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ADVANCING ACADEMIC CAREERS IN INDIA: A REVIEW OF HUMAN CAPITAL, SELF-EFFICACY, AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

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Abstract

Faculty career progression is a poorly-known and unequally-evolved phenomenon even in the context of the transformative scale of the Indian higher education sector, which is being under the National Education Policy 2020. The paper reviews three interrelated determinants of academic career success in human capital, self-efficacy and institutional mechanisms using the integrative lenses of the human capital theory, the social cognitive career theory and the organisational support theory. We claim that the prevailing Indian literature, despite its expansion is typified by three inherent constraints, a constricted, publication based conceptualisation of human capital that does not recognize teaching, international experience, and social capital; a general lack of regard of the mediation of psychological processes such as self efficacy; and a tendency to continue to describe measures that remedy deficiencies within an institution. Besides, intersecting inequalities of caste, gender, and region that organize academic careers in India have been kept silent by the literature. We suggest a theoretical reframing, which conceptualises human capital as jointly produced by individuals and institutions, regards career self efficacy as socially dispersed instead of agentic, and has equity as an analytical imperative. The future research agenda is presented, and it focuses on longitudinal designs, multidimensional measurement, intervention research, and comparative research based on institutional types and states. The conclusion of the review gives certain implications to the faculty development policy in under researched areas like Chhattisgarh.

Keywords: academic careers, faculty development, human capital, self-efficacy, organisational support, higher education, India

1. Introduction

The Indian system of higher education is the largest and most varied one in the world, including more than a thousand universities, forty thousand colleges, and almost 1.5 million educators (University Grants Commission, 2024). The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) sees a radical change of such a system to research-intensive, multidisciplinary, and continuous professional development (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, academic workforce, its preparation, motivation, support, and retention are critical to the success of this transformation. The Indian faculty career advancement is a puzzle, however. The process of entering is becoming more and more credentialled, as the majority of permanent jobs now require a doctoral degree but the promotional prospects are felt to be obscure, arbitrary, and unequal (Jayaram, 2020; George, 2020).

There are three general explanatory models of academic careers around the world. The human capital theory (Becker, 1964) focuses on the knowledge, skills, and experiences that are acquired and rewarded by the labour markets through doctoral credentials, publications, grants, expertise in teaching, etc. A very important psychological factor is introduced by social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1994) which postulates that self efficacy

beliefs and outcome expectations mediate the transfer of human capital into career behaviours and outcomes. The institutional context is predicted by organisational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), which presumes that the individual capacities can only thrive under proper mentoring, research funding, and allowing policies.

These three streams emerged to a large extent in isolation in India. Research productiveness studies seldom measure self efficacy. Validated human capital indicators are rarely included in the evaluation of programmes in faculty development. Critiques of Career Advice Scheme (CAS) policy refer to structural defects without providing much empirical data to the way faculty progress through the requirements of promotion. Above all, no prevailing review has explored the interactions between human capital, self efficacy, and institutional mechanisms to the specific institutional ecology of the Indian higher education.

The present paper is a theoretical literature review of the Indian academic career literature, and is structured around these three constructs. We are not out to give a complete listing of the studies--that sort of systematic listing, though useful, is currently being done elsewhere. Instead, we are trying to synthesise conceptually: to understand how each construct has been conceptualised and operationalised, to review how well the evidence is theoretically coherent, to detect areas of persistent gaps and silences, and to develop a proposal of a theoretically informed, contextually sensitive research agenda. Although we are interested in national implications, we are specifically concerned with implications in a state such as Chhattisgarh, where the rate of higher education expansion is high but research capacity is still in its infancy.

2. Human Capital Theory and Academic Careers

The concept of human capital as a form of capital that was developed by Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) views the knowledge, skills and competencies of people as investments whose returns are reaped in labour markets in the future. The academia background places higher capitalized human ones with faster promotions, higher pay and recognition (Bland et al., 2005). Academic human capital is multidimensional: educational capital is doctoral credentials, institutional reputation, and post doctoral training; research capital is publications, grants and citation impact; teaching capital consists of pedagogical training and course evaluations and social capital is a complementary resource that facilitates network and tacit knowledge access (Fox, 1992; Lin, 2001).

