



Online Journal

ISSN : 2347 - 9671

www . epratrust.com

February 2014 Vol - 2 Issue- 2

EMPOWERMENT OF DEPRIVED WOMEN THROUGH QUALITY EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Dr. B. Jishamol*

**Post Doctoral Fellow, Centre for South Asian Studies, UMISARC, Pondicherry University, Pondicherry.*

ABSTRACT



This paper attempts to answer the questions related to lack of empowerment of deprived women in India due to low literacy. It begins with an introduction and a brief summing up of the empowerment and then makes an overview of the issues and factors that prevent the empowerment due to lack of education and hence deals with the causes for drop out of deprived children's in schools, that prevents the empowerment of the deprived women's community. It also tries to analyze the measures taken by the Government of India for the improvement of the deprived girl children's education.

Hence an attempt has been made to discuss the alternative approaches and to create a space for discussion on the ways and means involved with education in the context of empowerment of deprived women. The outcomes of this paper include a diverse collection of recommendations and it also clearly tries to bring out the issues that need to be focused on to strengthen and take the movement forward. This research helps in bringing forth the different problems faced by depriving children's education that is a hurdle for the empowerment and should be tackled. The paper concludes with a few suggestions and steps to be followed, that will cause the empowerment of deprived women, entire development and economic emancipation of the community in India.

KEYWORDS: Deprived Women, empowerment, Education, Slum

INTRODUCTION

Women's education and the concept of "empowerment" has been one of the developmental objectives of the twentieth century. The term "empowerment" has become one of the most widely used development terms. There are various programmes conducted by researchers' women educators from diverse socio-cultural background to examine the empowerment of women and make further recommendations. Women's groups, non-governmental development organizations, activists, politicians, governments and international agencies refer to empowerment as one of their goals. The term is referred to a pathway for development in all areas or walks of human life. The empowerment of women through education would improve the situation of especially the deprived women and then lead to the emancipation of the community as a whole.

Nelly P. Stromquist, defines "empowerment" as "a process to change the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society" while Lucita Lazo describes as "a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means or enabling the access to a control over such means and resources". Considering the above, the term is therefore more relevant to the marginalized groups the poor, the illiterates, the indigenous communities and the deprived women. Kabeer's theorisation of empowerment sheds empirical insights into poor urban women's participation in community action. Paz's definition of empowerment is "the ability to direct and control one's own life". Namtip Aksornkool states that

"It is a process in which women gain control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their rights at all levels of society at the international, local, and household levels. Self-empowerment means that women gain autonomy, are able to set their own agenda and are fully involved in the economic, political and social decision-making process".

The relativity of empowerment differs and in this particular contest we can consider for the deprived community as leading their own life, and the empowerment to guide their children and the family in the society, and finally hoped to the emancipation of the whole community.

THE NEED FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Ultimately, empowerment should lead to the improvement of women's socio-economic status. Traditionally, women have been oppressed not only by poverty and a lack of education, but by a patriarchal society in which women are dismissed to the spheres of home and family. Asha seeks to educate women about their legal and moral rights and to create communities where women are equal to men and where their opinions and leadership skills are recognized and respected. Empowerment is the acquisition or the bestowing of power. Power arises from possessing a complex combination of personal and physical resources that is being bestowed or being acquired in the process of empowerment.

Women can attain empowerment through different points of departure: emancipatory knowledge, economic leverage and political mobilization. While many poor women work outside the home

to support their families and the tasks they perform are exhausting and meagerly rewarded, access to income improves their authority in the home. Working women, regardless of how inferior their position and small their income, have a greater sense of control over their lives and more power and control over resources within the family than nonworking women.

Education is the strongest medium of social activity in creating a new dimension of views towards women and in adopting the partnership in different activities and in expressing her thought. If the working opportunity is done by enhancing the rate of women education, the socio-economic condition of that country is possible to increase. To develop self-esteem and self-confidence; to have knowledge about their bodies and sexuality; to have the ability to make their own decisions and negotiate; to raise the women's awareness of their civil rights; to provide skills for income generation; to make participation in community/society more effectively; and to prepare them to be good women leaders.

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Women's powerlessness arises from their illiteracy, which further leads to various lacks such as awareness, information and knowledge, skills, self esteem and self-confidence, and lack of job opportunities. They remain in a state of blissful ignorance and most survive in the belief that they cannot change their poor situation. As a result of this long-standing poverty and powerlessness the women lose their sense of control over their environment. The deprived women work individually and silently in their home that reinforces their powerlessness. This way they are unable to share and discuss their common concerns, problems and solutions.

