

Empowering Women through Quality Education System in India



Shubham Agarwal

Research Scholar,
Deptt. of Commerce,
Kumaun University,
Nainital, Uttarakhand

Abstract

This research paper focuses Women's Education that has been playing a vital role in Nation Building. A tremendous opportunity for progress lies in women's education and empowerment. It has a multiplier effect not only on their own lives but also on their family and the society. It not only focuses on giving women strength and skills to rise above from their miserable situation but at the same time it also stresses on the need to educate men regarding women issues and inculcating a sense of respect and duty towards women as equals. Empowering Women has been accorded high priority by Government of India and therefore many initiatives has been taken such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme that aims to make girls independent both socially and financially through education. This approach of the Government can facilitate in generating awareness and improving the efficiency of delivery of welfare services meant for women. The Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (Girl Child Prosperity Account) is a Government of India backed saving scheme targeted at the parents of girl children. The scheme encourages parents to build a fund for the future education and marriage expenses for their female child. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skill and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. These Programs have been proven to be game changers and have inspired people to campaign for the cause of the girl child with an opportunity to further her education and prepare for a successful future.

Keywords: Women Empowerment; Capacity Building; Quality Education; Career Prospects.

Introduction

"If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered".

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

For India, to become a developed economic, both men and women have a great role simultaneously. Education helps a person to become sensible, explain new things and facts about the world. It plays one of the most important roles in Women Empowerment as it encourage lateral thinking and innovative ideas with formal decision making process to create an enabling environment for nation's growth and prosperity. Education is the first step to give women the power to choose the way of life that she wants to lead. A knowledgeable woman has skills, information, talent and confidence that she needs to be a superior mother, employee and resident. It has enabled women to take decisions about marriage, parenthood and careers. Education has also created awareness about opportunities outside of marriage, giving her financial independence and reducing her dependence on 'the man in her life' be it father or husband. The educational process should make them feel good about themselves, build their confidence and self-respect, opportunity for their creativity and setting their own agenda and priorities with own pace of learning process.

Objective of The Study

The study has been conducted mainly to:

1. Understand the challenges prevailing in Women Development.
2. Overview of the Women Status in India
3. Study the importance of Quality Education System in India
4. Analysis the initiatives taken by Government for Women Empowerment.
5. Study the opportunity address through Quality Education System.

Research Methodology

The proposed study based on secondary data and information

which is collected from the concerned sources such as Annual reports of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, The Ministry of Statistics and Programme, Press Release of Press Information Bureau, Government of India, relevant books, periodicals and research articles papers and web-sites are used in this study.

Review of Literature

Digumarti Bhaskara Rao and Digumarti Pushpalatha Rao in their study, "*Women, Education and Empowerment*", provides understanding that empowerment does not take place in a vacuum, it is a complex issue with varying interpretations in different societal, natural and cultural contexts. At the individual and household level indicators of empowerment like participation of crucial decision making process, extent the sharing of domestic work by men, ability to prevent violence etc. At the national level, awareness of her social and political rights, integration of women in the general national development plans, the extent to which women are officially visible and recognized and the degree to which the media take head of women's issues etc.

Savita Mishra and Reshma Khatun (2017) in their book "*Women Education in Modern Perspective*" highlights the importance of women education and long history of addressing women's rights and progress. However, important gaps remain and women's realities are constantly changing, with new manifestations of discrimination against them which emerges regularly. Some groups of women face additional forms of discrimination based on their age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, health status, marital status, education, disability and socio-economic status, among other grounds. The constitution of almost all democratic countries, including India, guarantees equal rights to both men and women. Women education 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. Educated women are capable of bringing socio-economic changes with overall development of a country.

Digumarti Bhaskara Rao and Digumarti Pushpalatha Rao in their study, "*Women, Education and Empowerment*", state that empowerment through education is ideally seen as a continuous holistic process with cognitive, psychological, economic and political dimensions. Given the complexity of political, societal and international interrelations, one has to systematically think about the strategies and concrete proposals for future action if one hopes to achieve such a goal. The formal and non-formal education system would need to be considered. It would be important to analyze the gender content and to ascertain the manner in which it is addressed / not addressed in the education system. On the basis of the analysis, curriculum changes would need to be brought about and incorporating issues such as traditions, race, ethnicity, gender sensitization, urban and rural contexts in the programmes.

Indicators Showing Status of Women in India

As per Census 2011, India's population was 121.06 Cr and the females constituted 48.5% of it. In 2011, the sex ratio (number of females per 1000 males) at all India level was 943 and the same for rural and urban areas are 949 and 929 respectively. The sex ratio for 0 - 19 age group was 908 while that of 60+ age group was 1033. The sex ratio in the economically active age group (15 - 59 years) was 944. The literacy rate at all India level was 72.98% and the literacy rate for females and males are 64.63% and 80.9% respectively. During the last decade, the highest improvement in literacy rate was observed for rural females (24%). At all India level, the adult (15 + years) literacy rate was 76% and that among males was 78.8% and females was 59.3%. Rural - Urban gap existed in Adult literacy rate for both females and males. The adult literacy rate for females in rural areas was 50.6% vis-a- vis 76.9% in urban areas whereas for males the same in rural areas was 74.1% vis-a-vis 88.3% in urban areas.

