

Empowerment of Women for Educational Leadership Through Higher Education : The Goal Ahead to Eliminate Gender Disparity

Mr. Pranab Kalita*
Mrs. Banti Ramchiary**

“There is no one in the world who is not educated; and there is no - one whom we can afford not to educate ; why be neglectful only in regard to girls ?”

Chen Hung- Mou

Introduction

Education is the 'third eye' of man illuminating the light from darkness to revolutionise a new path of progress and prosperity. It is a unique investment in the present and the future. It is the increasing demand of science and technology that one needs to be educated not only to become a better social being but also a better creative and productive being. With the explosion of knowledge in all areas of human activities the objectives of education have changed and become more challenging. In the present paper an attempt has been made to focus on the importance of higher education and the best possible needs especially for empowering women for educational leadership to eliminate gender disparity in the emerging educational and societal scenario.

Methodology

In this paper the research is based on secondary data. The data is taken from different journals, research papers, research reports and websites.

Empowerment of women for Educational Leadership

Education is the most important instrument for human resource development and also a major tool for realizing empowerment. During the British period, education became a tool of colonial power. Since Independence, the policy makers have argued for universal education and for making education as a tool for bringing about social equality. Education has always been emphasized as the most significant instrument for improving women's status all over the world. Women constitute about half of the nation's population and women's education has assumed special significance in the context of country's planned

development. The Indian Constitution has guaranteed “Equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, irrespective of sex, age, race or religion.” But majority of women are still unable to enjoy the rights and opportunities guaranteed to them. Women are part of our socio-economic system. The educational background of a woman has a direct bearing on her development. There is a great disparity in women's employment between urban and rural areas. Education of women occupies top priority amongst various measures taken to improve the status of women in India. In 1964-66 Kothari Commission had emphasized equal educational opportunities for women and had also suggested effective steps to achieve it. Subsequent Five Year Plans and various committees including the National Perspective Plan (1988-2000) have stressed the need for greater participation of women in higher education. Higher education is a strong factor to empower women and moulding their total personality. The National Policy on Education (NPE)-1986 is a landmark in the approach to women's education. In the section entitled 'Education for women's Equality' the policy states:

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 National 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 policy guides that by 1995 every educational institution should take up a study and awareness of the women's predicament. Emphasis has been laid on the removal of women's illiteracy and priority has been given to women's participation at different levels.

Education not only provides knowledge and

*Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Philosophy, Barama College , Barama, P.O.- Barama, Distt. Baksa (B.T.A.D), Assam-781346

**Assistant Professor, Deptt. of English, Barama College , Barama, P.O.- Barama, Distt. Baksa (B.T.A.D), Assam-781346

skills to improve health and livelihood but it becomes a key factor to overcome all the barriers that a woman faces to improve her own position in the society. Education gives status and confidence in decision making. Education is the milestone of women empowerment. The need for women empowerment is emphasized all over the world. According to United Nations Population Information Network (POPIN n.d), the key elements of this complex concept 'women empowerment' are:

Women's sense of self-worth; their rights to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives; both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a

more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. (POPIN n.d)

In recent years the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue is determining the status of women.

Today women have acquired new dimensions and are educated. The present situation positively encourages women to take administrative positions in our society. Higher education in India has expanded rapidly over the past two decades. This highly developed higher education system offers facility of education and training in almost all aspects of human's creative and intellectual endeavours. It enables qualified women to become leaders in society and allows them to become role model for younger girls.

Table-1
Literacy Rate in India

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India (2011)

The following points are identified according to the table.

- 1) In pre-Independence time the literacy rate of women was in a very poor state in comparison to the literacy rate of men.
- 2) During the five decades (1901-1941) the literacy rate of women has risen from 0.7% to 7.3% whereas the literacy rate of men has risen

from 9.8% to 24.9%.

- 3) During the post-independence period the literacy rate of women has increased at a faster pace than the literacy rate of men.

With the adoption of several policies the participation of women in higher education has changed. The enrolment of girl students in higher education is increasing

Table-2
Women Students Per Hundred Men Students

Year	Total Women Enrolment (000s)	Women Enrolment Per Hundred Men
1950-51	40	14
2009-2010	6080	71

Source: UGC Annual Report 2009-10

Table-3
Women students' enrolment in various faculties : 2009-10

Sl. No	Faculty	Women Enrolment*	Percentage of Total Women Enrolment
1	Arts	2776289	45.66
2	Science	1214864	19.98
3	Com/ Management	967392	15.91
4	Education	224974	3.70
5	Engineering/ Technology	467581	7.69
6	Medicine	234702	3.86
7	Agriculture	16417	0.27
8	Veterinary Science	4256	0.07
9	Law	84517	1.39
10	Others	89381	1.47
	Total	6080373	100.00

*Provisional / Source : UGC Annual Report 2009-10

The data clearly reveals that women enrolment had been the highest in the faculty of Arts followed by Science and Commerce. These figures indicate that women students are enrolling themselves in various courses as per their preferences and future requirements.

