



ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 15th May, 2017

Received in revised form 12th

June, 2017 Accepted 6th July, 2017

Published online 28th August, 2017

Key words:

Women empowerment, Higher education, Development, Education.

ABSTRACT

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said: "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". In our country women contribute almost half of the population. By empowering women it will automatically strengthen the national economy. According to the Literacy Rate 2011 census, the female literacy level is 65.46% where as the male literacy rate is over 80%. Education is considered as a milestone for women empowerment. Education is the only key to unlock the golden door of freedom for development. Education play a major role for supporting women's right, dignity and security. Women Education in India has been a major preoccupation of both the government and society because educated women play a vital role in the development of the country. Education of women is the most powerful tool which help to change the status of women in the society. For the harmonious development of the country women should go shoulder to shoulder with men. For empowering the women, higher education will play a major role. This paper discuss the impact of higher education on women empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women by giving proper knowledge, skills and self confidence. Education is considered as a basic requirement and a fundamental right for the citizen of any nation. It is also a powerful tool for reducing inequality and make any person independent. Education enables any person to face the challenge of society and change their there life styles. For centuries women are treated as the weaker section of our society. Women are not allowed in many jobs. A large womenfolk of our country are still illiterate, backward and exploited. This situation is due to cultural barriers and for traditional outlook. Education is the only factor to get rid from this traditional outlook. So women have to awake from deep slumber and have to understand the true meaning of empowerment. Now women are out of those traditional customs and dark ages. They have the ability to choose their destiny, job, vote, etc. India can become a developed nation only through women empowerment.

Women Empowerment

The Oxford American Dictionary defines, "empowerment" as "to make (someone) stronger and more confident, esp.

in controlling their life and claiming their rights". Women empowerment is a process of enabling women to have access and make productive contributions to their economic independence, political participation and social development. It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources and also greater autonomy in making decisions. Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies for development and sustainability. The Women Empowerment principles are:

- Establish high level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Treat all men and women fairly at work- support human rights and nondiscrimination.
- Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Measure on progress to achieve gender equality.

Higher Education

Education is an art of imparting knowledge to others for betterment of their life and preparing a person to attain the aims in their life. Higher Education means training of highly skilled specialist in the field of economics, science, technology and culture at various types of higher schools, which accept persons who have successfully completed secondary general education. Higher Education of women plays a pivotal role in releasing their energy and creativity and enabling them to meet the complex challenges of the present

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society. Special emphasis should be given to Research and Development by engaging women in larger population.

Status of Women in Indian society

A civilization can be judged by exploring the status of women in the society. The Muslim influence makes a considerable change in the status of women in our country. They were deprived of their rights of equality in the society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy brought improvement in the status of women in our country. Mahatma Gandhi also induced women to participate in the freedom movement in India. Thus women started participating in politics and administration. Though women have uplifted themselves from the past scenario, but still illiteracy, dowry, ignorance and slavery have to be removed in order to get a rightful place in Indian society. At present education is the only tool to get the right place in our society.

Needs of Women Empowerment

The needs of women empowerment in our present society are as follows:

- Empowerment enables women to acquire knowledge, skills and techniques for their betterment of life.
- Economic empowerment is essential for improvement of female sex.
- Empowerment helps in gender equity, which every women desire.
- Empowerment give women the decision making power of their own.
- It helps in having positive thinking on the ability to make change.
- It helps in increasing one's positive self- image and overcoming all stigma of our society.
- It also helps to change others perceptions by democratic means.
- Empowerment also helps to access to information for taking proper decision.

Relationship between Higher Education and Women Empowerment

Higher Education can bring remarkable changes in women's life resulting in social transformation by inculcating the following characteristics among them:

1. Enhancing the self confidence within women.
2. Raising their status in the social infrastructure.
3. Increasing self efficacy.
4. Enhancing upward social mobility.
5. Bring awareness among the women, about their rights and duties in the society.
6. Giving career opportunities.
7. Boosting their self esteem.
8. Reducing dependability on others.
9. Changing the mindset of an individual.
10. Bringing awareness of gender equity.
11. Developing ability for critical thinking.
12. Fostering decision making within women.
13. Developing leadership qualities among women.

