



Education: A Pillar of Gender Justice

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Educate one man, you educate one person, but educate a woman and you educate a whole civilization.. Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract: The educational system of a country makes an important contribution to the development of habits, attitudes and qualities of character in citizens. This in turn helps them to bear the responsibilities of the democratic citizenship in a better manner and to counteract all those tendencies which hinder the emergence of a broad, national and secular outlook. Education is central to the efforts of empowering women to achieve equality and to remove their weaknesses. Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. In spite of the stupendous progress of women's education, the enrolment of girls in secondary and higher level education is alarmingly below than the targets fixed by SDG 4.

Keywords: Education, human right, equality, empowerment, primary education, secondary education, higher education, Information and Communication Technology (ICT),

I. Introduction

Education is the key to the task of nation building as well as to provide requisite knowledge and skills required for sustained growth of the economy and to ensure overall progress. According to former President APJ Abdul Kalam “education is the pillar of a strong and developed nation. In the knowledge society, intellectual capacity will dominate. Therefore, education must become a thrust area, aimed at 100% literacy. This is the key for empowerment. Women’s education is particularly important to bring societal transformation, including small family, higher education and better healthcare for children”.

In confronting the many challenges that the future holds in store, humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of democracy, freedom, equality and social justice, peace, and sustainable development. (UNESCO: 1996). Peter F

Drucker, the famous Consultant, predicted that “the currency of the future economy would be knowledge”. He further stated that the next society will be a knowledge society in which knowledge will be the resource and knowledge workers will be the dominant workforce. India has emerged as a global leader and a strong nation at the turn of this century. The Indian education system recognizes the role of education in instilling the values of secularism, egalitarianism, respect for democratic traditions, civil liberties and quest for justice. It aims at creating citizens equipped with necessary knowledge, skills and values to build an inclusive, just and progressive society.

II. Importance of Education: Equality and Empowerment

Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, dignity and equal opportunity for development. Human Rights Education is a necessary precondition for a healthy democratic society which enables the citizens to participate in the democratic process of the country. It helps in developing global perspective and awareness in protecting us from discrimination, in preparing us to raise our voices against abuses of human rights in the world and in accepting our responsibilities vis-à-vis our rights (Dubey: 2003).

The importance of the education of girls has been accepted globally. It is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within family and across generations. In 1994, International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo recognized education, especially for women, as a force for social and economic development. ‘Education facilitates empowerment which is essential for the participation of women in all aspects of the development process’ (ICPD Programme of Action, Para 4.2).

Education is associated with improved access to information on good nutrition, good child-rearing practices, and earlier and more effective diagnosis of illnesses. As a result children born to educated mothers tend to be better nourished, fall sick less frequently, are healthier, and have a better growth rate than their uneducated counterparts (UNESCO: 2005). Education provides girls and women a better understanding of health, nutrition and family planning giving the choices and the power to decide over their own lives and bodies. Women's education leads directly to better reproductive health, improved family health,

economic growth, for the family and for society and lower rates of child mortality and malnutrition.

A quality basic education better equips girls and boys with the knowledge and skills necessary to adopt healthy lifestyles, protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and take an active role in social, economic and political decision-making. Education for women could also be highly effective in reducing the incidence of trafficking girls to brothels, increasing overall environmental awareness. Education can battle terrorism as well. If mothers are educated about terrorism, they can prevent more children from extremism and fundamentalism. We can promote peace through education.

Education: Sustained economic growth

Education contributes to the economic stability of any given nation by increasing the income of the poor. Research has shown that no country has sustained consistent economic growth without a significant nation-wide literacy rate. In addition to economic stability, education promotes civil and international peace, as well as cultural tolerance and understanding.