With little exposure to the outside world as they are preoccupied with their day to day chores, and thus the deprived women are not aware of possibilities out there. The prevailing gender ideology that discriminates against women, the job options for women are even narrower. Lack of public awareness about the burdens of women and the conditions of their life and work make them neglect by the government so that there is no policy or programme to promote the deprived women's welfare. Similarly, household conditions precipitate, perpetuate or aggravate women's powerlessness. For example, limited resources for education will give preference to education of sons than daughters.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Access to basic education lies at the heart of development. Lack of access to education and securely acquired knowledge and skill are both a part of the definition of poverty and a means for all kinds of diminution including empowerment. Sustained access to meaningful learning that has value is critical to long-term improvements in productivity, the reduction of poverty, demographic transition, preventive health care, empowerment of women and reductions in inequality.

Education is very important in the life of a person for the growth of individual personality; it is accepted as one of the fundamental rights of a citizen. It makes a person productive, disciplined and thus adds to one's strength for empowerment. As such, importance is given to education all over the world and especially to women. In India, the role of women in household activities is most important. Therefore, for the development of family, society and the

nation it is highly desirable and inevitable that the girl children are educated. The best example for this is the words of Mahatma Gandhi "if you educate a man you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman you educate an entire family".

The empowerment leads the women to be responsible in numerous areas, including parenting, politics, health, technology, and the workforce. To that end, facilitating opportunities for women to participate in their own empowerment begins in the classroom. The formal and non-formal education systems would need to be considered. It would be important to analyze the gender content and to ascertain the manner in which it is addressed/not addressed in the educational system. Likewise, it would be important to reorient the teachers on gender issues so that overall gender sensitization in the educational system could be brought about.

Female education reduces child mortality, fertility, maternal mortality on the one hand and prevents the spread of communicable disease on the other. Women's education helps improve the environment and it gives them more decision making power in their families. In this regard, education to the deprived women are important to the protection against violence, diseases and unwanted pregnancy. An analysis of the education system in regard to girls' education clearly indicates that a major breakthrough has been made in the education of girls and women in India.

Specifically, women learn about and realize opportunities to improve their health and develop income-generating skills and by doing so to empower them to overcome poverty. It is a process rather than a gift to people. Development practitioners

recognize the critical importance of empowerment in the development process. At present, Indian governmental policies include equal access and full participation of women in decision making bodies at every level of government. However, while India established a broad legal framework to ensure women's empowerment, the actualization and implementation of such ideas remain slow. The social reality for many Indian women makes it difficult to achieve upward social and economic mobility, which is often due to a lack of resources and knowledge about how to effectively improve their own livelihoods.

Women must become literate, as education is beneficial for them as well as their families. The family web is woven around the women. She has to be up to the mark and educated so that she could fend for herself and her family during the hour of crisis. The status of women would improve only if they educate themselves and grab every opportunity to become stronger and more powerful than before.

LIMITATIONS OF EMPOWERMENT TO WOMEN FROM PRIMARY EDUCATION

Most of the governmental programmes, including education policies do not target the deprived Girl children, but often do target a certain level of annual income families in India. There is often reluctance to provide basic infrastructure and services to the deprived areas because rural to urban migrants are often regarded as temporary urban residents.

Taskforce report on Education for Women's Equality also suggests that for greater female enrollment and retention, the presence of female teachers at the primary level is useful. Drop out rates were significant. In rural areas, for every 100 girls

in Class I, there were 40 in Class V, 18 in Class VIII, 9 in Class IX and only 1 in Class XII. The corresponding figures for urban areas were 82, 62, 32 and 14, respectively. In lieu of the above statement, it can be seen that while merely 21% of primary school teachers in rural areas were female, 56% was the corresponding figure in urban areas. This can be a significant reason for lower dropout rates and higher enrollment rates of girls in urban areas. It is understandable that parents might be wary of sending their daughters to a school without female teachers.

1. Several nutrition centres and primary schools function without basic facilities such as electricity, water or sanitation, where the parents fear to send their girl children for education.

2. Children do not understand what they are studying and tuitions become necessary for the child.

3. Teachers do not teach well and give no individual attention to weak students to the deprived community.

4. Large classes make it difficult for the children to concentrate. Also in some schools different classes are taught together. For example, first standard to a third standard sit in the same class, with one teacher.

