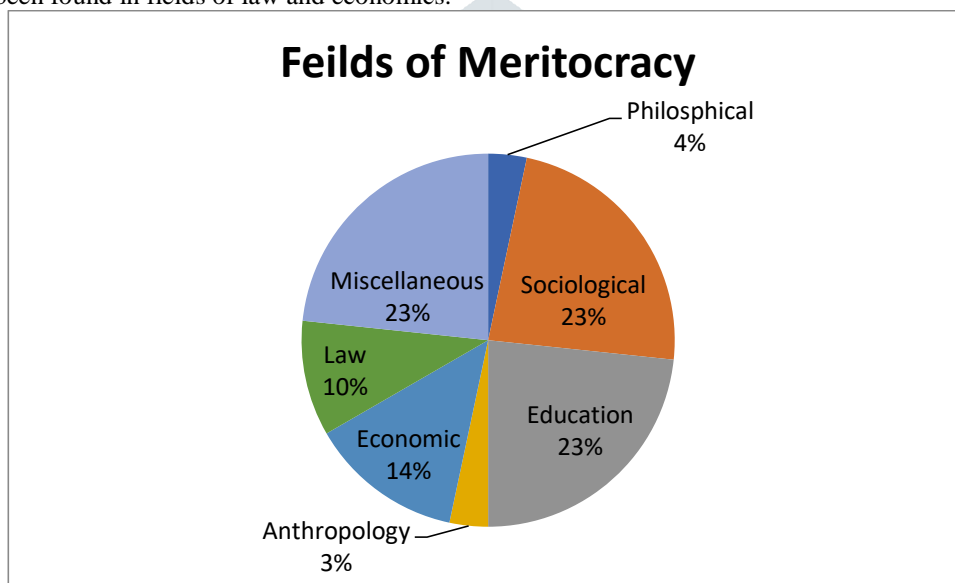


Fig. 2: Percentage of studies related with the meritocracy.

To show the relevance in recent time, the 63 papers are arranged in chronological order, which suggest that the studies are disseminated with respect to time and are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Chronological order of number of papers reviewed.

| Year | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. | 6 | 9 | 12 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 2 |

2. Literature Review on Meritocracy in Education

The literature has been divided into two parts. Initially the meritocracy in Indian context has been reviewed and key points are given in the table 3.

Table 3: Issues related with meritocracy in Indian context

| Study | Issues |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surinder S Jodhka and Katherine Newman (2007) | The elimination of qualified workers from India is due to quota policies. Instead of reservation, govt. must work on education like extra hours in school, personality development classes. |
| M. Das and P. Dutta (2008) | Caste and gender discrimination is still a serious and systemic consequence of India’s social and religious history, and this has long and clear impacts in Indian labor markets. |
| N. Raghunath (2010) | Sectors like IT industry have broken the traditional irrational forms of social discrimination due to global competitive pressure. |
| S. Sharma (2016) | Social discrimination has had the side-effect of unusually high levels of educated unemployment in India. |

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| A. Mukherjee and S. Paul (2012) | Under investments in education and geographic mismatches in job skill allocation is hampering the growth of India. |
| Amman Madan (2017) | The school education, distinguished features from private school to govt. school. Such a school having only one teacher itself diminished the chances of meritocracy. |
| Dinsha Farrokh and Allen Mistree (2015) | Meritocracy itself is composed of two political components: ability for an agency to make its own decisions internally (i.e. autonomy) and an organizational culture that ensures individual-level commitment to meritocratic practices (i.e. accountability). |
| Satish Deshpande (2015) | Weak students have been empowered into institution of national importance, Universities. Now task, then, is to sustain to create conditions for the imagining of more democratizing the one resource that can make on social inequality. |
| Z. Khan (2016) | Oligopolistic social structures as the natural enemy of meritocracy |

