

## **Women Empowerment in Higher Education: Policies, Participations and Issues**

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### **Abstract**

*The life of civilization starts from women womb. History is the foot prints example of role of women for nation standing is much more important than the others contribution. In present context Men and Women are parts of two sides of a coin if one parts erase or any mistakes then the coin has no value so that, if nation or family not give attention properly towards development of women in their own family or nation then the family or nation is unable to achieve the sustainable development in their whole lifespan. Present paper discussion about the participations and issues for women at higher education level with UNESCO outlook towards women empowerment especially in higher education sector and moreover discuss about present policies for women empowerment at higher education level.*

**Keywords:** *Women Empowerment, Higher Education, Policies, Participations, Issues*

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## **Backdrop**

Education for girls helps to make communities and societies healthier and safer, and can also help to reduce child deaths, improve the maternal health and tackle the spread of diseases. It underpins the achievement of all the other Millennium Development Goal MDGs. That is also why in 2000, at the Dakar Conference, donors promised that every country with a sound education plan would get the resources it needed to implement it (DFID, 2000). Girls are vital not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation and promotion of gender equality in education is essential for human resource development. Education is a basic component of social cohesion and national identity. It leads to an improvement in the depth and quality of public opinion, as well as to more active participation of the marginalized in the democratic process. No society has ever liberated itself economically, politically, or socially without a sound base of educated women. Education has a direct impact on Women empowerment as it creates in them awareness about their rights, their capabilities and the choices and opportunities available to them. There is no doubt that education has social and economic benefits for the general public and private individuals. However, many children today are completing primary, and even secondary, school without acquiring basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Improving the quality of education not only improves individual children's quality of life, it also promotes economic growth (World Bank, 2008). Thus, from the early years of the first independence, the Convention Against Discrimination in Education, was adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 14 December 1960 and entered into force on 22 May 1962, which set the stage for a systematic alignment of African official discourses on global positions for gender equality.

## **Indian Context-Policies and Programmes**

India is a largest population with multicultural unique nation all over in the Universe. In India, education to all citizens is a constitutional obligation. The principal of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian constitution, in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only guarantees equality to women, Just after Independence, in 1951, literacy levels were very low (25% for men and 9% for women), In the next ten years there was not much progress in the literacy levels. It is only after the recommendations of the Indian education commission (1964) and the National Policy of Education (1968) that the education of girls was seen as a means of accelerating social transformation. This situation changed in 1976 after the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment to the constitution was

passed, making all education the joint responsibility of the central and state governments.

National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and its Programme of Action (POA) gave high priority to gender equality and committed the entire educational system to work for women's empowerment. The National Perspective Plan 1988-2000 reiterates this point of view and states that women themselves must overcome their handicaps. Thus, this has been a careful articulation of education for equality for women, which is reflected in the educational policy discourse. Monitoring committees for women's/girls' education at the Ministry of Human Resource Development level and also state level were formed to monitor the indicators of gender concerns in all policies and projects. Emphasis was laid on enrolment and retention of the girl child in formal and non-formal schooling; recruitment of rural women teachers and removal of gender bias in the curriculum. Many literacy campaigns in different parts of India were launched which brought out volunteers from all sections of society as instructors, master trainers and organisers. Complementary to this strategy, media campaigns and parental awareness programmes for generating a positive climate for girl's education were also started. Mobilization of women's groups and projects like Mahila Samakhyas (Education for Women's Equality) with focus on the constraints that had so far prevented women and alter societal perception about them. In the present context of empowerment that especially was focusing the National Policy for Women in 2016. It describes the Mission, Vision and major objectives of this policy.

#### **Drat National Policy for Women 2016**

**Vision:** A society in which, women attain their full potential and are able to participate as equal partners in all aspects of life sheers of life and influence the process of social change.

**Mission:** To create an effective framework to enable the process of developing policies, programmes and practices which will ensure equal rights and opportunities for women in the family, community, workplace and in governance.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Creating a conducive socio-cultural, economic and political environment to enable women *enjoy de jure* and *de facto* fundamental rights and realize their full potential.
2. Mainstreaming gender in all-round development processes/programmes/projects/actions.

3. A holistic and life-cycle approach to women's health for appropriate, affordable and quality health care.
4. Improving and incentivizing access of women/girls to universal and quality education.
5. Increase and incentivizing work force participation of women in the economy.
6. Equal participation in the social, political and economic spheres including the institutions of governance and decision making.
7. Transforming disseminatory societal attitudes, mindsets with community involvement and engagement of men and boys.
8. Developing a gender sensitive legal-judicial system.
9. Elimination of all forms of violence against women through strengthening of policies, legislations, programmes, institutions and community engagement.
10. Development and empowerment of women belonging to the vulnerable and marginalized groups.
11. Building and strengthening stakeholder participation and participation and partnerships for women empowerment.
12. Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, audit and data systems to bridge gender gap.

***Priority Areas:***

- Ø Health Including Food Security and Nutrition; Education; Economy; Service Sector; Science and Technology; Governance and Decision Making; Violence Against Women; Enabling Environment; Environment and Climate Change.

**Historical Prospective towards Women Empowerment in Access Higher Education at Worldwide View**

Following the trend at primary and secondary levels, opportunities for women to participate in higher education are increases world-wide. The data in these essays are not presented in a form which allows a detailed comparative analysis but the following points are significant:

- Ø In the Arab States enrolments of women in higher education have more than doubled between 1975 and 1988. Thirty-five percent of students are women, although these figures look more favourable than the situation warrants because many men study overseas. Many are in traditional profession which are considered to be an extension of the natural roles of wife and mother. i.e., teaching (which is particularly favoured because it offers gender

segregation in the work place), nursing and clerical work.

