The role of women in higher education in India

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge is the life of every Indian woman. It results with the experience that she gains from the environment and the supporting world around her, which allow her to live as knowledgeable productive members of the society. The homely environment with mother’s love is the first source of learning for the child and an educated mother would create an environment, allowing her children to gather and analyze information, which helps in adapting to bigger society in future. Critical thinking and analysis will make children better members of society. To educate someone is to deliberately teach them something new and higher education for women is most powerful means to evolve through/beyond the current economic and social crisis in India and to teach her children the art of thinking and analysis before entering the school for education [1].

Keywords—Knowledge, Women, Higher education, Challenges, Benefits

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is a distinguishing characteristic of human beings with a tremendous capacity to acquire and transfer knowledge from one generation to another, gaining prominence with advanced science and technology. Higher education is the gateway to economic security and opportunity particularly for women in India. Women are part of the socio-economic system and they uphold rich cultural and traditional values. Their progress is equated with the progress of the nation. From 2000, many Indian women play a major role in Knowledge Societies as leaders, addressing issues on creating and adapting information and ideas at an accelerating speed to support economic growth and improved quality of life in India addressing issues such as Equity, Quality, Relevance and Access, proving that Indian women with any background becomes a contributing member of society through learning. The Indian Government has introduced policies and procedures with the goal of sensitizing the higher education system, recognize gender equity and increasing the number of women enrolling for higher education. Higher education for women in India has witnessed impressive growth over the years and the Government is pooling resources needed to promote female education at all levels.

1.1 Higher education- “A Boon to Woman”

Knowledge is the life of every Indian woman. It results with the experience that she gains from the environment and the supporting world around her, which allow her to live as knowledgeable productive members of the society. The homely environment with mother’s love is the first source of learning for the child and an educated mother would create an environment, allowing her children to gather and analyze information, which helps in adapting to bigger society in future. Critical thinking and analysis will make children better members of society. To educate someone is to deliberately teach them something new and higher education for women is most powerful means to evolve through/beyond the current economic and social crisis in India and to teach her children the art of thinking and analysis before entering the school for education [1].

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

India is one of the few countries where women enjoy a comparatively better status than many women in other parts of the world. True Indian women face many problems and are subject to the same social pressures which women experience in other parts of the world. But relatively speaking, their situation is much better than what it used to be in the pre-independence era. The development of women in different aspects of life through the ages can be categorized in the following ways:
(a) Women’s Education in Ancient India;
(b) Women’s Education in Medieval India;
(c) Women’s Education in Colonial India;
(d) Women’s Education in Modern India.

2.1 Women’s education in ancient India
Since from the ancient time women had possessed a bit lower position than men in the society due to the set of rigid social norms. But during Vedic periods their position was much better and they used to access the higher education but with the course of time, she lost her importance. Women education in ancient India prevailed during the early Vedic period. Most of the Indian scriptures Rig Veda and Upanishads mention several women sages and seers. However, after 500 B.C, the position of women started to decline. But the Islamic invasion had restricted the freedom and rights of women.

2.2 Women’s education in medieval India
During medieval India, after the introduction of the Purdhah system, the condition of women education further deteriorated. Different religions (Hinduism, Islamic, Christianity) conventions and customs had deteriorated her status further. Education in medieval India flourished during the Mughal rule from 1546-1848 where the education system was under Ulama where education meant religious training of various subjects like medicine, Arabic literature, philosophy, grammar, history, law, administration and ethics. A sequence of socio-religious movements contributed to the development of women’s education in the country. Many rulers like Itlutimish, Akbar etc. took several initiatives to make education available to the women of India. The ordered form of women education in India was incorporated in the early centuries of the Christian era.

2.3 Women’s education in colonial India
During the colonial era in India, there was a revival of interest in women’s education again. Various eminent leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar had given special emphasized on the education of women. However, on the other side Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar were those eminent leaders who worked for the upliftment and attainment of education for women of the lower castes. During the colonial period, the institutional form of imparting learning was introduced in which women’s education had witnessed an essential expansion. Then after various movements were launched to educate the country’s women. Furthermore, this journey progressed through the years and structured the modern Indian education system.

2.4 Women’s education in modern India
After the independence of India in 1947, the women education got a fillip. After independence, the government has taken various measures for providing education to Indian women. Women literacy rate seemingly rose in the modern days. Women education in India became a compulsory concern and female literacy has gone higher than male literacy. As a result of the various government measures undertaken during the three decades the growth of female literacy rate was more than male which was about 14.87% as compared to 11.72 % of that of male. While women literacy rate was 22% in 1971 which roused to 54.16% in 2001 [2].

3. SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION
(a) Introduce attractive scholarships for both financially poor students and meritorious students to encourage women students in higher education.
(b) Provide counselling for both family and person concerned at the secondary stage of education.
(c) Make skill-oriented higher education.
(d) Establish non-traditional curricular for women and extend state support for this.
(e) Improve transport facilities for women students.
(f) Education policy has to be taken to facilitate women participation in higher education.
(g) Establish more female educational institutions.
(h) Provide Bank loan facilities for women students.
(i) Establish higher educational institutions in rural and tribal areas.
(j) Check sexual harassment within and outside institutions. [3]

4. CONCLUSION
In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "If you educate the man, you educate the person but if you educate the woman, you educate the nation". Fundamental changes in attitude are necessary before women can make progress in STVE. A multi-level, integrated approach is necessary for vocational education and training to lead to greater equality in the labour market. On the one hand, this entails addressing the constraints on girls' and women's' access to and performance in training; areas such as the streaming of students, gender bias in learning materials, trainers' attitudes and vocational counselling. On the other hand, it means recognizing the broader social, economic and political context of education and training, in particular, the issue of the roles women are being trained to perform. Key partners need to be identified, from parents to policymakers. Methods used might include public information through the mass media and support incentives for trainers. All the reports recognize that despite the many initiatives which have been taken, it appears that there is still an enormous gap in between girls and boys and men and women in scientific, technical and vocational education and related careers confirming the complexity of these issue requiring a holistic approach.

Where scientific and technological literacy for all is a goal, both in view of efficiency and equity, there are additional reasons to be concerned that young women have an opportunity to learn and enjoy learning science. In most African countries women are almost totally responsible for subsistence farming, they are the prime caregivers - raising and rearing children, tending to the sick members of the family, selecting and cooking meals for the family. Thus, the very quality of life issues that are included in science courses is directly related to the everyday duties of many women. The use and understanding of science and appropriate technology by women in development would do much to improve the quality of life of all in the community.
5. REFERENCES

