CHAPTER I
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INTRODUCTION

The equal opportunities dilemma in higher education, from a global perspective, emanates from the need for social justice and equalization, specifically as regards access to and success in education. In striving for the democratization of higher education, policymakers, educational leaders and teachers are confronted with critical problems and issues. Policy reform itself is contingent upon the structural reform of society, the integration of social and educational policies, the use of all available educational resources and the participation of all social groups in the process of education.

Pertinent questions can be raised in addressing the problem of policy reforms and equality in higher education, such as: Who is meant to benefit by reforms? Whom is the expansion intended to serve? More importantly, policies to extend access gives prominence to the question of “access to what?” Access along with provision of quality education ought to be regarded as complementary goals in the debate on “equality” and “equality of educational opportunity.”

The factors described above have produced a condition out of which there is now a steady growth in comparative studies on higher education. However, while ample has been written on universities in more developed countries, the body of research on universities in developing countries tends to be limited. It is important to recognize the existence of professional knowledge and expertise within developing countries which can give some direction to their common pursuits of a democratic type of higher education, the enhancement of social equality and the furtherance of national development. For these reasons, the researcher has undertaken a comparative study of policy reforms and equality in higher education between post-independence India and, Trinidad and Tobago, both described as “developing countries.” In addition, both are ex-colonial countries and had been subjected to British rule. India gained independence in 1947 and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962. The main purpose of the study would be to examine the universal provision of higher education and the effective reduction of existing disparities among different ethnic groups in each
context.

In this introductory chapter, the following themes and issues are discussed as a background to the study: the dimensions of higher education reform; equality of educational opportunity among individuals and groups; variations on the theme of positive discrimination/affirmative action; the contextual realities in both India, as well as Trinidad and Tobago; and a review of research on equality in higher education in both countries. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the need for a comparative study on policy reforms and equality in higher education specifically with reference to India and, Trinidad and Tobago. In the end, the chapter presents the objectives of the study, the sample, research methodology and chapterization.

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND REFORM INITIATIVES**

Universities and other institutions of higher education\(^1\) are important to national development in the developing countries. Universities, in addition to their scholarly functions of teaching and research, have now been assigned the extension and developmental function.\(^2\) V.R. Mehta, former Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University, outlined: “Today universities not only preserve and transmit knowledge inherited from the past, they are also expected to create and disseminate knowledge... As we move from “Knowledge Society” to “Knowledge Economy”, they are expected to provide necessary manpower with skills and expertise to man public and private services” (2003: 2). Perhaps the most significant is the need for universities to promote national development and indigenous culture. Coleman underscored that the developmental university aims at: “making the entire university learning experience more relevant to the indigenous culture and the practical problems and the professoriate participates in public formation and the university serves society

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1 In this study, the researcher recognizes the term higher education in its broadest sense to include all postsecondary or tertiary institutions that may offer degree or sub-degree programmes – full-time or part-time. This effectively incorporates the non-university sector (institutes of technology, technical-vocational institutions, community colleges, and other specialized institutions, as well as universities). In adopting an inclusive approach to the definition, the study embraces the diversity and heterodoxy that exist at this level of education in the English-speaking Caribbean. One must also consider that in countries such as Britain, where higher education used to be synonymous with universities, this has contributed to much confusion (Scott, 1984). The term tertiary has currency in the Caribbean region as a concept to denote postsecondary or higher education (Fletcher, France and Sukdeo, 1987).

2 Prange, Jowett and Fogel (1982) explained that, in the developing countries, where national purpose is readily identified as development, the university is expected to impel that activity, therefore it becomes “the development university.”
directly” (1984: 92).³

The United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) identified that the mission of higher education is to contribute to the sustainable development and improvement of society as a whole by: (i) educating highly qualified graduates able to meet the needs of all sectors of human activity; (ii) advancing, creating and disseminating knowledge through research; (iii) providing opportunities for higher learning throughout life; (iv) contributing to the development and improvement of education at all levels; (v) interpreting, preserving and promoting cultures in the context of cultural pluralism and diversity; (vi) protecting and enhancing civil society⁴ by training young people in the values which form the basis of democratic citizenship and (vii) providing critical and detached perspectives in the discussion of strategic choices facing societies (UNESCO, 2002).⁵

Evidently, in the developing world, universities have a direct contribution to make to national development by eliciting informal public opinions on long term social and economic goals. Hence, higher education should aim at training human resources and enhancing economic growth in true sense of the terms and in all aspects and dimensions.⁶ Essentially, as Bhatnagar and Bhatnagar has underlined, higher education is not all examination- “It is to give the younger generation the right socio-political, economic and cultural orientation in such a manner that the national needs of socio-economic development are met” (2000: 20). Higher education is thus an accepted value of change for development of the nation. A prominent American educational statesman of the 1960s and 1970s, Father Theodore Hesburgh commented: “the university is among the most traditional of all institutions of our

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³ This quotation was extracted from a lecture delivered by V.R. Mehta at Ranchi University, Jharkhand, India on 19 September, 2003 as part of the UGC (University Grants Commission) Golden Jubilee Lecture Series.
⁴ Civil Society consists of a wide variety of institutions and activities thus: political parties, religious, caste and linguistic associations, professional, scientific and literary societies, the press and the electronic media. Each of these collective actors compete for space within society in order to assert their relative autonomy (Oommen, 2004).
⁶ The World Bank document “Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience (1994)” stated: “Institutions for higher education have the main responsibility for equipping individuals with advanced knowledge and skills required for positions of responsibility in government, business and the professions.” It added, “Higher education investments are important for economic growth. They increase the individual’s productivity and incomes, as indicated by rate-of-return analyses, and they also produce significant external benefits not captured by such analyses” (World Bank 1994: 1, 12).
society and at the same time, it is the institution most responsible for the changes that make our society the most changing in the history of man” (cited in Clark, 1983: 182).

Before addressing specifics in the matter of change through higher educational reforms, it may be useful to make a few pertinent distinctions. Change is definitely implicit in reform, but change may occur as a result of chance conditions, not subject to human control, it may appear disorganized and can be disruptive (Trow 1971, Levin 2001). Innovation applies to the addition of a deliberate, novel, specific change which is expected to be more efficacious in accomplishing educational goals. The element of novelty which implies a re-examination of parts or a qualitative difference from existing forms seems quite imperative (Purshothaman and Stella, 1995). “Higher education reform” as Altbach defined it, refers to a process of “planned change in universities or colleges aimed at improving aspects of the academic environment” (1982: 210)⁷. Additionally, reform involves substantial or thorough change in an aspect of an institution or in the structure of the entire academic system.⁸ Educational reforms and particularly those that call for a large-scale revamping of the educational system, are often the result of a shift in social and political ideologies (Vielle, 1981). According to Levin (2001), the changes in question are driven primarily by government’s political apparatus rather than by bureaucrats or educators, and are justified on the basis of the need for a very substantial movement away from current practice. Trow concluded that: “a reform may be thought of as an intervention, as a new, perhaps more effective part filling into an old process and making the whole more efficient or otherwise attractive” (1971: 88).

Important reforms in the structure of the higher educational system of a country always involve “a political process” with implications for “the redistribution of power and of material resources” (Paulston, 1976). These reforms mean significant alteration in national higher educational policies which in turn can produce changes in the per centage of students from different groups and social strata. The first common factor in university reform is the intensity with which youth in that portion of “the intelligence curve” traditionally deemed unsuitable for university education—now petition for it. Bereday recorded: “As it becomes apparent that the old notions of

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⁷ Miller stressed that “the term “planned change” is restricted by some scholars to a specific orientation toward the deliberate processes of change and of changing” (1967: 333).

⁸ It is necessary to be careful in discussing university reform in a comparative context. What is a radical innovation in one country may be even an outdated solution in another (Cerych, 1972; Altbach, 1974).
ability are socially loaded and that widening the range of talent diversifies standards without necessarily lowering them, a lively battle is joined on the issue of liberalizing university admission" (1973: 6). Most significantly, in his discussion on educational reform, Tedesco remarked: “The emphasis on quality today takes the form of a concern with academic achievement. A key aspect of current trends in educational change is precisely the development of effective devices for its evaluation” (1998: 83). Trow advised that an important question at the outset is who is to be benefited by reform and by how much – “Is the “greatest good for the greatest number” the criterion or the satisfaction of the desires of a small dissident group, perhaps at the expense of others, so that in actuality a minority rules?” (1971: 88). Hence, higher educational reforms may involve a major shift in educational policies towards greater equity and social justice (UNESCO, 1996); on the contrary not all such changes are universally accepted or always successful (James and Mcinnis, 2005).

The limits of higher educational reform originate from the “inter-relationships” between education and other dimensions of the social system. The polish sociologist, Jan Szczepanski (1980) directed attention to “The Total Educational System.” This system includes the family, early childhood care and education, schools, universities, educational institutions, the government, political parties, the business community, mass media, and cultural institutions etc. all of which influence an individual’s education from birth to the post-school adult age. Even to the extent that certain reform measures may originate among groups which do not constitute part of the ruling class structure; due to “interrelationships” with higher education the reforms will inevitably be changed into a product acceptable to those in power (Carnoy, 1975). Indeed, a strong relationship exists between the higher educational system and the other institutions and needs of the larger society (Zaltman, Florio and Sikorsh, 1977). Levin argued in the same vein that “changes in the educational sector will parallel and follow from changes or contradictions in a society’s economic, political and social relationships” (cited in Paulston 1977: 386).

In sum, Gornitzka, Kogan and Amaral reiterated: “For the most part it is noticeable that he professoriate is hardly involved in all of these power shifts and actions... A university’s own strategic plans merge with the implementation of national reforms” (2005:7). By all means, when higher education reform movements violate the percepts of the polity, they will either fail to be adopted, or fail to indicate results.
If universities observe that the tradition of autonomy should be tempered with accountability (Azad, 2004) and furthermore; if they establish linkages with other sectors of society as part of a consistent and compatible development strategy, higher education reform will serve as a potentially powerful force for changing and promoting a more equal society.

**EQUALITY AND EDUCATION**

Within recent times, “equality” has become one of the key words in the policy debate on educational problems at both the national and international levels (Husen, 1972). Issues of educational equality cannot be considered in isolation from the role of the education system and its impact on social equality. In fact, Kleinig emphasized: “If we are to make use of a principle of equality at all, it needs to be one concerned with social equality, for only so can it amount to anything” (1982: 129). The process of equalization of educational opportunities has now become a primary goal directed to children from different social categories (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). However, when it comes to operational procedures, there are different approaches towards understanding “equality” and “equality of opportunity.” Hence, it would be worthwhile to discuss these two concepts.