5. Lack of care for children, that is, whether the child is actually attending classes or leaving school in between.

As opposed to widely held notion that parents do not encourage their girl children to study because even they are not educated and instead ask them to help with work, many parents revealed that they in fact urged their children to continue with their education at school. There are various factors that collectively create an unhealthy

atmosphere for learning among the deprived community. The primary reason is the environment:

1. First and foremost the families are rooted in poverty; either the father or mother was the only earning member in a family, for daily wages. Older siblings or friends who have dropped out discourage the child from continuing with studies.

2. There is an absence of child monitoring, even in school the teachers do not pay individual attention to each child. Hence, both the environment at home and the school is in a large way responsible for the children's drop out.

3. Most of these children are first generation learners; their parents cannot guide them. Parents are not able to judge the effectiveness of the schools. There is a tendency to blame the children for disinterest in studies, while the reason can be the lack of actual teaching in the school.

4. Most of the children complain or reveal that they dropped out because they felt they learn very little in school.

5. Parents complained that government schools promote even weaker students and the systems of examinations in most schools are not effective;

6. Compounded with the set of factors is the monetary consideration, a desire or need to earn, which also forces some children to drop out.

Though 63.04 lakh students get admitted in 31, 035 schools across the state, the drop-out rate is almost 36 percent by the time they get to the high school of which 90 percent are girls.

Primary schooling, through government schools, is a free education system provided by the Government of India. But higher education is highly dependent on personal factors like availability of funds, interest in studies and family situations. Due to their vulnerable and weak socio-economic status, slum children are in need of special attention during their years in primary school. Due to not finding a friendly environment in school, these children lose interest in studies and drop out. This problem is reflected in the lower number of children joining the subsequent class every year in most schools.

Without improving or providing the basic living conditions, an atmosphere conducive for the child's learning cannot be created; no matter how many schools are constructed, the problem of lack of learning and eventual dropouts will remain. Apart from appalling living conditions, the deprived children do not receive good quality education and the question of empowering the girls (women) will remain the same.

ISSUES FOR LACK OF EDUCATION OF THE DEPRIVED CHILDREN

The following are some of the real issues involved with deprived community education in India:

1. There is no good policy on deprived girl children's education at a national and state level. The psychology and personality of these children are different and it should be done differently since the problems of deprived children and other children are also different.
2. The mindset of the municipalities, in general, is that the people living in deprived conditions are to be wished

away, be tolerated for a while and that they will disappear after some time.

3. Data are collected for every school, but is not disaggregated to identify where the problem of schools lies. The above said issues can be easily rooted out with government's effective rules and programmes.

GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO DEPRIVED CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Free and compulsory education is made an obvious exception on account of its cost and significance and centre is given a specific responsibility for it (Art. 45). Similarly, the responsibility of the Centre to equalize educational opportunities between different areas or different sections of society had also to be recognized and duly provided for (Art. 46). Then the responsibility of the Centre to safeguard the cultural interests of the minority and to see that they have adequate facilities to receive at least primary education in their own mother-tongue (Art. 350 A).

The Government of India has many provisions in the constitution for the education of the deprived communities as a directive principle of state policy under Part IV: "45. The State shall endeavour to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years."

24. Similarly, the Constitution also makes it an obligatory responsibility of the Government of India to promote the educational interest of the weaker sections of the people and makes the following provision: "46. The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled

Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

Decentralization and community participation in education was encouraged in the 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution in the early 1990s, and free and compulsory basic education from six to fourteen years of age, as a fundamental right, was added to the 86th Constitution of India in 2002, and was legislated at national level in 2009

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above study, recommendations are made for the development of education among deprived children. The policy of the government should have a major chapter on deprived community for forty per cent of people live in this condition. The schooling methods should be changed that the quality of schools and school education should be improved. Expanding the reach of high quality, early childhood care and education is essential for India's poor to build the literacy and life skills needed to transition out of poverty and empower the women. Certain non-governmental organizations provide basic education for the urban disadvantaged children. A variety of basic learning opportunities are at least theoretically available for the deprived children, which has to be implemented in all the areas. As resettlement is a planned process and, unlike internal displacement due to natural disorders, it gives the authorities the time and space to plan. The mere provision of housing does not end the state's responsibility to the affected people. Provision of basic amenities such as education, health care, water, ration supplies and public transport is equally essential.

Government initiatives to empower women:-

The First Five Year Plan sought to “promote the welfare of women” by helping them to play their legitimate role in the family and the community, but emphasized that the major burden of organizing activities for the benefit of the female population had to be borne by the private agencies. Five Year Plans continued to reflect the same welfare approach to women's interests though they accorded priority to education for both, men and women and launched measures to improve maternal and child health services and supplementary nutrition for children as well as expectant and nursing mothers.

