

MAPPING NEW TERRAINS FOR 21ST CENTURY WOMEN



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EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION IN TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This article explores theoretical and practical issues related to the impact of women's education in their empowerment. The development of women's education is discussed in this study. As women's education has become one of the key development objectives in the recent decades, the concept of empowerment has been tied to the range of activities undertaken by and for women in different areas, including education.

Empowerment of women through education in 21st century is the most important tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination and bring lasting change for women in developing countries. Educated women are essential to ending gender bias, starting by reducing the poverty that makes discrimination even worse in the developing world. No longer is gender equality viewed solely as a social justice issue. Ensuring that women have the same opportunity to rights, resources and voice within a society is widely recognized as essential to that society's growth and development.

Key words: *Empowerment, Women, Education*

INTRODUCTION

International treaties and authorities agree that basic human rights should be enjoyed by all without discrimination. Basic human rights include personal safety; basic living needs “food, etc., health, education, job opportunities, wages, voice or vote, and property ownership. In all of these areas, however, women fall behind men almost universally. Yet research shows that creating greater gender equality helps create a fair society, raises economic productivity, and helps advance other development goals.(Global Monitoring Report ,2007) Without progress in the situation of women, there can be no true social development. Human rights are not worthy of the name if they exclude the female half of humanity. Empowerment of women’s education for equality is part of the development of a better world for all human beings, and all societies in 21st century.

Educated mothers are more aware of the benefits of immunization for their children and they are fifty percent more likely to immunize their children than women who have not received education. As women's education has become one of the key development objectives in the recent decades, the concept of empowerment has been tied to the range of activities undertaken by and for women in different areas, including education.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To find out the significance empowerment of women's through education in 21st century.

IMPORTANCE OF EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Females are nearly 50 per cent of the total population but their representation in public life is very low. Woman continues to bear the major load of the household work. Her primary role is often viewed by the society as housewife. This constraint operates more or less for all classes and communities of women. Prevalent culture which is very complicated and often decisions are taken behind the scene may be regarded as another constraint in this regard. Empowering women is the basic to the basics of human rights where she wants neither to beg for power nor search for power hierarchy to exercise power against others. Empowering women with the help of laws, education and employment will make the society to accept the women as an equal gender like male. Female also has all the potential and empowering women will help to use her full capability and mitigate the economic dependency of women.

In 21st century societies have started to realize women's importance and have being accepted women's empowerment for development of the world, women as an active agent for development, participation in and guiding their own development.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

In 21st century the world is awakening to powerful truths that not only are women and girls not the problem, but they may, in fact, very well be the solution. No country can fully develop economically and socially if it fails to tap and fully utilize the talent of its citizens. The development and competitiveness of a village, state or nation depends on efficiently and effectively utilizing its resources. Human talent is a critical resource and women are half of that resource. Economic success depends on the development and effective utilization of the skills, education and productivity of its entire workforce. A growing body of work shows a correlation between gender equality and the level of development of countries. Studies show that reducing gender inequalities enhances productivity and economic growth. (Hausmann, Ricardo, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi,2008)

Gender inequities influence the way members of the family spend their time and resources. Evidence suggests that women with more control over resources will spend more money on basic living needs (e.g., food and health) and education. Research demonstrates that investment in women, and more specifically women's education, has numerous positive effects, including: 1) reduction in female fertility rates; 2) lower infant and child mortality rates; 3) lower maternal mortality rates; 4) increase in women's labor force participation; 5) fosters educational investment in children. (Commitment to Afghan Women, 2009) These outcomes not only improve the quality of life of women and families but also foster economic growth. Economic

benefits of addressing and reducing barriers to women's education and engagement in the workforce can be substantial.

With more education, women delay marriage and getting pregnant, and they are better able to negotiate the number of children they have. Education can play a critical role in reducing violence against girls and women and enhancing their control over their own bodies. (Kimotho, Rose W, 2005) Better maternal education also benefits children through improved hygiene practices, better nutrition, lower fertility rates, and hence higher per child expenditures. Taken together these contribute to future growth and poverty reduction.

