

Gender Inequality in Higher Education

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Abstract

Women are dominated by patriarchal kinship system that results in social and economic dependence of women on men and stipulate their relative lower status compared to men. Although over the last decades women have struggled to become equal with men in all aspects of life (viz. education, health, employment etc.), but still there exist inequality in these sectors. Gender inequality has emerged as the major stumbling hurdle in achieving the development targets (ibid 2002).

Gender inequality in higher education is a persistent problem in Indian society especially for girls from rural areas and lower socio-economic backgrounds. During the past several decades India has achieved success in moving towards universal school enrolment and in enacting policies to address educational inequalities such as those based on gender. However educational gap still exists. The higher education system in India is complex. The regulators associated with governance are overlapping and entangled across various ministries and regulatory bodies. The increase in the enrolment figures is consistent with the expansion of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) over the years. The number of higher educational institutions (HEI's) has increased from about 30 universities and 695 colleges in 1950-51 to about 700 universities (as of 2012-13) and 35,000 colleges (as of 2011-12) as per a recent UGC report. With an annual enrolment of above 25 million (including enrolment under Open and Distance Learning System), India is today ranked as the third largest higher education system in the world after US and China (ASHE 2013 Annual Status of Higher Education of Status and UTs in India-Part1).

Key words- *Gender Education Equality Inequality Higher Education*

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Introduction

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”. Women are part of our socio-economic system. They uphold our rich cultural and traditional values as they have a strong bond with the society. Their progress is often equated with the nation’s progress and therefore, their participation in development activities of the society is always a concern. The educational background of a woman has direct bearing on her development. One can see that there is a great disparity in the distribution of women’s employment between urban and rural areas.

Gender inequality, in general, refers to the gap indicated by differential preferences between male and female in any field of life. In the context of higher education, gender inequality refers to the gap between enrolment of male and female students in higher educational institutions (Afzal, 2013:13).

Gender inequality has been a major issue in India’s pursuit for achieving the goal of universal higher education. In order to overcome the problems faced by girls, several measures have been initiated across the country. What impact have these made as reflected in the available statistics? Gender inequality in education highlights that the participation of the girl-child is affected significantly due to social attitudes towards their education in Indian society.

Societies that discriminate on the basis of gender pay adversely in terms of prevailing higher poverty, lower quality of life, slower economic growth and weaker governance. Gender inequality is responsible for poverty because if works are divided equally then not only a person but a country will get the progress (Elizabeth King, 2001:111).

The Causes of Gender Inequality

Gender inequality or discrimination are root causes of violence against women influenced by the historical and structural power imbalances between women and men which exist in varying degrees across all communities in the world. (www.junglerummy.com)

The Main Causes of Gender Inequality are as Follows:

Poverty, literacy, lack of employment facilities, social customs, beliefs and practices, social attitudes, lack of awareness of women etc. are the causes of gender inequality. It is important to remember that risk and protective factors are not direct causal links, but rather correlated that is to say, that a boy who witnesses abusing his mother by his father will show the same behavior in life. In such a way a highly educated woman having a high socio-economic status in the society also suffers due

to this very evil in the society. Violence against women is a complex social, economic and cultural phenomenon.

Main causes of gender inequality are given below-

Economic Causes- Son is proved to be a helping hand for the family as well as a source of receiving dowry is the main economic cause of gender inequality. Feeling of economic insecurity in old age by the parents or family is also one of the causes. There is a presumption in the society that son will provide economic security in old age, it is also the cause of discrimination.

Social Causes- Social security in old age, enhancing prestige in community are the causes of gender discrimination, manpower and physical strength, and help in meeting family obligations are also the causes of gender inequality.

Psychological Causes- Mostly people think that son is a good friend during old age because son will live with them throughout the life and their daughter will not be there. Mental satisfaction is also the psychological cause of gender discrimination.

Religious Cause- Prevailing presumptions in the society that son is the medium of achieving salutation is also the cause of gender discrimination. While if society will go into the depth, come to the inferences that these are the baseless presumptions.

Status and Growth of Higher Education in India

There were 20 universities and 500 colleges at the time of independence.

At present, university and University level institutions

State Universities- 243

State private Universities- 53

Central Universities – 40

Deemed Universities – 130

Institutions of national importance established under Acts of parliament – 33

Institutions established under various state legislations – 5

In addition, there are 25, 951 colleges including around 2565 women colleges. Out of 25951 colleges, 7362 colleges (28%) have been recognized under section 2 (f) and 5,997 colleges (23%) under section 12-B of UGC Act, 1956.