India is analyzed as country having the complex social and caste structure. The benefit to explore this social structure in its own way by certain policies make it more complex and difficult to understand and generalized. One such system in which job quota is implemented on basis of caste has been criticized in most of the studies. Jodhka & Newman (2007) identified that, instead of investing in education infrastructure, the policies of quota for jobs will lead to hell situation in India. The discrimination on basis of caste and creed in society leads to inefficient system and the Indian capital labor is affecting by these in worst possible way (Das & Dutta, 2008). The traditional government jobs in which quota based jobs are available is very different from the private sector specially the IT sectors. They demand high skilled meritocracy based human resource to deal with global competition (Raghunath, 2010). Such sectors are taking the load of merit in India but are few sectors sufficient to cater the need of huge population is the answer to explore. This social caste based discrimination is leading the unemployment in India (Sharma, 2016). Under investment in education and unavailability of skilled people due to this is causing the hindrance in growth of India (Mukherjee & Paul, 2007). The education system providers are broadly divided into two aspects, one the government sponsored school and second the private owned school. There exists a great scope in the improvement of level of education provided to the students in government school as compared to private owned school. Such system itself diminished the chances of meritocracy in society (Madan, 2017). The autonomous institutions are working on meritocracy principle but they too have other problems like connections/ recommendations for job, lower wages, inferior human resource policies etc (Deshpande, 2015).

The studies on meritocracy in Europe and US covers the different aspect. The studies are summarized in table 4.

Table 4: Issues related with meritocracy in Europe and US

| Study | Issues |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jencks and Phillips (1998) | Promoting employment for scheduled castes, is articulated as a principled commitment to the modern virtues of competition and productivity The American language of meritocracy decreases the inequality and impact of historical discrimination but these things have a deep impact on education level. An education policy raises serious concerns for how we are to think about and pursue equality, inclusion and fairness in and through education in the future. |
| Phillip Brown & Stuart Tannock (2009) | Dell works on meritocratic principle and where ever it goes global retain the talent. Such global meritocracy causes the great burden on educational development project for being relevant in the world |
| Wimmer and Schiller (2002) | The discourse of global meritocracy makes clear the social exclusion, injustice and inequality that are the consequences when education policy and practice are shaped by 'methodological nationalism' |
| Jedidiah J. Kroncke (2016) | Meritocracy becomes a driver of developmental success and as an explanatory factor in politics of labor regulation debates. Meritocracy yielding individual rewards but also the social maximization of individual talents meritocracy bring synergy. Meritocracy deployed human capital is technical not social. |
| A. Lawton (2000) | Meritocracy myth and with unequal opportunity to work. |
| L. Neves (2000) | US is doing good because of better policy implementation regarding meritocracy rather than Europe |
| Jonathan J.B. Mijs (2015) | Meritocracy not just as an unfulfilled promise, but as an unfulfillable promise. |
| Yair, G. (2007) | The concept of meritocracy can be broken down into three constituent elements: i) careers open to talents; ii) educational opportunity matched to natural ability; iii) achievement as the basis for social inequality in industrial society |

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|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Souto-Otero, M. (2010) | The ideal meritocratic situation is just a expectation which is neither held in logic and nor in practices. |
| Steven Alvarez(2012) | Meritocracy reproduces social inequality, and on the other, it individuates agency and personal freedom. |
| Aundra Saa Meroe(2014) | Every adult citizen of conscience also should take responsibility for affirming the public good of access to high-quality education. |
| Sigal Alon and Marta Tienda (2007) | consider the impact of changes in the relative weighting of two merit criteria in college admissions for equalizing educational opportunity and increasing diversity |
| Richard Breen(2003) | People from different class origins and ethnic groups experience chances of gaining access to better class positions, even when they have low level of education (in Ireland) |
| Erzsébet Bukodi and John H. Goldth(2019) | Meritocracy of any kind as in various respects incompatible with the principles of a free-market economy and liberal democracy. Especially education-based meritocracy, as essential has to be technological and represent economic dynamism of society. |
| Dominique Goux and Eric Maurin(1997) | The social inequality exists in France schooling system. Social inequalities widen in the course of the working career. Social origin is an asset at the start of a career, but even more so during a career. |
| Baldwin Ranson(1988) | The mastery of modern technology needed to modernize an economy requires meritocratic education, regardless of any arguments against that form of discrimination. rationale in educational policies in China, Mexico, the United States, and Japan are described, showing how those countries weed out the mass of students from educational opportunities to master technology. |
| Ansgar Allen (2011) | Govt. task in recent years has been to develop practices of self-absorption will ensure that aspiration drives effort within acceptable channels preventing self-loss and subsequent dissatisfaction |
| Peter Saunders (1995) | A meritocratic system of class recruitment would 'allocate' individuals to social classes purely in terms of their ability and effort without regard to their social background. Meritocracy, in other words is based upon a competition in which the achieved rather than ascribed characteristics of individuals determine the outcome. It is a system which depends upon genuine equality of opportunity but which generates unequal outcomes. |
| R. Quinn Moore (2000) | Singapore's fair equal opportunity is manifested in three ways. First, the government allows each racial group to create a community-based self-help group to address its cultural, educational, and social deficiencies. Second, massive government subsidized housing projects provide people of all income levels relatively similar living conditions to ensure that the rich do not have large environmental advantages over the poor. Finally, after entry into the "playing field" has been equalized by self-help and housing policy, the procedural equality of the meritocracy is supposed to be guaranteed by the educational system, in which success is determined "objectively" by standardized testing. |
| Martha Augoustino, Keith Tuffin and Danielle Every(2005) | Gender discriminate and Indian students are treated unfairly. Justifying the social inequality leads to racist consequences: it give white Australian privilege and the disadvantage of minority group is intact |
| Jerome Karabel (1972) | open admission leads to more egalitarian society as over a period of time elitist will be balanced in America |
| Marta Kolczynska and Joseph J. Merry (2016) | Higher preferred levels of inequality are reported by men, those with more education, and those with higher incomes (Kelly and Evans 1993). Additionally, those who place greater emphasis on meritocracy permit higher ratios of inequality, while those who show stronger support for the welfare state prefer lower ratio. |