However, there are three essential ways in which human capital theory is not complete. To begin with, it considers human capital as a stock owned by individuals and considers its returns as being largely mediated by the market. This clouds the social construction of merit the mechanisms through which some of these credentials and achievements become institutionally defined as valuable and others made invisible. The emphasis of research on teaching or international on domestic publications is not a natural outcome of the productivity but a result of historical toil on the professional credibility (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004).

Second, this theory is far too concern about the institutional forms in which human capital is accumulated and transformed differently. Faculty in resource endowed universities stand better chances of publishing, getting grants, and having networks, and there is a difference between human capital produced by them but not just larger but differentiated (Blackburn and Lawrence, 1995). On the other hand, teaching faculty in intensive or under resourced institutions might get lots of teaching capital that gets systematically devalued in promotion requirements. Orthodox theory of human capital does not have the words to discuss such an institutional impact.

Third, the theory does not comment on the mental mechanisms by which a person converts capability to successful career action. It presupposes that the ownership of human capital is already directly converted into productive deployment. Nevertheless, decades of studies reveal that self efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and goal setting play a pivotal mediating role in the ability performance relationship (Bandura, 1997; Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1994). Two people who share the same publication history would have quite different career paths when one of them is not certain about their skills to get future grants or to be the head of the research team.

Theoretical extensions have been as a result of these limits. Signalling theory (Spence, 1973) rethoughts credentials as the unobservable ability signalling and clarifies why credentials inflation and the unclear shadowy demand of a doctoral degree can persist despite the dubious direct productivity impacts. Job competition theory (Thurow, 1975) indicates that wages are linked more to jobs than to individuals; qualifications signal one's place in the labour queue. These extensions reorient analysis from individual skills towards labour market structures and the rules for job assignment.

The Global South has criticized the universalism of the human capital theory. The mediating factors of returns to education in developing country settings are labour market segmentation, endemic caste and gender discrimination, and the absorbent capacity of formal economies (Tilak, 2018). Doctoral credentials in India are not related to academic jobs, and institutional type, social networks, ascriptive attributes (caste and gender) can determine whether research productivity will be converted into promotion (Chanana, 2021; Neelakandan and Patil, 2022). These remarks do not disqualify the human capital theory but highlight its necessity to be placed into context and be combined with the social and institutional lenses. To study the academic careers in India, human capital theory should thus be critically used with the addition of other theories that outline the cognitive processes that relate ability to action and organisational structure that predetermine chances of capital accumulation and conversion.

3. Social Cognitive Career Theory

The silences of the human capital theory are addressed in social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1994; Lent and Brown, 2013) which outlines the cognitive and affective processes that connects people inputs, contextual influences, and about career outcomes. Based on the social cognitive theory formulated by Bandura (1986, 1997) that focuses on triadic reciprocal causation between the personal features, environmental determinants, and behaviour, SCCT offers a dynamic, process oriented approach to the expression of agency by the individual in the restricting and enabling environment.

The key construct is self efficacy, which is the judgments of the ability to plan and implement courses of action needed to make assigned performances. The self efficacy beliefs also affect career decision, the amount of effort put into them, determination under stress, thoughts about the career activities and the emotional response to the career activities (Hackett and Betz,1981). Self efficacy is popularized as a strong predicting factor of academic performance, persistence, and career choice in various populations using meta analytic evidence (Multon, Brown, and Lent, 1991; Robbins et al., 2004). There are four main sources of self efficacy development and modification, which are personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). It has been shown that research usually helps these sources to operate in the academic settings, but their comparative impact on any field of study and level of development differs.

The second fundamental cognitive mechanism is outcome expectations which refer to beliefs regarding the implications of practising specific behaviours. People choose those career paths where they envisage good results and shun those they perceive to produce bad results. Vicarious learning, social persuasion and direct experience shape outcome expectations that interact with self efficacy to shape goals and actions (Betz and Voyten, 1997). Self efficacy and outcome expectations have been found to predict career interests and intentions together with self efficacy generally having the greater direct influence.

One of the unique features of SCCT is the clear consideration of situational affordances and impediments (Lent et al., 2000). The theory further differentiates distal factors such as socialisation history, access to role models, access to education and proximal factors such as financial resources, social support, discriminant practices, and institutional policies that occur during active career decision making and implementation. These are contextual influences on how interests are translated into goals and goals into actions. Even when an individual has a high research self efficacy and positive outcome expectations, he or she might not be able to pursue an academic career when he or she is prohibited to teach, does not have any access to laboratories, or is not supported by a department leader.