Total Number of students enrolled:-

Universities and colleges 136.42 lakhs

16.69 lakhs (12.24%) in University Department and 119.73 lakh (87.76%) in affiliated colleges.

Equity in Education- Gender Equity

Women constitute 48% of the total population of India. The principle of

gender equity in enshrined in Indian constitution in its preamble, fundamental rights, fundamental duties and directive principle and also reducing the gender gap in higher education is a focus area.

The enrolment:- Women students- 56.49 lakhs constituting 41.40% of the total enrolment (of the total women enrolment,) 14.72% women have been enrolled in professional courses.

States- Highest in Goa (59%) and lowest in (Bihar 30%)

Status of women in Higher Education

There has been a phenomenal growth in a number of women enrolled in Higher Education since independence women enrolment- was less than 10% of the total enrolment on the eve of independence and it has risen to 41.40% (D. Manjulata, Mrs. VijayLaxmi.....et. al).

Status of Higher Education in India: According to the census of 2011-

India's higher education system is the 3rd largest in the world, next to the United States and China. The main Governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission, which enforces its standards, advises the government and helps co-ordinate between the Centre and the State. Accreditation for higher learning in our seen by 15 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission.

As per the latest 2011 census, about 8.15 (68 millions) if Indian are graduates, with Union Territories of Chandigarh and Delhi topping the list with 24.65% some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), National Institute of Science, Indian institute of Science, Education and Research (IISERs), Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIT), University of Mumbai and JNU (JawaharLal Nehru) have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education. The IITs enroll about 8000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India. However India still lacks internationally behind universities such as Harvard, Cambridge and oxford.

Indian higher education is in need of radical reforms. A focus on enforcing higher standards of transparency, strengthening of the vocational and doctoral education pipeline and professionalization of the sector through stronger institutional responsibility would help in reprioritizing efforts and working around the complexities. (www.wikipedia.org)

History of Indian Higher Education-

India is believed to have had a functioning system of higher education as early as 1000 B.C. Unlike present day universities, these ancient learning centers

were primarily concerned with dispersing Vedic education. The modern Indian Education system finds its roots in colonial legacy. The British Government used the university system as a tool of cultural colonization. Colonial efforts in higher education were carried out initially through the East India company, followed by the British parliament and later under direct British rule. The first institution of higher learning set up by the British east India company was the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781. This was followed by the Asiatic society of Bengal in 1784, Benaras Sanskrit college in 1791 and Fort William colleges in 1800 with the Charter Act of 1813, the British parliament officially declared and 22.56% of their population being graduates respectively. Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million students in a decade from 2000-01 to 2010-11. As of 2016 India has 799 Universities with a break up of 44 central Universities, 540 state universities, 122 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the state Act and 75 institutions of National importance which include AIIMS, IITS and NIT's among others.

Other institutions include 39,071 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800, exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2016. Colleges may be autonomous i.e. empowered to examine their own degrees, up to Ph.D level in some cases, or non autonomous, in which case their examinations are under the supervision of the university to which they are affiliated, in either case, however, degrees are awarded in the name of the university rather than the college.

The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology: Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology. Distance learning and open education is also a feature of the Indian Higher Education Council system and is looked after by the Distance Education Council. Indra Gandhi National open University is the largest University in the world by number of students, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe.

Indian education as one of the duties of the state. The same act also removed restrictions on missionary work in British India, thus leading to the establishment of the evangelist Serampore college in 1818. Thomas Babbington Macaulay's famously controversial minute of education (1835) reflected the growing support of a western approach to knowledge over an oriental one. Soon after, in 1857, the first three official universities were started in Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta and Madras (Chennai). These universities were modeled after the University of London and focused on English and Humanities. The British control of the Indian education

system continued until the government of India Act of 1935 that transferred more power to provincial politicians and began the Indianisation of education. This period witnessed a rise in the importance of physical and vocational education as well as the introduction of basic education schemes. When Indian gained independence in 1947, the nation had a total of 241,369 students registered across 20 Universities and 496 colleges. In 1948 the Indian Government established the university Education commission to oversee the growth and improvement of higher education. In the 1960s and 1970s, the government increased its efforts to support higher education by not only setting up state-funded universities and colleges, but also providing financial assistance to private institutions resulting in the creation of private aided/grant-in-aid institutions.

Despite the leave of the British, Indian higher education continued to give importance to the languages and humanities until the 1980s. Institutes of Technology, Regional Engineering colleges and Indian Institute of management were some of the more prominent expectations of this trend. These institutions drew inspiration from reputed universities in the United states and also received foreign funding. (www.wikipedia.org)

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