



Women Empowerment through Technical Education in India

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Abstract- With the population of over 1.36 billion (2019), India is the second most populated country and largest democracy in the world. Technical and higher education for women is still a huge challenge for India to improve the prosperity of the nation and living standards of its people. A higher women illiteracy rate is still affecting the living standards and socio-economic condition of the country. Promoting and encouraging girls' education can help control child mortality in India. A lot of measures have been taken by the Ministry of Labor and Employment in women's employment and skill development. Advanced Training Institutes conduct vocational training for girls and women. Skill is the most important bridge that can fill the gap between candidates and employment. Vocational training and education are important to improve rural incomes and productivity. Women are more likely to work as subsistence farmers, leading family members, seasonal laborers, or micro entrepreneurs at home, along with managing their domestic responsibilities. Skill development can boost employability, household productivity, and become an added source of income for women. This article is aimed to focus on the challenges for women empowerment and solutions that can help women to contribute to the nation's development and become self-reliant in their lives.

Keywords - women empowerment, technical education, employment, women education, skill development

I. INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment is a basic human and constitutional right of every woman, irrespective of caste, creed, and religion, and a vital part of national development. Women empowerment refers to the process of building a society where women can live peacefully, without any fear of abuse, cruelty, and discrimination, which is very prevalent in a traditional patriarchal society. Women constitute around 48% of the population in India and play an active role in social development, but they are still being suffered and demoralized due to lower social status and fewer rights. Hence, there is a strong need for empowerment and education for women to deal with widespread mistreatment and biases in a male-dominated society.

In the term "Empowerment", power refers to the control over intellectual assets like information, knowledge, and ideas, and material assets like finance and land. Empowerment refers to the multi-faceted social development process that helps people to have freedom in all aspects of life. The concept of empowerment consists of social development, economic independence, and political decision-making. Women's empowerment starts with the understanding of the effects of political and socio-economic forces and awareness of their capabilities and rights. Women are the first exploited creed in mankind's history and largest overlooked group in the world. Women empowerment is the latest buzzword in India. It enlightens them about what they can do in all segments of life. The most common barrier in women empowerment is that a huge section of women are sidelined and overlooked in the mainstream society.

India is a developing country and world's largest democracy but women here are still affected by deep ignorance about their values in the society. They are discriminated against and deprived in all aspects. In this day and age, gender discrimination exists in India and the world. Women are worshipped as the holy, pious, and divine force and they have high position in Upanishads and Vedas. But the reality in progressive society is different. India's constitution talks about welfare and equality for women, but cruel and barbaric practices still haunt them as female infanticide, feticide, dowry issues, child labor, sexual harassment, molestation, rape, gender discrimination, eve-teasing, and domestic violence.

Women empowerment promotes self-confidence and self-determination among women, so that they can become an important part of society. Women are the crucial part of their family, society,

and the country. It's high time to work constructively against the traditional practices, traditions, superstitions, prejudices, and customs, which were meant to discourage women. Technical education is the main tool to achieve social, economic, and political empowerment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ashok Kumar Gaba (2011) presents an IGNOU case study about women empowerment and technical and professional education. In the 18th century, women's education first came into focus. In 1962, UNESCO addressed the need for vocational and technical training to women for socio-economic growth of the country through a conference. Later on, several conferences and forums were organized about these issues and have come out with some objectives. At the Millennium Summit, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were organized in New York in 2000. The MDG-3 was one of the most important goals, which included "Promoting women empowerment and gender equality and to eliminate gender discrimination in education." Thanks to the evolution of technology and globalization, there is a great demand for a skilled workforce. This way, Open and Distance Education (ODE) can be helpful to provide the right skills and training to women in developing countries.

Disha Singh (2019) focuses on gender discrimination and issues in women's training and vocational education in India. The labor productivity in India is much lower than that of several other developing nations. India also has the challenge of the skill gap due to the lack of skilled workforce in various sectors. The sectors like crafts, manufacturing, etc. have a desperate need for a skilled workforce on one side, while educated youths are unable to find the right jobs, on the other. In addition, India has over 90% of the workforce in the informal sector, which has over 60% contribution in economic development of the country. A network must be developed to promote productivity and skills and reward deserving individuals to make India a world-leading manufacturing economy. Gender equality is very important to improve participation in skills development.