The meaning of the word “equality” as outlined in The New Oxford Dictionary of English (Pearsall 1998: 621) is simply “the state of being equal especially in status, rights and opportunities.” Several meanings are assigned to the word “equal” among which are the following: (i) being the same in quantity, size, degree, or value (ii) uniform in application or effect, without discrimination on any ground and (iii) having the ability of resources to meet (a challenge). One concludes that the term “social equality” would therefore mean being equal in dignity, rank or privilege with others or; being equal in power, ability, achievement or excellence. This concept of equality inevitably raises notions of sameness and uniformity, and thus requires further clarification.

In the context of the social sciences, Oppenheim and Kristol stated: “The concept of equality refers sometimes to certain properties which men are held to have in common, but more often to certain treatment which men either receive or ought to receive” (1968: 102). Spitzberg’s (1980) response to this condition is that discussions of equality and justice should be conducted simultaneously. In “A Theory of Justice”,
John Rawls defined equality as follows: "equality refers to the same basic rights, liberties and opportunities; and the same protections of the principles of justice meted out to all members of society" (1980: 79). He defends a substantive principle, according to which "all social primary goods – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth and the bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured" (1971: 303). Rawls recognized that within such a conception conflicts will arise; hence he recommends an ordering of primary goods for first priority to be given to allowing each person an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a like liberty for others. Only then can social and economic inequalities be justified, but provided that two further conditions are met: first, that they are accessible and subsequently, given that this is the case, that they assign the greatest benefit to the least advantaged.

Andre Beteille (1983(a)), a sociologist, distinguished between equality in the simple sense and proportional equality. Equality in the simple sense makes no distinction between one person and another, distributing value in such a way that no one receives more or less than another. However, if equity is to be observed, one has to accept that not only are there differences between individuals but also that different individuals have to be treated differently. In conventional literature, people regard what is called "equity" as "just", it is, in fact, a sort of justice which transcends the written law (Aristotle Rhetoric cited in Panda, 1990). According to Cook and Messick, equity is "the determination of just distributions through appropriate mechanisms and procedures" (1983: 1). An equitable distribution of privileges or resources to members of a group can be an equal one where an option exists to improve each members' welfare, but in such a way it creates inequalities among the group members. Therefore, while the word "equity" involves distribution regarded as "fair" even though they contain both "equalities and inequalities", the word "equality" deals with "sameness" and "uniformity." One acknowledges that the perfectly equal distribution of educational opportunities is not necessarily the desired objective of governments’ policies on education or income distribution. When concepts of equality are debated, the issue is usually a philosophical rather than an economic one (Kern, 1982). Kirpal and Gupta asserted that the intention is "to create equality for the unequal" (1999: 33).
Both Coleman (1968) and Husen (1975) identified that the concept of “equality of educational opportunity” have undergone distinct changes in the past. Initially, it was viewed as equal and free access to education, later it was measured in terms of quality of school resource “inputs” and “treatment” meted out to students, and finally the assumption was made that it depends upon the effects of schooling on students’ achievement or output. The concept of “equality of educational opportunity” is not static but ever changing.

“Equality of educational opportunity” is broadly viewed in two different contexts: (i) from the point of view of individuals and (ii) from the point of view of groups. From both viewpoints, the concept can be assessed in its (i) narrow perspective, as equality of access and attainment in education, and (ii) wider perspective where equality is extended to post-school performance in terms of occupation and earnings. In the latter sense, education is regarded as essential to promote equality in economic and social spheres.

In analyzing the concept of “equality of educational opportunity”, the critical issue is what should be meant not only by “equality” but also by “opportunity.” Therefore, it is pertinent to discuss certain aspects of “equality” in the context of formal education with specific reference to the meaning of “opportunity.”

With respect to the individual, “equality” can be conceived of in three ways: (i) as a starting point (ii) as a treatment and (iii) as a final goal – or as a combination of all the three (Husen, 1975). Equality as a “starting point” signifies that all individuals start their educational career on equal footing. This is not possible. Even if the family and social backgrounds of pupils were the same, equality of education would not be accomplished for the simple reason that “individuals vary” due to inborn, inherited, genetic factors. Equality as a “treatment” means that everybody, irrespective of his genetic equipment and social origin ought to be treated equally in various ways. Naturally, “equal” treatment cannot mean the “same” treatment. This procedure will not result in increased equalization since individuals vary in their genetic potential. Finally, equality as a “final goal” states that “framing and implementation of educational policy should introduce measures that would contribute to an increased equalization in educational attainment” (Husen 1975: 17). This implies differential pedagogical treatment. Considered from the point of view of an individual, equality as a “goal” seems to be more relevant and significant since
what matters most to an individual is not "how equal schools are, but rather at the end of the school he is equipped to compete on equal basis with others, whatever their social origin might be" (Coleman 1966: 71).

Hence, "equality of opportunity" in education implies not equal but different offerings; it is the "opportunity" of education for each individual up to the limits of his abilities and talents.9 As Tawney argued: "Equality of opportunity depends, not merely on the absence of disabilities, but on the presence of abilities. It obtains in so far as, and only in so far as, each member of a community, whatever his birth, or occupation or social position, possesses in fact, and not merely in form, equal chances of using to the full his natural endowments of physique, of character and of intelligence" (1964: 103). According to de Vuyst (1999), education that is based on the principle of equality could be defined as education that allows each individual the opportunity to attain the highest possible degree in general education and professional skills corresponding to his or her aspirations and talent, i.e. independently of socio-economic status, caste, race and gender. De Vuyst reinforced the following point: "Equality in this kind of education system is proportional to individual initial possibilities" (1999: 94).

In the context of groups, "equality of educational opportunity" can again be viewed in three different ways: (i) equal access (ii) equal input and (iii) equal output or equal outcomes. Equal access means that each group, irrespective of factors such as social class, caste, tribe, race, gender or place of residence should have an equal share of educational provisions. This concept of educational opportunity assumes that the major obstacle to equal participation among the groups is material poverty which can be overcome by giving financial assistance to the "able but poor."

Coleman (1968) defined "access" in a comprehensive manner for different stages in the education process. In his view, equal access means universal free and compulsory education up to a certain level which caters for the principle entry point into the labour force. At the secondary stage differential curricula are to be provided for students of different aptitude and ability. In fact, opportunity lies in exposure to a given curriculum. The amount of opportunity is then evaluated in terms of the level of

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9 Entwistle indicated: "Demonstrable differences in intelligence, achievement, talent, interests or tastes may justify differential educational provision. Everything hinges on this distinction between differences which are educationally significant and those which are educationally irrelevant" (1978: 8).
curriculum to which a child is exposed. The higher the curriculum made available to a given group of children, the greater the opportunity. Those who are capable must have access to higher education regardless of their economic and social position; and scholarships and stipends are to be dispensed to those who are “able but poor.” The fundamental issue is: “can equal access guarantee equal opportunities to groups which are anything but equal?” Coleman dismissed “equality of educational opportunity” as “a false ideal” with reasons to do with the importance of the family for education and the economics of education. He found that children of parents of higher socio-economic status are able to avail themselves more of educational opportunities and they perform better at school. On account of failure to provide incentives to poor families to invest in their children’s education, the aggregate of resources in a society available for education is reduced and hence, the maximization of educational opportunity is threatened. The Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) reiterated that talented children of lower socio-economic status are kept away from “secondary and higher education” which slows down “the evolution towards social equality of education” (1972: 17).

The conception of equality of educational opportunity focuses upon inputs to the education system to elevate deprived group children. Equal input has been defined as equality in school characteristics that are helpful to their learning such as educational facilities, resource materials and infrastructure. In Coleman’s view (1966, 1968), if it is outcomes which ought to be equalized, perhaps the last thing educators need to advocate is for equality of such inputs on behalf of individuals or groups. Coleman’s perspective raises a pertinent question: “Instead of insisting upon equality at the point of input, why not focus upon equalizing outcomes through provision of equality education for all?” Rao elaborated on the issue of quality education and group equality thus: “The issue of quality – that primarily includes a relevant and “baggage – free” curriculum, learner-centred teaching methods, fair and just learning environment in terms of class, caste, gender10, and adequate resource materials and infrastructure – remains relegated to the background (2000: 4182). UNESCO (2002) highlighted that “quality in higher education” is a multidimensional concept which should embrace all its functions and activities to promote social equality: teaching and

10 Rao’s recommendation for an appropriate learning environment is also imperative to enhance learning among different races and tribes.
academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment; in addition, services to the community and the economic environment. Internal self-evaluation and external review, administered openly by independent specialists, if possible with international expertise, are essential for enhancing quality and equal learning outcomes.\(^\text{11}\) Riley (1994) placed emphasis on an important distinction: quality is concerned with identifying levels and standards while equality pertains to the distribution of power and resources. Riley pointed out that quality is also concerned with monitoring and maintaining performance standards, but in her view, monitoring is an element of “quality” maintenance which is frequently omitted. With respect to the quality/equality dilemma, Riley concluded: “A tension exists between the two which is based on values and ideology, so that key actors in the system can influence quality and equality outcomes in favour of different groups in the system” (1994: 13).

The concept of equality as equal outcomes directs attention to the effects of schooling. The fundamental assumption underlying this concept is that “ability in large measure is acquired and the goal is to compare and equalize achievement of different groups” (OECD 1973: 74). In this regard, Coleman (1968) explored two concepts of equality: the child concept and the school concept. The first one focuses on the child and measures the effect of education upon him. How is the child actually changing as a result of the process? How is he prepared for the contest? The second concept focuses on the school. Equality of outcomes implies that in some respect people should become equal as a result of their schooling. Green (1971) indicated that the realization of educational opportunity is “a dismal prospect”, partly because equality of outcome is inconceivable expect at a very modest level of academic achievement. According to Lucas, when the emphasis is upon opportunity, the implication is that outcomes will be unequal – “He who is offered and seizes an opportunity receives a bonus, something which the others haven’t got” (1975: 46).

