



Gender disparities in Indian education system

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Abstract

This study considers the gender inequality that exists among every gender region, social class and prevents the growth of Indian education systems. The reality of gender inequality of higher education in India is very complex and diversified, because it exists in every field like education, employment opportunities, income, health, cultural issues, social issues, economic issues etc. An attempt has been made to find out those factors which are responsible for this problem in Indian education systems. So, this paper highlights the multi-dimensional context of gender inequalities prevalent in Indian education systems. Overall, the study indicates the inequality in economic, social, cultural and legal biasness which are of a great challenge for policy-makers and social scientists to establish proper equality in the entire social field. The researchers have tried to suggest some relevant strategies and policies implication for reducing this gender inequality and to promote the dignified position for Indian women.

Keywords: Higher education, gender, cast, religion inequality

Introduction

Gender Disparity in India means health, education, economic and political inequalities between men and women in India. Gender disparity is largely the result of the deeply ingrained systems of patriarchy. Discrimination against women begins before birth and called this systemic subordination. Gender inequality in India is a multifaceted problem that affects both men and women. Some argue that gender equality measures, place men at a disadvantage. In the current situation, 68% of girls are still educated as their discrimination affects the country and extreme racism deprives women of justice and equality, which is only education and enlightenment can secure. Equality and equity in education are directly related to the democratic development of the society, where the purpose of education is to produce knowledge makers with the capacity of making the most profitable use of the acquired knowledge. The majority of the nearly six million out-of-school children in India are girls. Between 2006 and 2010, only 26% of girls completed high school, compared to 50% of boys. This gender inequality is most evident in low-income families. Gender disparity is evident in India's childhood literacy rates 82% of boys are literate and only 65% of girls can read and write, according to the 2011 Census of India. Statistics show that about 10% more girls enrolled in Indian high schools by 2019 compared to 2011. While this is a significant increase, much remains to be done to ensure that girls receive the same education as boys.

Education in India

India ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and their signing of a Global fit for children obligations set a framework for committed action by the government and civil society at large. The Constitutional bill on December 2002 had made free and compulsory education a fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years, which led to

the Education for all campaign of the Indian government, the national program to achieve universalization of elementary education. There is a huge gap between the policies of India's laws and forward-looking laws and its strong educational practices integrated into structures and institutions. Girls and women are often bound by gender roles and outdated traditions, which make gender inequalities apparent. About twice as many girls as boys are expelled from school or have never been sent to school, especially if they belong to a social and economic group that looks down on them. For many girls who drop out of school at the age of ten or eleven, the future means working in fields or on road construction sites and then earning a living. According to United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), poverty and local cultural practices play a role in gender inequality in education throughout India. Another obstacle to educating girls is the lack of hygiene in schools across the country. In many schools, there are no separate toilet facilities for girls. Separated toilet facilities are important once girls reach puberty. Without privacy and facilities, they need to cope with the menstruation cycle, many girls choose to leave schooling altogether. 23% of girls in India leave school once they hit puberty. And, the girls who continue education miss as many as 50 school days each year as a result of menstruation.

Table 1: Girls Education-Overview of Issues⁷

Systemic Issues	Content and Process of Education	Economy, Society and Culture
Problem of access	Gender stereotyping	Poverty / powerlessness
Dysfunctional schools	Perpetuation of gender-bias	Status of women
Quality of schools	Relevance of curriculum	Cost to family
Motivation of teachers	Language	Child labour / domestic chores
Existence of multiple delivery systems - formal, non-formal, condensed, satellite and residential.	Joyful learning	Farm / non-farm work
Calendar and timings	Ready access to books, magazines, papers and so on	Caught up in survival battles
	Appropriate reading material for the newly literate	Perception of herself
		Post puberty practices
		Child marriage

Source: Adapted and updated from Ramachandran, (2003), Background Paper for 2004 EFA Global Monitoring Report.

National Policy on Education (NPE)

The NPE emphasizes key values such as equality between men and women, eradicating social ills and degrading practices, small family practices, etc. The NPE and program of action highlight the need to improve the social, nutritional, and health status of the girls and also to strengthen support services such as drinking water, fodder, fuel, and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as an integral component of the Universal Elementary Education (UEE). The program of action emphasizes the need to revise textbooks to remove gender bias and gender sensitize all educational personnel so that equality between sexes could be internalized through gender-sensitive, gender-sensitive curriculum, which includes gender and its practice.

Suggestions for gender-sensitive curriculum transactions are

1. Effective pictures and illustrations should show to the children that a woman is not merely a mother, but she can be a teacher, a doctor, a professor, an engineer, and so on. It should include in the textbooks and reading materials.
2. Depicting men and women in shared roles and one can display the talent of women.
3. One can counter prejudicial references in textbooks if noticed. Textbooks should be made non-racial and non-sexist.
4. A gender-sensitive life skills approach to curriculum transaction includes all the skills necessary for day-to-day functioning and covers areas such as family life education, legal literacy, and lifesaving skills, etc.
5. This approach could be bid to alter the unequal gender relations and empower both boys and girls for a shared future by breaking down gender stereotypes and gender barriers in skill development.

