

SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATION IN LEADING TO PROGRESSION OF WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research paper is to acquire the understanding of significance of education in leading to progression of women. Through the acquisition of education, one is able to generate awareness in terms of various aspects that are required to lead to progression. Within the country, before it achieved its independence, education of women was not given much consideration. But after the country achieved its independence, there were improvements made about in the system of education. In addition, women were encouraged towards acquisition of education. In the present existence, women are turning out to be professionals and are employed in various fields. Hence, through the acquisition of education, they are leading to progression. The main areas that have been taken into account in this research paper include, history of women's education, higher education in India, women's disciplinary choices, challenges experienced by women in acquisition of education and measures to improve education among women.

Keywords: *Disciplinary Choices, Education, Educational Institutions, Progress, Women*

Education is the most important instrument for human resource development. Among the measures that have been put into operation to improve the status of women in India, education is regarded as a top priority. In recent years, the focus of planning has shifted from equipping women for their traditional roles of housewives and mothers in recognizing them to be effective contributors towards promoting well-being of the family. Efforts have been made since the past three decades to get more girls enrolled in schools and to make provision of non-formal education to women (Chapter 1, n.d.). The education of women in India assumes an important role in leading to progress of the entire nation. It not only assists in the advancement of human resources, but also improving personal satisfaction among them within as well as outside their homes. Educated women are empowered to render a significant contribution in the implementation of function of child development (Saxena, 2017).

The education of women in India has not been given much consideration by the administration as well as the common society. Within the country, it is vital for the individuals to form perspectives and viewpoints that women's education should be given utmost consideration. Educating a woman means educating the entire nation. The major reasons, why education of women is considered important are, they are the ones, who are vested with the responsibility of household management, child development, health care of the family members and so forth. When they are educated, they can obtain employment opportunities to enhance the living conditions of themselves and their families. In the present existence, women are getting enrolled in colleges and universities and acquiring higher education. They are turning out to be professionals, such as, doctors, lawyers, researchers, teachers, academicians, educationists, administrators, directors, politicians and so forth. This factor signifies that women are advancing and attaining empowerment opportunities, which are beneficial not only for themselves and the communities, but also for the entire nation.

HISTORY OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

After the country attained its independence, education began to render an essential contribution in the emancipation of women from traditional discrepancies. Women became more vocal, articulate and assertive. The Constitution of India, granted equal rights to women that included right to education. The National Policy on Education of 1968 marked a significant step in the history of education in post-independence India. It aimed to promote national progress, perspective of common citizenship and culture, and to strengthen national integration. It was acknowledged that the growth of the population needed to be brought down meaningfully over the last three decades. The primary factor that could help in achieving this was the spread of literacy skills and education among women. This policy put emphasis on the removal of differences and to equalize educational opportunities among men and women (Chapter 1, n.d.).

Education is regarded as an important source of bringing about progress in the overall quality of lives of women. The National Education System continues to render an essential contribution in the empowerment of women. Within the system of education, improvements were brought about in the teaching-learning methods, instructional strategies and development of skills and abilities among the teachers and other administrators of the educational institutions of all levels. Women's studies were given recognition and educational institutions were encouraged to initiate programs that have the main objective of promoting women empowerment. There were initiation of programs that aimed to facilitate participation among women, so they are able to develop capabilities among themselves that are essential in the case of non-traditional occupations and in existent and emerging technologies (Chapter 1, n.d.).

The Constitutional Amendment of 1976, which includes education at the concurrent list was a comprehensive stage. The National Policy of Education of 1986, and the Revised Education Policy of 1992, also put emphasis upon higher education of women. Much of the important work in promoting education was vested among women. The formulation of policies and programs related to promotion of education was possible only when active support was available from the society. In most of the Indian families, primarily residing in rural communities, girls were viewed as liabilities and inferior to men (Chapter 1, n.d.). These individuals possessed the viewpoint that education should be acquired by the male members and girls need to be trained in terms of implementation of household chores and in taking care of the needs and requirement of family members.

