

WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

A changing society and a developing economy cannot make any headway if education, which is one of the important agents affecting the norms of morality and culture, remains in the hands of traditionalists who subscribe to a fragmented view of the country's and the world's heritage. The differences between the positions of men and women in the society will not lessen; leave alone disappear, as long as there are differences between the education levels of men and women. Inadequate education or no education is the most important factor contributing to the backwardness of the masses, especially women. The low literacy among women brings down the national literacy. This gap which exists between the literacy rates of the two sexes also exists between the enrolment of girls and boys at all levels of education. Given this backdrop, the present study brings the reviews in the research field of women's education and concludes that there is a need for studies on willingness to pay for women's education.

Keywords: Education, Willingness to pay, gender gap

Introduction

Women empowerment can only be achieved through the provision of adequate and functional education to the women folk. This is crucial because no matter how rich or vast a nation is, without an effective, efficient, adequate and functional education for all its citizens, education which is relevant to its immediate needs, goals and objectives, such a nation would find it difficult to stand on its own. The brand of education being advocated is that type of education in which is embedded the spirit of self-realization and all that are needed for the country's overall development like mass literacy, economic empowerment etc.

The need for women education is also underlined by the fact that purposeful occupational achievement and satisfaction is ensured by deep self-awareness and understanding which can only be achieved through the provision of effective and functional education and guidance and counselling. The empowerment suggested is such that entails the process of challenging power relations and of gaining wider control over source of power. This, however, cannot be achieved without the provision of reasonable access to formal and functional education to the women folk. This is based on the premise that education has been adjudged to be a viable instrument of change in the positive direction (Jain, 2004). Provision of formal and functional education is needed for the women folk, because:

- It would empower them to know and ask for their rights to education, health, shelter, food, clothing etc.

- It would empower them to fight against every form of discrimination, assert themselves about their right to equal treatment with their men counterpart as bonafide citizens of this nation.
- It would enable them to take decisions and accept responsibilities for taking such decisions concerning themselves.
- It would give economic power to the women and thereby enable them to contribute their part to the economic growth of the nation.
- It would empower the women scientifically through exposure to science and technological education for the challenges of the present technological age and information.
- It would help women to reduce maternal and infant mortality through improved nutrition, improved child rearing practice, health care and prevention against killer diseases.
- It would avail women with the opportunity of participating keenly in the world of sophisticated politics and governance as enlightened citizens (Nayar, 2000).

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population (Kapoor, 1986).

Review on Women's Education

Women's education in ancient India was quite good but in the middle age it was deteriorated because of many restrictions against women. However, again it is getting better and better day by day as modern people in India understand that without the growth and development of women, the development of country is not possible. It is very true that equal growth of both sexes will increase the economic and social development in every areas of the country (Jain, 1999).

Women should be given equal opportunity in education like men and they should not be isolated from any development activities. Women covers almost half population of the country means if women are uneducated the half country is uneducated which bring poor socio-economic condition. Through the women education the social and economic development will be faster in India. To spread the importance and improve the level of women education all over the country, countrywide national propaganda and awareness programmes are very necessary. An educated woman can educate her whole family and thus whole country (Holder, 2010).

In terms of population, India is the second largest country of the world due to the low level women education. If a woman is uneducated, the future of country would also be uneducated. Women education was the matter of concern in India in the middle age

however, it has been now solved to a great extent. Women education has been given a lot of priority in India just like men to bring some positive changes in the social and economic status of the country. In the past women were not allowed to go out of the door of their houses. They were only limited to the domestic works as their education (Gupta, 2000).

Raja Ram Mohan Ray and Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar were some famous social reformers during the British rule in India who paid their attention towards the women education. Both man and woman covers the half of population of the country. They are like two sides of the coin so need equal opportunity to participate in the country development. One cannot exist without other because women are everything as they give birth to the future generation. If they would be well educated they would give rise educated future generation and thus healthy social and economic condition in India (Goswami, 2006).

The female education in India is highly necessary for the future of the country as women are the first teachers of their children means future of the nation. If education of the women is getting ignored, it would be the ignorant of bright future of the nation. An uneducated woman cannot actively participate in handling the family, proper care of the children and thus weak future generation. We cannot count all the advantages of the women education. An educated woman may easily handle her family, make each family member responsible, infuse good qualities in children, participate in the social works and all would lead her towards the socially and economically healthy nation (Srivastav, 2014).