III. India: significant achievements in education system

India has made significant achievements in the development of education. The education system in India is the second largest in the world, with 15,51,000 total number of schools, 8,26,982 schools at primary level, 4,43,392 schools at upper primary level, 1,50,604 schools at Secondary level, 1,30,22 schools at Higher Secondary level (UDISE+: 2018-19) and 1047 universities and 41,935 Colleges at higher education level. In 2019, the total enrolment of students in higher education is 373.99 lakhs including 181.90 lakhs women i.e. 48.64%. (UGC: 2018-19)

Technology and technological innovations have changed the quality of life and brought some radical changes in all sectors of education, health, industry and government. The rapid developments in science and technology and the challenges of globalization, liberalization and privatization are posing additional challenges to the education system in the country. There is general consensus that “Information and knowledge” are the main driving forces behind these developments. All this contributed to economic growth and development and to self reliance in manpower in every area, including policy planning, administration, and governance of the huge economy.

National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986:

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) as revised in 1992 was a landmark in the field of policy on women's education. It recognised the need to redress traditional gender imbalances in educational access and achievement. In the section titled 'Education for Women's Equality', the policy stated:

Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women, in order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past. There will be a well conceived edge in favour of women. The New Education system will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators.

The updated National Policy of Education (1992) proposed simultaneously adult literacy and primary education. It focused on girls and other disadvantaged groups. In line with the gender perspective, the policy indicated the shift from equalization of educational opportunity to education for women's equality. It emphasized that obstacles to women's literacy and women's retention in education were a priority. There were wide regional variations, and female illiteracy was concentrated in parts of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar. While girl's enrollment had gained at primary and upper primary stages, the dropout rate of girls in these stages were higher than that of boys.

The New National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP 2020)

The New National Education Policy, 2020, introduced by the central government is expected to bring profound changes to education in India to make India a global knowledge superpower. The policy outlines the vision of India's new education system and replaces the 1986 National Policy on Education. The policy is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. The medium of instruction will not be shifted from English to any regional language. It is up to the states, institutions, and schools to decide on the implementation. NEP's higher education policy proposes a 4-year multi-disciplinary bachelor's degree in an undergraduate programme with multiple exit options. These will include professional and vocational areas.

IV. Legislative framework in India

Constitutional provisions

The Constitution of India provided for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. It was enshrined in the Directive Principles of State

Policy within Article 45. The goal as set in original Article 45 was never achieved. The provision was not justiciable, and the state was under solemn obligation to achieve this goal.

Landmark Judgements of Supreme Court

The Supreme Court of India in landmark judgements of *Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka* (1992) and *Unnikrishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh* (1993) declared that the conversion of state's obligation under Article 45 into a fundamental right would help to achieve the goal at faster speed. Thus in keeping with the hope expressed by the Supreme Court, the Parliament amended the Constitution to introduce a new Article 21A: The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of age six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.'

The amendment also introduced a new clause k in Article 51A which imposed a duty on parents and guardians to provide their children with educational opportunities. The Article provided that 'a parent or guardian [shall] provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, [a] ward between the age of six to fourteen years'.

The amended Article 45 provided as under:

Provision for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years: The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

Article 46 of the Constitution of India provides that:

The State shall promote, with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation.

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009

The 'Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009' (RTE) was passed which came into effect from 1st April 2010, providing for free and compulsory education to all children aged 6-14. The Act marks a new phase in the history of education for children to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It is believed that if our country nurtures the children and young people with the right education, India's future as a strong and prosperous country is secure. With the enactment of this legislation, Government has fulfilled one of the promises about Universalization of Elementary Education.

The Act makes it incumbent on Government to provide free and compulsory education to all children of 6-14 years of age; ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by every child of the age of six to fourteen years. It also makes it

mandatory for the State to ensure availability of a neighborhood school within three years of the commencement of the Act. The Act stipulates that the State needs to provide infrastructure including school building, trained teaching staff and learning equipment as well as ensure good quality elementary education according to the standards and norms specified.