On the other hand, it is possible to consider equality of outcomes with

\(^\text{11}\) In the academic arena two important terms “quality assessment” and “quality assurance” are utilized which in practice complement each other. In quality assessment, both internal and external procedures are used to evaluate the overall teaching and research performance of an institution or a part of it. Quality assurance, which is a concern of various stakeholders in higher education, is an ongoing process of adopting various mechanisms and procedures to monitor performance and pursue corrective actions in order to improve academic standards and improve institutional effectiveness (Powar and Panda, 1995).
reference to those outcomes which are extrinsic to the educational experience itself. One can take an instrumental view of education which primarily concerns what follows from differences in educational provision and achievement. Brookover pointed out: “Conflicts arise over differential treatment in school and unequal outcomes of the education process in terms of wealth, occupational status, and opportunities (cited in Ballantine 1993: 79). Entwistle highlighted: “From this extrinsic point of view, equality is assessed in terms of socio-economic outcomes” (1978: 13). Coleman (1968) and Green (1971) agreed that the principle of equality is satisfied when “the range of educational achievement and the distribution of benefits within that range should be about the same for each social group.” Robinson further stated: “the aim of policies in promoting equality of outcome is that if the population were divided into groups along non-educational criteria then the achievement of these groups would be the same” (1981: 155). The equality of outcome envisaged here is that representation of the different social groups – if classified in terms of social class, caste, tribe, race, gender etc. at the higher educational level – should be in proportion to the size of the group within the general population. The objective is to equalize not merely opportunity but outcomes in education and certainly occupation among all groups. In Tyler’s opinion (1977), there is nothing which prevents policymakers from accepting this perspective and at the same time applying Rawls’ difference principle thus: “All social primary goods – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured” (1971: 303). As Wilson stated: “We can say that equality is “increased” or a state of “absolute equality” is approached as we progressively remove accidental features, and concentrate more and more on natural features that all men might reasonably be expected to have, at least in some part” (1966: 58).

Sir Isaiah Berlin’s classic statement on the accomplishment of ideal equality reads: “Equality is one value among many: the degree to which it is compatible with other ends depends on the concrete situation and cannot be deduced from general laws of any kind, it is neither more or less rational than any other ultimate principle; indeed

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12 The conclusions drawn on the principle of equality between groups are not widely accepted. From a humanistic point of view it is not clear why distinct inequalities between individuals within social groups should be more acceptable than similar inequalities between human beings across social groups.

13 The consensus among writers is that ideal equality may be unattainable but it is always possible to reduce the disparities and promote a desirable order of equality amongst all sections of the population.
it is difficult to see what is meant by considering it either rational or non-rational” (1978: 96). According to Beteille (2001), if our everyday practice reflects so many instances of inequality, this is partially due to the contradictions, oppositions and tensions inherent in the ideal of equality itself. In examining education policies designed to achieve equality, the term “equal opportunities” itself is quite elusive. It can refer to a wide variety of contexts within educational institutions, for instance: access, resource materials, curriculum, pedagogy, the general teaching environment, and quality performance and standards. Moreover, at various times equal opportunities have been used to counteract different kinds of educational or socio-economic inequality on the basis of social class, caste, tribe, race or gender – and consequently there are distinct differences in its conceptualization. Weiner remarked: “For some, achieving equality means enabling certain under-represented groups to attain their rightful place in the existing social, economic, and political order; for others it means offering radical alternatives to an essentially biased social and political system” (1986: 26).

To eliminate undeserved inequalities Rawls calls for “the principle of redress” as follows: “since inequalities of birth and natural endowment are undeserved, these inequalities are somehow to be compensated for. Thus the principle holds that in order to treat all persons equally, to provide genuine equality of opportunity, society must give more attention to those with fewer native assets and to those born into the less favourable social positions. The idea is to redress the bias of contingencies in the direction of equality” (1971: 100-01). Entwistle claimed that: “the desirable widening of opportunity which is necessary to diminish economic and social inequality has to be sought in ways which probably call for unequal provision within the educational system itself” (1978: 13).

In sum, it may be confirmed that the idea of equality is now a reality which modern societies have to contend with. While it is a fact that no society has thus far achieved the goal of equality, and that in many societies the right to equality may be suppressed or circumscribed and limited to certain groups for varying periods of time, it is evident that no society today can completely refuse to accept it as part of its value framework. This means that in order to approximate the goal of equality, it is imperative to offer quality education and other supportive systems “unequally” to address different kinds of educational or socio-economic inequality (class, caste, tribe,
race, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc). This can take the form of “policies of affirmative action” or “positive discrimination” in some societies where the respective governments reserve seats in educational institutions or grant concessionary benefits such as deprivation points in university admissions etc.

**POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION OR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

Weisskopf defined the term “positive discrimination” thus: “the practice of preferential selection of members of under-represented groups to widely esteemed positions – in other words, when membership in such a group increases one’s likelihood of being selected to such a position” (2004:4). For Weisskopf, what makes discrimination “positive” is that it is intended to elevate members of groups that are under-represented in esteemed positions and thus under-represented in the upper strata of society. Weisskopf also specified that “negative discrimination” denotes a policy of exclusion of members of such groups.

In Garcia’s view (1997), affirmative action in general describes those practices that attempt to correct past or present discrimination and prevent future occurrences of discrimination. It endeavours to redress historical inequities by providing traditionally under-represented groups with more equal access to the majority of public and private arenas. This access is seen as “more equal” since it attempts to redress years of inequities and inequalities within a short space of time. According to Brown and Donahoo (2003), affirmative action is a government policy that seeks to remedy long-standing discrimination against specific groups. The principal goal of affirmative action policies and programmes is to increase access to and to ensure the equitable distribution of opportunities in higher education, employment, and government contracts.14 To this end, Brown and Donahoo outlined: “affirmative action provides regulations, procedures and guidelines to assure that eligible and interested citizens receive equal consideration regardless of their race, gender, or age” etc. (2003: 61). It is clear that affirmative action policies of preferential treatment might focus on compensatory justice. However, compensatory benefits differ from redistribution practices essentially due to their concern with the past. Rai explained: “Redistribution is concerned with eliminating the present inequalities, while compensatory justice is

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14 Somers (2002: 212) endorsed this view as follows: “The term “affirmative action” refers to a wide range of voluntary and mandatory activities in the areas of employment, education and government contracts”.

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concerned not only with this but with also providing compensation for unfair burdens borne in the past" (2002: 4309). Different perspectives and variations on the theme of affirmative action – abound in different societies.

The evolution of India’s ancient history reveals that Scheduled Castes (Harijans) and Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis) have been the deprived and backward sections of Indian society occupying the lower portions of the social and economic pyramid. In a society of this kind, where inequality and domination have been deeply embedded in the social structure and in the psyche of the people; it is an arduous task to uplift and empower the deprived groups even through legislative measures. Any attempt to exercise the rights stipulated by law is often to challenge the existing order of relations (Beteille, 1974). Furthermore, Beteille emphasized: “the moral basis of claims for special treatment of the Harijans and Adivasis is quite different than the moral basis of claims by the various castes and communities which seek inclusion among the other Backward Classes” (1981: 10). Beteille reinforced the point that: “Only the Harijans and Adivasis have suffered collectively the kind of social abuse and psychological injury that justify very special measures of redress in their case, including the reservation of jobs” (1990: 41). Patwardhan and Palshikar endorsed Beteille’s perspective by suggesting that: “eligibility for PD (Positive Discrimination) preferences should go to the ethnic communities that have suffered past and present discrimination connected to the stigma attached to their members and to psychological attitudes and social behaviours ingrained in both the discriminators and those discriminated against” (cited in Weisskopf, 2004: 105).

In the Indian context, Beteille advocated the reconciliation between the two principles of merit and reservations in the interest of compensatory justice as follows: “It is one thing to recommend equality of opportunity as a way of eliminating discriminations, it is quite another when equality of opportunity becomes only an excuse for relentless competition without any regard for those who lose out in the race... The idea behind the compensatory principle is that society must intervene in order to ensure that the competition is fair, and not just free” (cited in Kirpal and Gupta, 1999: 33).

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15 Sometimes the implementation of preferential policies for compensatory justice is accompanied by the use of quotas. Nickel defined a quota as “a numerical good or requirement for the hiring or admission of members of specified groups within a certain time and until a certain percentage is reached” (1975: 534).
In Trinidad and Tobago, the multi-ethnic society has evolved from peoples who were brought by the British colonizers as immigrants; the two major ethnic groups were Africans who came as slaves and East Indians who came as indentured labourers. An argument put forward is that both groups have been subjected to common forms of exploitation and deprivation under the colonial regime (Singh, 1994). Hence, the belief has been established that every creed and each ethnic group should strive to achieve equality essentially on the premise that educational opportunities are open to all from the earliest stages. Progress and social mobility therefore depends upon personal success and application. As such, any policy of affirmative action will inevitably be seen as inequitable, discriminatory and provocative; and will only aggravate social tensions and foment ethnic strife. Alternatively, the government is intent upon suggesting and implementing those policies designed to improve endemic social problems. As far as unequal representation of ethnic groups in higher education is concerned, government has declared: “It’s not affirmative action but a social action to deal with a social problem. Any segment of this society that needs special attention will get it” (Newsday: October 26, 2003, p.10). The moral debate and value to the application of affirmative action in Trinidad and Tobago has not succeeded.

In 1995, US President, Bill Clinton spoke on the purpose and meaning of affirmative action in response to this Republicans opponents: “Our search to find ways to move more quickly to equal opportunity led to the development of what we now call affirmative action. The purpose of affirmative action is to give our nation a way to finally address the systemic exclusion of individuals of talent, on the basis of their gender or race, from opportunities to develop, perform, achieve and contribute. Affirmative action is an effort to develop a systematic approach to open the doors of education, employment, and business development opportunities to qualified individuals who happen to be members of groups that have experienced long-standing and persistent discrimination…” (New York Times, July 20, 1995 cited in Garcia 1997: 4).

In Garcia’s view, as a result of affirmative action, far more equitable standards have been set in virtually every aspect of American life – “Gone were the days of routinely arbitrary hiring practices, gender-based exclusion, unfair employment criteria... and too many class distinctions to count” (1997: 99). Apart from
affirmative action, Motwani indicated: “There are other ways to upgrade the quality of one’s education in order to effectively compete with others and advance independently without undue overprotection. Policies, giving preference to one race at the cost of others, generates resentment and divisiveness. “Diversity” created through unjustified means for diversity’s sake, would never be enjoyed as diversity. It would be loathed as disunity” (2003: 300). Similar arguments are now put forward by those who have always opposed affirmative action policies in principle. Nevertheless, critics can debate the degree to which enhancement of social equality in American society has actually been accomplished, and how far it is attributable to affirmative action policies.

Thus, positive discrimination preferences have proved to be controversial whenever and wherever they have been discussed and implemented. This situation is unavoidable with a policy that encompasses political tension – between the individual right to equal treatment and the societal goal of eradicating prevalent group inequalities – and which is capable of producing both tremendous benefits and tremendous costs. In this respect, public confidence in the acceptance of a positive discrimination policy, as in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, becomes an influential element in its success.

In Trinidad and Tobago the use of quotas appears to be unconstitutional; on the other hand, in India it is explicitly sanctioned by the Constitution. Hence, whereas “the charge of reverse discrimination” is the most popular complaint about affirmative action in Trinidad and Tobago, this is not the case as pertains to reservations in India. Critics must evaluate substantive arguments to determine why it is deficient policy.

GENERAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This section presents the general background and context of the study. It deals with the contexts of India and Trinidad and Tobago in order to provide similarities and differences in conditions created to effect equality of opportunity in higher education.

India

India, Republic of South Asia, is the seventh largest country in the world with an area of 3,287,263 square kilometres (Appendix A.I). It is located in the northern hemisphere and is bound by Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar
and Bangladesh. Bounded by the Great Himalayas in the north, India stretches southwards and at the Tropic of Cancer, tapers of into the Indian Ocean between the Bay of Bengal on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west (Appendix A.II).

India attained independence on August 15, 1947. The country comprises a Union of States and is a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic with a parliamentary system of government. The Republic is governed according to the Constitution which came into effect on January 26, 1950. The Constitution distributes legislative power between the Parliament and the state legislatures and centers for vesting of residual powers in Parliament. India has now been divided into twenty-eight (28) states and seven (7) Union Territories.

India is the world’s largest democracy. The latest population enumeration of Census 2001 revealed that India is the second most populous country in the world after China. India’s population on March 1st, 2001 stood at 1,028 million (532.1 million males and 496.4 million females). (Research, Reference and Training Division; Government of India: 2006). India occupies only 2.42 per cent of the world landmass but supports and sustains 16.7 per cent of the global population (Ibid).

India’s linguistic diversity is extreme and many dialects are spoken among the population. Hindi, in Art. 343 (1) of the Constitution (1950), is designated as the official language. Constitutional provisions also accorded English the position of an associate official language (Art. 343(2)) since it serves as an all-India lingua franca and is the medium of instruction in secondary schools and universities; in addition fifteen (15) regional languages are recognized.

The peoples of India comprise of many different ethnic and religious groups drawn from the earliest settlers in the sub-continent or from invaders whose on quests are well known. Northern India is revered as the hearth within which Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and much later, Sikhism originated. These indigenous religions have been supplemented by Islam and Christianity due to external contacts over the last two millennia. India’s ethnic and religious diversity is perhaps the most complex to be found anywhere on the globe outside of Africa (Kurian, 1982).

India is a diverse country with a large population of over one billion people, encounters a rich diversity in terms of language, religions, castes, tribes and varying social and economic background of its people. The disparity in certain issues is high
to the extent that some groups feel excluded from the mainstream due to discrimination based on their socio-economic status (Takwale, 2003). The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute the weakest sections of the population. Natujal and Sharma stated: “For historical reasons they have continued to remain socially and educationally neglected communities” (1979: 1). The SCs are scattered all over the country, and according to Yadav: “the only thing they share in common is poverty and social disabilities arising from the untouchability among these people” (1991: 15). The majority of tribal people live in remote areas which were not easily accessible till recent past. Although tribals are found all over India, the greater proportion are concentrated in three main regions – the North-East where they constitute a majority of populations in Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh – the hill areas of Central India, and Western India, where many reside in the states of Bihar and Orissa. Singh recorded that the low social and economic status of tribals is due to “non-contact with the outside world, inbreeding, isolation and seclusion leading to emergence of distinctive cultural pattern” (1979: 255). To a significant degree, social prejudice has obstructed the academic achievements of the SCs and STs. However, Beteille found that “a more serious obstacle today is the abject poverty of the vast majority of them to whom even the benefit of literacy comes slowly” (1988: 130). Generally, the lower castes and tribal communities constitute the poorer rural masses, while upper castes predominate the better off urban population (Mathews, 2001).

Predominance of agriculture and a judicious mix of private and public sectors in industrial and technological development are significant features of Indian economy. Agriculture is referred to as “the life blood of Indian Economy”. About seventy percent (70%) of the Indian population lives in villages with agriculture or agro-based small industry providing the main occupation. The contention is that agriculture accounts for more than two-thirds of the labor force, but for only one-third of the country’s national income (Bordia, 1995). India’s economic growth, though relatively steady since independence in 1947, has however been undramatic, and its gross national product (GNP) per capita remains the lowest in the world. As a result, the poor in India can only be excluded from any of the benefits of “so-called” development (Banerjee, 2001). To alleviate the ill effects of economic crisis, government is committed to the welfare and education of the vulnerable sections in
particular – children, women, displaced persons, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Research, Reference and Training Division, Government of India: 2006).

The first opportunity for the introduction of mass education in India came with the attainment of independence in 1947. As an alternative to the British Indian educational system, Gandhian “basic education” provided children with instruction related to manual and productive work in order to build an educational system suited to India’s conditions. At present, the 10+2+3 structure for the education system has been implemented. The 10 years basic school utilizes a common curriculum and includes two levels of primary education (Grades I-V and VI-VIII) and one level of secondary education (Grades IX-X). This is followed by 2 years of higher secondary education (Grades XI-XII) when students would bifurcate into vocational and academic streams. The primary education system in India is the second largest in the world – however out of 200 million children, between age group 6-14 years, only 120 million are in school. Net attendance at primary level is only 66 per cent of enrolment. Secondary school enrolment is 49 per cent (Yadav, 2002). At one extreme are the elite “public” paying schools, so named after the British models; and the newly established Navodaya Vidyalayas. At the other extreme are the ill equipped, inadequately staffed, and poorly supervised government or municipal schools. Suffice to say, in 2001, India’s literacy rate was 64.84 per cent: 75.26 for males and 53.67 for females (Research, Reference and Training Division, Government of India: 2006). The culmination of secondary school studies is the Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination which may qualify one for a three year undergraduate degree.

In 2002, India’s higher education enrolment was 7 per cent (Mohan, 2002). In a complex society which is divided by social class, caste, tribes, a distinct gender gap, and where collective identities are very marked by rural and urban differences and regional disparities, people find it natural to question whether the proportion of university graduates in their community is equal to, greater than, or less than their proportion in some other community or in society as a whole. In Indian society, educational inequality is seen to be a reflection of various forms of social inequality that have emerged from British rule and continue to persist. The factor of “equal opportunity” within the Indian higher education system is intrinsically interwined in the thick rope of socio-economic oppression which ties down the social system (Raza, 1991). As one moves down a scale from upper class, high caste, male and urban in
relatively developed regions – to lower classes, scheduled castes and tribes, female and rural in relatively less developed regions, the inequalities become increasingly sharp. Thus, Velaskar underscored that: “In the Indian context, social structures are characterized by divisive and hierarchical systems of relations of caste-class, ethnic groups and gender which interact and crosscut and are held together in complex ways in modern times” (2006: 7).

Naik asserted that: “utter poverty, lack of educational background, and a different lifestyle have prevented the poorer and backward classes from taking full benefit of free education facilities at all levels” (1975: 38, 39). This means that education is essentially the preserve of small higher sections and serves as a powerful instrument of perpetuation of inequalities (Jayaram, 1984). The resulting structural imbalance has distorted the pattern of educational growth to the extent that overall the lower classes remain subjected to adverse socio-economic conditions. Higher education is found to have contributed to the stabilization and perpetuation of ascribed status or status retention (Jayaram, 1987). Indeed, students of the affluent upper strata get a better quality of education, admission into the desired professional courses and are able to exploit avenues to improve their merit and get through public examinations (Sudarshanam, 1991). The elite occupies all the top jobs in government and the private sector while the others have to be contented with ministerial and menial posts. Clearly, the emerging middle classes have consolidated their social position by controlling the professional occupations and cultural institutions. The peasants and manual labourers are continually marginalized from the loci of power and influence due to inadequate education at all levels. This signifies that the high level of upper class ideological control remains a crucial mainstay of their continued social and cultural domination over the subaltern groups in India (Scrase, 1993). Furthermore, the slow pace of industrialization and urbanization has led to a highly uneven pattern of class formation; and castes, tribes and ethnic groups tend to cut across class lines. Almond emphasized: “As a result, the development of class identities and political mobilization based on class appeals has been severely inhibited” (2000: 638).

Until the 1940s the higher castes, mainly the Brahmins had enjoyed social, economic and political dominance over the members of lower castes (Beteille, 1965). Since the pre-independence leadership was concentrated in the hands of Brahmins, the predominant force in the social structure of Hindu society in extensive power –
"political, ritual and economic" (Cohen cited in Shah, 1984) concretized their elite status in education. The Brahmins who were the first to respond to modern education, constituted the single majority caste group in various institutions of higher learning. This is in spite of efforts, both formal and informal, to counteract their predominance. In the words of one researcher, "no other country can quite match this picture of a continuing intellectual tradition carried so long by a single section of the population" (Shils 1961: 21). Although the Indian government adopted various measures to increase the educational level and social status of the lower castes; they were nowhere near the traditionally privileged Brahmin caste (Bhatt, 1975). While some non-Brahmin castes have recently entered the field of higher education; it is only the dominant among them who have benefited through political power which they have been able to wield and utilize (Jayaram, 1990). Chatterjee recorded that since the traditional Brahminical Sanskrit education in the pre-British days, the lowest castes "steeped in ignorance, illiteracy and poverty, have been target of economic exploitation... and all forms of social disabilities" (2000: 1).

According to Ghurye, provisions in the Constitution (1950) intended that both the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) were "to be afforded special treatment for overcoming their social and economic difficulties to enable them to realize and experience the active condition of social justice" (2000: 413). The Constitution abolished the practice of caste in 1950. The most obvious manifestation of the goal of social equality has been the implementation of educational and occupational reservation policies for "Dalits and Adivasis" as documented in the Constitution (Kumar, Heath and Heath, 2002). Reservations were extended to the Other Backward Classes at the national level in 1993 (Das, 2000). As Pinto observed, "regardless of official policy, the [caste] system still permeates Indian life and culture" (2001: 2819). The oppressive aspects of the caste system have been increasingly contested by those at the bottom of the educational pyramid, specifically by the lower castes (SCs and OBCs) and the STs.

There is sponsored mobility into higher education for SCs and STs through lowered entrance requirements, reservations of places, financial support for tuition and maintenance, and motivation through reservations in employment (Shukla, 1991). Nevertheless, enrolments are at a far lower level than proportionate to the population

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16 Dalits are India's ex-untouchables. Constitutionally they are referred to as Scheduled Castes.
and students tend to cluster in weaker institutions, take less prestigious courses, exhibit poorer performance and are poorly represented as far as diversity in the workforce is concerned (Rao, 2002(b)). While government has taken up the cause of ameliorating the educational level among the SCs and STs, both groups have remained seriously disadvantaged (World Bank, 1994). With reference to the backward classes, Natujal and Sharma pointed out: “Even among these classes, the educational development has been lop-sided. The benefits of various educational schemes have rather been captured by a few privileged groups and the vast segment of the population continues to be neglected” (1979: 26). As indicated by Kabra (1991), the Constitution makers recognized that the weaker sections and, in general, women, needed support and encouragement to pursue education.

