

Women's Right to Education: Issue and Challenges

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Abstract:

When girls are educated, their countries become stronger and more prosperous.

- Michelle Obama

In India, Right to education is considered a fundamental Right. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 is also enacted for providing quality education to every child in India. Implementation of the Right to education is still not up to the mark and children in large numbers are not getting a quality education, especially girls. Prime elements of the Right to education and evolution of the implementation of the right to education can be seen in the 4As scheme. We must follow the concept of 4As of Education and improve our policies as well as a grassroots level environment to support every child to get a quality education. There are many successes we achieved through many programmes and schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) but still, we did not reach our ultimate goal. As in the girl literacy rate, the number is only 65.46%. Safety, Security and Awareness towards education are primary issues we need to focus on. Many other issues and challenges are also discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Education, Right to Education, Importance of Education, Women's Education, Women's Rights.

Introduction

Right to Education is one of the most essential Human Rights. It enables access to all other Rights. A Well-educated person can make a much higher contribution to society than an illiterate person. Education is the element which transforms an animal alike person into a well-civilised person. Kofi Annan once said that “Knowledge is power,

Information is liberating, Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family”. Development of society depends on the citizens of that society. If the majority of the people of the society are educated, development and growth of that society will be much higher. Everybody can live happily in a peaceful society. The whole world realizes the importance of education now and they all

impart education as a fundamental right of the people. There are many countries which amended their legal provisions to establish the right to education as a basic fundamental right. The United Nations, UNESCO and many other international institutions are also trying so hard to deliver quality education to every child in the world. We also got many successful results through many programmes and conventions but it is not enough success. There are still many areas where we need to focus like women's right to education, Refugees and internally displaced person's right to education, Minorities right to education etc. In this paper, Women's Right to education is discussed. Providing quality education to women will change the whole world. It will also eliminate many social issues like poverty, domestic violence, over-population etc.

Concept of Education

Sadly, most of the people understood the term "Education" in its narrower sense. Only very few people understood "Education" in its proper sense. Education is derived from the Latin word "Educare". Which means "To Bring Out" or "To Lead-out". In simple understanding, We can say that Education is the process of learning and acquiring knowledge & skills. It also brings good values, beliefs and nice habits to the person. Education can be provided through various educational methods. Educational methods include teaching, storytelling, training, discussion,

guidance, research etc. It depends on the situation and person, which method will be more useful for education. Leo Buscaglia said that "Change is the end result of all true learning". If a person obtains only some information about one or more subjects then it is better to call him "well-informed" person. Education is much different than that. It is the Element which provides not only skill, information and knowledge but it also brings wisdom and broad vision to the person which can be utilised to transform the society into a better place to live for everyone.

Right To Education

Right to education means a person is entitled to have quality education for himself. Government or society must create a proper environment which eliminates all the hurdles which prevent a person from receiving an education. There are many ways to understand this concept. Here, Right to education is expressed through the 4As of education. The '4As' was adopted in 1966 by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; later, they were developed by Katarina Tomasevski, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education 1988-2004, who contributed to give them wide visibility (Castillo, 2009). According to the '4As' of Education, Education must be Available, Accessible, Acceptable and Adaptable.

Availability:

By availability means, there must be enough facilities and infrastructures in

every educational institution. It must not be unsatisfactory. If there is a proper staff and highly qualified teachers are working in the schools and sufficient quality infrastructure is also available then the reasonable assumption can be made that there is enough possibility that quality education is available there. It is the basic element of the right to education. If there are no highly qualified teachers and infrastructure is available then it is next to impossible to provide proper qualitative education.

Accessibility:

If there is proper infrastructure and teachers are available in the school but anyhow the school is not accessible by a child then the whole concept and whole system of providing the right to education will be ruined. There can be problems related to economic accessibility, physical accessibility and curricular or pedagogical accessibility which need to be removed as fast as possible. Society and Government must establish appropriate environments for everybody so they can access education without any obstacle. Education must be free, study material and other costs associated with a study must be supported by the government. There must be a fair distance between institutions and home, there should be adequate transportation and roads, there should be proper safety and security for normal as well as physically challenged people.

Acceptability:

Only availability and accessibility are not enough. 'one size fits all' should not be applicable here. There are various cultures, areas, peoples and situations. Everything is different from each other. We must differentiate between every aspect and create the most effective system for every child. There must not be a biased educational system. It must fulfil the quality aspects and there should be a minimum standard for everyone. Quality should be the priority. Education is not just about getting a degree. It is the combination of skill, knowledge and humanity. An educated person must contribute to society in its development. It is education not creating a person who is helping others as well as society, that education and the education system is worthless and the government must change it and make it more effective.

Adaptability:

After fulfilling the above three aspects, the Government must be concerned about local needs with the present scenario. Every area, Country and state have different needs. Time is also a key factor. If we manage to create a system which is most appropriate according to local need and present time, It will be one of the great systems. We must consider local festivals, environment, technology, geographical and cultural situations while setting up curriculum and timetable. We must focus on yearly and semester systems too. There must be a proper and stress-free examination and evaluation system.

Sometimes it needs higher effort but it all is worthy if we want to develop our society through systematic education otherwise there will be an educational system but it will not at all utilisable and helpful to society.