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| Henryk Domański(2011) | First, in Poland the rise of meritocracy began in the 1980s and continued until 2000s, indicated by increase in returns to university education. Second, the rise in meritocracy was paralleled by growing benefits to managers and professionals. Third, privatization of the economy distinguishes workers into private and state sectors, with income advantage being more pronounced in the private sector. Market mechanisms in the Polish private sector dictate more rational and efficient allocation of rewards based on workers' productivity. |
| Jennifer Goodman (2013) | Spectacle of the examination creates the illusion of a meritocracy, obscuring the reality of biased test questions that privilege students who are already privileged. |
| Stuart Tannock (2008) | By education-based discrimination, I mean the promiscuous, arbitrary and unjust denial of rights, privileges, voice or respect to those lacking in education. |
| Amy Li (2011) | The concept of meritocracy - merit, distributive justice, equality of opportunity, and social mobility |
| Andrew Delbanco(2012) | H. Collective sacrifice and a sense of responsibility for one another would seem to be the only things that can save us from ourselves |
| Marie Duru-Bellat and Elise Tenret(2012) | Education has a significant and positive impact on perceptions in just three countries, after controlling for age, gender, and income. Thus, more educated individuals in those merit is rewarded in their countries. However, this positive impact of education, countries are more likely to be live that action is not systematic. In seven countries, individual education level is negatively related to perceived meritocracy, while it has no significant impact in the 15 remaining countries (Europe). |

The history shows that countries of Europe and America facing the challenge of discrimination. Still they do better in terms of economy. Timely meritocracy policies play a part in the same. The studies on meritocracy show that problem that these countries are facing. The problem lies in providing the equal opportunity of education to all such that there is not much difference in the earning of persons that belong to the institute of repute with respect to others institute. The onus lies on the institution to make and provide the policies that bring equal opportunities and equality in the society. If not, it will create problem in the meritocratic system, because of money, the social status gets impacted that bring more advantage to afford higher education. The problem lies to diminishing the social inequality in both cases (table 3 and table 4).

3. Scope for future research in India derived from the comparison

Now the research topics regarding meritocratic situation in India are:

1. By what level the inequality has been reduced by using non meritocratic practices?
2. What is the economic burden that a country is facing using quota policies?
3. What about the motivation level of people (who do not belong to the category) towards the betterment of country or society if the contribution in the society in their development is found to be least?
4. What is the level of talent retention in India in such a situation?
5. What are the alternatives available to reduce the social inequality except the quota based education?
6. Has quota become political issue rather than social issue, which is hampering the talent?

4. Conclusion

The study has revealed that biasness towards certain disadvantaged groups in the entry, during the process of education and while testing in an educational system has resulted in social inequality and has contributed towards the inefficient outcomes. Non consideration of ability, effort and equality of opportunity in an educational system has been instrumental in production of inefficient outcomes which in turn contributes towards hampering the growth of a country. The need of the hour is to give utmost priority to the unbiased, fair, just and merit based intake in the educational system which further aims at providing equal opportunity during the process of education thereby aiming to achieve a high quality outcome in terms of knowledgeable, skilled and efficient workforce.

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