In the present existence, individuals belonging to rural and urban communities have recognized the significance of women's education. They possess the viewpoint that even when women are performing the job duties of home-makers, then too, it is vital for them to acquire education or enhance the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. In the present existence, education has been given importance to a major extent. Women are getting enrolled in higher educational institutions to augment their educational qualifications and academic skills. The main purpose of acquiring higher education is to ensure that they are able to acquire a good employment opportunity. The acquisition of education primarily depends upon social class, financial position and educational qualifications of parents. Girls and women, belonging to upper classes, who

are wealthy and whose parents are also well-educated do not encounter barriers in the acquisition of education.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

The system of higher education in India is regarded as one of the largest in the world. It consists of colleges, universities and institutions of national importance, which includes, Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management and Indian Institute of Science and autonomous institutions with the status of deemed universities. In 2006, there were, 367 university level institutions, which includes, 20 central universities, 217 state universities, 104 deemed universities, five institutions established under the state legislation, 13 institutions of national importance, established under the central legislation and six private universities. The graduate and the post-graduate colleges account for 18,064, (including 1902, women's colleges). Out of 18,064 colleges, 14,400 came under the purview of the University Grants Commission (UGC). The rest are the professional colleges, under the purview of the Central Government or the statutory bodies like the AICTE, ICAR, MCI etc. The colleges that are under the UGC purview, 6109 have been recognized under UGC under Section 2(f) and 5525 under Section 2(B) of the UGC act, the recognition of which permits them to receive grants under UGC (Chapter 1, n.d.).

Since 1991, large number of private colleges were being established to make provision of education, where the individuals are required to self-finance their education. The private technical education system in India is the largest in the world and the augmentation of higher education in the last 15 years has been an essential part of the private sector. The major objective of these educational institutions is to fulfil the demand of the Bachelors programs in the fields of engineering, technology, medicine dental education, health sciences, management, computer and Information Technology education, mass media and communication, teacher education and so forth. Most of these are in the southern and the south-western states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. There has been an increase in the number of under-graduate colleges within the country (Chapter 1, n.d.).

In the beginning of 1950-1951, when the proportion of women was 10.9 percent to 40.4 percent in 2002-2003, this has been a significant increase. In other words, in 1950-51, there were 14 women per 100 men, which increased to 67 in 2002-2003. Therefore, the proportion of women, making an entry in higher education has increased from 1,685,926 in 1991-1992 to 3,695,964 of all students, which account for 40 percent. There have also been changes in the women's choice of disciplines in higher education. In addition, there are disparities on a comprehensive scale, on the basis of caste, creed, race, religion, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background. The women, belonging to under-privileged sections of the society are the ones, who are influenced by these differences to a major extent (Chapter 1, n.d.).

WOMEN'S DISCIPLINARY CHOICES

With the beginning of globalization, changes and transformations have been brought about in the global market and where jobs are not restrained by the geographical boundaries. Further, there is

direct connection between the industry, corporate world and higher education. Transformations have been brought about in the skills and abilities that are required for the jobs. There has been a corresponding change in the boundaries in the arts and science subjects. While the stratification between arts and science has been further reinforced. The sciences are further divided into applied, emerging versus pure sciences. Natural and pure sciences are relegated to the lower position as compared to the applied sciences and professional skills. Furthermore, the academic programs are related to the biosciences, such as, molecular biology, microbiology, biochemistry, and biophysics. These fields are preferred as compared to biology, chemistry and physics. In the hierarchy of these disciplines, new disciplines, such as, management, media and mass communication and fashion technology have also taken their place towards the higher end of spectrum. The private institutions are rapid in responding to these demands (Chapter 1, n.d.).

Women obtained admission in colleges and universities in the general education or in arts subjects till the early nineties. In the present existence, they are getting enrolled in the private self-financing institutions for pursuing their studies in both the new and the traditionally labelled masculine disciplines. The gendered influence of the changes that have taken place requires attention, if the goal of social change and gender equity has to be achieved. The study of gender, primarily puts emphasis upon the study of inequality and social differences. These are regarded as critical to the understanding of disciplinary choices (Chapter 1, n.d.).