Seeking the cooperation and partnership of the private sector in fulfilling the target of Universal Elementary Education, the Act mandates unaided private schools to reserve upto 25 percent of the seats for students from weaker sections. The Act clearly prohibits donation or capitation fee on admission; and interviewing the child or parents as part of the screening process.

V. Literacy rate: Trends in India

Bertrand Russell has commented, “Democracy in its Modern form would be quite impossible in a nation where many men cannot read”. Literacy level and educational attainment are vital indicators of development in a society. Basic literacy is essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy. With the planned interventions and sustained efforts, considerable progress has been made. Literacy rate in the 2001 census was 64.83 per cent, which improved to 74.04 per cent in 2011.

According to NSO survey, in 2018, literacy rate among persons (aged 7 years and above) in India was about 77.7%. In rural areas, literacy rate was 73.5% compared to 87.7% in urban areas. Difference in literacy rate among males and females (aged 7 years and above) was observed with male literacy rate higher (84.7%) than female literacy rate (70.3%) (NSO: 2017-2018). Kerala emerged as the most literate state with 92.2%, followed by Delhi with 88.7%. Uttarakhand is at number 3 with 87.6%, Himachal Pradesh’s 86.6 percent, and Assam’s at 85.9 percent, while Andhra Pradesh featured at the bottom with a rate of 66.4 percent.

As per UNESCO, India will achieve Universal Literacy in the year 2060.

Literacy rate in India: 1951-2011

Census year	persons	males	Females	Male-Female gap In Literacy rate
1	2	3	4	5
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.3	40.4	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	26.84
2002	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Census 2011/102

VI. Segments of Education Pyramid

Education, in its broadest sense of development of youth, is the most crucial input for empowering people with skills and knowledge and giving them access to productive employment in future. Improvements in education are not only expected to enhance efficiency but also augment the overall quality of life. There are following three segments of education pyramid;

- I. Elementary and Primary education:
- II. Secondary education:
- III. Higher education

i.) **Elementary education**, that is, classes I–VIII consisting of

Primary (I–V) and

Upper primary (VI–VIII) is the foundation of the pyramid in the education system and has received a major push in the Tenth Plan through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

➤ **Targets for Elementary Education :**

- Universal enrolment of 6–14 age group children including the hard to reach segment.
- Reduce gender, social, and regional gaps in enrolments
- Dropout at primary level to be eliminated and the dropout rate at the elementary level to be reduced from over 50% to 20% by 2011–12.
- Universalized MDMS at elementary level with effective supervision and monitoring of the programme and transparency in the implementation which are lacking in most of the states.
- All States/UTs to adopt NCERT Quality Monitoring tools.
- Achieve 80% literacy rate.
- Reduce gender gap in literacy to 10%.

➤ Major Schemes for Elementary Education

The emphasis is being laid on Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) guided by five parameters:

- (i) Universal Access, (ii) Universal Enrolment,
- (iii) Universal Retention, (iv) Universal Achievement, and
- (v) Equity.

The major schemes of elementary education sector included Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, commonly known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), Teacher Education Scheme, and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBVS). KGBV has now been subsumed within SSA. During 2000-2001, in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the flagship programme for Universalisation of Elementary Education, was launched and has been made operational across the states. The approach is community-owned and village education plans prepared in consultation with Panchayati Raj Institutions. School curricula and teaching material have been revised to make them gender sensitive.

Education to All: Breaking all Barriers

The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 has made elementary education a Fundamental Right for children in the age group of 6-14 years by providing that “the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine”. This has been a path breaking legislation in India, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is being implemented in partnership with State Governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations. SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. SSA has a special focus on girl's education and children with special needs. SSA also seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Progressing Ahead:



Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner. SSA has brought primary education to the doorstep of millions of children and enrolled them, including first generation learners. According to the VIII Educational Survey (2009), the number of habitations that had a primary school within a distance of 1 km was 10,37,833 (91.21%), whereas, the number of habitations that had an upper primary school within a distance of 3 km was 9,96,521 (87.58%). (AISES: 2009)

Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDMS): World's Largest School Feeding Programme

The Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) is the world's largest school feeding programme reaching out to more than 120 million children in over 1.27 million schools across the country. With a view to enhancing enrollment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE) known as mid-day meal scheme, was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995, initially in 2408 blocks in the country. MDMS has helped in preventing classroom hunger, promoting school participation, fostering social equality and enhancing gender equity thereby facilitating overall healthy growth of children.