As per Unified District Information System For Education (UDISE) 2015- 16, Published by Press Information Bureau, Gol, Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of boys and girls at secondary level is 79.16 % and 80.97% respectively and GER of boys and girls at Senior Secondary level is 55.95% and 56.41% respectively. Hence there is no massive gap in GER of boys and girls at secondary and senior secondary level in the country. In case of higher education, GER of girls is marginally lower than that of boys at all India level and also in respect of most of the States.

According to Sixth Economic Census released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, women constitute around 14 per cent of the total entrepreneurship i.e. 8.05 million out of the total 58.5 million entrepreneurs. Out of this, 2.76 million women constituting 13.3 per cent of women entrepreneurs work in agriculture sector whereas 5.29 million women constituting more than 65 per cent work in non-agriculture sector. The average employment in women-owned enterprises is meager 1.67. The World Bank also estimates female labour force participation in the market at 31.2 percent in India and provide information that more than 50 million young women in India neither study nor work. It is also calculated that one percentage point increase in female education raises the average gross domestic product (GDP) by 0.3 percentage points and raises annual GDP growth rates by 0.2 percentage points. A study reveals that India could increase its GDP by 16-60% by 2025 by simply enabling women to participate in the economy at par with men.

Challenges Prevailing In Women Development

In India women have multiple responsibilities, as home providers and producers therefore, they tend to engage in activities that are home-based. This had, in turn, restricted their mobility and limited their scope for better economic opportunities. They often face discrimination and exploitation in varying degree and occupy limited space in social, economic and political realms. Lack of equal access to education and employment, the existence of huge inequalities in

labour market, rising sexual violence and exploitation, gender discrimination and unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work, prevalence of harmful social practices such as early child and forced marriage, low representation of women in representative institutions, etc. remain the key barriers to their advancement. The gender disparity in various spheres hinders women's empowerment and their integration in national mainstream and raises fundamental question of social justice. This requires a major shift in our mindset which would lead to a positive attitude towards women and their role in society.

Importance of Quality Education System in India

Education is the Backbone of a Nation and a key instrument to national human resource development. A good quality education provides all learners with capabilities to become financially productive, to develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being. The learning outcomes must include threshold levels of literacy and numeracy, basic scientific knowledge and life skills including awareness and capacity development. Education leads to empowerment that includes a process of strengthening individuals, organisations and communities to get more control over their own situations and environments. Quality education is a crucial factor in combating poverty and inequality in society and provide platform for Equity in education which means that personal and social situations such as gender or family background are not obstacles to achieving academic ability and all individuals reach at least basic skill level.

Initiatives Taken For Empowering The Women Through Strong Education System

The expansion of education among girls has been an integral part of educational policies and programmes. The National Policy on Education 1986 (as modified in 1992) lays emphasis on education of girls/women through empowerment programmes. Accordingly, Ministry of Human Resource Development has taken a number of initiatives for expansion of girls' education, details of which issued by Press Information Bureau (PIB), Government of India is as under:

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme that aims to make girls independent both socially and financially through education. This approach of the Government can facilitate in generating awareness and improving the efficiency of delivery of welfare services meant for women. The objectives of this initiative are: Prevention of gender biased sex selective elimination, Ensuring survival & protection of the girl child, Ensuring education and participation of the girl child
2. The Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (Girl Child Prosperity Account) is a Government of India backed saving scheme targeted at the parents of girl children. The scheme encourages parents to build a fund for the future education and marriage expenses for their female child.
3. National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE) provides Rs.3000.00 which is deposited in the name of

eligible unmarried girls below 16 years as fixed deposit, who are entitled to withdraw it along with interest thereon on reaching 18 years of age and after passing class X. The objective of the scheme is to establish an enabling environment to reduce the drop outs and to promote the enrolment of girls children in secondary schools. The scheme covers (i) all girls belonging to SC/ST communities, who pass class 8 and (ii) all girls who pass class VIII from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) and enrol in class IX in Government, Government-aided and Local Body Schools. The funds under the scheme are not allocated State-wise. Funds are sanctioned to States/UTs based on the proposals received from the State Government and availability of funds under the scheme during the financial year.