The programs in higher education are divided into those of general subjects, such as, arts, which include, social sciences and humanities, and pure sciences. In addition, it also includes, professional academic programs, such as, engineering, architecture, medical science, teacher education, agriculture, law and so forth. Furthermore, they are divided into masculine and feminine disciplines. The masculine disciplines are, commerce, law and engineering. Medical science is the profession, which involves participation of females. In India, as in the rest of south Asia, the practice of female seclusion enjoined the treatment of women patients by women doctors. This necessitated the training of women doctors, thereby, facilitating their entry into the medical profession. The proportion of women in the masculine disciplines were miniscule, right after the country achieved its independence. It remained so, until the 1980s, with the exception of commerce (Chapter 1, n.d.).

In the present existence, men and women aspire to get enrolled in educational institutions and acquire higher education. Upon the completion of their education, they aspire to obtain good employment opportunities and augment their career prospects. Parents are giving good quality education to their girls as well, so they are able to sustain their livelihoods independently (Chapter 1, n.d.). The connection that has been formed between education and the job market are vital, as it signifies that in order to obtain good employment opportunities in reputed organizations or institutions, the individuals need to possess appropriate educational qualifications. In terms of government policies on women's education, it was observed that while, there was not any explicit discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, creed, race, ethnicity, religion or socio-economic background, this is regarded as significant in promoting education among women and girls (Anonuevo, 1995).

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN IN ACQUISITION OF EDUCATION

In India, women experience number of challenges and problems in the acquisition of education. These challenges are primarily experienced by girls and women, belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically weaker sections of the society. Research has indicated that girls and women, belonging to wealthier families too have experienced problems, primarily in acquiring an understanding of the academic concepts and forming a strong foundation of learning. Due to this, they do not depict interest and enthusiasm in acquiring higher education. The major challenges have been stated as follows:

Financial Problems – Finances are regarded to be of utmost significance in the acquisition of education. In private schools, colleges, universities and training centres, individuals need to self-finance their education. The various costs that are involved in education include, fees, stationary, books, bags, technology, and transportation costs. When the students are living at a distance from their homes, then they are required to spend finances on living accommodation, food and so forth. On the other hand, in government schools, education is provided free of cost, but other expenses are involved. Women and girls, belonging to poverty stricken families, who struggle to make ends meet are the ones, who experience financial problems in the acquisition of education. When they are unable to meet the costs involved, then they either drop-out of schools or face challenges in getting enrolled in schools.

Unconstructive Viewpoints of Parents – The parents, belonging to rural communities and underprivileged sections of the society are the ones, who possess unconstructive viewpoints and perspectives in terms of education of girls. They are of the viewpoint that girls should be trained in terms of implementation of household responsibilities and school education is not meant for them. They have to eventually get married and in their marital homes, they would not be able to make effective use of their academic skills and abilities. Primarily due to this viewpoint, they do not encourage their girls to pursue education. Even when girls are enrolled in schools, they are required to drop-out, before, their educational skills are honed. Whereas, they believe in making provision of education to the boys. They possess the viewpoint that if boys are educated, they will be able to contribute in augmenting their status and securing their livelihoods.

Unfavourable Home Environment – In order to acquire education and augment ones, academic skills and abilities, it is vital to create a favourable home environment. The favourable environmental conditions usually comprise of proper infrastructure, civic amenities, facilities and an encouraging attitude on the part of the family members. When parents do not motivate their girls in getting enrolled in schools or when they are already enrolled in schools, they compel them to carry out number of household responsibilities, due to which they are unable to find time for their studies, this is a major challenge. In rural households, usually there are lack of civic amenities and facilities, such as, electricity, lighting etc. Scarcity of these factors, enable the students to experience challenges and problems regarding acquisition of education. In addition, when there are occurrence of conflicts and disputes among the family members, concerning education of their girls or over any other issue, then too, it is regarded as the major challenge.