Universal Retention vis-à-vis 'nowhere child'

It is increasingly realized that retaining the disadvantaged children enrolled in schools is a far more challenging task than enrolling them into educational system. Around 22% children dropped out in classes I and II. Several factors, apart from their adverse socioeconomic conditions are responsible for this. The opportunity cost of girl-child education is quite high in the rural set up and she is often a 'nowhere child', in the school but doing domestic work, mostly sibling care. The presence of female teachers often serves as a role model for girls and positively influences their enrolment and attendance. But, then, in the educationally backward States, there are few women teachers to particularly attract girls to school and retain them.

In States like UP and Bihar, the average attendance was as low as 57% and 42%, respectively. One-third of the teachers in MP, 25% in Bihar, and 20% in UP do not attend schools. The dropout rate reduction has been faster for girls as compared to that for boys. However, the dropout rate at the elementary level (Classes I–VIII) has remained very high at 50.8% (Planning Commission: 2008/4-5).

Computer-aided Learning:

Since inception of the programme, approximately 67,000 schools have benefited from this intervention, including 102.62 lakh children and 1.99 lakh teachers who we provided with training in handling CAL resources.

ii.) Secondary Education: Path to Progress

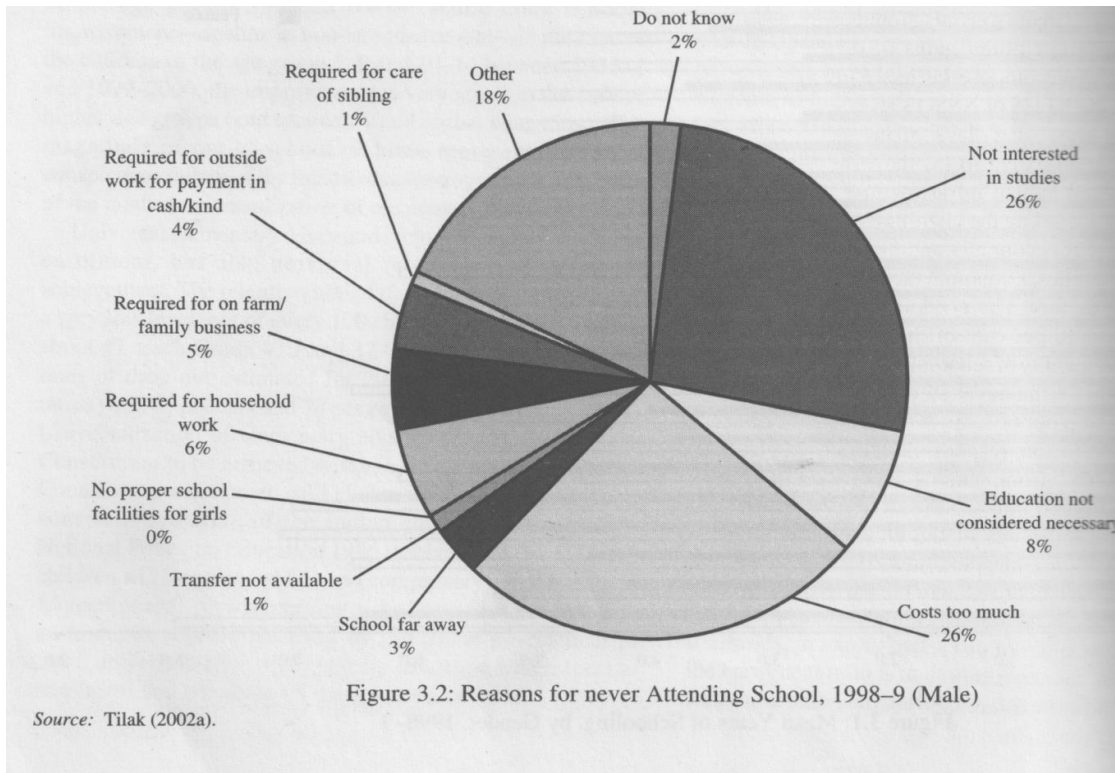
Secondary education serves as a bridge between elementary and higher education. It is essential in view of the demands of rapidly changing technology and the growth of knowledge economy. It is also necessary for young children to acquire skills to compete in the job market and to move forward in establishing a knowledge society. The stage is now set for universalization of secondary education.