The Ninth Five Year Plan was rather ambitious. It took up ‘empowering women as agents of socio- economic change and development’ as a major commitment. To begin with, it adopted the ‘National Policy for Empowerment of Women’, which among other objectives, sought to organize women into Self Help Groups to work for their own empowerment, accorded a high priority to schemes for maternal and child welfare and most importantly, made a bid at easy and equal access to education through the Special Action Plan of 1998, plans for the free education of girls up to the college level (inclusive of professional courses) and vocational training.

The literacy rate for India in Census 2011, works out to 74.04 percent. The corresponding “figures for males and females are 82.14 and 65.46 per cent respectively. This three-fourth of the population of age 7 years and above is literate in the country. Four out of every “five males and two out of every three females in the country are literate. The

country has continued its march in improving literacy rate by recording a jump of 9.21 percentage points during 2001-2011. The increase in literacy rates in males and females are in the order of 6.88 and 11.79 percentage points respectively. However, efforts are still required to achieve the target of 85 per cent set by the Planning Commission to be achieved by the year 2011-12. The hurdle for these achievements need more research, planning, policy and programmes that will make the movement forward.

Infrastructure, teachers and enrollment:-

Efforts towards attaining Universal Elementary Education (UEE) have resulted in a substantial increase in physical infrastructure, teachers and enrollment. The number of primary schools had increased from 0.642 million to 0.767 million between 1999 and 2005. The number of teachers in Primary Schools had increased from 1.91 million in 1999 to 2.31 million in 2004-5 and enrollment had increased from 113.61 million to 131.69 million in the same period. It is intuitive that a lower Student-Teacher Ratio facilitates enrollment as teachers can now give more attention to each student. The increase in enrollment for girls at the primary level was 5.2% in this period- far higher than 1.7% for boys, according to the chapter on Elementary Education of the Working Group Report for the Eleventh Five Year Plan. An extremely positive development in the present decade is that the gap of 21.59 percentage points recorded between male and female literacy rates in the 2001 Census has reduced to 16.68 percentage points in 2011. Though the target set for the year 2011-2012 by the Planning Commission of reducing the gap to 10 percentage points has not been achieved, it is heartening that the reduction has been in the order of almost 5 percentage points.

As per the quality of schools, according to the Working Group Report, the percentage of schools having girls' toilets on campus has increased from 28.24% in 2003-4 to 37.42% in 2005-6. Not having a girls' toilet in school would mean that girls often skip class to go to far-off toilets. This clearly decreases the quality of schooling.

These observations suggest that policies and programmes for the improvement of education opportunities for deprived children may also need to be integrated with initiatives on women's empowerment. This would be helpful for improving reproductive health, Childcare, and young women's access to training, education and technology can increase economic opportunities. Government commitment to gender-responsive budgeting is important to facilitate such efforts. Women are then consigned to illiteracy. The case of a woman demonstrates a situation where the working conditions keep the woman invisible to the government and policy makers because of her isolation. She does not have the benefit of social protection- all of which are manifestations or symptoms of powerlessness. Though the Government had taken efforts to the promotion of girl's education, efforts, policy and programme can be designed for the empowerment of women as well.

Measures to be done by the Charity organizations and the NGOs,

At the grassroots level, actual organizing of the deprived women should be done. Public awareness through meetings, workshops and dialogues for the policy recommendations and national plan of action and advocacy of policy reforms. Numerous press releases, radio- T V and other mediums can focus on the issues of women empowerment and importance of

girl children's education. Education and Training by various social organizations for the deprived women to acquire varied skills for empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Empowered women

The empowered woman is aware that she has tremendous potential to contribute to the progress of her family, community and nation. With that understanding, she is confident of her worth, and can appreciate others. Aware of her productivity, she seeks to improve her skills and knowledge continuously from information sources. She appreciates the knowledge gained from reading and reads regularly. The empowered woman understands that she is a human being, and hence she could and should question the family and social practices which negatively affect her. She seeks to get scientific insights into superstitions, and challenges those which are unjust to women. She has freedom of movement and expression on a par with men and seeks self-improvement.

The empowered woman can lead and serve as a positive role model for other women. She respects the dignity of womanhood and appreciates daughters in the same way she does sons. Self-reliance is undoubtedly a necessary condition for emancipation of the deprived women, discriminated and live in highly unfavorable socio-economic and cultural conditions. They can survive and help their households if they are self-reliant.