Distance of Schools from Homes – In rural communities, schools are mostly located at a distance from homes. In order to attend schools, students need to adopt a mode of transportation. The distance of schools was not merely regarded as a challenge for boys. They either on their own or along with their friends are able to go to schools on daily basis. On the other hand, this was regarded as the major problem for the girls. Parents too felt reluctant in sending their girls to schools, located at a distance, especially when they do not have access to adequate modes of transportation. In some cases, fathers need to ensure that they take the girls to schools and bring them back. In such cases, they have to take out time for this job, particularly, when they are willing to make provision of education to their girls. But girls do are unable to attend schools, primarily due to the distance from homes and lack of proper modes of transportation.

Lack of Infrastructure in Schools – In schools as well as in other educational institutions, learning can take place in a well-organized manner, when there is provision of appropriate infrastructure and equipment. These include, proper furniture, black-boards, technology, learning materials, heating and cooling equipment in accordance to the weather conditions, and the school and classroom environment should be created in such a manner that would facilitate learning among students. In addition, it is vital to ensure that there is clean drinking water and restroom facilities. In some of the schools, there are provision of mid-day meals. When mid-day meals are provided to the students, then it is vital to ensure that they are prepared in a clean and hygienic environment, and clean utensils are made use of. When any of these facilities or infrastructure is lacking, then it would impose challenges upon acquisition of education for girls as well as boys.

Shortage of Female Teachers – Research has indicated that girls usually feel comfortable, when they learn from female teachers. In nursery schools and at the elementary levels, normally female teachers are employed. This is not only in India, but in other countries of the world as well. There has been prevalence of the viewpoint among the individuals that needs and requirements of young children can be taken care of by female teachers in an appropriate manner. At the secondary level too, girls normally feel more comfortable in interacting with female teachers. They usually possess the viewpoint that they will be able to enhance their academic skills and performance, when taught by female teachers. When there are shortage of female teachers, then it is a major challenge in the acquisition of education, especially among girls.

Inability in Understanding Academic Concepts – The major objective of getting enrolled in educational institutions is to acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts with the main purpose of enhancing one's performance in assignments, tests and examinations. The girls, belonging to all categories and backgrounds normally experience problems in acquiring an adequate understanding of the academic concepts. Subjects, such as, mathematics, science, economics, involve numerical problems and calculations, which require great deal of practice. Whereas, other subjects, such as, history, geography, English, Hindi etc. involve lesson plans. The students are required to put into practice the learning methods appropriately to acquire an efficient understanding of the concepts. When girls experience problems in acquiring an efficient understanding of the academic concepts, they are unable to score good grades in assignments and tests. In some cases, they even drop out of schools to get engaged in other work.

Violence and Mistreatment – In educational institutions at all levels, girls have experienced violence and mistreatment. These are considered as criminal acts, which subject the doers to disciplinary action. The individuals, who have been involved in these acts include, fellow students, staff members and even teachers. The major causes that teachers have verbally or physically abused them is primarily for not completing class or home-work assignments, scoring low grades in exams or if their class performance is not in accordance to the required standards. Fellow students normally get involved into quarrels over trivial issues or get involved into violent and criminal acts, out of the feelings of antagonism and hatred. It has been researched upon that staff members, such as drivers or custodians have also been involved in violent and criminal cases, such as, sexual harassment. These acts, not only influence them physically, but also psychologically. The girls normally feel vulnerable and apprehensive to a large extent and are unable to pursue education.

Unsatisfactory Teaching-Learning Methods – In order to enhance learning and educational skills among the students, it is vital for the teachers to put into operation, effective teaching-learning methods. The teaching-learning methods are the aspects that have the main objective of making provision of adequate knowledge on the part of the teachers to the students. Whereas, on the part of the students, it is vital to acquire an effectual understanding of the concepts, imparted by the teachers. When these methods would not be adequate, then students would experience problems and challenges in augmenting their understanding. The subject areas that they are teaching require them to make a decision regarding which methods to make use of. For instance, mathematics involves writing, whereas, English lesson plans can be explained orally. Furthermore, the teachers need to take into consideration the age groups and backgrounds of the students, when implementing these methods.