Persistence of High Dropouts

The education system in India is characterized by the persistence of high dropouts. This not erodes the gain from extended coverage but also leads to wastage of scarce resources (Jain: 2008). The Education Commission (1966: 269) found that 65 per cent of the dropouts were due to poverty. NCAER (1994) also found that economic factors were more important than any other factor in explaining non-enrolment and drop outs in elementary education in several states in India. Economic factors and lack of interest in education were found to be the two major reasons for non-enrolment of children in schools according to the 35th round of the NSS. For the males of age 3-35 years who ever enrolled but currently not attending education, engagement in economic activities was the most common major reason for currently not attending education (35% in rural areas and 42% in urban areas), whereas for the females in the same age-group, the major reason was engagement in domestic activities (32% in rural areas and 27% in urban areas) (NSO: 2018).

The figures show the relative importance of various factors for children never enrolled in schools by gender. Several factors have been identified by the NFHS, such as: lack of interest

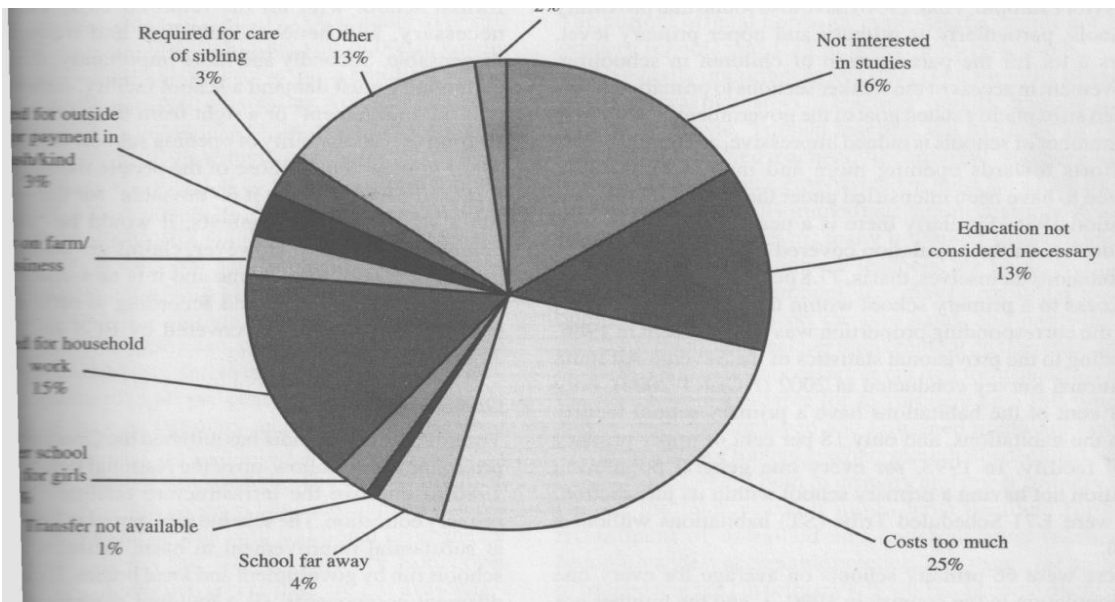
Reasons for drop out and never Attending School (Male):



Source: Council for Social Development: 2006.

and not considering education necessary, costs of schooling, opportunity costs, school related factors and others.