It is clear that many benefits may be derived from collective action with a serious purpose and involvement. Poor women are busy women, apart from family needs, they also face conditions such as spouse control, violence at home and unsafe community

environments that limit their physical mobility. This the empowerment of women should start from the basic of primary girls' education it forms the basic platform of empowerment. Thus the dropout rate of deprived children at school should be controlled and the education of girl child with all the above mentioned recommendations be encouraged. And hence the dropout rate will diminish and the empowerment of women will cause for the emancipation of the entire deprived community. Empowerment means building aspirations, hopes and expectations. Thus empowerment keeps the women going! And the development should start from within!

REFERENCE

1. Anonuevo, Carolyn Medel- (ed.) (1995), *Women, Education and Empowerment: Pathways towards Autonomy*, UNESCO Institute for Education, Germany, pp7-10
2. Sato, Yutaka "Women's Empowerment and the Local State, The Case of Public-private Collaborated Community Development in Ahmedabad," Paper for the 18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies at Lund Universitet, Sweden, 'Gender and the Local State in South Asia', Urban Poverty,
3. Anonuevo, Carolyn Medel- Op.cit., pp-27
4. Non Governmental Organisation working for children and women empowerment.
5. News for friends of Asha, Asha Community Health and Development Society, New Delhi
6. Anonuevo, Carolyn Medel-, Op.cit., pp-25-26
7. Hossain, Md. Afzal Research on Humanities and Social Sciences Vol.1, No.4, 2011 www.iiste.org "Socio-Economic Obstacles of Women Empowerment in Rural Bangladesh: A Study on Puthia Upazila of Rajshahi District", Institute of Education and Research (IER), Rajshahi University, Bangladesh
8. Little, Angela W (2010) *Elementary Education in India: Policies, Politics and Progress, create pathways to access*, Consortium for Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) Research Monograph No. 44, p.60
9. Rathor, Anupurna (2003): *Slum Dwellers, Curse on Development*, Sarup & Sons, - p.126

10. Mev Miller, Kathleen P. King, Kathleen P. King, (ed.) (2009). *Empowering Women through Literacy: Views from Experience*, Information age publishing, USA, 2009.
11. Anonuevo, Carolyn Medel- Op.cit., p-10
12. Freiermuth, Sibylle and Keaveney, Megan Slum Women for Peace in Mumbai, India – Denison University
13. Bhuyan , Dasarathi *Empowerment of Indian Women: A Challenge of 21st Century*
14. Tsujita, Yuko(2009): *Deprivation of Education: A Study of Slum Children in Delhi*, Background Paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010, India ,
15. Sen, Ruchira *Education for Women's Empowerment: An Evaluation of the Government run Schemes to educate the girl child*, CCS Working Paper no. 183, Summer Research Internship Programme 2007-08, Centre for Civil Society, www.ccs.in. pp 1-5
16. Interview with Murugammal, Bojaraja nagar, Central, Chennai, dated 12.08.2012.
17. Interview with Raja, Bojaraja nagar, Central, Chennai, dated 12.08.2012.
18. Shah, Mansi and Sen, Sreyashi *Education mapping in a slum area: an analysis of the dynamics of demand and supply*, CCS Working Paper No. 201 Summer Research Internship Programme 2008, Centre for Civil Society, p.1-3
19. Alphonse, S.J. Xavier, (2007) *Community Colleges in India Education for Livelihood*, Gyan publishing house, New Delhi, p-13
20. Lakshmanan, V(2007): *A Statistical insight into health and education in Chennai Slums*, Chennai, pp 2-3.
21. Mansi Shah and Sreyashi Sen, Op.Cit.,
22. Naik j.p., *The role of government of India in education*, government of India ministry of education
23. R.Govinda, 2006: *Issues of Urban Education with context to the Girl Child*, Seminar on Status of Girls' Education in Urban Slum communities, India International Center, New Delhi, ,
24. Qudsiya, Contractor (2008): *Journal of Comparative Social Welfare, Understanding the impact of involuntary slum resettlement on women's access to healthcare in Mumbai, India*, 24:2, pp153-163
25. *Census Report-2012*, Government of India, Chapter 6, 2012, p101.
26. Sen, Ruchira Op.Cit., pp-7-41
27. *Gender Equality and Sustainable Urbanisation*, Un-Habitat, www.unhabitat.org, pp1-17