In the case of Indian women, the dimensions of caste, tribe, class and others effect cumulative disadvantages and they bear a multiple burden of inequality: nowhere do they enjoy a status which is equal with men (Chanana, 1993). It is well known, in India, women enrolment in education is low and data on higher education reveal that females consistently lag behind their male counterparts (Chitnis, 1988). With reference to women’s education, it is imperative to consider their social context, which is immersed in culture, religion and in the “patrifocal family structure and ideology.” According to Mukhopadhyay and Seymour, the term refers to: “a set of predominant kinship and family structures and beliefs that give precedence to men over women – sons over daughters, fathers over mothers, husbands over wives...These male-oriented structures and beliefs...constitute a socio-cultural complex that profoundly affects women’s lives and hence, their access to education and educational achievement” (1994: 3). In general, Chanana observed that women’s education is not yet seen “as a means to radically redefine women’s role in society. They are not still being regarded as equal to men in legitimately regarding pursuit of career as the main goal of life (1990: 89). Consequently, women are excluded from the high status well paid jobs which are essentially knowledge based (Indiresan, 1995). The following are well known barriers that affect women’s access to higher education and prestigious jobs (Chanana, 2000): women’s association with private domain of the household; the choice between dowry and educational expenses; lack of economic resources in the family; education being perceived as consumption and being irrelevant for production etc. Chanana pointed out that these factors have to be
understood in a situation where “some parents” are permitting new and emerging options to their daughters in education and careers for socio-economic advancement. Nevertheless, Chanana concluded: “women have come to be stereotyped in the employment market just as they have been stereotyped in the domestic sphere. No radical shifts in the occupational placement pattern of Indian women have taken place during the last three decades” (2001: 355).

In post-independence India, expansion of higher education reflects wide disparities among different social classes, between the SCs/STs and non-SCs/STs, between men and women, between rural and urban areas and across different states and within states. Agrawal and Varma believe that accommodating these disparities “in the process of policy formulation and evolving an integrated perspective for the country as a whole is indeed a challenging imperative of the situation (1998: 2). Hence, in Indian higher education the problem of equality of opportunity regarding access and quality still persists.

Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago, island republic of the West Indies, is separated from Venezuela by 11 kilometres off the Gulf of Paria. Trinidad is the southernmost island of the Lesser Antilles chain in the Caribbean, and with Tobago, it covers a combined total land area of 4820 square kilometres (see Appendix III). Tobago lies 31 kilometres northeast of the larger island and occupies only 32.2 square kilometres. The capital of Trinidad is Port-of-Spain and the other major urban centers are San Fernando and Arima. The capital of Tobago is Scarborough (Appendix IV).

Trinidad and Tobago was formerly a British Crown Colony that become self-governing in 1956. The twin island achieved full independence from Britain on August 31st, 1962 and became a Republic within the Commonwealth on September 24th, 1976. The Constitution (1976) provides for a ceremonial President, a Prime Minister as the effective head of government and a bicameral parliament: constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms are to be observed in governance. Multiracial, multireligious, and multilingual, Trinidad and Tobago has been described as a stable “multiparty parliamentary democracy” with a good track record in human rights.

Trinidad society is based on the complex interaction of many ethnic groups of
which two predominate: namely the Africans—descendants of African slaves, and the East Indians—descendants of indentured labourers imported from India between 1845 and 1917. In between, there were five groups of white; foreign whites or bekes, local whites or French Creole, Portuguese, Middle Easterners and Spanish-speaking Venezuelans; three groups of coloureds and one group of Chinese. Africans and East Indians each comprise 40 per cent of the population; and although the remaining 20 per cent is considered “Mixed”, less than 1 per cent is Chinese. Trinidad is much more multi-ethnic than Tobago, whose population consists almost entirely of Africans. The twin island is also home to great religious diversity which allows for the observance of various faiths including Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and the Orisha faith.

The population of Trinidad and Tobago is estimated at 1,290,413 persons, of which 644,174 are male and 646,239 are female (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2000). The official language is International Standard English. The common language, a dialect of English is very innovative with elements of French, Spanish, Hindi and African languages. The presence of diverse ethnic and religious groups with many indigenous languages within such a small country makes Trinidad and Tobago a microcosm of the world.

After independence in 1962, the government attempted to develop a black culture rooted in the African past and to introduce black pride as a viable cultural concept; however African society has become essentially white oriented and deeply imbued with European, more specifically British values (Deosarans, 1981). Notwithstanding differences among them based on caste, language and religious beliefs, and largely on account of the perceived inferiority conferred upon them by the wider society, the East Indians adamantly resisted assimilation (Samaroo, 1982).

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17. (Mid-year estimates, 1999).
18. It is important to consider the influence of caste in Trinidad’s society and its impact on education. According to Jain (2004): “On the one hand, there is a strong likelihood of the immigrants representing the normal range of castes found in India and, on the other, the premium placed on the agricultural castes in recruiting could have led Brahmin and other high castes to register themselves as agriculturalists. It is true, however, that despite heterogeneity in the derivation of indentured immigrants—not only among provinces but also within the districts and villages of origin—they were looked upon by others and also forged consciously an identity that was homogeneous. The mixing up of castes, language and region in the course of journey to Trinidad as well as common proletarian living conditions on plantation must have worked in that direction. However, the historical perspective should not be ignored; there is evidence that caste and other distinctions were restored when the East Indians settled in villages in Trinidad and even to this day the distinction between Brahmin (the highest priestly caste) and Chamar (which designates all untouchables in Trinidad) is quite pervasive. Nevertheless, in
Four institutions have assisted the East Indians in preserving their cultural autonomy — religion, the caste system, kinship ties and material culture (La Guerre, 1974). In respect of the Mixed group, their culture where it is retained at all, seems restricted to only external aspects (Mustapha, 2002). Ethnic differentiation is further reinforced by occupational and geographic segregation. By and large, residential areas are divided into African, or East Indian districts. Africans are concentrated in industrial urban areas in and within the proximity of Port-of-Spain, San Fernando, Arima, the Pitch Lake in Labrea and the oilfields of the southwest region. Many East Indians supply labour for rural agriculture, mainly in the sugar belt in the west. Generally, other ethnic groups engage in commercial activities in urban areas (Kurian, 1982).

Trinidad and Tobago’s economy is heavily dependent on the energy and energy-related sectors to provide most of its export earnings. These sectors comprise the petroleum and petro-chemical industries, as well as other heavy industries utilizing natural gas. Government intends to support its growing petroleum based economy and is committed to the development of labour intensive industries and technological power (Trinidad and Tobago: Social and Economic Policy Framework (SEPF) 2002-2007). In Trinidad and Tobago, approximately, 20 per cent of the population was living in poverty at the start of the new millennium (Lakeberg Dridi, 2002). Thus, to alleviate poverty, the major goals of the education system are: the provision of foundations for a workforce in an industrial and technological economy, the elimination of socio-economic disadvantage, nation building, and schooling for all at least inclusive of both the primary and secondary stages (Trinidad and Tobago Education Policy Paper, 1993-2003).

The education system in Trinidad and Tobago has evolved out of the British Colonial System and was modified by inputs from the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC). The system is basically organized into public schools which operate under the Ministry of Education. Public government schools and the more prestigious government assisted denominational schools provide “free education” at the primary and secondary school levels, until Form 5. On a competitive basis, a small per centage of successful students are given an additional two years of free education to write the

comparison with India, caste has not debarred untouchables from accessing education. In fact, the collective resistance of Hindus against foreign values motivated an orthodox Brahmin, Shri Bhadase Sagan Maraj, to establish Hindu primary schools in Trinidad which were open to all Hindu children irrespective of their caste.
Advanced Level Examinations (CXC and GCE) set by the Caribbean Examination Council as well as the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford and London, England. Thereafter, three year undergraduate and higher degree courses can be pursued mainly at the premier higher education institution which is a regional University of the West Indies located in the St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad. At the bottom of the educational pyramid, attendance at primary school is compulsory for all children in the 6-12 age group, although many enter school at age 5. In 1999, gross enrolment ratios at the primary level were estimated to be 99 per cent overall, 99 per cent for boys and 98 per cent for girls. At the secondary level, the figures read 88 per cent for both male and female students (Lakeberg Dridi, 2002). The participation rate at the higher education level is less than 8 per cent. According to 1999 statistics, the literacy rate of the population is 77.4 per cent functionally literate, 14.6 per cent functionally illiterate and 8.0 per cent illiterate (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2000).

When examined within the broad context of society, one can say that in 1962, independent Trinidad and Tobago inherited an education system of a highly stratified structure with elitist functions. Although primary education was generally accessible, secondary education was available only to a privileged few. Whites and coloureds (the Mixed race born from white European males and African women) had greater access to the limited opportunities available (Campbell, 1992). The overarching significance of education opportunity was emphasized. The embracing of higher education as a means for social and economic mobility played an instrumental role (Herbert, 2003). The social order emerging out of colonialism had placed different races into different economic statuses (Singh, 1994). The situation today represents an extremely complex interaction between race, class, and to some extent, gender.

"Making of a Monster" is a narrative that evaluates the historical evolution of Indo-African ethnic and racial conflicts since the formal termination of indentureship in 1917 to contemporary times in Trinidad (Pillai, 2003). Although educational opportunities and top positions in colonial administration were reserved for the Whites, Africans sought education and were employed in the middle and lower positions in the state government jobs. The educational and economic advancement made by Indians in the post-indentureship period and the subsequent emergence of an educated middle-class who attained positions in the state and government jobs, an exclusive African territory, brought them into direct conflicts with the African
educated middle class. The fear of “Indian domination” expressed by the Africans and the social exclusiveness developed among the Indians were principal factors that heightened mutual hostility and suspicions. Pillai documented: “This polarization designed and executed by the colonial administration is still continuing without many changes even in contemporary times” (2003: 134).

As a result of prolonged interaction and strong mutual influence across different racial and ethnic lines, it is hardly likely that many traits exist in pure forms. But it is apparent that across newly developed ethnicities, various conflicts arise over the question of rights and privileges as pertains to higher education. A pertinent issue is the inaffordability of tuition fees among those of low socio-economic status. A recent controversy was the idea to implement a quota system at UWI, St. Augustine aimed at recruiting young Afro-Trinidadian males, especially between the 17-24 age group (Trinidad Express: November 2, 2003, p.3). It is not uncommon to hear protests of discrimination from different ethnic and political interests groups. They assert that, the National Anthem of Trinidad and Tobago states: “Here every creed and race finds an equal place.” In addition, they refer to the Constitution that guarantees “equality of treatment” and “non-discrimination.” Many proclaim that these ideals are not translated into the education system in general, and hence this is the reason for marked inequalities at the higher educational level.