This resonance makes SCCT especially applicable to the setting of Indian higher education, in which resources and support differ drastically between central universities and state universities, deemed universities, private universities and affiliated colleges (Agarwal, 2009; Jayaram, 2020). The research self efficacy of a faculty member can be great, yet without access to the laboratory or the grant funding, secured time, and the assistance of a doctoral student, the said efficacy will not be achieved in the form of publication output. Institutional interventions that increase any of the four sources of efficacy namely grant writing (performance accomplishments), research mentorship (vicarious learning), departmental recognition (social persuasion), or the enhancement of faculty career development could be efficient without necessarily changing material resources in the short term.

There has been a proliferation of empirical uses of SCCT in higher education to study research self efficacy among doctoral students and faculty (Bieschke, Bishop, and Garcia, 1996), teaching self efficacy and instructional practices (Tschannen Moran and Hoy, 2001), career self management behaviours including networking and professional development (Spurk et al., 2015). The career aspirations of underrepresented minority students, persistence in science and engineering among women, and the role of mentoring on self efficacy and career outcomes have been explored through the use of SCCT (Curtin, Malley, and Stewart, 2016).

Its use in non Western and third world settings is increasing. The cross cultural applicability of SCCT constructs is mostly supported in studies in South Africa (Alfred, 2001), Turkey (Isik, 2013), China (Hui and Lent, 2018), and Malaysia (Ismail, Ali, and Arokiasamy, 2012) but with a note of the necessity to measure them culturally and take into consideration the context-specific barriers. One of the fields where SCCT has been used in the study of career choice among undergraduate students, but has seldom been used in the development of faculty careers, is in India (Pasupathy & Siwatu, 2014). This is a major lost opportunity. The specific emphasis on contextual affordances and the specification of intervention points provided by SCCT provide exactly the model that Indian academic career research needs.

SCCT has been enriched with critiques and extensions. Researchers recommend more focus on the emotional and identity based aspects of career development claiming that SCCT pays a minimal role in highlighting the affect, belonging and work related identity (Kidd, 2008). Others observe that the contextual factors theory even though pioneering is still under-

specified; it states that contextual factors do matter but omits the most critical aspects of contextual factors and how they can interact with individual differences (Duffy, Blustein, and Diemer, 2016). Significant attempts to overcome these shortcomings are taken by the Psychology of Working Framework (Blustein, 2006; Duffy et al., 2016) as well as the career self management framework of SCCT (Lent and Brown, 2013) itself, which grabs the theory by the throat and expands it to include work volition, marginalisation, and adaptive career behaviours throughout life.

SCCT has three critical contributions to Indian academic careers. First, it identifies the psychological processes that the human capital theory does not address - how the capabilities are converted into confidence and how the confidence is transformed into action. Second, it focuses attention on the cause of self efficacy and consequently on possible intervention points. Third, it focuses on situational affordances, which offers a theoretical justification of studying institutional variation as central instead of peripheral. According to the theory, the same person, with the same endowments of human capital, is expected to have different career paths, depending on the type of institution one works in. In India this prediction is hardly verified.

4. Organisational Support Theory and Institutional Mechanisms

The organisational support theory (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa, 1986; Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011) has it that employees develop universal beliefs regarding how much their organisation cares about their contributions and the well being of their organisation. This is the perceived organisational support (POS) based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964): people pay an organisation with good treatment, devotion, and dedication. With the employees feeling that the organisation voluntarily invests in them by recognizing and deploying resources to them and by treating them fairly, the employees will have a feeling of obligation to pay the organisation back by engaging more, committing affectively and willingly, and making discretionary effort (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

There are various types of favourable treatment which make POS stronger. Procedural, distributive and interactional fairness also largely anticipates POS and this indicates that the organisation does not ignore the dignity and rights of employees. The antecedent of supervisory support is one especially strong one, given that supervisors are a proven agent of the organisation (Maertz et al., 2007). Positive working environments, such as job security, autonomy, role clarity, skill enhancement can be enhanced because POS communicates organisational investments in long-term success of employees. Rewards and recognition provide clues that the contributions will be noticed, and valued, and the ability to work efficiently will provide you with the signals that the organisation is committed to helping employees to succeed.

