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Dr. Seema Singh
Department of Political
Science, Agra College, Agra,
Uttar Pradesh, India

Capacity building of women through education: Indian perspective

Dr. Seema Singh

Abstract

Education is considered as a basic requirement and a fundamental for the citizens of any nation. It is a powerful tool for reducing inequality as it can give people the ability to become independent. Education is regarded as an important milestone of women empowerment. India can become a developed nation only if women contribute to the best of her capacity and this is only possible when women is educated and empowered. Education is the most powerful tool of change their position in the society. Now people have started to realize the importance of education. A girl child should be educated in order to ensure a better life for herself, her family and for a nation.

Keywords: education, empowerment, policy, right, awareness

Introduction

Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru once rightly said 'if you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered'. Education is the basis of human life. Development and progress of a man depends upon education. Education is the milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges. So, we can't neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment. India can become a developed nation only if women contribute to the best of her capacity and ability which is possible when she is educated and empowered. The concept of education may be considered from the narrow and broader point of view. In the narrow sense, it is considered with schooling. In the broader sense, the meaning of education is related with growth and development. In this way, we can state that education seeks to nourish the good qualities in man and draw out the best in every individual. According to Nelson Mandela 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'.

In the words of Gandhiji, 'By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man – body, mind and spirit'.

Rabindra Nath Tagore, 'The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence'. The goal of education is to develop physical, mental, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual aspects of life. Education is a life-long process.

Objective of the Study

This research paper discusses the importance of education in capacity building of women in Indian conditions.

Educational Role in Women Upliftment

Women play a key role in building a nation, and every country is being known for the power of women's empowerment. Promoting education among women helps them understand their individuality to refrain from any exploitation. Women are not only the carriers of human race but civilization and sustainable development rests on them. They are the best upholders of environmental, ecological and social balances, yet they are the victim of male-dominated patriarchal system, neglected in their day-to-day life, and not considered equal to men in wage or social status. Their role is silently appreciated without economic recognition, regard and accountability.

Correspondence
Dr. Seema Singh
Department of Political
Science, Agra College, Agra,
Uttar Pradesh, India

In order to challenge their subordination, women must first identify the ideology that legitimizes male domination and understand how it perpetuates their oppression. This recognition requires reversal of the values and attitudes, indeed the entire worldview, that most women have internalized since earliest childhood. Women have been led to participate in their own oppression through a complex web of religious sanctions, social and cultural taboos and superstitions, hierarchies among women in the family, behavioural training, seclusion, veiling, curtailment of physical mobility, discrimination in food and other family resources, and control of their sexuality (including concepts like the good and bad women). Most poor women have never been allowed to think for themselves or to make their own choices except in unusual circumstances, where a male decision maker has been absent or has abdicated his role. Because questioning is not allowed, the majority of women grow up believing that this is the just and natural order.

In order to describe the status of women, the word 'empowerment' came during the 1980's and became popular in the field of development, especially in reference to women. In grassroots programs and policy debates alike empowerment has virtually replace terms such as welfare, upliftment, community participation, and poverty alleviation to describe the goal of development and intervention. In spite of the prevalence of the term, however many people are confused as to what the empowerment of women implies in social, economic and political terms.

The concept of empowerment of women as a goal of development projects and programmes has been gaining wide acceptance, especially since the last two decades. A salient feature of the term empowerment is that it contains within the word 'POWER'. Empowerment is a process through which change in power in favour of women balance can be achieved. In every society, there are powerful and powerless individuals and groups. This power equation operates in all fields of life as economic, social, political, religious, education, etc.

Empowerment, according to P.K.B. Nayar is an aid to help woman to achieve equality with men or atleast to reduce gender gap considerably. Power, the basic ingredient in the concept of empowerment may be defined as the capacity of a person or a group of persons to influence the behaviour of others even against their will. Education is a powerful instrument since education enables women to gain more knowledge about the 'word outside, skills, self-image and self-confidence. This paves way for the effective political participation,

The most conspicuous feature of the term empowerment it is that it contains the word power, which, to sidestep philosophical debate, may be broadly defined as control over material aspects, intellectual resources, and ideology. The material assets over which control can be exercised be physical, human or financial such as land, water, forests, people's bodies and labour, money and assess to money. Intellectual resources include knowledge, information and ideas. Control over ideology signifies the ability to generate, propagate, sustain, and institutionalize specific set of beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviour - virtually determining how people perceive and function within given socio-economic and political environments.