Although nationalistic sentiments have intensified and citizens, irrespective of the origins of their ancestors, have become indigenized into identifying with Trinidad and Tobago as their home, it is visible that national culture comprises of segments reflecting different levels of respectability. Thus, there exists middle and lower-class variants of national culture. There are middle and lower class families, schools and occupations. As Mustapha stated: “These class-based variants often transcend boundaries of race” (2002: 160). Over the years, many former lower-class individuals have secured top professions in the society through higher education. However, Mustapha explained that despite initial expansion of education mobility trends are now becoming stabilized. This means that while the boundaries of stratification and access to opportunity has shifted away from solely ascriptive criteria to achievement-based criteria as measured (though inefficiently) by academic performance – the decisive evidence is that: “the society’s inequalities are becoming institutionalized and are beginning to follow regular patterns from generation to generation” (2002: 146).
In Trinidad and Tobago, women are not a homogeneous group. Divisions based on ethnicity and class, as well as social and economic status, affect their lives and are responsible for their varied roles and contributions to societal development (Nicholas, 1990). With reference to university educated women, Mohammed (1987) found that whereas higher education had become a normative expectation for middle and upper girls of the African and Mixed races as well as a preparation for marriage; for East Indian girls, attaining an education required greater sacrifice and more of a break with culture — consequently it was regarded as the pathway to a career and personal independence rather than a preparation for a housewife's role. The critical issue is that although the proportion of university educated women in Trinidad and Tobago has increased dramatically in the post-independence period, they still tend to be concentrated in female-dominated occupations and the lowest echelons of the professional hierarchy (Hamilton and Leo-Rhymie, 1996). According to Nicholas, “In Trinidad and Tobago, it can be said that the patriarchal power... or male/female relationship reinforces the oppression and subordination of women through various institutions” (1990: 3).

Trinidad and Tobago during the post-independence era from 1962, has implemented greater equality of opportunity for citizens to acquire higher education and achievements have been impressive by “Third World” standards. On the other hand, while reforms to effect equality facilitated to some extent mobility among the lower socio-economic classes: there have been no specific reforms aimed at redressing ethnic imbalances and gender-based inequalities.

In sum, both India and, Trinidad and Tobago, have encountered similar problems and issues that originate from the elite system of higher education adopted under British rule. In India, however, the disparities between the rich and poor and educated and uneducated, particularly women, are greater primarily due to severe poverty, massive population, regional imbalances, and the rigid patrifocal family structure. Furthermore, unlike the Trinidad and Tobago scenario, the challenge of the marginalized and deprived to equal access in higher education is compounded by the constraints of the caste system. The crux of the situation in both the countries is that the deprived are already creating pressure on the state to make higher education more accessible; they have raised the issue of equality and socio-economic equity for all ethnic groups inclusive of both men and women.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

India

In India, many studies have directly or indirectly addressed the theme of “equality” and “equality of educational opportunity”. They encompass the broad issue of education among deprived groups and their social mobility which have promoted a greater understanding of the problem of equality in higher education and its crucial aspects.

Chitnis (1974) undertook a study aimed at finding out whether the investment done by both “centre” and “state” enabled the SCs to reach nearer to the goal of equality as promised in the Constitution. The study concentrated on “Literacy and Educational Enrolment Among the Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra.” Chitnis found that overall the percentagewise representation of the SCs at schools and colleges in the state was greater than the percentage of SCs in the total population of the state. Notably, in some districts the percentage of SC enrolment was higher than the percentage of SCs in the population, however – in other districts the reverse was the case. It was apparent that the extent of enrolment over population declined at each successive stage of school and college.

A study on “Trends of Enrolment of Scheduled Castes in Higher Education (1964-77)” pointed to great disparities in rates of growth in enrolment of SC and non-SCs in the States and Union Territories. (cited in Premi and Basu, 1983). Overall, disparity was more evident in the case of SC enrolment. There was no close relationship between concentration of the SC population in a particular region and its enrolment concentration. In addition, the educational disparities between SCs, vis-a-vis other communities; intensified from primary to secondary level and from secondary to higher levels of education. As one ascended the educational ladder, the rate of stagnation and dropout among the SCs were exceedingly greater than non-SCs. But on the whole, inequality between SCs and other communities regarding enrolment position in higher education had reduced over the thirteen year period (Premi and Basu, 1983).

Premi (1977) conducted a study on “Protective Legislation and Equality of

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19 The survey project utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data focused on interviews; and secondary data were collected from the census records of 1971 and the records in the state directorate of education.
Education Opportunity among Scheduled Castes in Punjab." The salient finding was that equality of educational opportunity for SCs in comparison with non-SCs was still a distant goal, even in view of equal access to educational institutions. Essentially, "aspects of equality in terms of equal inputs had not so far been accepted in principle." In fact, a distinct caste and class pattern in the utilization of educational facilities at the higher level was observed.

Rastogi (1977) carried out a comprehensive study on "The Impact of Constitutional Provisions Upon the Upliftment of Harijans at Lucknow University." Socio-cultural depression, social stigma, paucity of time due to economic hardship and social segregation were the prime factors affecting the free socialization of Harijans with the caste Hindu students. The former also exhibited limited participation in classroom and in extra-curricular activities. Rastogi identified that the main reason for non-utilization of benefits guaranteed under the Constitution of India was the lack of implementation of the provisions and facilities by the government.

Rastogi's main finding emerged in Aikara's investigation of the problems encountered by SC College students in Bombay (1980). Compared with the non-SC students, the SC students were found to be inferior in almost every aspect in socio-economic and academic background as well as in performance and progress among the student population. Further, Sharma's study of SC students in Patna University (1982) demonstrated disparity between SCs and other castes in respect of habitation, per capital income, parental education, study facilities, alienation and level of academic achievement. In his study on "The Personality Characteristics and Educational Problems of Scheduled Caste Students", Kakkar (1990) illustrated that SC students have all the personality characteristics that are a prerequisite to progress in life. They are higher than others in vigour and ascendancy. They are also high on educational problems and low in socio-economic status. On account of the fact that academic achievement paves the way to educational and vocational ladder in life; they tend to trail behind in occupational life.

There are even fewer studies pertaining to the educational problems and aspirations of Scheduled Tribes. Solanki (1976) engaged in "A Study of the Problems of Tribal Students Going for Higher Education." Out of twenty-eight tribes in Gujarat, children from only fifteen tribes had entered the field of higher education. For more than half of the dropouts at the college level, the annual household income was less
than Rs. 1200. One fourth of the students experienced such poverty that they had to either earn while learning, or get a scholarship or borrow money from their relatives and friends in order to pursue their education. All the STs indicated that they could not have opted for higher education if special facilities were not provided to them by the government and urged that the practice be continued.

Kumar (1978) found that in spite of many higher educational facilities made available to STs of the Ranchi district, they still had not reached to the level of non-tribal people. The more facilities they received, the more acute the problem became in other directions. There were various obstacles to higher education among STs like illiteracy in the family, economic backwardness and inferiority complex which all led to dropout and stagnation. There were additional limitations like lack of higher education institutions in tribal areas, no girls hostels, language problem and educated unemployment. Kumar further pointed out that the majority tribals in higher education belonged to literate families with comparatively high social and economic status in their respective communities, and their parents had aspirations for good jobs after higher education. Although higher education was not seen to be relevant to the needs of tribal communities, it helped to elevate their socio-economic status. In his investigation on the “Impact of Education on the Tribals of Ranchi District”, Lakra (1976) documented that the primarily agriculturalist tribals were gradually migrating to cities and neglecting traditional mode of living. With the dawn of independence the educated tribals were at an advantageous position but they were in dire need of training specific job skills and more education.

Some important findings were revealed in Pandey’s study on “Social Aspects of Academic Achievement and Aspirations of Scheduled Tribe Students” (1981). The STs of Mirzapur district were unable to adequately avail of educational opportunities as allowed in the Constitution due to socio-cultural backwardness and the gap between school environment and family background. In all educational institutions of the Mirzapur district there was distinct hegemony of non-tribal upper caste students who exhibited indifference in their behaviour towards the tribals. It was observed that teachers also showed indifference to tribal students. Pandey recommended that the introduction of some special type of educational system was imperative to afford tribal students better educational opportunities and hence accelerate the process of socio-economic development.
The principal findings of Aswathi's study (1987) on STs in Bihar established a close interrelationship between education and socio-economic mobility among the tribal people. Education up to school level provided social mobility as reflected through students' choice of modern customs in dress, ornaments and media of entertainment. Due to education, there was a horizontal social and occupational mobility on the one hand and vertical economic mobility on the other. The occupational expansion resulting from education had a direct bearing on the economy and improved it to a significant degree in the educated households. There was a direct link between educational and economic mobility and the expenditure pattern of respondents.

There are very few studies on the educational development of "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes" in relation to socio-economic status and the goal of social equality. Parvathamma (1974) observed that in Karnataka many of the SC and ST student youths were still to come to higher education. Chitnis (1974) indicated that SC and ST female students of Maharashtra planned to terminate their education at graduation or even earlier; furthermore very few among ST females went for higher education. Chitnis recognized that overall the STs were more disadvantaged than the SCs. Shah and Thaker (1974) documented that with the entry of SC and ST students at the college level, the state of Gujarat had to cater to the needs of different socio-economic groups with widely differing abilities, aspirations and facilities. It was visible that governmental assistance for education to SC and ST students led to inequalities of utilization between different SC/ST groups within the state. George (1975) emphasized the complexity of a similar situation which had arisen in Kerala. SC and ST college students needed to be informed about the existing facilities and its purpose. The majority of students from both groups had passed their school leaving examination at a higher age. Neither the SC nor ST students showed high aspirations for technical and professional jobs. The study highlighted that reservations in education on the community basis ought to be changed to considerations like economic backwardness.

It is interesting to view the performance of SC and ST students in reserved seat categories at prestigious educational institutions. Patwardhan and Palshikar (1992) examined the academic records of students admitted to the BJ Medical College in Pune from the 1970s to the 1980s. Generally, the authors found that SC and ST
students were less academically inclined than other students upon admission to the institution: also both groups lagged behind academically during the course of their studies. Nevertheless, among those SC and ST students admitted, only approximately 25-30 per cent performed inadequately — either by dropping out, by requesting more than eight years to complete their degree program, or by graduating with a minimum passing score in their final examinations. The fact was that a large proportion of SC and ST students ultimately graduated: among those students who entered in 1972-76 (and graduated by 1984), the graduation rate for SCs was 92 per cent and for STs 87 per cent.