The effects of POS are well known based on thirty years of studies. Positive relationships of POS with affective commitment, job satisfaction, positive mood, performance, and organisational citizenship behaviour and negative relationships with turnover intentions, actual turnover and strain were demonstrated by meta analytic evidence (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Kurtessis et al., 2017). POS satisfies socio emotional needs of approval, esteem and belonging; reinforced outcome expectancies of effort being rewarded and created felt obligation to care about the welfare of the organisation and contribute towards its accomplishment of its goals.

Organisational support within an academic context is also instituted based on institutional mechanisms that are different across institutional types, national systems, and periods in history (Bland et al., 2005; Bickel, 2007; Johnsrud and Rosser, 2002). These are: formal mentoring

schemes matching early career faculty with seasoned members (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007); seed grants and internal funding schemes allowing pilot data collection and extramural competition; conference travel support schemes allowing professional networking and exposure to discipline; sabbatical and study leave policies shielding early career faculty against unwarranted service demands (Ziker, 2014); clear promotion rules and fair assessment procedures alleviating perceptions of randomness and favoritism (O'Meara, 2011); departmental leadership and chair support schemes shielding early These processes play instrumental roles, including the supply of resources, skills and opportunities and socio emotional roles, including the communication of recognition, belonging and organisational valuation. By showing this, they imply a different notion which is that the organisation does not respect its faculty, is not interested in their achievements and does not want to invest in their improvement (Ryan, Healy, and Sullivan, 2012).

The studies of POS in higher education all demonstrate that POS relates to faculty job satisfaction, commitment, intent to stay and research productivity (Lawrence, Ott, and Bell, 2012; Webber and Rogers, 2018). These are effects of institutional climate, departmental leadership, and mentoring on faculties mediated by POS (Chughtai and Buckley, 2011). POS have been shown to moderate the negative influences of the role stress, work load and work family conflict on faculty well being and retention (Olson Buchanan and Boswell, 2006).

Most sustained attention has been given to mentoring. The basic work of Kram (1985) separated career functions (sponsorship, exposure, coaching, protection, challenging assignments) and psychosocial functions (role modelling, acceptance, confirmation, counselling). Meta analytical support proves the linkage of mentoring to higher career satisfaction, promotions and organisational commitment as well as reduced turnover intentions (Eby et al., 2008; Allen et al., 2004). Mentoring is associated with productivity of research, winning grants, self efficacy, and career optimism (Curtin et al., 2016; Feldman et al., 2010; Sambunjak, Straus, and Marušic, 2006). The distribution of access to mentoring is however uneven, women and faculty of colour report less access to informal mentoring networks and less satisfactory experiences of mentoring (Ragins and Cotton, 1999; O'Brien et al., 2010).

The second important area is research funding and infrastructure. Resource based theories focus on the personal effort and ability required but not sufficient to facilitate the output of the research. Faculty need space in labs, equipment, library facilities, research assistants and secured time. Prescriptions of these resources indicate an investment in the research of the faculty members and allows the transfer of human capital into results. Resource deprivation sends the message of devaluation and faces faculty in under resourced institutions in a systematic disadvantaging way.

The organisational support comes in form of signals and structures of promotion and tenure policies. Positive predictable, transparent and equity relationships improve POS by alleviating uncertainty and expressing procedural justice (O'Meara, 2011; Trower, 2011). Unclear and unevenly placed or prejudiced policies destroy POS and cause cynicism, disengagement, and intent to leave (Lawrence et al., 2012). This prioritisation of research, teaching and service articulates the organisational values; organisations that rhetorically praise the excellence of teaching and only reward research publication express a clear ranking of value.

Applications have been extended and criticized, to academic applications. Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) underlines that people tend to conserve the available resources and obtain new ones; the loss of resources is less proportional to the stressor and more salient. This sheds light on why the sacrifice of effort in research work in institutions with

under resources is not readily welcome by the faculty, and that resource deprivation by the institution can have a compounding, cumulative effect throughout the career span. Job demands-resources theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007, 2017) makes a distinction between job demands (compelled to effort, which have psychological costs) and job resources (job demands are lowered, leading to growth, and achievement of goal). Job resources that include autonomy, social support, performance feedback and developmental opportunities in the academic setting mitigate negative impacts of high demands on burnout and engagement.