Education, which is the most dynamic factor of development, it is the only tool for realizing empowerment. It brings about conscientization, which helps women to

perceive, interpret, criticize and finally transform their environment. Literacy and education is the gateway to information, opportunity and empowerment. Keeping people ignorant and unaware is to keep them disempowered and woman in India have, for long, been kept disempowered.

India is the world's largest democracy so how women education affect India's development. If girls are not educated, family suffer too. Educated mothers use their knowledge to improve the mental health of their children and other family members. Child mortality rate is much higher where mothers lack education.

Today what we know about women's education is entirely different from the early stages. During the Vedic period, women enjoyed equality in all spheres of life. They were advised to study distinctive texts. After this period, women's education declined severely. Their role confined to their respective houses snatched the significance of women's education in India. During British period, various socio-religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chand Vidya Sagar emphasized on women's education in India.

The emancipators of the 19th century wanted education to be given to women more on humanitarian grounds and to strengthen them in the performance of their traditional roles in families. Though change in this view came about during the post-independence period, ambivalence about the purpose of women's education persisted at least in traces amongst individuals and even among official agencies. An understanding of this ambivalence is reflected in the context of proper academic planning, allocation of resources and analysis of quantitative indices of educational development like enrolment, institutional infrastructure, literacy rates, etc. India holds a strong determination in educating all children, especially the girl child by declaring education as a fundamental right. India ensures constitutional provisions for providing free and compulsory education to all the children between 06-14 years of age.

The Government of India has initiated various programmes and policies to ensure that a girl does not miss out any opportunity of getting education. After independence, the government had set-up a national committee on women's education in 1958 and it recommended for female education. In 1964 the education commission was setup. The government came up with New Education Policy in the year 1968, which focused on the overall education at both rural and urban areas.

National Policy for Empowerment of Women

The National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 was enshrined with the goal 'to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The policy was widely disseminated with the following objectives:

- Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential;
- The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, cultural and civil;
- Equal access and participation in decision making in social, political and economic life of the Nation;

- Equal access to women in health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security, public office, etc.
- Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women;
- Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women;
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process;
- Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and
- Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

Literacy Rate

The literacy rate between men and women since 1901 in given table –

Literacy Rate in India

Year	Male %	Female %	Combined %
1901	9.8	0.6	5.4
1911	10.6	1	5.9
1921	12.2	1.8	7.2
1931	15.6	2.9	9.5
1941	24.9	7.3	16.1
1951	27.16	8.86	18.33
1961	40.4	15.35	28.3
1971	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	75.26	53.67	64.83
2011	82.14	65.46	74.04

As shown in the table we see that there is difference between the literacy rate of male and female in India. The female literacy rate is drastically increasing every year, but not up to the male literacy rate. Even after so many programmes and policies of the government, we are still lagging behind in providing education to the girl child. The problem here is not in implementation but in the level of commitment of people in general. Different factors are responsible for the decrease in females' literacy rate. Some of them are –

- Gender Inequality
- Patriarchal System
- Required house-hold work.
- Her interest in studies.
- Early age marriage.
- Economic dependency
- Dowry System

Enrolment by itself would not be adequate to capture the level of education advancement. Factors such as dropouts and wastage, retention outturn etc., were crucial too. Educational advancement also depended upon whether enrolled children attended schools even for a long time, and whether they did not dropout causing wastage. In case of girls, social factors such as marriage, betrothal and parental apathy played significant part in causing wastage.

Conclusion

The evils of poverty, unemployment and inequality cannot be eradicated by man alone. Equal and active participation of women is obligatory. Unless women are educated, they will not be able to understand about their rights and their importance. Empowerment of women aims at striving towards acquiring higher literacy levels and education, better health care for women and their children, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of their rights, improved standard of living and to achieve self-reliance, self-confidence and self-respect among women. What should never be forgotten is that women like men need to be pro-active in the process of life-long learning, which is true empowerment. While being attracted by modernization and globalization we must be confident to say no to marginalization.

Illiteracy is a curse for any society but illiteracy among women, particularly in a male dominated society is a national disaster. Hence rapid spread of literacy and education among Indian women brooks no further delay. Fortunately, in recent times women have awakened to the fact that in order to break gender barriers, education is essential because equality is meaningless unless it is supported by opportunities for education and employment

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