Women's Right To Education

Indian Constitution recognises Right to education as a Fundamental Right in the 86th Amendment, 2002. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 also came into force from April 1st, 2010. In this Act, the word 'Free education' means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate Government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. (School Education, 2019). Words 'Compulsory education' casts an obligation on the appropriate Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age group.(School Education, 2019). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was also implemented as the main programme for elementary education. Which was also focused on bridging the gender and social gaps in elementary education. It was also one of the fundamental goals of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan found that we need to change our educational system and also approach the

whole society for the development of the girl's education. As per the census records, we can see that female literacy has gone up to 65.46% in 2011 from 8.86% in 1951. It looks like the development but we are still very very far from the ultimate goal. We can see the figures in the data given below. (STATE OF LITERACY, 2020)

Literacy rate in India : 1951-2011

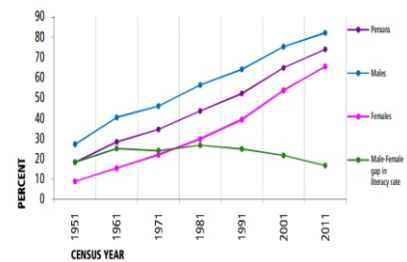
Notes

Literacy rates for 1951, 1961 and 1971 Censuses relate to population aged five years and above. The rates for the 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 Census relate to the population aged seven years and above.

The 1981 Literacy rates exclude Assam where the 1981 Census could not be conducted. The 1991 Census Literacy rates exclude Jammu & Kashmir.

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	24.84
2001	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Literacy rate: 1951-2011



India still has one of the lowest female literacy rates among the developing countries. The low rates of female literacy not only creates a negative impact on women's lives but it affects the country's economy as well.(WARNER, MALHOTRA and MCGONAGLE, 2012). Many studies show that high rates of maternal mortality, poor nutritional status, low earning potential and little or no autonomy are directly related to illiteracy of women. We can see that there is a gap between male and female literacy rate. Which we need to eliminate as soon as possible. We must establish equality not

only in the educational system but in society as a whole society. Equity should also establish equal rights for all and that must be justifiable. It is accepted by everyone but especially from parents and teachers to understand the situation and eliminate gender bias from the whole society through eliminating many stereotypical attributes like brave, heroic, caring, self-sacrificing, love and kindness which are often used to differentiate male and female characteristics in the wrong perspective. It will help girls and instill confidence in them. Efforts have to be made to increase the enrolment and attendance of girls in schools and there is a need to address the deep-seated cultural norms and values that impede girls' access to education. (*A human rights based approach to education for all*, 2007). The government made many efforts for the development and betterment of Girl education like KASTURBA GANDHI BALIKA VIDYALAYA (KGBV) is a scheme which was also launched in July 2004 for the betterment of girl education in India. The purpose of the scheme is to set up residential schools at upper primary level for girls belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC) and minority communities. This scheme was merged with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in the XIth Plan with effect from 1st April 2007. KGBV scheme provides a minimum reservation of 75% of the seats for girls belonging to SC, ST, OBC or minority

communities. It also gives priority for the remaining 25% accorded to girls coming from families below the poverty line. The government of India has sanctioned 2578 KGBVs. 427 KGBVs have been sanctioned in Muslim concentration blocks, 612 in ST blocks, and 688 in SC blocks. As of January 2009, 2423 KGBVs are reported to be functional and 1,90,404 girls enrolled in them. Out of the total 2578 KGBVs, 547 KGBVs have been constructed and 1262 KGBVs are in progress and 769 have not been started. It helped a lot in the field of girl education but unfortunately not enough. We are still facing many issues and challenges which need to be eliminated immediately.

Challenges and Obstacles

We can evaluate the implementation of girl's Right to education in the above mentioned 4As concept. We can see that the basic problem is availability. Quality Education, in reality, is very hard to get. There are bias and discrimination in the school environment and syllabus. It is very hard to access due to many reasons. We are far away from achieving quality and development in the current situation but unfortunately. We are still struggling at providing education. Whether it is of quality or not. Girl education is still facing many issues such as inadequate school facilities, poverty, social values, insufficiency of female teachers, gender bias in curriculum etc. Girls are not sent to schools by parents as they are kept

working in household routine tasks. Even if parents are enrolling girls, they still face many problems such as access to the school, transportation facility, safety etc. Girls sometimes have to cross lonely ways, risky bridges, railway tracks without any support. Parents often find it unsafe and it is also one of the prime reasons for less enrollment and higher dropout ratio of girls. Inadequate Classroom and improper Toilet facilities are the biggest disappointment and demotivators which take away the right to education from girls. inadequate female staff in teaching and non-teaching is making not only education tough but increasing chance of sexual harassment. It also puts girls' lives in danger.

Conclusion

Right to education is one of the most important Human Rights. Proper implementation of the Right to education in the society will bring peace and happiness to every citizen. Especially when education is being provided to Women, It changes the pace of development dramatically. India and many countries realised the value of quality education and its contribution to the development of society. International institutions and many conventions taking it very seriously. Every woman in the world is entitled to receive a quality education. The Indian government is trying very hard to implement Right to education with special reference to women. Although, We are not even

reaching near to the ultimate goal because of the many issues we discussed before in this research paper. It is suggested to develop a society in such a way where quality education will be provided and no obstacle occurs between person and education. We also need to focus on our educational policies and curriculum so we can implement it on a grassroots level and Right to education doesn't just stay on paper. We also need to aware as much as possible people towards the Right to education and also towards the importance of education. When parents and the government will work together and understand the real power of education, India and the whole world will get a dominant change. This change will not only provide a higher development rate for the current scenario but it will also provide us with new visions which will stay with our next generation too.

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