In India, providing education to all the citizens is a constitutional commitment. The principal of gender equality is also enshrined in the Indian constitution, in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only guarantees equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Just after Independence, in 1951, literacy levels were very low (25 per cent for men and 9 per cent for women). In the next ten years, there was not much progress in the literacy levels. It is only after the recommendations of the Indian education commission (1964) and the National Policy of Education (1968) that the education of girls was seen as a means of accelerating social transformation. The policy placed special emphasis on initiating programmes to give equal educational opportunities to all the groups and both sexes (Chanana, 1990).

The constitution also gave primary responsibility for elementary education to the state governments, while the central government was given responsibility for technical and higher education. This situation changed in 1976 after the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution was passed, making all education the joint responsibility of the central and state governments. One of the consequences of this was that the foreign assistance, so far restricted to technical and higher education, now began to flow into primary education as well. Between the mid-1960 and the early 1980s, the proportion of resources going into elementary education showed a steady increase (World Bank, 2007).

National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and its Programme of Action (POA) gave high priority to gender equality and committed the entire educational system to work for

women's empowerment. The National Perspective Plan 1988-2000 reiterates this point of view and states that women themselves must overcome their handicaps. Thus, there has been a careful articulation of education for equality for women, which is reflected in the educational policy discourse. Central and State governments attached lot of significance to actually operationalising the NPE's Programme of Action and in a series of regional meetings with the State Governments, a special review of gender issues in education was undertaken (Shukla and Kaul, 1998).

It was emphasized to the States that gender concerns must be built into all educational processes. Monitoring committees for women's/girls' education at the Ministry of Human Resource Development level and also state level were formed to monitor the indicators of gender concerns in all policies and projects. Emphasis was laid on enrolment and retention of the girl child in formal and non-formal schooling; recruitment of rural women teachers and removal of gender bias in the curriculum (Desai, 2009).

Mass literacy campaigns in different parts of India were launched which brought out volunteers from all sections of society as instructors, master trainers and organizers. Adult Education Programmes, Total Literacy Campaigns, Post Literacy Programmes, and continuing Education Programmes were also started. Nationwide gender sensitization programmes were undertaken to cover a large number of educational personnel to include educational administrators, teachers and teacher educators (NCERT, 2003).

Complementary to this strategy, media campaigns and parental awareness programmes for generating a positive climate for girls' education were also started. Mobilization of women's groups and projects like Mahila Samakhya (Education for Women's Equality) with focus on the constraints that had so far prevented women and girls from accessing educational inputs were launched. The purpose of these groups was to address issues of self image and self confidence of women and alter societal perception about them. Its overall goal was to create circumstances to enable women to better understand their predicament, to move from a state of abject disempowerment towards a situation in which they could determine their own lives and influence their environment, and simultaneously create for themselves and their family an educational opportunity which enhanced the process of development (Gupta, 2003).

Review on Gender Gap in Education

Gender gap has been well documented and analyzed by governmental agencies, international organisation, university departments, NGOs and individual researchers. Some recent publications that provide a panoramic view of this subject include, World Bank (1997), which charts the terrain occupied by primary organisations; Kaur (2002), which provides the comparative perspective on girls' and Women's education in South Asia; Shukla and Kaul (1998), Bhattacharya (1998), which looks more generally at the status of education in India; and finally Haq and Haq (1998), which analyses education within the context of human development in South Asia.

The past five decades have produced mass of information on innovative practices and experimental programmes. There are also innumerable guidelines and policy statements on why gender gaps persist in education and how these can be reduced. Negative cultural and societal attitudes, different standards- roles for boys and girls, competing demands on the girls' time, economic reasons like lack of resources, distance from school, lack of facilities in schools for girls, lack of female teachers, lack of security both in and outside the school, curriculum not relevant and flexible, gender stereotyping in curriculum, gender unfriendly classroom environment, early marriage and child bearing, absence of women role models and the fear of deterioration of social structure are the most frequently quoted stumbling blocks to female education (NCERT, 2009).