Reasons for drop out and never attending school (Female)



**Source:
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ouncil for Social Development: 2006.

Two other important factors include the feeling that education is not considered necessary, and/or that children are required for farm/family business or for outside work. Contrary to general understanding some still seem to view that education is not necessary (for development); this is more true in case of girl's education.

To attract children into schools, it is necessary that interest is created in the minds of the children, and more particularly their parents, in education. Besides providing truly free education, financial incentives may have to be offered to the poor. Gender differences are also important in both the phenomena. A large number of girl children are required for household work, in addition to taking care of siblings both in rural and urban areas. In fact, the opportunity costs of girl's education are much higher than in the case of boy's education.

Opening of schools exclusively for Girls' Education

The Central Advisory Board of Education Committee Report on Girls Education noted a gross shortage of secondary schools for girls (both co-educational and girls' schools). The dropout of girls is extremely high mainly in the northern States, not only because the parental priority for girls' education is low, but also due to the poor access to schools in the rural areas. Opening of schools exclusively for girls appears to be necessary to overcome the gender disparity. States have to undertake, on priority, school mapping for girl's education.

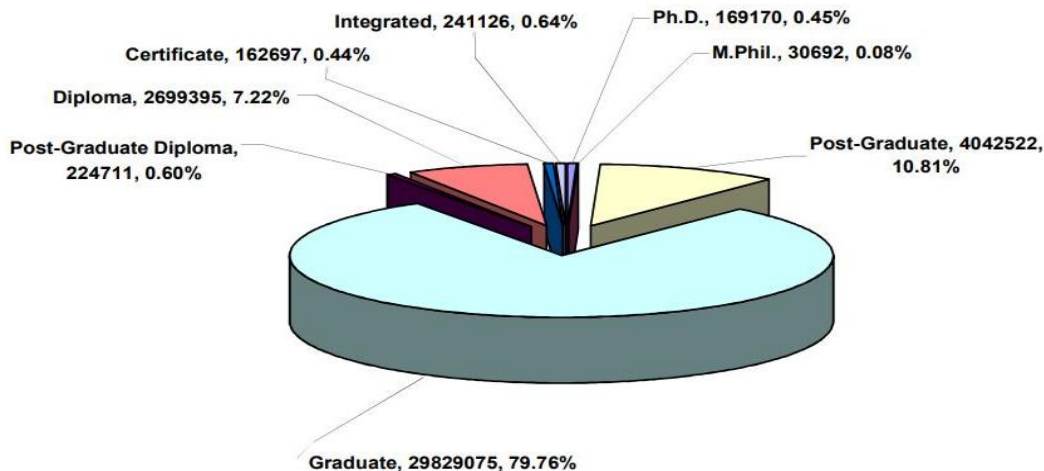
Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti

The National Policy on Education, 1986, envisaged setting up of pace setting Residential Navodaya Schools with the aim of providing excellence, coupled with equity and social justice. Consequent to this, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti is registered as a society. On 30th September 2019, 636 NVs are running with about 265,574 students enrolled, out of which 206,728 (78%) were from rural areas. NVs are the top-ranked C.B.S.E. schools, having a pass percentage of 99.71% and 98.93% in 10th and 12th grades respectively.

Distance Education

Keeping in mind the declaration of SAARC Decade of Girl Child, greater thrust was given to the introduction of open school, distance education system and other innovative educational programmes specially for girls in rural/remote areas and urban slums. It has been observed that a large number of girls are beneficiaries of correspondence courses and also appear as private students. Country planned for achievement of gender parity in Primary and Secondary Education by 2005 and 2015.