Dr. Shailendra Kumar Gupta (2016) explores the role of vocational education and skill development on women empowerment. He focuses on government's participation in the form of skill development programs and highlights the needs to face the challenges in women's skill development. Entrepreneurship is the new trend in India, especially among women with the wake of globalization and economic liberalization. For providing vocational training and education and developing entrepreneurial skills, the institutional and policy-making framework has expanded the horizon for economic growth of women. There are plenty of successful women entrepreneurs in economic and social fields in the country. He focuses on the need for developing human resource and training policies to empower women to make it to sustainable livelihood for themselves and the others.

Tauffiqu Ahamad et. al (2016) deals with vocational training for skills development with several government programs like National Skills Development Mission, National Skills Development Corporation, and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana. Women are used to face gender discrimination and inequalities, while some women suffer even more due to caste and background. Women empowerment and participation are the basic rights that should be given to every woman, so they can have freedom to do anything in life. A lot of initiatives have been taken by the Ministry of Labor and Employment in employment and skill development. Vocational training and education have come up to be the important tool to improve productivity and incomes. Skill development can bridge a huge gap between workforce and employment.

Dr. D.K. Parmar and Prof. V.K. Modi (2016) discussed the needs of technical and higher education for women in India as it is very helpful to improve their lifestyle and country's prosperity. Women can be an important human resource for India as they constitute over 48% of the country's population. Their socio-economic growth and development plays a vital role in sustainable growth of the nation. Indian constitution protects gender equality in its Fundamental Rights, Preamble, Directive Principles, and Fundamental Duties. In 2002, the Government of India introduced the Education for Everyone (EFA) program. According to this program, education for every Indian child from 6 to 14 years old has become the fundamental right.

Dr. Kunhi Singh Bhuyan (2020) explains how education can help in women empowerment through her research. Women empowerment should be aimed to make women self-confident, self-reliant and financially free with a positive attitude and ability to make decisions and play a vital role in the development of the country. Empowerment is defined as a process to create an environment to promote self-determination of a specific group or people. Gender biasness is very prevalent in India and the world. Education is the basic human right across the world. Everyone should be provided with educational opportunities for their livelihood in future. Education is empowerment to women. India is still lacking in women literacy and it negatively affects their lives and their family. This article discusses education as a medium for women empowerment, along with the problems, constitutional provisions, and solutions.

According to Miss NabanitaBera (2016), women empowerment should be aimed to develop potential of women and encourage them to act and think freely, make their choice, and control the way they live and, finally reduce exploitation and discrimination. It uplifts women in economical, political, and social spheres where they can play a similar role in the development of the country as men. Women suffer due to fewer rights and reduced social status that has been given due to patriarchal order for centuries. Gender equality and women empowerment still seem a far-fetched dream in India, especially because of age-old issues like domestic violence, dowry, female infanticide, etc.

III. RESEARCH/AIM

This paper is aimed to find some of the most common issues in women’s technical education and current scenario by answering these questions -

- What steps government has taken for women empowerment and technical education?
- What are the loopholes in current society that are keeping women from seeking technical education?
- How **can women empowerment** help women gain the position they deserve in society?
- Are there any solutions that can **promote the government's** effort for women empowerment and skill development?

1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are given below -

- To identify the common barriers for women empowerment and gender equality
- To know the importance of women empowerment
- To analyze the benefits of women education through government policies and measures
- To provide solutions to achieve women’s skill development and to promote their role in technical education
- To know the current Indian scenario of women’s technical education

2. METHODOLOGY

Secondary data has been collected for this study to support the information and to present the current scenario of women’s education in India. The secondary information and data has been collected through various sources in this study, such as research articles, journals, books, magazines, government reports, and authentic websites.

3. WHAT ARE THE LOOPHOLES IN CURRENT SOCIETY THAT ARE KEEPING WOMEN FROM SEEKING TECHNICAL EDUCATION?

It is undeniable that Indian society is conservative and, in no way, it has given emphasis on girls’ education. There are also other problems associated with girls’ basic and technical education.

