



WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Women education has always been a priority area and NEE envisages the entire educational system to work for women's education and empowerment. It has been emphasized that gender concerns must be built into all educational processes. Emphasis has been laid on enrolment and retention of the girl child in formal and non-formal schooling, recruitment of rural women as teachers and removal of gender bias in the curriculum. Special provisions have been incorporated in various schemes; e.g., the revamped Black board Scheme provides that at least 50% of the teachers recruited should be women under NFE programme and 90% assistance is given for centers exclusively for girls. A scheme for strengthening of boarding and hostel facilities for girl students of secondary and higher secondary schools is continuing with the objective of boosting retention of girls. Education is understood as an ongoing process of learning and empowerment which transcends mere literacy. The programme, which is not constrained by present agenda or predetermined targets, responds and designs interventions to meet the articulated needs of rural poor women. Free education is provided to girls by various State Government/ UTs while education is free for girls upto class XII to Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas. Vocational Programme with emphasis on entrepreneurship are being designed for girls drop-out. In major thrust areas- DPEP and TLC- Women are a special focus. Steps are being taken to increase women's participation in educational process, nation-wide gender sensitization programme of educational personnel and parental awareness programmes for generating a positive climate for girls' education. The present study made an attempt to focus on women education in Indian scenario.

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INTRODUCTION

The World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien 1990 was an important milestone in the march towards universal elementary education and girls' and women's access to basic education. Forty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this conference tugged our conscience by reminding the world that everyone has a right to education – Basic education is more than an end in itself, it is the foundation for lifelong learning and human development. Women education refers to every form of education that aims at improving the knowledge, and skill of women and girls. It includes general education at schools and colleges, vocational and technical education, professional education, health education, etc., Women education encompasses both literary and non-literary education.

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Educated women are capable of bringing socio-economic changes. The constitution of almost all democratic countries, including India, guarantees equal rights to both men and women.

Table 1. Female Literacy rate in India

Census Year	Literacy rate (%)
1951	8.86
1961	15.36
1971	21.97
1981	29.76
1991	39.29
2001	54.16
2011	65.46

Source: Census Data, 2011

Literacy is the first step towards formal education. It refers to the ability to read and write. Female literacy has been improving over the years. The proportion of women who are literate has increased by 15 per cent over the last decade from

39 per cent in 1991 to 54 per cent in 2001 and the recent Census reveals that 65.46 percent. The details is explained in the above table. Primary education is now a fundamental right. When a woman (or a girl) is ensured of her rights, the society at large is ensured of its sustainability. Realizing the importance of women education, the government and many non-government organizations took a lot of projects to spread women education. Literacy programs are being taken in favour of women.

Importance of Women Education

The importance of women education is briefly summarized below:

Economic development and prosperity: Education will empower women to come forward and contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country.

Economic empowerment: So long as women remain backward and economically dependent on men, the helpless condition of them cannot be changed. Economic empowerment and independence will only come through proper education and employment of women.

Improved life: Education helps a women to live a good life. Her identity as an individual would never get lost. She can read and learn about her rights. Her rights would not get trodden down. The life or condition of women would improve a lot, if we take a broad outlook in the field of female education.

Improved Health: Educated girls and women are aware of the importance of health and hygiene. Through health education, they are empowered to lead a healthy life-style. Educated mothers can take better care of both herself and her baby.

Dignity and Honor: Educated woman are now looked upon with dignity and honor. They become a source of inspiration for millions of young girls who make them their role-models.

Justice: Educated women are more informed of their rights for justice. It would eventually lead to decline in instances of violence and injustice against women such as dowry, forced-prostitution, child-marriage, female foeticide, etc.

Choice to choose a profession of her choice: Educated women can prove be highly successful in the fields of life. A girl-child should get equal opportunity for education, so that, she can plan to become a successful doctors, engineers, nurses, air-hostesses, cook, or choose a profession of her choice.

Alleviate poverty: Women education is a pre-requisite to alleviate poverty. Women need to take equal burden of the massive task of eliminating poverty. This would demand massive contribution from educated women. There cannot be much social and economic changes unless girls and women are given their rights for education.