In response to this, developing flexible school calendars, encouraging community participation, promoting parental awareness, creating gender neutral textbooks, training teachers for promoting gender equality, promoting girls' access to science and math's education, reliance on multiple delivery systems and increasing resources of primary education are the strategies most often recommended for overcoming these hurdles (Schultz, 1998). In fact, there is a certain degree of agreement about the constraints to education and about strategies that "work". But despite this convergence, these problems persist. The discourse on strategies needs to be located in a dynamic perspective. Revision and reflection are required to analyze this changing scenario, to identify its impact and to develop strategies to adjust to it (Wazir, 2000).

Review on Choices for Women in Higher Education

The relationship between availability of disciplinary choices and women's ability to access them are not directly related, nor are they dependent on women's academic achievement. The reasons cited for this are mainly due to social ethics. Large majority of women may be deprived of exercising free options in selecting subjects of their choice in school, as in case of girls, parents generally take the decision regarding the academic stream to be pursued. This decision is guided by the consideration that girls are not expected to work or earn before marriage and education is only an investment to fall back upon in case of the daughter becoming a widow or being deserted (Chanana, 1998). The poor parents have another problem; even though they perceive the significance of education, many a times they are not able to finance it.

Besides, there is lack of role models and socialization support at home. Women from these social categories are the most affected by the stratification of disciplines, programmes and institutions. Further, the social and economic disparities are reflected not only vis-à-vis caste and tribe, but also at the regional level, i.e. in different provinces. Discipline boundaries not only limit choices but choices are further limited by future options of "life chances" of women. Higher education is further denied to the disadvantaged groups and especially women from rural poor homes (Singh, 2015).

Because of social and economic reasons, parents may be unwilling to spend on education as well as the dowries of their daughters. A perusal of the disciplinary choices depicts that the proportion of women in some of the masculine disciplines was miniscule soon after independence and remained so till 1980's. This is evident as the proportion of women in science decreased from 33.3 percent in 1950-51 to 28.8 percent 1980-81. This was the period when natural science was at a premium, especially physics and chemistry (Chanana, 2000).

Till the eighties, they were the first choice for male students and while competing with men, women were pushed out. It is also possible that science was not, in any case, the first preference for young women whose parents perceived marriage as a priority over higher education. An undergraduate degree of any kind only helped in the marriage market by raising the social status. A science degree required a longer investment of time and other resources, therefore was not desirable. The young women were also socialized to perceive higher education from that view point (Agarwal, 2007).

The proportion of women in 2002-03 in arts was 44.2 and has been increasingly steadily since 1970-71. The proportion of men, on the other hand, has decreased gradually during the same period from 83.9 percent to 54.6 percent. In teacher's education, another feminine discipline the proportion of women has gone up from 32.4 to 50.6 percent. Science, a masculine discipline, provides an interesting insight on disciplinary choices of young women and men. For example, in science the proportion of men which was around 80-90 percent till 1980-81, has come down to 59.8 percent in 2002-03 (Chanana, 2004).

Higher education for young women is taken for granted nowadays among the upper and middle strata in the cities but it is still not viewed as an immediate investment in their careers. Social role expectations affect the aspirations of women. For example, in the patriarchal social structure, parents are not expected to use the income of their daughters. Therefore, even educated daughters are not encouraged to work and if they do so, it is for a short period before marriage (Rao, 2001).

After marriage, It is the right of the groom's family to decide whether she will work or not. Therefore, for a majority of young women in the academia, higher education is not linked to careers. This is the reason why women join arts and humanities as they are cheaper, softer, and shorter than the professional courses. But lately, the number of those who are entering the professional subjects is growing (Karat, 2005).

Conclusion

The review of the literature which deal with the issues pertaining to women education, its necessity, its importance, discrepancies between the rural and urban, poor and rich, men and women and also among difference religious groups suggests that girls have been suffering for long in India, due its patriarchal nature, which attaches undue importance to boys. There are intra-household discrepancies in resource allocation, not only in resource poor households, but also in rich households, where girls are enrolled in

'soft' disciplines, since they are groomed only to get married. However, perceptual change taking place of late, though only in small circle, since neglect of women's higher education is still practiced. From the above studies, it is found that more number of studies exists in the field of women higher education but willingness to pay is not found in Tamil Nadu. Thus, there is more scope for research in the field of willingness to pay for higher education.

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