First of all, here is the overview of literacy rate in India -

Year	Male (percentage)	Female (percentage)	Combined (percentage)
1901	9.8	0.6	5.4
1911	10.6	1.0	5.9
1921	12.2	1.8	7.2

1931	15.6	2.9	9.5
1941	24.9	7.3	16.1
1951	27.16	8.86	18.33
1961	40.4	15.35	28.3
1971	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	75.26	53.67	64.83
2011	82.14	65.46	74.04

Source – Census of India (Literacy Rates) Wikipedia (11)

The above table shows the clear picture of the current status of women's education in India, let alone technical education. The higher illiteracy gap between men and women is definitely related to dependence of women on men, as well as the negligence and exploitation against women. Here are some of the challenges in women empowerment and education –

- It goes without saying that most of the women come from an unprivileged background, where economic condition is too terrible to seek education as it is expensive nowadays. Due to these reasons, only boys manage to get school education and girls end up with household chores.
- Another major difficulty is that the previous generation doesn't understand the need for technical education for girls. Girls usually spend most of their time taking care of their younger sisters and brothers so their parents can go out and work. Girls have to do various household chores from a very tender age. It would not be wrong to say that there is a lack of awareness of parents for girl's education that is holding back these girls from their rights.
- Lack of transportation can also be blamed for the poor literacy rate of women in India. Some areas don't have schools. Hence, girls need to travel farther. Due to lack of proper communication and transport, girls have to travel a lot for schooling.
- The thought process of conservative society is another problem behind the lack of girl's education. Parents think that girls ultimately have to go to someone else's house and do household chores over there. Hence, they train them about household duties from a very early age. According to them, providing education to them is an additional burden, as they think that girls have nothing to do with degrees. Due to these reasons, they were used to marry their girls at a very young age.
- Lack of girls' school is another major issue. Conservative parents don't want their girls to study with boys in a co-ed school.
- Schools' curriculum remains the same for boys and girls. They study the same subjects in the same class. Hence, parents don't think that girls need to study social science, history, geography, biology, etc. if they have to perform household duties at the end.
- School timings are also fixed. Especially in rural areas, parents don't enroll their girls in co-ed schools. Instead, they engage their girls in domestic work and they don't want their daughters to leave their household chores for school education.
- Considering the present law and order situation, parents are also insecure about enrolling their girls for school education and sending them. It is natural because crime rates against women are ever-rising, such as eve-teasing, rape, molestation, and abduction. All such cases demoralize girls to pursue education after a certain age. This is the reason parents hold them back from getting education.

4. HOW WOMEN EMPOWERMENT CAN HELP WOMEN GAIN THE POSITION THEY DESERVE IN SOCIETY?

If women are well informed and educated, they can make a wise decision for themselves and their loved ones. Girl's education should be given prominence in order to make women empowerment come true. Education is the fundamental right for everyone in the world and empowerment comes through it. Education is the torch of light which removes the darkness of unawareness. It is the need of the hour for development. Despite taking a lot of measures to promote girl's education by the government, the situation is still not good. Elementary education must be universal for the empowerment of women. Along with promoting girl's education, such empowerment also improves the moral through gender equality and liberty.

It is education which enables women to gather opportunities, to change their traditional lives, and take stand to bring change to society. Technical education is even better to empower women by providing necessary skills, knowledge and self-confidence to take part in the development of the

nation. Girl's education is beneficial to the whole society. It is very important to remove poverty in the nation and infant mortality. Educated women can be very helpful for their families and socio-economic development of the nation in different ways.

5. WHAT STEPS GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION?

All the Five Year Plans have given special attention to women education in India along with vocational and technical training to help them to be better homemakers and financially free. Technical education also aims to improve the quality of life for women. Hence, polytechnic education has become very important for women. According to the Women Education 1937 report, women can play a special role in the overall development of the nation. Hence, the government should take the right steps to expand technical and vocational education. This report didn't get much attention from the British government. But Indian government took various steps after independence to uplift women's status in society through the National Women Council in 1956-57.

Only 4% girls were benefited with education before passing this report. Later on, the government focused on improving the technical and vocational education facilities for women. Technical education got a significant focus with the establishment of polytechnic training during the Second Five Year Plan. The National Council for Women Education recommended starting a women's welfare initiative. In the post-independence era, women's education has got a fair expansion. Literacy rate was raised from 4% to 7.93% from 1951 to 1981, i.e. around 24.82%, according to the National Policy of Education, Programme of Action 1986. It was raised to 39.42% by 1991. Girls' technical education institutions were established quite later than those for boys. In 1937, the first polytechnic co-ed institution was founded. In 1961, two polytechnic institutions were established for women in Bangalore and Delhi, as per the recommendation from the National Council for Women. Social welfare and development were the main objective of those institutions.