- Ø The higher education system in India is massive and structurally diverse with 4.3 million students in 196 university level institutions. At base a British colonial system, it has undergone a major expansion since independence into higher education and employment came via the nurturing professions; nursing and teaching, largely as a result of the efforts of social reformers to improve the lot of widows and other marginalized women. Economic factors in more recent times have broken down the resistance to women working to supplement family incomes and today women are well represented in many occupations.
- Ø In Indonesia there are more women than men in the nineteen to twenty-nine year-old age group yet there are more men than women in higher education. Only one in fifteen women in this group is in higher education. Participation rates for women are particularly low in science and technology.
- Ø At the University of the South Pacific girls are outnumbered three to one over all courses and four to one in degree programmes. Thaman and Pillay comment that women are not encouraged to study at tertiary level because the family role is assumed to be paramount. Scholarship policy channelled women into teaching.
- Ø The data on Peru provided by Zamora show both the demographic explosion in education since the forties and the pipeline effect of increased participation of girls in primary and secondary education flowing through into higher education one generation later.
- Ø The United States appears at first glance to have achieved equal participation of women and men in higher education. Indeed since 1979 more women than men have been enrolled in college programs. Yet women have done less well in professional courses and at doctoral level.

### **Present Status of Women Empowerment at Higher Education Level**

Today India can boast of large educated manpower, which is most important for socio-economic growth of this nation. Despite serious handicap of means and resources, the country during the last 66 years has built up a very large system of education and also a vast pool of men and women equipped with a high order of scientific and technological capacities, robust humanism, philosophical thought and creativity. In 1950, we had 25 Universities and 700 colleges with an enrolment of just one lakhs students. We have moved 20 million students studying in about 600

Universities and over 34,000 colleges. India is a nation of more than 6 lakhs villages where the soul of India lives. According to provisional results of Census 2011 proportion of rural population is 68.84 per cent of total population. Thus sustainable development cannot be achieved without engaging this, two third populations in the development process. However, women enrolment in higher education has also increased from 14% in 1950-51 to 44% in 2012-13. Gross Enrolment Ratio for female is 12.7% against. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has proposed to set –up 2-exclusive universities for women in order to improve female participation in higher education. The apex regulator is also planning to start 800 constituent colleges under the central varsities to ensure equity in access to quality education for fair sex. The document underlines the fact that certain sectors of our population are still not open to send girls to coeducational institutions in such a scenario these women universities “may act as a fillip to the participation of girls in higher education”. Under the scheme, 20 colleges each will be set up in the respective states in the district headquarters, numbering to 800 new colleges in all. “The colleges should be of international configuration in infrastructure, hostels, playground, library and technology savvy classrooms, and to be 100% funded by the centre as is presently followed in the case of the Delhi University” the document said (Source: Times of India, 1/27/2012-16:14).

**Higher Education and Women Empowerment:** Higher education plays a catalytic role in empowering the women, can be enlisted as below:

- Ø Higher education enables women to fix themselves up in society into which they are found themselves.
- Ø Explore the world manipulate it for their survival and establishment of themselves.
- Ø Potential deposited in individuals are explored through higher education so that individuals can acquire training and knowledge in a profession.
- Ø Enable them to cultivate confidence and habits and develop right attitude to work and life as a good citizens.
- Ø Empowering women with knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in development process.
- Ø Provide opportunities to women to fulfilment their needs. These needs comprise with special learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression,

numeracy and problem solving) and basic learning contents such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by human beings to be able:

- ii To survive; To develop their full capacities; To live and work in dignity; To participate fully in development; To improve their lives; To continuing learning; Through higher education flow of ideology and culture of nation, states and its people; Women with higher education help in development of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside; Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl child, but also can provide better guidance to all their children; Women with higher education can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of population.

### **Government Initiatives for Women Empowerment through Participation in Higher Education**

The contribution of women for nation building is remarkable so nation must be promising for their development including their safety, health, and education. These three things are most important basic pillar for a women empowerment. So at the present context the government of India provided the special initiatives for women participation at higher education level. The University Grant Commission (UGC) has all along given emphasis in participation of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribe (Ss), Minorities, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Persons with Disability (PWD), and Women in higher education. Some of the notable schemes of the UGC for nurturing social equity for various beneficiary categories in vogue are Indira Gandhi Post Graduate Scholarships for Single Girl Child, Residential Coaching Academics for Minorities, Rajiv Gandhi National fellowship for SCs and STs, and Maulana Azad National Fellowship for Minorities, Post-Doctoral Fellowship for SCs, STs, PWD and Women. UGC take a major part for empowering women in higher education level, the details in given below:



(Sources: *Nurturing Social Equity in Higher Education*, UGC, 2013)

### Issues for Women Empowerment at Higher Education level

In view of 21<sup>st</sup> India has cross the century of national growth but there are still some gap between male and female development in global view. There are many hindrances in the path of women and in higher education. Some of them as follows-

- Ø Lack of education; Financial constraints; Family responsibility; Low mobility; Low ability to bear risk; Low need for achievements; Absence of ambitions for the achievement; Social status.

### Conclusion

In the above discussion the paper focusing on the past and present outlook towards women participation in higher education. After all there are need more women participation in higher education level. All we all know the fact of women participations for nation making. Women's role in socio-economic development of a country is very important. Education in general and higher education in particular, is really a milestone of women empowerment. Still we know that how women's are facing a lot of problems in day to day life and if we stop this type of problem then we must



educate all the women in this whole world. If mother is higher educated then there are no need of guidance and counselling for a child/student. In every country must be promise about prevailing gender disparities in terms of education, health, employment and representation in national parliament are sole recessions behind this discrimination. The attitude of man dominant society should change and try to be very cooperative with women and encourage her greater participation in decision making process at household level, local, state, national and international level.

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