Female Literacy and Status in India

India has failed to provide universalization of education as it remains under the stranglehold of major stratifications leading to discrimination. Early marriage, social discrimination, and lack of education infrastructure have resulted in 60 million girls missing out on primary education and the gender gap remains a problem in the country. The Indian government has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all but still projects one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia as there are almost 300 million rate women in India. Gender inequality persists, as social and legal institutions do not guarantee women's equality in basic human rights. It is a major area of concern at the school level and the literacy questions remain the largest juggernaut in the Indian management of education.

- To locate the gaps and possibilities in girls education
- To establish the link existing between education and women's quality of life
- To propose and execute policy measures to enhance girls' education at all levels.
- To set right the imbalance of relationships in a male-centered and dominated society, education and economic independence are imperative.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence shows a great deal of sexual discrimination, which confirms discrimination in the educational context. Women's ability to think independently and to participate equally with men will ensure gender

equality and be in line with the Millennium Development Goals. The Indian government needs to identify those areas and cultural approaches that contribute to gender diversity in education.

Education Disparities in India

1. Schooling

India aims to meet its Millennium Development Goals for Gender Equality in Education by 2015. Despite some gains, India needs to triple its rate of improvement to reach a GEEI score of 95% by 2015 under Millennium Development Goals. In rural India, girls continue to be less educated than boys. Recently many studies have investigated underlying factors that contribute to greater or less educational attainment by girls in different regions of India. As the family size increased by each additional child after the first, on average there was a quarter of a year decrease in overall years of schooling, with this statistic disfavoring female children in the family compared to male children. The mother's level of education in the family also plays a role in educating the children, with research showing that in families with mothers that had a lower educational level, the outcome tended to more disadvantageous for the educational attainment of the children.

2. Secondary Education

In examining educational disparities between boys and girls, the transition from primary education to secondary education displays an increase in the disparity gap, as a greater percentage of women for men who leave their study journey after the age of twelve as per the Statistics on dropouts in high school transformation and influences in Rural India. The study indicated that among the 20% of students who stopped schooling after primary education, near 70% of these students were females. The most common reason for girls to stop attending school was the distance travel and social reasons. In terms of distance of travel, families expressed fear for the safety and security of girls, traveling unaccompanied to school every day. In rural areas, the social reason also consisted of how families viewed their daughter's role of belonging in her husband's house after marriage, with plans for the daughter's marriage during the second age in some cases.

3. Post-Secondary Education

Participation in post-secondary education for girls in India has changed over time. The overall participation of girls in higher education has increased over time in recent years. However, there are ongoing differences in terms of distribution across sectors. While boys tend to better represent all academic disciplines, girls tend to focus on selected subjects while lacking representation in other fields of education. The dropout rate is higher for boys than for girls. This practice has been postponed to secondary education where dropout rates are higher for girls than boys. The drop-out rate in higher education can be determined by the degree of need and urgency that boys may feel toward gaining employment. Thus, as employment is attained, boys may be more likely to drop out compared to girls in higher education institutions, as the employment urgency could be less pressing for girls.

4. Literacy

Although growing slowly, the literacy rate for women in India is lower than for men. According to the 2011 Census of India, the literacy rate for women is 65.46% compared to men at 82.14%. Compared to boys there are very few girls enrolled in schools, and most of them drop out. According to data from a 1997 national sample survey, only the provinces of Kerala and Mizoram are close to women's literacy rates worldwide. According to most experts, the most important factor in improving the socio-economic status of women is education. From 2006 to 2010 the percentage of females who completed at least a secondary education was almost half that of males, 26.6% compared to 50.4%.

5. Reservation of Female Students

Under the Non-Formal Education program, about 40% of the centres in the state and 10% of the centres in Union Territories are exclusively reserved for females. Since 2000, about 0.3 million NFE institutions catered to 7.42 million children, of which about 0.12 million were for girls only. State-owned engineering, medical colleges, and others like Orissa have reserved 30% of their seats for women. The Prime Minister of India and the Planning Commission also voted for the establishment of the Indian Institute of Technology for women only. Although India has seen significant improvements in women's literacy rates since the 1990's the level of women's education remains largely threatened.

Legal System and Gender Disparity in India

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees Women the right to equality and Article 15 (1) explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and Article 15 (3) provides for measures to the detriment of women by empowering the state to provide them with special provisions. Article 16 of the Constitution provides for equal opportunities for all, in matters relating to public employment or appointment to any office and specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. These articles should all and form the basis of the formation of our legal constitution. Our natural obligation to discard

practices that degrade women's dignity has been elevated to a critical level of responsibility by Article 51-A. The guiding principles of the State policy contained in Part IV of the Constitution direct the State to protect women's rights including the right to equal pay for equal work, the right to health and sanitation, the right to childbirth benefits, and to respect international conventions. Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, The Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994, the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 are some of the laws that exist because of provisions of the Constitution of India.