Discrimination against Women—Traditionally, the status of women is considered as inferior to men. Their role was mainly confined in the implementation of household tasks and activities. Whereas, men were regarded as the owners of the family, who were vested with power and authority. Under this concept, women were likely to remain within the household and there was prevalence of the viewpoint that they need not get enrolled in educational institutions to hone their academic skills nor inculcate any other skills among them. The families possessed the viewpoint that if women would acquire education to a much greater extent, then would be difficult for them to arrange their marriage (Tan, n.d.). In the present existence, women are given independence, but it has been found that within the Indian communities, parents usually give preference to marriage. They aspire to get their girls married, upon attaining the age of 24-25. Hence, they feel, girls should complete their education by the age of 21-22, get engaged into employment and get married.

MEASURES TO IMPROVE EDUCATION AMONG WOMEN

The measures that need to be formulated to bring about improvements in the acquisition of education among women have been stated as follows:

Strengthen Political Leadership and Empowerment of Women – The governments need to be supported to develop the poverty reduction strategies and the education sector would plan to improve the accessibility of the girls to quality education. It is vital to make provision of the increased and

flexible funding to support the development and implementation of national plans (Girl's Education towards a Better Future for All, 2005). The organizations, associations and groups that are working towards augmentation of education among women need to work in collaboration and integration with each other to create political leadership with the main purpose of promoting empowerment opportunities among women.

Supporting Policies – The Ministries of Education and the organizations that are involved to augment educational skills among girls and women should be enabled to make provision of leadership and capacity to promote education among them. Mechanisms need to be strengthened to monitor gender equality in the system of education. Community and parental participation should be strengthened in the education policy, planning and budgeting processes. Financial and non-financial barriers need to be eliminated in accessing primary education. This is a part of the comprehensive national plan that makes provision of adequate financial allocations to offset the direct and indirect costs that are involved in promoting education among girls (Girl's Education towards a Better Future for All, 2005).

Improvement of Life Opportunities – Women and girls should be provided with the opportunities that would bring about improvements in their overall quality of life. Education is regarded as an instrument that not only makes provision of academic knowledge, but also generates awareness among the individuals in terms of other aspects. When women would obtain adequate knowledge in terms of academic concepts, as well as other factors, then they would be able to carry out all tasks and activities in an appropriate manner. Through acquisition of education one is able to understand how to get engaged into effective communication processes with others.

Provision of Financial Assistance – Research studies have indicated that meritorious students are unable to get enrolled in educational institutions and pursue higher education due to financial problems. In schools and higher educational institutions, provision of financial assistance is given to the students in the form of scholarships, and fellowships. In addition, the removal of school tuition fees has resulted in the dramatic swell in the enrolment of girls and boys in educational institutions. The waiving of tuition fees cannot be done in isolation. In addition, there are other factors that need to be taken into consideration, such as, resources that are needed to upgrade infrastructure, facilities, civic amenities, teaching-learning processes, instructional strategies and the overall school and classroom environmental conditions.

Experienced and Knowledgeable Teachers – The recruitment and selection of skilled and knowledgeable teachers are regarded to be of utmost significance. The teachers are vested with the major responsibility to make provision of knowledge to the students that would promote their effective growth and development. When recruitment and selection of teachers takes place, it is vital to ensure to take into consideration various factors. These include, educational qualifications, skills, experience, personality traits and demographic factors. The teachers need to possess efficient knowledge of the subjects that they are teaching. To facilitate the impartment of academic skills and abilities to the students, it is vital for them to ensure that they are able to communicate the concepts in a well-organized manner.

Appropriate Instructional Strategies – The teachers need to put into operation the instructional strategies, by taking into consideration the academic requirements of the students. The main objective of instructional strategies is to enable the students to acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts. There are different forms of instructional strategies that are put into practice, these include, reading and providing oral explanation, giving notes of the concepts and lesson plans, understanding through role plays, bringing experiences and examples, organization of debates and quizzes and making use of technology. The instructional strategies are utilized on the basis of subjects and levels of education. The teachers need to be efficient and possess adequate skills and abilities in terms of the instructional strategies that they are implementing.