Cultural transformation and economic development bring social change, which ultimately leads to the growth of the nation. It wouldn't be wrong to say that cultural and social changes are the by-products of economic growth of the nation. The need for women's contribution in economic development and growth of the nation was realized by the policymakers and the constitution after independence. Traditional degree courses like MA, BA, B.Com, etc. don't have much relevance to the professional world and they don't play any important role in job opportunities. Hence, vocational and technical education should be given prominence for economic growth of the nation. In 1986, National Policy of Education came up as a milestone to improve women's status in India. The policy was aimed to promote equal opportunities for women to get education.

The non-discrimination policy is implemented strictly to avoid stereotyping genders in professional and vocational training courses and to promote the involvement of women in non-traditional and emerging occupations. In 2001, the National Policy for Empowerment of Women was founded to bring social change. This policy is aimed to provide women with equal preference in quality education, healthcare, vocational training, career, remuneration, employment, safety, etc. Science and technology was one of the major aspects of the policy. It was aimed to help women to be involved in the fields of science and technology in higher education and ensure the involvement of women in development projects with technical and scientific inputs.

Government has taken certain steps to develop scientific awareness. Special measures have been taken for technical training to improve special skills of women, such as information technology and communication. India is one of the countries with the highest youth population worldwide and it is going to keep it the same till 2040. But when it comes to productivity, India ranks much lower than other Asian countries. It is very important to up-skill the workforce to ensure the inclusive economic growth in higher productivity sectors. Skill development has come out as the need of the hour for the country and the government has taken a lot of skill development programmes over the past decades. Only 10% of people are getting technical training in India. It is much lower than the UK (68%), Japan (with whopping 80%), Germany (impressive 75%), and Korea (the highest 96%). The candidates have a lot of problems in finding jobs due to lack of proper skill training. There are around 48% of job gaps in India, while the global figure is only 34%, according to several international organizations. Around 93% of candidates are under-employed and employed in informal and unorganized sectors, as per the GOI estimates. The per capita income of eastern states

in India is very low as compared to northern states like Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. There are so many vocational training educational institutes in industrialized states.

6. ARE THERE ANY SOLUTIONS THAT CAN PROMOTE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT?

Considering the above facts, women education has been found to be very important for their empowerment. It is evident that the condition of girl's education is not that good in the present scenario and the country still needs improvement. A holistic and integrated approach is important to promote women's condition. Girls should get the priority in education. Women education must be considered as an investment with high returns in the form of socio-economic growth of a country. Here are some of the solutions that can help promote the efforts of women empowerment in India –

- First of all, the government should make education accessible to all and societies should popularize girl's education to make the efforts of all campaigns successful. Effective measures must be taken to spread awareness about women empowerment and skill development.
- Minimum infrastructure must be provided by the government for girls' education, such as building good hostels, toilets, and schools. There is a lack of separate educational institutes for girls in India, which is the main cause of poor enrolment rate. In addition, many guardians hold their girls back from joining a co-ed institute due to the conservative thinking of people.
- Poverty is another common factor. Many parents cannot bear the expenses on education for their child. This is the reason they send their child to work instead of school. There is a strong need for economic security for under-privileged children, such as bearing school expenses and mid-day meals. Scholarships should also be provided to encourage them not to leave their education midway.
- Curriculum should also be attractive and helpful to girls for their future. Both girls and boys have the same courses. But some vocational training courses should be added that are career-oriented. The curriculum must be flexible and tailored as per the present industry demands.
- All government, private, and semi-government organizations should contribute to the expansion and development of women's education. The government should launch the awareness campaigns to make the people understand the needs for girls' education.
- There is a need to appoint more and more lady teachers in all levels. Female teachers should be appointed more than male teachers, especially in co-educational schools. This provision will make parents confident and more encouraged to let their daughters study in schools.
- Especially those from rural areas, women candidates must have priority in training courses and job recruitments. Women will be more encouraged towards education if it is made possible. Women should also have reservations in various categories. It will encourage parents to provide education to their girls.
- Finally, law and order must be maintained by the state government to restrict the dowry system and early marriage of girls and to make education compulsory for them. At the same time, the government must also encourage community, social workers, and female youth leaders to start an initiative against prejudices and social barriers against women's education.

IV. CONCLUSION

Women education is very vital to prevent gender discrimination and empower women. It goes without saying that there are so many challenges towards improving the literacy rate of women in India. There is still a need to provide equal opportunity to women in India. Women empowerment can be made easier when women equally participate in technical education that will bring a significant improvement in science and technology. Government has to take certain measures to encourage women to choose the fields of science and innovation. Organizations, policymakers and even NGOs are working towards women empowerment in India. But there is still a long way to go. Technical education is important in this day and age.

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