Empowering through women education

A Corner stone of national policy of education is the removal of disparities in the field of education and to bring this about a well conceived edged in favour of women is posited

Gender awareness, gender sensitization and gender weight age are therefore ingredients in all educational interventions. one of the most successful effort to link women's empowerment with education has been mahilasamakhyas. The programme is operational 17 districts spread over of the four of the states of Andhra Pradesh Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttarpradesh. The samakhyas approach begins with the understanding that women must identify their problems and evolve solutions at their own place.

GIRLS WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA:

According to Webster's New World Dictionary (1962), education is "the process of training and developing the knowledge, skill, mind, character, etc., especially by formal schooling". Education is the basic tool for empowering a woman; moreover, Education is the key to development. India has made progress in education, but not enough and definitely India attained independence, almost sixty percent of girls / women are not literate. Most of them have never been to school or any other education programme. Recent surveys (even those done after the launching of Total Literacy Campaigns) do not reveal any dramatic change. Census of India was collected in 1990-91, the Human Development Survey was done in 1993-94, and the National Sample Survey was also done in 1993-94. Education is not a luxury item that is only to be ensured in an emergency once other elements are in place; it should be given priority and started as soon as possible. Girls are especially vulnerable in emergency situations – and they must be especially protected against physical, sexual and psychological abuse. This means establishing safe environments, in which girls as well as boys can learn, play and receive psychosocial support. Everyone has a right to education, which shall be directed to the full development of human resources, and human dignity and potential, with particular attention to women and the girl child. Education should be designed to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those related to population and development.

WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

However strong are women's aspirations, and however much they support each other, progress will be extremely slow unless and until there is public recognition that a problem exists and needs to be tackled. Gender equity policies and programmes merely represent good intentions unless they are backed by appropriate legislation and infrastructure support. Legislation needs

Education for Women's Equality

The National Policy on Education (NPE) and Programme of Action (POA) commit the entire educational system to work for women's equality and empowerment. The modified, 1986 and its POA give high priority to the education of women, being a factor of the equity package. Besides, this issue is also of economic importance. Education is a major factor in developing and thereby optimizing the contribution of this large segment of society towards socio-economic development. The POA, 1992, has identified a number of specific programmes in this area keeping in view the experience in implementing the previous POA. Significance has been greatly attached to actually operationalising the NPE's Programme of Action and in a series of regional

meetings with the State Government, a special review of gender issues in education was undertaken. At the same time it was emphasized to the States, that gender concerns must be built into all educational processes. A monitoring committee for women's/girl's education at the Ministry of Human Resource Development level monitors the indicators of gender concerns in all policy and projects. The State Governments have been advised to set-up similar monitoring committees at the state. Special provisions have been incorporated for the benefit of women under the existing schemes of the Department. Under the Operation Blackboard scheme, the revised policy formulation stipulates that at least 50 percent of teachers recruited in future should be women. Under this scheme, Government of India have provided assistance since 1987-88 for creation of 1, 22,890 posts of primary school teachers. Mainly to be filled by women. According to the latest reports, 69,926 posts of teachers have been filled of which 57.39 percent are women teachers. A scheme of hostels for enabling girls to benefit from secondary education is being operationalised.

Conclusion

Amartya Sen (2001) has explored these issues greatly and highlights key obstacles to the betterment of women and the realization of gender equality. Sen argues that all too often the burden of hardship falls disproportionately on women; 'gender inequality in India is not one homogenous phenomenon but a collection of disparate and interlinked problems'.

Education forms a very basic indicator for women's equality and empowerment. Levels of female literacy, gender gaps in literacy levels, and enrolment and dropout rates at the primary school level are relevant indicators. Until the middle of nineteenth century, girls and women were educated only for traditional household works. Now, the society is witnessing changes in the role status of women. There is greater emphasis on education girls and women in the same way as we educate boys and men. The modern-day parents want to fulfill the aspiration of their children without gender parity. The educated women should insist on exercising their civil, social, political and economic rights. This will help improve the overall condition of women in the society. We can hope for better days whole all women of our country will be enlightened and educated.

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