Maintaining Good Terms and Relationships – Within school, teachers and students as well as the fellow students themselves are required to maintain good terms and relationships with each other. They need to communicate with each other in an effective manner and not get involved into disputes or conflicts. Students possess different learning abilities. Some students are sharp and astute, whereas, others take time in acquiring understanding of the concepts. When the students are slow or experience setbacks in their performances, then it is vital for the teachers to deal with them in a calm and composed manner. When they have not completed their assignments, then it is vital to listen to their problems and extra time is usually given, when the problems are genuine. Hence, when the students form good terms and relationships with their teachers and fellow students, then they are able to augment their academic understanding and performance.

Equal Opportunities – Families and communities need to make provision of equal opportunities and consider girls equal to boys. The provision of equal opportunities should be primarily regarding the acquisition of education. This factor is vital, primarily within rural communities, where girls are not given equal treatment as the male members of the family. The families and the communities need to possess this viewpoint that girls would also be considered equal to men, if they are provided with similar opportunities. When they would be educated, then they would be able to acquire employment opportunities, thus rendering an operative contribution towards promoting well-being of their families.

Formation of Amiable Home Environmental Conditions – Within home, the environmental conditions should be pleasant and amiable that would motivate girls to study and improve their academic skills. The encouraging attitude on the part of the family members, provision of civic amenities and facilities and a peaceful atmosphere are the main aspects that lead to formation of pleasant and amiable home environmental conditions. With these conditions, students would be able to concentrate upon their subjects in an appropriate manner. Proper concentration and attentiveness are the major factors that enable in obtaining the desired academic outcomes. Parents need to ensure to provide girls with sufficient room and timings and not burden them with household responsibilities, particularly when they need to study.

Prevention of Abuse and Violence – Girls and women are experiencing various forms of abuse and violence within as well as outside the home. These are regarded as major factors that impose barriers within the course of their acquisition of education. Various forms of abuse and violence that are put into practice include, verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment, discriminatory treatment, neglect and exploitation. Physical abuse is the one that causes physical

harm, whereas other forms of abuse impose psychological problems upon them. Hence, it is vital to formulate measures that would prevent abuse and violence. The individuals within home and educational institutions need to form the viewpoint that women and girls need to be treated with dignity and respect and there should not be any kinds of discrimination on the basis of factors, such as, caste, creed, race, religion, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background.

CONCLUSION

With the purpose of promoting effective growth and development of the individuals, communities and the entire nation, education is regarded to be rendering a significant contribution. Through the acquisition of education, individuals are able to not only acquire academic knowledge but enhance other information that would enable them to lead their life in a well-organized manner. In the acquisition of education, there are number of challenges experienced by women, these are, financial problems, unconstructive viewpoints of parents, unfavourable home environment, distance of schools from homes, lack of infrastructure in schools, shortage of female teachers, inability in understanding academic concepts, violence and mistreatment, unsatisfactory teaching-learning methods and discrimination against women. The measures formulated to improve status of women are, strengthen political leadership and empowerment of women, supporting policies, improvement of life opportunities, provision of financial assistance, experienced and knowledgeable teachers, appropriate instructional strategies, maintaining good terms and relationships, equal opportunities, formation of amiable home environmental conditions, and prevention of abuse and violence.

In some rural communities, and among the underprivileged sections of the society, education of women was not recognized. But changes have been brought about in these viewpoints and these individuals too are getting their girls educated. Women are getting enrolled in higher educational institutions and there have been establishment of colleges and universities throughout the country that are rendering an effectual contribution in enabling the women to enrich their educational skills and abilities. Education is not only considered important in promoting enhanced livelihoods opportunities for women, but also with the development of the system of education, they are obtaining degrees in fields, such as, science, engineering, law, architecture, arts, business, management and so forth. Since, the significance of education has been given comprehensive recognition, women are emerging as professionals in various fields and are rendering an effectual contribution towards progress and development of the country.

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