Heterogeneous Gendered Realities and Multiple Disadvantages

Quantitative data used to measure gender gap / progress towards gender equality in education reveals little about the texture of inequalities inherent in the society and reinforced by the prevailing education system. Coming to grips with gender and social equity issues in education requires a framework that can capture heterogeneous gendered realities and multiple disadvantages. Gender is embedded within a complex social and institutional structure in India. Therefore, it is necessary to look at gender inequalities in education within the broader framework of social, economic and location specific inequalities on the one hand, and the prevailing school system on the other. A global study on girls education summarised the issues: "Already excluded because of their gender, many girls face multiple barriers, making it more difficult for them to enrol in and complete primary school and continue on to secondary school... reaching excluded girls generally means higher costs and alternative policies and strategies because their needs differ from those of majority population...". Feminist scholars and those working on exclusion have tried to tease out the texture of exclusion by identifying the levels, the sources and also the forms of exclusion. While the government has provided schools in most areas, discrimination or non-inclusion takes different forms for people from different social groups / locations.

Table 2: Heterogeneous Gendered Realities that Frame Education Participation of Girls in India

Prevailing School System ▶		Access	Teachers and Teaching	Learning	Monitoring and Supervision	Accountability	Transition to Next Level
Socio-Economic Factors ▼							
Poverty	In abject poverty	No access to schools or school not within reach (walking or bus)	Teacher attitude / prejudice towards girls	No support for girls at home, no money for tuition	Data collected periodically, does not capture or correlate with incidence of girl child labour / work and implications for education	Women / girls have no voice in community / in the school	School not within reach affecting girls more
	Above poverty line						
Location	Rural	Teacher absent, irregular, take turns	High teacher-pupil ratio leading to low teaching time	School not visited	Village level committees not as effective	Lack of upper primary / high schools	Teacher absent, irregular, take turns
	Urban						
	Tribal						
Community	Tribal	Formal access yes, social distance may prevent	Teacher unfamiliar with tribal language	Social/cultural language barriers	Not a priority	No voice in village or in school	No girls, only high schools
	SC		Culture/caste/class biases				
	Muslim						
	Others						

Towards Gender Equality in Education							
Occupation	Indoors	Work burden on children	Attitude/ prejudice	Irregular in school	Not factored in as an area to track	Long hours and no time to participate in meetings	Dropout
	Outdoors			Seasonal work			
Migration	Seasonal	Long absence	Teacher indifferent, not equipped to handle children joining mid stream	Irregular in school	Not factored in as an area to track	No voice in community	No hostel facilities/ other alternatives
Displacement	Permanent	Move to new location	Teacher indifferent	Irregular in school and language can also be a barrier	Not factored in as an area to track	No voice	No hostel facilities/ other alternatives
	Periodic						
Conflict	Communal	Poor access due to insecurity, fear	Teacher attitudes/ prejudice	Low learning due to fear, insecurity and frequent absence / schools shut	No monitoring	No voice in the administration	Fear of movement
	Insurgency						
Violence	Home	Poor access due to fear, low self image	Corporal punishment, verbal abuse	Low learning due to fear, insecurity	Not part of monitoring protocol	Not accountable to children or parents	Lead to dropping out
	School						
	Society						
Gender Relations / Attitude	Eldest/ older children	Burden of work, eldest at risk	Teacher attitudes	No time to study at home, work burden	No specific monitoring done through	Gender issues not taken on board	Leading to dropping out

Towards Gender Equality in Education							
	Girl child	Reaching of menarche			data / information disaggregated by gender as well as social group		
Disability	Mental	Identification and assessment of requirement	Ignored, not equipped to handle special requirements	No support	No specific monitoring	IED programme not gender sensitive	Drop out
	Physical	Identification and assessment of requirement. No physical access					
Health	Health problems including HIV/AIDS	Prejudice in school / community	Teacher attitudes	No support	Not specifically monitored	Not part of monitoring protocol	Drop out

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Gender Disparity has a long history. The education sector can certainly play a vital role in eliminating this gender inequality. It is very important to make people aware of the benefits of gender equality. It is important to note that the inclusion of the concept of gender equality in the curriculum and the enactment of laws to eliminate gender inequality has a significant impact on the need to achieve the constitutional goal of establishing an equitable society. Education should be used as an agent for basic changes in the status of women. Education, as a human right, must include the principles of non-discrimination, equality, and justice. It cannot be a commodity sold to those who can afford it. It should be a right and a right guaranteed by the government. We should be considered a landmark women's empowerment, leading to National Development, which enables women to respond to challenges to protect the better lives of themselves and their children. These realities cannot be separated from the planning and implementation of education policies. Therefore, in the lack of constructive, purposeful, and progressive legislative changes it is clear and consistent, and can effectively deal with these facts and, the goal of the

development of the Millennium will always be a hoax. Awareness about the importance of girl's education among the members of society is very important.

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