(Regular and Distance education courses) : Higher Education : 2018-19



Level Wise Student Enrolment

iii.) Higher Education in India

In India, the Higher Education has contributed significantly to economic development, social progress, and political democracy. At the time of Independence of India, there were only 20 Universities and 500 colleges in the country with 2.1 lakhs students in higher education. In 2018, the number of Universities is 1047, and 41,935 colleges in the Higher Education sector. During the academic session 2018-2019, the total enrolment in all courses and levels in regular stream is 373.99 lakhs including 181.90 lakhs women students, constituting 48.64%. The strength of teaching faculty in universities and colleges has gone upto 1416299 as compared to 5.89 lakhs in 2008-2009 (UGC: 2018-2019).

Source: UGC Annual Report: 2018-19

Women Studies Centers

The objective of the scheme of *Development of Women Studies* is to strengthen and sustain the Women Studies Centers in universities by establishing them as statutory departments in the university system. The thrust is to develop field action projects for action, research, evaluation and enhancement of knowledge and partnership across boundaries of

caste/class/religion, community and occupations and to involve many more people and many more organizations in the network as well as to ensure that the focus and the quality of this newly emerging discipline are maintained.

Expansion of Technical Education

During the past 5 decades there been a phenomenal expansion of technical education facilities in the country because it is one of the significant components of human resource development. However participation of girls in B.E/B.Sc.(Eng.)/B.Arch., polytechnics and Technical and craft school has not kept pace with the overall increase and women's participation in technical education is below the desired level.

Participation of women students in polytechnics was one of the thrust areas under the World Bank assisted technician education project which was implemented in two phases namely Tech.Ed.I and Tech.Ed.II which together covered 19 States and UTs. All the boys polytechnics have been converted into co-ed polytechnics. Besides this 9,535 additional places have been created for girls and additional hostels to accommodate 7,085 girls have been provided in the existing and new Women Polytechnics. The scheme of Community Polytechnics aims at bringing community/rural development through science and technology applications and through skill oriented non-formal training focused on women, minorities, SCs'/STs/OBCs and other disadvantaged sections of the society.

VII. Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Women Empowerment

ICT also has a key role in women's social empowerment. Twenty-first century skill, particularly in the area of information and communications technologies (ICT), are essential to equip all of our citizens, regardless of gender or ethnicity, to contribute actively to the knowledge society. ICT offers the opportunities for direct, interactive communication even by those who lack skills, who are illiterate, lack mobility and have little self-confidence. Here are some aspects of life which have a direct influence of ICT especially on women, women's increased access to job Market and improve entrepreneurship using ICT. In the past women were only considered for household work and were left outside the mainstream of development.

Transforming ICTs for gender justice

The agenda facing gender justice advocates is the transformation of the ICT sector so that its effects produce the following benefits across all countries, and are available to women and

men on a fair and equitable basis. Without transformation, however, ICT will not produce the benefits associated with the virtuous cycle for women:

- Improvement in quality of life
- Efficiency gains
- Jobs created
- Skills enhanced
- Wealth increased
- Use of ICTs for political empowerment
- ICTs to challenge harmful traditional values and practices (Gillian M.).

ICT is also particularly useful in increasing the transparency and accountability of government, an application from which women can particularly profit. One example demonstrates how women used ICT to call upon a national government and a local administration for greater accountability and transparency. Traditionally, women have been the incubators and transmitters of knowledge relating to food processing, preservation, and storage, the growing of specific crop, nutrition, and health. Much of the knowledge that women in rural areas possess are scientific. IT can help organize and transfer this knowledge to outside communities that might benefit from it. Thus, IT can also help empower women through codification and dissemination of their indigenous knowledge.

Mass media have uprighted the position of women in ICT sector all the more, advertisements, cartoons, telecasting, broadcasting all this projects female awareness in society. Female no more lack in knowledge in fitting themselves in right places (Pasha: 2009).

