



Status of Women in Higher Education

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Universities are the 'light house' of the society and teachers are 'torch bearers' to bring social change. Every year girls do better than boys in science and arts in the class X and XII examination. Majority of the top achievers are girls. There are several reasons which indicate that they used to make pragmatic choices about their future because they were conditioned to believe that marriage and family come first. But now in India great concern is being shown regarding career for them in different spheres nurturing their talent by providing various options.

To empower women, it is necessary that they should have control over decisions which affect their lives. Through empowerment they can control their resources as knowledge, information and financial resources. This can lead them to become stake holder among the human capital and their presence in the society will be accepted.

Women are under-represented in science, mathematics and engineering fields and are an under-utilized pool of talent and resource as they comprise more than half of the population of any society and could contribute towards the social and economic development of societies through participation in science and technology programmes. The study done in INSA (Indian National Science Academy) revealed dissatisfaction of most respondents regarding professional growth and career advancement due to lack of time, household responsibilities, ill-health and lack of encouragement from the organizations. The study suggested that remedial measures should be taken to improve women's participation need to become priority in policy making.

Some barriers which prevent women's participation in decision making are limited access to higher education, discriminatory appointment and promotion practices, dual stresses of family and professional roles, family attitudes, career interruptions, alienation from the male culture and continued resistance to women in management / higher positions, inadequate policies and legislation to ensure the participation of women.

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To empower the women in higher education they should be given equal representation, their unique perceptions and strength should be properly utilized, they should be allowed to participate in policy-making and decision making, women friendly policies should be formulated, selection committees should be sensitized for non-sexist interviewing, there should be relaxation on their age-limit and length of experience and a directory of qualified women should be kept.

According to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, gender discrimination can be minimized if due importance is given to physiological, social, safety, self-esteem and self-actualization of women.

Women can empower themselves in higher education by developing effective networks of information and influence, acquiring personal skills needed to be effective, find ways to make a difference, be prepared to challenge the accepted wisdom, maintain healthy balance between work and personal life, having a desire to excel, appreciating without being critical, enjoying the job which they do and keep on learning.

The pathway to higher education can empower women in following ways:

Economic development and prosperity: Education will empower women to come forward and contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country.

Economic empowerment: So long as women remain backward and economically dependent on men, the helpless condition of them cannot be changed. Economic empowerment and independence will only come through proper education and employment of women.

Improved life: In our country, girls wait for marriage and after marriage they lose their entities. Their rights are trodden down, sometimes situation becomes insulting. If we do not take a broad outlook in the field of female education, the situation will be worse.

Dignity and honor: Educated women are now looked upon with dignity and honor. They become a source of inspiration for millions of young girls who make them their role-models.

Justice: Educated women are more informed of their rights for justice. It would eventually lead to decline in instances of violence and injustice against women such as dowry, forced-prostitution, child-marriage, female foeticide, etc.

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Choice to choose a profession of her choice: Educated women can be highly successful in the fields of life. A girl-child should get equal opportunity for education, so that, she may choose a profession of her choice.

Alleviate poverty: Women education is a pre-requisite to alleviate poverty. Women need to take equal burden of the massive task of eliminating poverty. This would demand massive contribution from educated women. There cannot be much social and economic changes unless girls and women are given their rights for education.

Conclusion: Until the middle of nineteenth century, girls and women were educated only for traditional household works. Now, the society is witnessing changes in the role-status of women. There is greater emphasis on education of girls and women in the same way as we educate boys and men. The modern day parents want to fulfill the aspiration of their children without gender disparity.

The educated women should insist on exercising their civil, social, political and economic rights. This will help improve the overall condition of women in the society. We can hope for better days while all women of our country will be enlightened and educated.

References

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