There are still only a few applications in India. Studies of POS in Indian higher education are conducted in business schools and universities that are privately owned, but mostly not in state universities and colleges attached to them (Bhatnagar, 2007; George, 2020). Faculty is always reported to experience low organisational support, especially in teaching intensive institutions, and the POS is known to predict job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Shukla and Singh, 2015; Rai, 2018). These literature sources are, however, typified by cross sectional designs, small convenience samples, and little focus on the particular mechanisms by which the support is (or is not) demonstrated. The studies on the effectiveness of specific institutional interventions on faculty career outcomes have not been conducted in rigorous causal designs that have been published so far in India.

The Indian POS literature barely features caste, gender, and intersectionality. This is a critical gap. The organisational support theory postulates that fair treatment improves POS. However, the discrimination based on caste in terms of hiring, promotion, and everyday academic experiences is still widespread (Neelakandan and Patil, 2022; Thorat and Neale, 2020). Women professors complain of being locked out of the informal circles, prejudiced pedagogical assessments, and sexual harassment (Chanana, 2021; Gupta, 2020). Faculty of Dalit and Adivasi have to work in hostile environments and shoulder the service burden disproportionately (Sen, 2020). These organisational betrayal experiences or systematic failure of institutions to ensure that members are not harmed is not the lack of support but the presence of harm (Ragins, 2012). The knowledge about the academic careers in India is such that one has to look beyond just the supportive mechanisms to realise that there is an underlay of unsupportive and even actively hostile organisational conditions.

The literature on Indian academic career research implies three priorities of organisational support. First, scholars have to go beyond international measures of POS and explore the institutional mechanisms that are important to Indian faculty. The mentoring process might not be the same in hierarchical Indian departments that are carried by patronage as in the US, where most POS research has been carried out, and where the environment is more flatter and individualistic. Second, it should be studied how the effect of organisational support interacts with individual traits. Are there greater impacts of mentoring on first generation academics, women, Dalit and Adivasi faculty? Third, the field should shift away the literature of documenting deficits to interventions assessment. Indian faculty perceive low organisational support that we know. It is not known what interventions can increase POS and enhance career outcome best.

5. Academic Careers in India: Evidence, Gaps, and the Silence on Inequality

The Indian literature on academic careers, despite the increasing growth, has been disjointed and lacks the theoretical development. Putting this evidence together based on human capital, self efficacy and institutional mechanisms shows not just what is known, but what has continued to be missing.

The operationalisation of human capital has been done in an exceptionally limited manner. Doctoral rank and volumes of publications are the most popular ones; the experience in teaching is present here and there; research grants are seldom. The indicators that are of utmost significance in international research, including the prestige of doctoral institutions, postdoctoral and international experience, citation impact, teaching effectiveness, social capital, are practically missing. Such parochia is indicative not only of the priorities of the Career Advice Scheme in terms of publications, but also something more fundamental: the Indian literature has adopted a (publication centric) model of productivity and has never questioned whether it can be applied to wildly unequal institutional situations. Intuitively, it makes sense that doctoral graduates and prolific publishers are progressing more rapidly what is underestimated. The unknown is much more comprehensive. It is unclear whether the prestige of doctorate or international experience is independently associated with career benefits, whether teaching excellence is compensated, whether social capital offsets deficits in formal human capital, or whether human capital returns on caste, sex and region are similar. The theory of universal returns is not only untested; it is refuted by a mass of sociological data of discrimination and cumulative disadvantage.

Self efficacy has been virtually overlooked. The few other studies state positive results of correlation with productivity and retention, although their measures are heterogenous and design cross sectional. Three gaps are striking. To begin with, there is no research that has tested self efficacy as a mediator between human capital and career outcomes and this omission makes it unclear whether an intervention should be based on skills or efficacy beliefs. Secondly, the cultural peculiarities of self efficacy are not discussed. What role do caste hierarchy, patronage networks and collectivist norms play in India in the context of career efficacy? Are the four sources of efficacy in kind? These are the questions that require qualitative investigation. Third, there has been virtually little attention as to perceived employability, which is vital in a labour market where precarity and vacancy rates are an issue.