Community Radio: Voice of Voiceless

Community radio movement has created grassroots-level participation and horizontal circulation of ideas among the deprived rural communities, which are necessary pre-conditions to democratization. The Community Radio, Sangam has turned out to be a boon for rural folk in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh especially backward women who operate and manage the radio themselves. Sangham Radio has carved a place in the lives of nearly 10,000 listeners spread over 100 villages in the region. As against the mainstream radio, this is a radio owned, managed and operated by women from the margins of the society who have been excluded and rendered voiceless in any public forum. It is the first community radios in the country and managed by a team of backward women. People started realizing that many solutions are available locally for their problems.

In the beginning in 1996, James Bentley, Regional Communication Adviser (Asia), Unesco, met 35 backward women members of a local NGO, Deccan Development Society (DDS) who expressed their wish to have their own radio programme, to articulate local issues in their own language and in their own time. A low-cost radio station was proposed to be set up, subject to getting a licence from the Government of India. The programmes are about festivals, poor people, divorced women, and women who have separated from their husbands, and for farmers when there are no rains and no crops, or when the crop is damaged because of heavy rains. The DDS women handled subjects in the programmes which were useful for poor village people. The programmes included sowing, ploughing, public health and hygiene, women's and children's illnesses, animal diseases, Vision 2020 of the Andhra Pradesh government, education, agriculture, water, local knowledge, festivals and folk culture.

The radio has instilled confidence and pride in the local people especially women. For the women team manning the radio station have now become local heroes and are handling their newfound local popularity with responsibility. People have a sense of pride that their own issues have gained the importance they deserved.

Khabar Lahriya: A Ray of Hope for Rural Women

A group of poor, backward and tribal women, situated in Chitrakoot, a backward" district of Uttar Pradesh (UP), bring out their own newspaper. Khabar Lahriya emerges as a ray of hope in demonstrating the possibility of a democratic future for India. Khabar Lahriya (literacy meaning news ripples), a project of Nirantar, is a fortnightly newspaper produced by a group of seven predominantly backward and Kol (a tribe in Bundelkhand) women in Chitrakoot district, Uttar Pradesh. The publication, which started in 2002, now has a readership all over the Bundelkhand region along with other states. Khabar Lahriya received the Chameli Devi Jain Award for excellence in journalism in 2004. Written in the local language, Bundeli, Khabar Lahriya reports include incidents of harassment for dowry, rape sexual harassment, domestic violence, and mental oppression and child sexual abuse. Often Khabar Lahriya was the only newspaper to report on such cases. Victims of violence and their family members approached the reporters in some cases as they felt that this was a space for redressal of grievances. By reporting on such cases, issues considered to be private became centre stage in the public domain. Such issues generated discussion in various groups (UNESCO: 2007). To conclude, in the last few decades the progress in Education has been noteworthy.

Women's education is of crucial importance in addressing gender inequality. Despite all constitutional and legal guarantees and development measures leading to educational advancement of women still lag far behind in almost all the sectors of education. The substantial steps should be taken for improving quality of education at all levels by recruiting additional teachers, technology upgradation including ICT in schools, and Technical Assistance (TA) with particular emphasis on the educationally fragile States. The issue of poor performing schools would be addressed by grading schools through a composite index. We still have a long way to go. Women are still severely hampered by discrimination and lack of resources in educational opportunities.

All concerned in the international community- Governments, multilateral organizations, bilateral institutions and the private sector- need to increase investments in women and girls. That is a timely reminder of the challenges countries faced in addressing capacity-building programmes for women, which is a serious impediment to development. The real change for women globally rests not just with women leaders but with the efforts of women at all levels of organization working together across both cultural and national borders. If they are provided with proper education and employment, they will be able to overcome their problems and can come forward to make their names everlasting in the annals of history. They need three E's Education, Employment and Empowerment. We should remember the call given by Betty Friedan "we keep pursuing our goals, and little by little we make headway".

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