Barriers of Women Empowerment through Higher Education

- Gender inequality is one major obstacle of Women Empowerment.

- Family restrictions to children to get higher education.
- Violence is one prime factor which opposes women empowerment.
- Financial constraints from govt. and also from other organizations.
- Low need of achievement to get higher education among women in rural sector.
- Low mobility.
- Absence of ambition among girls to get higher education.
- Lack of motivation to learn among women.

Measures taken for the Empowerment of women:

Literacy is essential for any measurement of human development. The National Policy of Education (1986) was set up for the development of education and also eradication of illiteracy. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) gives importance to women welfare. The Mahila Samakhya Programme started in 1987 focused specially to the socially excluded and the landless women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990, to safeguard the rights of women in our society. The revised NPE (1992), gives special emphasis to women education. The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), in 1994 gives a holistic approach to reduce gender inequality and social disparities. The 86th Constitutional Amendment made free and compulsory education a fundamental rights for all children between 6-14 age group. The Government of India declared 2001 as 'Women Empowerment year'. The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, 2001-02 is one major initiative taken by Govt. of India for Universalisation of Elementary Education irrespective of cast, creed and sex. This are all initiatives taken by our govt. to uplift women education as well as women empowerment in our country.

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment:

Gender equality means where women and men enjoy the same opportunities and rights in every sphere of life . Equality between men and women exist when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power. A critical aspect of promoting gender quality is women Empowerment. Thus women empowerment is vital to sustainable development and the realization of human right for all. Empowerment occurs through improvement of condition, standards and global perspective of life.

Gender Fair Education

Gender Fair Education involves the attainment of equality, rights and empowerment through an explicit goal in a healthy social environment. Some major instruments of Gender Fair education are identification and projection of role models among faculty, administrators, and resource persons. The Gender Fair women higher education should be the transformation of women's life and as well as transformation of society itself.

Suggestions

Some suggestions for uplifting Women Empowerment in our society are as follows:

- Every parents have to aware of their daughter's education.

- Inculcate a confidence level in every women to make possible changes in our society.
- Encourage participation of women in income generating activities.
- Change the approach of our society toward sex discrimination and gender inequality.
- To induce the feeling of self-dependence among women.
- Removal of gender inequality from our orthodox society.
- Women should actively participate in all social and political changes of our country.
- Eliminating all forms of discrimination in education and employment.
- A remarkable and strategic change is necessary in national media, to change the attitude of people toward women education.
- Preventing early marriages in our country.
- Women should contribute effectively to the socio-economic development of the nation.
- Introduction of satellite schools for remote areas of our country.
- Encourage use of ICT and internet for the study by women.
- Proper implementation of the governmental schemes by respective agencies is required.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion we can conclude that higher education is very much essential for empowering women in our society. Only literacy cannot help in empowering women, but women should provide higher education so that they can be able to make their own decision. Women Education is a powerful tool of change of position in society. Higher education function as a means of improving the status of women in the family and society. Education is the only tool for empowering women. Government of India should come forward for taking initiative regarding women empowerment and also there should be a proper implementation of those initiatives. Women Empowerment aims at acquiring high literacy rate and education, better health care for their children, increased participation in commercial sector, awareness of their rights and duties to achieve self-reliance and self-confidence among women. Recently the NDA government has launched 'Beti Bachao, Beti padhao', scheme for making girls independent both socially and economically. The 'Udaan' program of CBSE is dedicated to the girl child education.

This type of scheme should be implemented nationwide to bring a remarkable changes in our society. This is a true empowerment. In this way every women will be empowered. Thus women will secure power and capacity as that of men and manifest themselves among different opportunities through higher education.

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How to cite this article:

Moumita Hazra (2017) 'Role of Higher Education in Women Empowerment and Development', *International Journal of Current Advanced Research*, 06(08), pp. 5289-5291. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijcar.2017.5291.0691>