The least rigorously studied area is institutional mechanisms, which are most discussed. The results of mentoring are similar: there are few formal programmes, informal mentoring is disproportionate and early career faculty are left to their own devices. However, there is no research that assessed a structured mentoring intervention in India. Funding of research and infrastructural shortage are completely recorded yet there are no records of what can be done to cope with them. Are seed grants augmenting extramural funds? Is teaching release an effective way of research involvement? Promotion policies have been widely criticized but seldom assessed; even the limited quantitative research studies do not have control groups and are unable to eliminate other possible explanations. Promotional criteria are viewed as constraints as opposed to policies that could have been designed. The main question, what criteria, in what conditions lead to what outcomes, is not answered.

The greatest gap is the silence on inequality. There is virtually no mention of caste in the literature, even though there is ample sociological data that it defines access, opportunity, evaluation, and climate at each stage of career. Faculty of Dalit and Adivasi report being excluded of mentoring networks, having fewer resources, bearing disproportionate service loads and being subjected to hostile climates. The literature goes on as though there is no such thing like caste. The analysis of gender is superficial: the literature reports underrepresentation and obstacles but says very little about how it works: how stereotypes are used to assess teaching, how domestic labour is divided, and how harassment occurs, and little has been done to study interventions. The region is considered as a sampling frame and not substantive variables; a faculty in Chattisgarh or north east is presumed to be just like in Maharashtra, with the only difference of poorer. Such an assumption is unnecessary. These exclusions are not

exclusive. They are indicators of underlying normative shortage: the literature has not inquired whether Indian academia is a meritocracy or a place of planned inequality. Its answer to this question is its silence.

This needs an integrative approach. Human capital is not an explanatory threat to self efficacy, nor does self efficacy stand opposed to institutional mechanisms. Human capital gives the basic skills; self efficacy defines whether and how the basic skills can be mobilised; and institutional mechanisms influence the possibilities of accumulating human capital as well as the probability of the success of mobilisation of the self efficacy. These are mutually dependent relationships which change over time. Most importantly, inequality is not incidental but constitutive: the caste, gender or region is not a control variable, but a major structuring force that permeates all three domains.

6. A Research Agenda and Implications for Policy and Practice

The literature records that which is broken but is theoretically sterile, methodologically parsimonious and ethically quailsome. Development demands to be re-focused on five overlapping priorities.

To start with, grow the descriptive evidence base in a strategic manner. There is no need to have any additional single institution surveys of research productivity in the field. Surveys of the Indian academic workforce, nationally representative, are desperately needed, sampled systematically in terms of institution type, discipline, career stage and social location e.g. caste, tribe, gender, class and region. There is no Indian analog to the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty or EUROAC, which is a failure in politics indicative of the low priority given by the academic profession.

Second, multidimensionally measure human capital. The brevity with which the concept of human capital has been operationalised in terms of the number of publications and doctoral qualifications is no longer justifiable. The minimum reporting standards ought to be the prestige of the doctoral institution, postdoctoral and international experience, teaching efficacy, quality of research, acquiring grants, professional service, and public interaction. The social capital should be quantified using the method of the analysis of egocentric networks; it is not studied at all whether social capital can offset the shortage of formal human capital or enhance privilege in India. Specific attention should be paid to teaching capital. Its rigorous downgrading in promotion systems is not the same as saying that teaching is not important, but rather an indicator that the measurement system is faulty. There is a need to conduct research on valid measuring teaching effectiveness, weight teaching and research to reflect institutional missions, and design faculty development to promote teaching without imposing a cost on research productivity.

Third, introduce self efficacy as a part of causality. Self efficacy is an overlooked opportunity of a significant scale. SCCT provides a well tested model of exploring the psychological processes that connect human capital to career success. Further studies need to establish and prove Indian specific research self efficacy, teaching self efficacy, and career outcome expectations scales. The longitudinal designs are to be used to test mediation hypotheses: is research self efficacy a mediator of doctoral training and early career mentoring in terms of publication productivity? The self efficacy sources in Indian faculty require research, how do performance achievements, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective conditions work in the Indian academic context, and what place do caste, gender and institutional location have in the influence on access to efficacy enhancing experiences? Moderating effect of institutional context needs to be looked at: do we find that the self

efficacy-performance correlation is weakened in the resource poor contexts where the highly effective faculty is unable to turn the confidence to performance?