Kirpal and Gupta (1999) directed attention to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). The authors considered several earlier studies of SC and ST students at IIT-Bombay during the 1970s: subsequently they gathered rich data extending over the years (1981-1992) on the reserved-seat students entering the B.Tech programs for all five of the major IIT campuses — Bombay (Mumbai), Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur, and Madras (Chennai). The average drop-out rate of 16 per cent for reserved-seat students compared favourably with much higher rates of wastage recorded for such students in the 1970s by Kirpal et al (1985) and Chitnis (1986). Kirpal and Gupta’s (1999) main findings regarding students’ academic scores at the IITs were summarized in terms of the “Mean Cumulative Performance Index” (MCPI). This Index referred to a sample comprising of approximately 10 per cent of general entry, SC and ST students who enroled between the years 1989-92. The MCPI findings were 7.88 for 436 general-entry students, 6.23 for 115 SC students, and 5.93 for 21 ST students. It was evident that SC and ST students lagged behind general-entry students in examinations. In addition, those who graduated required more years of study than their general-entry peers. The average graduation rate for the SC and ST groups was 84 per cent as compared with 94 per cent for general-entry students. The salient point that needs to be mentioned is that SC and ST beneficiaries of reserved seats and the institutions that are training them — are acquiring immense successes.

The review of literature has illustrated that higher education for disadvantaged groups has certain pre-requisites — adequate household income, parental support and motivation, access to places at the primary and secondary levels, expenditure on facilities, exposure to effective teaching and learning — all of which are deemed essential for academic achievement. Since this range of pre-requisites are seldom
covered in full by government programmes and policies, it means that in most cases only the best-off students among SCs and STs can afford to spend several post-secondary years in an educational institution.

Undoubtedly, there exists “a creamy layer”\(^{20}\) of Dalits and Adivasis who constitute the vast majority of the beneficiaries of India’s reservation policies in admissions to higher educational institutions. Rao supports this observation in stating that: “the schemes of reservation tend to reproduce within the beneficiary class the same kind of clustering the reservation is meant to remedy… those among the beneficiaries who already enjoy the advantages obtain disproportionately large shares of the benefits” (2001: 51). The process favours urban and male students and operates across sub-castes and tribes, as well as across socio-economic strata and within the SC and ST groups. This has resulted in appeals for additional subdivided categories of reserved seats to allow the least well-off sub-castes and tribes entitlement to their own separate reservation category.

**Trinidad and Tobago**

While several empirical studies have been undertaken on the socio-economic background of secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago; there exists a paucity of meaningful evidence and studies on aspects of equality and equality of educational opportunity with reference to the University of the West Indies.

Research studies in Trinidad and Tobago (Cross and Schwartzbaum, 1976; Baksh, 1986) have shown that socio-economic differentials such as income levels, type of occupation and education profoundly influence students entry to type of schools at the secondary level.\(^{21}\) For illustration, the scholars asserted that generally pupils from middle income families attending “prestige” primary schools will be placed in “prestige” secondary schools, while students from lower-income families attending “non-prestige” primary schools are usually placed in the less “prestigious” junior secondary schools. Of major concern, the latter category are afforded very

\(^{20}\) Weisskopf has explained the meaning of “creamy layer” as follows: “This term refers to those members of the under-represented groups eligible for reservations who are very well off in socio-economic terms and who, according to the critics, monopolize the opportunities opened up by reservation policies. Especially among the candidates who are not eligible for preferences, and who are concerned about being displaced by beneficiaries of reservation policies, there is a widespread belief that the beneficiaries come from a “creamy layer” that is, if anything, more privileged in socio-economic terms than those whom they displace” (2004: 35).

\(^{21}\) Historically, rural students did not fare as well as their urban and semi-urban counterparts in the attainment of secondary school places. By the turn of the twentieth century, this situation had improved tremendously through the construction of additional secondary schools in rural areas as planned in “Education Policy Paper (1993-2003). National Task Force on Education.”
limited access to UWI either through lack of articulation with the GCE and CXC examination systems or through poor academic achievement if they are so articulated. Miller emphasized: "Given the social biases evidenced in the structure of opportunity at the secondary level, and seeing that access to tertiary education is determined by successful completion of secondary education, it is not unreasonable to assume that tertiary education is similarly biased since the vast majority of students entering tertiary institutions in the 1990s have completed secondary schooling" (cited in Howe, 2000: 132). In addition, Miller (2000) deduced that students of Trinidad and Tobago who belong to the higher socio-economic categories are more concentrated in UWI, while those from the lower socio-economic categories are more often found in other types of higher educational institutions. While the establishment of university education within the region would have expanded access to the lower classes since they had little or no access previously, the actual number and proportion of those groups that have benefited "have been very modest."

With reference to the strong correlation at the secondary level between race and class in the Caribbean, Gordon (1991) and Miller (1991) inferred that a similar relationship would exist with regard to equal opportunities at the higher educational level. The point to consider is that prior to the mid-twentieth century, race was the pervasive criterion on which Caribbean societies were organized and class operated within racial categories. Since then, according to Miller (2000), class has displaced race/colour as the pervasive criterion. Race/colour now operates as a facilitating factor within class. This signifies that the lighter skinned members of any social stratum tend to have an advantage in accessing opportunities in comparison with darker skinned members of that stratum. Naturally, the legacies of race and class have not been eliminated within the context of contemporary access to higher education.

In addition, Miller (2000) illustrated that gender is interacting with other social criteria such as class and race. The studies on intergenerational mobility through high schooling in Trinidad and Tobago (Cross and Schwartzbaum 1976; Baksh 1986) revealed that boys are more likely to inherit their social status while girls from the lower socio-economic classes tend to change their social position through upward social mobility. In a real sense, females constitute the first sex in education. Girls begin schooling earlier, attend school more regularly, repeat fewer grades, are less likely to drop out, are more likely to attend secondary school and the majority who are
successful opt for higher education: at all levels they achieve higher standards of educational performance in comparison with males.22

One of Miller’s (1991) particularly interesting finding in Trinidad and Tobago was that Indian girls to a significant extent were experiencing greater access to secondary education than Indian boys. It was recorded in many circumstances that African girls were also having greater access than their male counterparts. It can be inferred that this interaction between race and gender was the same for other groups of Mixed origin. As Miller identified, equality between the sexes is usually assessed in respect of race and Trinidad and Tobago’s culturally heterogeneous society. In the case of Africans, the explanation is given in terms of weakness of the black family structure and the absence of the male in the home to serve as a role model for sons in many instances. In contrast, no similar weakness can be attributed to Indian family in Trinidad which is highly patriarchal in its socialization and mores. Cross and Schwartzbaum (1976) found it remarkable that East Indian girls of low socio-economic backgrounds in rural areas, managed to overcome limitations and attend those secondary schools that are more selective. The thought that education in preference to marriage offers more independence could be a factor in stimulating their achievement motivation and scholastic success. Gender differences in educational attainment among Mixed students will be largely influenced by ethnic descent and the family’s experience in relation to sex roles.

No substantial studies have been done on equality of opportunity among deprived groups and sections of the Trinidad and Tobago students at the University of the West Indies. However, the analyses of secondary school data sources suggest that a similar pattern is likely to prevail at the university level.

Evidence from multi-racial and multi-ethnic societies like Trinidad and Tobago clearly demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between education and social mobility. Firstly, access to education is essentially determined by one’s position in the socio-economic hierarchy. Given the inability of the weaker groups and sections to see their rewards through school education, their elimination takes place well before they reach the level of higher education. When there is little equality

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22 The data to support these assertions are not in question. They are routinely reported and confirmed by education statistical reports of Trinidad and Tobago, the annual Vice Chancellor’s Reports (UWI) and education reports of the Commonwealth Caribbean.
even at the secondary level, it is difficult to conceive of equality at UWI. Government’s expansion of the education system and the removal of barriers to educational opportunity seems to have benefited those of higher socio-economic status. The rate of mobility will only increase when education itself increasingly becomes the main criterion for advancement of the deprived in occupational roles.

THE PRESENT STUDY

In the current context of social transformation, the national leaders of independent India and, Trinidad and Tobago, confront the complex problem of eradicating disparities in higher education among peoples of diverse cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. In each country, policymakers, researchers and educators facilitate the formulation, development and implementation of national policies and programmes with a view to promote equality among all ethnic groups in universities and society as a whole.

In the words of President, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (1966), “The role of a University in a developing nation is to contribute: to give ideas, manpower, and service for the furtherance of human equality, human dignity and human development” (cited in Coleman, 1984: 86). In making this contribution, universities should open “their doors” and dispense information to the extent that people connect economic activity to aspects of social life and culture. Indeed, university education should include, as part of its mandate, a culturally informed education, giving students a knowledge of the “self” and the “other”, which in turn makes possible a fuller understanding of the need to enhance equality, self-worth, and human knowledge and skill among all social groups.

The questions that arise in the present study of policy reforms and equality in higher education in India and, Trinidad and Tobago are as follows: (i) What issues have emerged between governments and universities regarding national policies aimed at achieving social transformation in view of equality? (ii) Is higher education accessible to everyone? Do universities have admission policies which cater for different social groups? How far do these groups have an equal chance to attain certification in order to transform their social status? (iv) Are men and women treated equally, irrespective of gender? (v) To what extent has policy reform efforts promoted equality among all social groups in the society?
In India and, Trinidad and Tobago, the national past reflects some common factors and since ideals and aspirations for development in each context are influenced by global movements, the problem of promoting equality through higher education reform may be similar in some respects. On the other hand, when policies are translated into practice the differences in national contexts loom larger than similarities. Hence, comparative analysis in this study is fundamental in as much as it helps to keep certain policies “in place” as well as to provide resistance to the implantation of anything more than selective aspects of ideas. In light of this background, a comparative analysis of policy reforms in higher education between two democratic countries has the obligation to explain similarities and differences in their substantial commitment to equality and social justice.

In addition, India is a particularly significant case among the developing countries because it is amongst the earliest to have developed its universities and colleges and it now contains the second largest higher education system in the world. It can provide lessons to the developing system of Trinidad and Tobago, and simultaneously an international dimension may shed light on India’s own experience with reform measures and equality issues in higher education.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study has the following broad objective:

To compare higher education policies aimed at achieving reform and equality in post-independence India, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The specific objectives are:

i) To examine the focus on equality in higher education policy reform in respect of variables characterized as social class, caste, tribe, race, ethnicity and gender.

ii) To assess measures instituted to improve access to higher education.

iii) To evaluate the extent to which quality education is achieved.

iv) To determine the merit of granting positive discrimination and affirmative action for deprived groups.

v) To analyze, in a systematically comparative framework, the similarities and differences in higher education policy reforms with
regard to equality among various ethnic groups.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF TERMS

Ethnicity, Race and Caste

Many definitions have been proposed for the term "ethnic group" across a range of societies. According to De Vos (1975), in broad terms, ethnicity is a sense of social belonging in a group and ultimate loyalty to that group. Gollnick and Chinn categorically stated: "Individuals in the group share a history, a language (whether or not they can speak the language), the same value system and structure, and the same customs and traditions. To maintain the group identity throughout the generations, the attitudes, values, behaviours and rituals are practised in the family, the Church and social clubs (1983: 36). Of major importance, Brass documented: "Ethnicity or ethnic identity also involves, in addition to subjective self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition, either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups. Ethnicity is to ethnic category what class consciousness is to class (1991: 19). Therefore, in Jenkin's view (1997), ethnicity is not a rigid concept, but rather situationally variable and subject to negotiation based on the interests and viewpoints of the actors themselves.