4. In order to ensure greater participation of girls in elementary education, 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)' has targeted interventions for girls which include opening of schools in the neighbourhood to make access easier for girls, appointment of additional teachers including women teachers, free textbooks, free uniforms, separate toilets for girls, teachers' sensitisation programmes to promote girls participation, gender-sensitive teaching materials including textbooks. In addition, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) has been opened in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) where the female rural literacy is below the national average to provide for residential upper primary schools for girls.
5. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) envisages enhancing the quality of education by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of every habitation, improving quality of education imparted at secondary level, removal of gender, socio-economic and disability barriers. Under the integrated scheme of RMSA, interventions including construction of new secondary schools, provision of toilets blocks in existing schools with separate toilets for girls, construction of teachers quarters, construction of Girls Hostels in EBBs, special teaching for learning enhancement, self defense training, guidance and counseling facilities, conduct of adolescent education programmes, organization of empowerment/awareness camps are taken up to improve the education of girls at the secondary stage.
6. In Higher Education sector, University Grants Commission (UGC) has allocated special grants for construction of Women hostels in the Universities. UGC has provided financial assistance for construction of 535 (39 in universities + 496 in colleges) Women hostels in the last five years, UGC has undertaken a number of measures for the improvement of education of Women. UGC funds 7 Universities in India which are set up exclusively for women.
7. CBSE has launched a scheme "Udaan" to provide free online resources to girl students of Class XI and Class XII for preparation of admission test for the premier engineering colleges in the country.

The special focus of scheme is to address the low enrolment ratio of girl students in these prestigious institutions and to enable girl students to receive special incentives and support so that they can join these institutions and go on to take leadership roles in the future. The objective of this project is to enable girl students to soar to higher education from schools, and to eventually take various leadership roles in future. The aim is also to enrich and enhance teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics at Senior Secondary level by providing free and online resources to everyone, with a focus on special incentives and support to 1000 selected disadvantaged girls per year.

8. To provide encouragement and support to Girl Child to pursue technical education "Pragati Scholarship" has been launched by the MHRD from the year 2014-15 and implemented by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) aimed at providing assistance for Advancement of Girls participation in Technical Education. This is an attempt to give every young woman the opportunity to further her education and prepare for a successful future by empowering women through technical education. The scheme envisages to grant 4000 scholarships per annum. This includes tuition fee of Rs. 30000/- or at actual, whichever is less and Rs. 2000/- per month for 10 months as incidentals each year.

Opportunity Address through Women Education

The history of Indian women is full of pioneers, who have broken gender barriers and worked hard for their rights and made progress in the field of politics, arts, science, law etc. Now, women have held high offices including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of the Opposition, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and Governors. Women's empowerment has a multiplier effect not only on their own lives but also on the family and the society. The steady change in the position of women can be highlighted by looking some fact like on 25 July 2007, Pratibha Patil became the first female President of India, In June 2009, Meira Kumar became the first female Speaker of Lok Sabha, on 25 March 2017, Tanushree Pareek became the first female combat officer commissioned by the Border Security Force. In February 2018, 24 year old Flying Officer Avani Chaturvedi of the Indian Air Force became the first Indian female fighter pilot to fly solo. She flew a MiG-21 Bison, a jet aircraft with the highest recorded landing and take-off speed in the world. According to the report on the Role of Women in Development by the UN World Survey in 2014, women's active participation in decision-making has a positive impact on education, health, nutrition, employment and social

protection. For example, as female education levels rise, infant and child mortality rates fall and family health improves. Women's increased earning capacity has a positive effect on children's nutrition, health and educational prospects. It is a common knowledge that when more women work, economies grow. If women had the same access as men to productive assets, agricultural output would rise, reducing the number of undernourished people.

Conclusion

A tremendous opportunity for a country progress lies in women's education and empowerment. The empowerment of women is designed to increase and improve the social, economic, political and legal strength of women so that women can obtain equal rights. The empowerment of women helps women to control and gain the ability to manage risks, assets, income and their own time, as well as manage their risks and improve their economic situation and well-being. There is need of Mass literacy campaigns should be organised on a large scale and also emphasized on enrolment and retention of the girl child in formal schooling through incentive schemes such as mid day meals, free supply of text books, uniform, school bags, science kits, scholarship and residential and hostel facilities and removal of gender bias in the curriculum.

References

1. Mishra, Savita & Khatun, Reshma (2017). *Women Education in Modern Perspective*. Laxmi Book Publications, New Delhi.
2. Rao, Digumarti Bhaskara & Rao, Digumarti Pushpalatha (2006). *Women, Education and Empowerment*. Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi.
3. *Yojana (Women Empowerment: September 2016 and October 2018 Issue)*.
4. *INDIA 2018: A Reference Annual, compiled by New Media Wing, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, GOI*
5. *Annual reports of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, The Ministry of Human Resource Development, The Ministry of Statistics and Programme.*
6. <http://pib.nic.in>
7. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>
8. <https://en.wikipedia.org>
9. <http://mhrd.gov.in>
10. <http://vikaspedia.in>
11. <http://www.wcd.nic.in>
12. <https://www.vvob/educationfordevelopment/>
13. <http://www.mospi.gov.in>
14. <http://censusindia.gov.in/>