

## SYNOPSIS

### Background

The Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE) at the Tata Institute of Fundamental research (TIFR), Bombay, has been undertaking action research projects aimed at improving science and mathematics education. The work described in this thesis is an attempt to understand the social aspects of education and the role of education in the development of career choices. Special emphasis was placed on understanding the socio-cultural factors affecting career selection of the socially deprived sections of society, such as girls and students belonging to various scheduled castes and tribes (SC/ST).

Preliminary work in the topic was done in the Talent Nurture Project (TNP) of HBCSE (1980-1985), which was conducted in secondary schools of Bombay Municipal Corporation, with students belonging to socio-economically backward sections. The findings of the TNP were later extended, in collaboration with the Government of Maharashtra, to the entire Dahanu taluka of Thane district in Maharashtra. This project (1987-1990) covered all the secondary schools in the Dahanu region, which was selected on the basis of its high percentage of tribal population (65.69% of the total population (1981 census)). The preliminary study of career choices of socio-economically backward students was thus extended to the Dahanu area with a broadened scope.

The motivation for undertaking the work reported in this thesis, and the details of the thesis are presented below:

### **Motivation**

With the universalization of elementary education, educational opportunities are, in principle available to all sections of society. Also, with the present day linking of occupations to educational performance, the role of education has acquired greater importance in social life. Theoretically, with the passage of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment on the basis of sex or caste grounds, all occupations and career avenues are open to all sections of the society. However, lack of information regarding requirements of professions can pose a barrier to entry into many professions, even in the case of those who possess the requisites. As a group, this is more likely to happen in the case of SC/ST students, who very often are first generation learners and do not get the necessary support or guidance from their families. The uninformed families are not aware of the full implications of the governmental policies of providing positive discriminations through reservations of jobs (in public sector organisations) and in institutes of higher learning. This communication gap often results in students being advised to cash their educational achievements too soon and in the wrong channels.

In spite of the governmental reservations, the situation is not very

satisfactory for the SC/ST students. Many reserved seats in institutes of higher education or in the field of employment either remain vacant, or are availed off essentially by those sections of the scheduled castes/tribes which are slightly better off, or are more aware of the facilities than the rest. With respect to sex the situation is even more disturbing. Regardless of caste distinctions, few women are employed in professions with high status, such as, managerial positions, judiciary and decision making administrative positions, while those occupations which do employ more women, such as, teaching in elementary schools and nursing, do not have high status. With respect to educational achievement, girls are equivalent, if not superior to boys. In order to be allowed to continue in education, a girl often has to prove her merit. In spite of the equivalence in academic performance, the same equivalence is not seen in occupational or career development of girls.

One of the reasons for the lack of equivalence mentioned above, is premature and incorrect selection of careers, or the familial tendency to conform to outdated social norms. Thus, understanding the phenomenon of career selection among adolescents, the factors which influence these selections and the availability of vocational guidance based on an understanding of social realities were considered essential to understanding sex and caste biases in career selection.

**Objectives of the study :**

- 1) To study the prevailing career choices of students in the Dahanu



region and how these choices develop and crystallize from childhood to adolescence.

- 2) To study the factors involved in the making of career choices, such as, socio-economic background of the family, parental influence, home environment for literacy and information, sex and caste of the individual, awareness of vocations, prestige of vocations and stereotyping of occupations as suitable or unsuitable for the sexes.
- 3) To study the effect of intervention, in the form of provision of vocational guidance, on the career selection of girls.

### **Organisation of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, presents the background of the problem of occupational selection among socio-economically deprived groups. It also describes the motivation underlying the study of this problem as well as the social implications and relevance of occupational selection to the educational system. This chapter also presents the scope and limitations of the problem. The relevant literature in this field is also reviewed.

Chapter 2, describes the methodology of the study. The variables of the study are defined. The design and development of the scales used for occupational classification, and socio-economic status scaling are presented. The

experimental design of the study aimed at studying the effects of intervention is explicated. The choice of samples, and the various data collection tools such as the questionnaires aimed at learning about the factors considered important for career selection and the interview schedules for the understanding of the career choices of the students are explained in the chapter. The treatment of data and the statistical techniques used for analysis and their appropriateness to the data are also discussed.

Chapter 3, describes three factors considered relevant for career selection, which have been studied in some detail. These three factors are:

- i) the awareness of occupations among students
- ii) the prestige ranking/rating of occupations by students
- iii) the stereotyping of occupations with reference to sex roles by teachers and students.

The results of the analysis of these factors with variables of sex of the students, caste membership and academic performance indicate that awareness of occupations in terms of number of occupations known does not vary with any of these factors. However, the kinds of occupations known to girls and boys, and members of SC/ST groups or non SC/ST members are different. Similar findings were uncovered with relation to prestige rating and ranking of occupations. Sex-role stereotyping of occupations by teachers and students was uncovered and it was seen that students held the stereotypes more strongly than teachers.

Chapter 4, presents the career choices of students and the

developments in career selection from childhood to adolescence. It also presents how the variables, such as, sex, caste, socio-economic background of the family, the home background of literacy and awareness, and the parental influences are related to career selection. The familial influence on career choices was learnt to be the strongest influence on career selection as compared to other factors like personal preference and financial background of the families. The present status of availability of vocational guidance from families and schools is also discussed.

Chapter 5, presents the encouraging results of an intervention study with respect to the provision of vocational guidance to girls on career selection. The study shows that efforts aimed at providing guidance coupled with information for increasing awareness in girls prompts them to opt for higher career choices. Even though the study was limited to a small sample, it is felt that the implications are relevant.

Chapter 6, summarises the major findings of the study and states the various limitations of the study. The thesis concludes by suggesting a few relevant issues in the field of education and work which need further exploration.