Embracing ethnicity in place of race has shifted the debate around human difference from one that is biological in nature to one that is greatly shaped by nurture, culture and historical experiences. Additionally, Morris stated: "Race is not a biological category but a social construction that is given meaning and significance in specified historical, political and social contexts" (2003: 161). As early as 1950, UNESCO highlighted: "National, religious, geographic, linguistic and cultural groups do not necessarily coincide with racial groups; and cultural traits of such groups have not demonstrated genetic connection with racial traits" (cited in Gollnick and Chin, 1983: 40). Hence, Yetman and Steele (1975) asserted that racial designations have become arbitrary and artificial, merely engendering isolation and separation of groups of people in society. In fact, Montague (1972) felt that the term "race" should be dropped altogether. What matters is that, in the broad definition of ethnicity, racial characteristics are also included (Young, 2000). Therefore, racial groups include

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23 In Trinidad and Tobago, the term "race" is frequently used in everyday conversation and even in academic and intellectual discourse.
many ethnic groups but ethnic groups may include members of one or more racial
groups.

Pinto emphatically stated: “Inequality is intergenerationally transmitted in
caste and race. Prejudice and discrimination are both a part of race and caste” (2001:
2818). Rao refers to “caste” as: “a hereditary, endogamous and usually localized
group of Hindus, with a traditional association with an occupation and a specified
position in the local hierarchy of castes (2002(a) p. 42). The traditional “varna”
system divided Hindu society into four (4) major castes as follows: Brahmins (priests)
with utmost purity at the top of the social hierarchy and declining successively with
Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaisyas (traders) and Shudras (peasants) (Nadkarni, 2003). In
Sibal’s view (2002), it is now too simplistic to speak of this traditional caste system in
absolutist terms: in the process of assimilation and community living, a multitude of
castes and sub-castes with their own customs, cultural practices and social attitudes
have emerged over the years. According to Parekh (2001), in this sense they all
belong to an ethnic group. However, one must consider that a marked distinction
exists between race and caste – if only in terms of the notions of purity and pollution
in casteism – for which “they should not be collapsed into a single analytical
category” (Gupta 2000: 87).

Interestingly, without denying or belittling the differences between race and
caste, Berreman (1960) underscored: “I would hold that the term “caste system” is
applicable at the present time in the southern United States, if it is applicable
anywhere outside of Hindu India, and that it can be usefully applied to societies with
systems of hierarchical, endogamous subdivisions whose membership is hereditary
and permanent, wherever they occur. By comparing caste situations, so defined, it
should be possible to derive further insight, not only into caste in India, but into a
widespread type of relations between groups – insight which is obscured if we insist
upon treating Indian caste as entirely unique (1960: 471). Given Berreman’s assertion,
it is meaningful to view and compare patterns of social stratification and relations
between groups in India and, Trinidad and Tobago.

For the comparative purpose of this study, the term ethnic group suffices i.e.
(India- Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and the General
Category) and (Trinidad and Tobago – Africans, East Indians and the Mixed
Category). However, the researcher is fully aware of the diversities within each of
these categories. Further, whether it is higher castes in the Indian context or racial groups such as Africans, East Indians and others of Mixed race – they are all considered as ethnic groups. Clearly “ethnicity” in broad terms denotes an attribute of membership in a group. In the study, the terms social group or social category may also be used in accordance with relevant literature or data gathered.

THE SAMPLE

The study is carried out in two universities, namely Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, India and the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

JNU is selected since it is the only university in India which attracts students from all states and regions of the country. As a national institute it facilitates inter-regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian of “requisite merit” irrespective of his or her origin. JNU has attributed the highest importance to implementation of policies aimed at the improvement of standards for the underprivileged in society.

UWI, St. Augustine is the only established university in Trinidad and Tobago. It assumes a privileged position as a regional university with strong government support. It provides the region and the country with complementary opportunities for higher education to foster intellectual development regardless of differences in social class, race, ethnicity or gender. Emphasis is placed upon policy implementation for academic progression and thereby the equalization of standards among the population’s diverse ethnic groups.

Both JNU and UWI, St. Augustine endorse the admission of students with academic competence and potentialities for higher learning. This facilitates the active role assumed by each university to enhance equality and social mobility in a meaningful manner.

The selection of students for the completion of questionnaires is done through quota sampling. In both JNU and UWI one hundred (100) questionnaires are distributed equally among fifty (50) males and fifty (50) females. At UWI the sample includes thirty (30) Africans, thirty (30) East Indians and forty (40) Mixed students, all of whom are in the third year of their respective undergraduate programmes. These students are selected from the disciplines of Engineering, Natural Science,
Agriculture, Social Science and Humanities. At JNU, twenty-five (25) students are chosen from each of four ethnic groups, namely: Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the General category. Specific numbers of students are obtained across six disciplines as follows: Life Sciences (16), Computer Studies (15), Bio-Technology (4), Social Sciences (20) and Languages (30). The spread of OBC, SC and ST students is not uniform across the various disciplines, thus it was necessary for the researcher to locate additional students from Bio-Technology and Languages. JNU is predominantly a postgraduate institution and only offers BA degrees in Languages. However, the sample which comprises of twenty (20) BA Language students and eighty MA/MSc students are comparable with those of UWI in terms of age group and parental support.

The interviewing process is carried out through purposive sampling. Twenty (20) interviews are conducted with teaching staff at JNU and UWI each. These individuals include administrators, professors, and assistant professors, all of whom have acquired more than ten years of teaching experience and some of whom have served in the policymaking process. From among these teachers, a few are specifically selected to share their views on the theme of gender equality in higher education.

Purposive sampling is also utilized to interview policymakers and experienced professionals in the field of higher education. The interviewees are chosen on the basis of having attained profound knowledge and experience in higher education policy reform and equality issues. These experts include the President of Trinidad and Tobago who formerly served as principal of the UWI, St. Augustine Campus, the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, Trinidad and Tobago; the Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India and the Vice Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru Campus. The remaining interviewees consist of policymakers, educational administrators and university lecturers. Five (5) interviews are conducted in India, and five (5) in Trinidad and Tobago.

**METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS**

The questionnaire for students is divided into two sections. Section A requests information pertaining to students' socio-economic background. Section B asks for students' opinions on various aspects of policy reforms and equality in their respective university. The instrument consists of ten (10) structured questions; two of
which are open-ended for an elaboration of views (Appendix B). In addition to written responses in questionnaires, informal discussions are held with the students in order to gain a fuller understanding of critical issues and to cross-check information gathered.24

One interview guide for teaching staff contains six (6) questions. These questions are deemed essential to draw upon an in-depth comparison of policy reforms that impact upon equality in higher education in each selected context (Appendix C.I). Another interview guide to obtain teachers’ views on gender equality comprises of three pertinent questions (Appendix C.II).

The interview guide for policymakers and higher education experts considers policy reforms and policy outcomes at both the national and institutional levels. The instrument contains sixteen (16) questions from among which particular topics of discussion are selected for each interviewee (Appendix C.III).

For this study, interviews are qualitative in nature. Questions are open-ended with the intent to elicit information and to probe more deeply when the occasion demands. This method caters for the development of content analysis and qualitative coding permits some standardization as well as assessment of responses. Interviews are recorded on audiotape and thereafter transcribed to form a written record.

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

This study comprises of eight chapters.

Introduction forms the first chapter. The dimensions of higher education reform are discussed with a concern for universities to promote equality and social mobility among all ethnic groups in society. The chapter explores varied interpretations of Positive Discrimination/Affirmative Action to assess equality at the higher educational level in India and, Trinidad and Tobago. The chapter further examines the contextual realities in the two countries and presents a review of literature applicable to each. Finally, the significance of the present study, its objectives, operationalization of terms, the sample and research methodology are explained.

24 The researcher utilized a field diary to accumulate a detailed record of students’ perspectives.
Chapter two examines and compares policy reform in higher education and the need for equality of educational opportunity in each country. It reviews the origins of higher education policies and the question of social equality during the pre-independence era. The chapter essentially deals with the post-independence period through an in-depth examination of equality concerns as stipulated in various policy and education documents. Following this, the current status of higher education is addressed in terms of accessibility and quality relevant education for all ethnic groups in the interest of national development.

The third chapter illustrates the profiles of the two universities under study, namely Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India and University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. It provides within a national framework, the institutional goals and strategies used to implement reform measures and to advance equality.

The fourth chapter describes the socio-economic background of students in both universities in order to determine whether certain ethnic groups experience difficulties in gaining admission. The objective is to compare the impact that higher education policies have had on the composition of students enrolled in the universities.

Chapter five draws a comparison between the perspectives of students on the role of higher education in their respective context. The chapter directs attention to uneven access and compulsory tuition fees as related factors which may have an adverse impact upon the furtherance of social equality. The chapter evaluates equal conditions for access to higher education among different ethnic groups (caste, tribe and race) of varied socio-economic background; it further deals with equal opportunities in terms of gender differentiation. Perspectives are supplemented with those of teachers, policymakers and higher education experts.

Chapter six considers the views of students, teachers, policymakers and higher education experts on refutations as well as claims for the contribution of the Policy of Reservations within the Indian higher education system; and the feasibility of introducing Affirmative Action as a criterion for admission to UWI, St. Augustine. The chapter incorporates an evaluation of ethnic group variations (caste, tribe and
race) and social class dimensions in the arguments put forward.

The seventh chapter compares and investigates intrinsic differences in the provision for quality education in the two selected universities. Here, the idea is developed that quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional concept which to a significant extent depends upon the contextual setting of a given system; and it goes beyond a narrow interpretation of the academic role of different programmes. It extends to critical questions concerning the quality of students for system-wide enhancement in social equality. This chapter provides an assessment of the equality/quality dilemma in accordance with ethnic group perspectives (caste, tribe and race) presented by students, teachers, policymakers and higher education experts.

The eighth and final chapter presents a summary of the findings of comparative analysis of higher education policy reforms and equality among different ethnic groups. The chapter proceeds to offer observations and conclusions in light of consideration that both India and Trinidad and Tobago are developing countries subject to the forces of globalization.