Higher education is supposed to improve the socio-economic positions and enhance earnings of individuals and the entire society. Universities and colleges all over the world are accepted as the epitome of knowledge, education and human resources development. The Millennium Goals (2000) and the Education for All (EFA 1990) have emphasized the importance of education in promoting gender equality and advancement. Access to higher education for women is very vital for preparing women to occupy higher positions of leadership. Leadership as defined by Smyth (1989) "is the ability of humans to relate deeply to each

other in search of a more perfect vision." A large number of urban and educated women are enjoying the facilities provided for their educational upliftment. They are giving leadership to shun the path of ignorance, to improve their condition and to make conscious the masses about women's education.

We all are part of an era of educational expansion, universalisation of elementary education, vocationalisation of secondary education, higher and professional education and overall quality of education. Educational leadership at all levels of education is the need of the hour. Women now aspire, plan and struggle to establish a professional status or career and economic independence. Empowerment makes one realize about her own potentials. The path of goal realization gets strengthened if each educated woman lends support to the illiterate women to

build up greater self-confidence and courage. It is believed that higher education will create possibilities for leading to a different future. In a rapidly developing country like India for leadership building, especially for women, higher education has the responsibility to realize the relevance. The needs are –

1. Higher education needs to be reoriented to equip women for leadership roles and responsibilities.
2. Infusing leadership concepts and skills into the curriculum makes the curriculum of higher education broad and diverse.
3. Increasing the number of enrolment of more women students in the institutions will create a sense of awareness among women and be a source of guiding light for them.
4. Organizing orientation, workshops, short training programmes especially on gender related issues will encourage women for leadership.
5. Counseling units in Universities and Colleges can be a way of empowering women.
6. Providing appointments to more female lecturers in all faculties in the institutions will create the sense of role models to the female students.
7. Providing more Women's Studies Research centers to identify issues and areas for building up leadership development.
8. Family life courses will bring awareness of equity and empowerment issues.
9. Various activities on campus for developing leadership potentials among women will be the special advocacy for women.
10. In the higher education institutions, preparing women for training will display their high level of professionalism.
11. Special training packages and development of learning materials for women will encourage them to enhance their potentialities.

Conclusion

Women are capable of playing a significant role in family, society and professional spheres. The planning for women is a part of the overall planning in the country. Despite widespread illiteracy and ignorance, women in recent times

have gradually become conscious of the need of liberating themselves. A large number of women in different parts of the country are making significant moves to struggle for empowerment or leadership. The placement of women in leadership position will definitely make themselves aware of their hidden potentialities within them. The time has come to realise this utmost need i.e. especially building leadership interest among women. So promoting education among women is of great importance to achieve their goals in different spheres of life.

References:

- Bordoloi, R (2012). "Accessibility and Equity: A challenge for Higher Education in India", *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, Vol.3, No.4
- Education for All (2002). Gender and Education for All. The Leap to equality. UNESCO Publishing.
- Gupta, N.L. (2003). *Women's Education through Ages: New Delhi, Concept Publications.*
- Kidwai, A.R(ed)(2010). *Higher Education: Issues and Challenges*, New Delhi, Viva Books.
- GOI: Education Commission, 1964-66, p.1.
- Pandya Rameshwari and Anuradha Mathu (2005) "Capacity Building for Effective Women Administrator", *University News* 43 (49), 1-8
- Rao R.K. (2001) *Women and Education*, Delhi, Kalpaz Publications.
- Saxena V, Kulsrestha S, Khan B(2010). "Higher Education and Research in India", *International journal of Educational Research and Technology*, Vol.1 [1]
- Singh, Sutinder & Arora, Asha (ed)(1999). "Education and Women's Empowerment", *Selections from University News-3*, Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi
- Smyth, J. (ed) (1989) "Critical Perspectives on Educational Leadership", *Deakin Studies in Education*, Series 3. Lewes: Falmer Press.
- Talesra, Hemlata; Dasgupta, S.K; Dashora, PK & Dasgupta, Stuti(ed)(2001). *Educational Global Perspectives*, New Delhi, Regency Publications.