Fourth, replace the capturing of deficits with an assessment of interventions. The literature has taken a toll of what is absent in the faculty, mentoring, funding, clear policies, fair treatment. This documentation used to be required but it is no longer adequate. Faculty development interventions can be implemented using randomised controlled trials that are needed. How does structured mentoring cause early career retention, promotion and productivity? Does training on grant writing make the difference when it comes to funding? NEP 2020 and UGC revisions of the CAS have an opportunity to create differences in differences and regression discontinuity designs because quasi experimental designs and natural experiments can exploit the variation in policy across states and institutions. Intervention studies should be supported by design based implementation research that is sensitive to mechanisms, contextual moderators and adaptations. Top down evaluation will not yield actionable knowledge as easily as partnerships between researchers and institutions, where ownership and refinement are shared and both parties are involved in the process.

Fifth, inequality on the centre and intersectionality. The inequality has to be placed as an analysis point, rather than as a marginal issue. All research must, at least, subdivide the results by caste, gender and region. The term faculty is a such a term, which masks radically different experiences; the use of aggregate report is a way to actively hide inequality. The studies should explore avenues of benefit and harm, not just be an account of inequalities. What influence caste and gender in mentoring, funding research and studying abroad? How are biased judgments and exclusionary networks reproduced? The interventions that aim at reducing inequality should be thoroughly scrutinized. Faculty hiring affirmative action has been discussed at length and little research done; PhD-level reservation policies have not been evaluated; women, Dalit, Adivasi, and regionally underrepresented faculty-supporting programmes have been established but have not undergone causal impact examination. The intersectional analysis must take place: the career trajectory of a Dalit woman faculty member is not the product of caste discrimination and gender discrimination but rather due to the intersectional nature of these two traits in certain institutional structures. This complexity has not yet been confronted in the literature.

In the case of such states as Chhattisgarh, which have a very low level of research capacity and need to increase it quickly, this agenda has certain implications. It is not possible to affect national level evidence and the situation differs in state universities in Chhattisgarh: more constraints are qualitative ones: fewer doctoral programmes, less research infrastructure, greater teaching burden, lesser industry connections. The faculty development should be planned deliberately; it is not automatic that once teaching oriented college is replaced with a research oriented university, one needs to invest in research self efficacy, grant writing ability, global team work, and time to conduct research, which can only be achieved through planning. Chhattisgarh has the chance to jump a step higher, without carrying the heavy burden of past; it can specially create and assess interventions on first-principles, adding to the evidence base of the country, and meeting its own needs. New faculty development programs should have intensive evaluation designs to the start. Equity must be central. Chhattisgarh has a high rate of Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste population; the institutions of higher learning are the places where these disparities are recreated or overcome. The policies of faculty development that do not take caste and gender into account will only serve to recreate the existing differences. Equity based and proactive design is not an option but a necessity.

7. Conclusion

The academic workforce is central to the transformation of Indian higher education that is envisaged by NEP 2020. But we have only partial insights into academic careers in India, which is theoretically unsophisticated, methodologically underdeveloped, and broadly silent about the inequalities of caste, gender and region which organize academic work.

The evolution is in need of a triple reorientation. In theory, the discipline needs to shift its focus beyond a publication centric vision of the human capital towards a multidimensional, institutionally enshrined view on academic capability by incorporating SCCT and organisational support theory. Methodologically, it needs to change cross sectional convenience samples to nationally representative surveys, isolated institution case studies to comparative and longitudinal designs, description of deficits to the assessment of interventions. It simply has to answer the question that it has been evading all along normatively: what is the correct correlation between individual merit and social identity in academic professions? The rhetoric of human capital suggests a world in which hard work will be reward; the facts of Indian higher learning are organized inequality where caste, sex, along with territory influence the results of doctoral job acceptance up to professorial advancement.

The prices of lack of concentration are expensive. Faculty development policy will be intuition driven without any credible evidence. Unless inequality is given systematic consideration, the profession will keep losing talented scholars who have a disadvantaged background. Unless well intentioned policies are critically reviewed, they will have unintended impacts and consume unnecessary resources.

Indian academic profession has long been overdue to a career development literature that is responsive to the realities of the profession.

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