STRATEGIES OF IMPROVING STATUS OF WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION

Quality education that promotes helps gender equality and prepares girls and women for productive lives. Globally, the completion rate for primary school has increased from 63% in 1990 to 83% in 2005. Six of the seven top countries in expanding primary completion rates were in Sub-Saharan Africa. "The weakest performers were also primarily in Africa, however, showing the sharp contrast across countries in the region." Exceptional progress has been made in Asia and Cambodia as well. Still, a gap exists that affects girls and the poor disproportionately. "The most intractable groups to reach with primary education are those that are 'doubly disadvantaged': girls from ethnic, religious or caste minorities. About 75 percent of the 55 millions girls who remain out of school are in this group." The quality of school is critically important as well. Cross-country evaluations suggest improvement in cognitive skills has not kept pace with the increased enrollment. (Global Monitoring Report, 2007) Quality lags quantity.

They need to proceed in tandem. "More effort is needed to monitor outcomes (especially student learning)." Creating a supportive environment in which girls and women are comfortable to fully participate will allow them to develop their analytical and communications skills more fully and quickly. Also, gender stereotypes need to be eliminated from school textbooks. (Commission on the Status of Women, 2006)

Expanded courses are needed for women in practical subjects such as entrepreneurship. Enhanced non-formal education for girls and women, such as vocational or skills training and literacy programmes, needs to be developed. The subjects and skills to be taught should be developed with an eye to the needs and opportunities within the local or regional area in recognitions that most will live and seek work locally.

Education is important for more than just the knowledge and skills gained. Personal development and growth also are important aspects of education. Higher education is recognized for this emphasis on the personal growth and development of its students. Developing confidence, broadening one's perspective, expanding analytical skills, encouraging creative problem solving and developing communication and leadership skills are all important benefits of higher education. Post-secondary education opens the door to the future for women and their families.

A study of the personal development and transformation of women earning an online degree in India found that women who earned the graduate degree were, indeed, better

positioned to capitalize on career opportunities. Meaningful personal changes were observed in the women included “heightened self-confidence, credibility among peers, sense of belonging in their professional community, greater autonomy,” and “a heightened sensitivity to their own capability for constructing knowledge independent of the culturally-defined roles they had been given.” The women acknowledged they “realized new capabilities within themselves that changed the way they looked at life.”(Sivakumar, M., 2008) This personal awakening results in women becoming more involved in fighting for improvements within their societies. It’s important to note that this study focused on online education allowing attribution to the educational process in isolation of other factors that might cause or contribute to the changes.

Distance education has emerged as a tool for widening access to higher education for women. Delivery of post-secondary education via the internet gives women more opportunities to participate in additional education when there is not a school in the area or other barriers prevent the woman from attending. Additionally, distance education delivery systems allow women flexibility to participate in the education on a time schedule that works with their other duties and obligations. This flexibility is particularly well suited for housewives and mothers who have constraints of time, space, resources and socio-economic disabilities.(Kwapong, Olivia Adwoa Tiwaah Frimpong,2007) Universities around the globe could assist with this effort to deliver the benefits of higher education to those who do not otherwise have access.

CONCLUSION

Empowerment of women through education in 21st century is the most important tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination and bring lasting change for women in developing countries. Educated women are essential to ending gender bias, starting by reducing the poverty that makes discrimination even worse in the developing world. No longer is gender equality viewed solely as a social justice issue. Ensuring that women have the same opportunity to rights, resources and voice within a society is widely recognized as essential to that society’s growth and development. Investing in women and empowering women lifts entire families, communities and countries out of poverty and magnifies economic growth while also enhancing the wellbeing of all its citizens. Progress has been made to advance the rights of women closer to equal standing with men around the world, especially within the last three decades. Much is left to be done, however, in order to truly close the gender gap. In some regions, women still lack basic rights and protection. Even in developed countries biases still prevent women from rising to the same level of achievement and wealth as their male counterparts therefore stifling growth and development. The education of women and girls is a critical component in a country’s goal to close the gender gap and advance economic and social growth and development. Studies show that the investment in the education of women is effective in addressing poverty and extremism. Indeed, the investment in women is perhaps the most effective and efficient mechanism for advancing a society’s development and growth. Investment in the basic education of girls is unequivocally required. Investment in the higher education of women affords women the knowledge, skills and confidence to advance more rapidly into leadership positions within government, business, education and societies. Such advancement into positions of decision-

making and influence is necessary to effectuate change and advancement more rapidly and in a stimulating and powerful manner in 21st century.

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