

Research Article

Gender Equity in Education

Dr. Anup Kumar Pokhriyal

Abstract

Gender equity in education refers to boys and girls experiencing the same advantages or disadvantages in attending school. Boys and girls should receive equal treatment and should not be discriminated against based on gender. Education is considered as one the most effective instrument for achieving gender equity and sustainable development. The key for the future of any country and any educational institution is the capability to develop, retain and attract the best talent. Boys and girls are equally talented and must be treated equally particularly in Education. The present study is seriously focusing on the equal participation of girls and boys in various aspects of society particularly in educational system. Gender is the most pervasive form of inequality, as it operates across all classes, castes and communities. According to the census of India, (2011) there are 914 girls for every 1000 boys in the 0-6 age group in India. In rural areas it is 919 girls for every 1000 boys, whereas 902 girls for every 1000 boys in urban areas. This ratio should be above 950. Female literacy rate in India is lower than the male literacy rate. Many families, especially in rural areas believe that having a male child is better than having a baby girl. So the male child gets all the benefits. Today, the female literacy levels according to the Literacy Rate 2011 census are 65.46% where the male literacy rate is over 80%. The numbers of girls' children who do not get education especially in the rural areas are still high. Gender-based discrimination in education is both a cause and a consequence of deep-rooted disparities in society. Poverty, geographical isolation, ethnic background, disability; traditional attitudes about their status and role all undermine the ability of women and girls to exercise their rights. Hopefully Education will be a gateway to achieve Gender equity.

Keywords: Education, Gender equity, Inequity, Girls Education, Literacy, Enrolment

Introduction

Ancient Education System in India is also to be understood as being ultimately the outcome of the Indian theory of knowledge as part of the corresponding scheme of life and values. The system takes full account of the fact that Life includes Death and this form the eternal truth. This gives a particular angle of vision, a sense of perspective and proportion in which the material and the moral, the physical and spiritual, the perishable and permanent interests and values of life are clearly defined and strictly differentiated. Education must aid in this self-fulfillment, and not in the acquisition of mere objective knowledge. It is the only education which can sublimate the ordinary instincts in a child to extraordinary useful activities

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Education Himgiri Zee University, Dehradun, Utarakhand.

Email- anup.kumar@hzu.edu.in

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and inculcates social ideals, high morality and spiritual values in a child, so that child is able to create a strong character useful to the society and to his own self (Singh,2007).

According to the ancient Indian theory of education, the training of the mind and the process of thinking, are essential for the acquisition of knowledge.

“Education is unearthing the absolute humanity, manipulating every individual’s intense openings, bonding between individual and society, interconnecting amidst people and nature, diminishing inequality between the literate and illiterate, harmonizing one’s inner self with what is functional, expanding and cultivating knowledge-based imagination and beauty consciousness, prosperity, and totality in life through application of knowledge” (Rabindranath Tagore).

"Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of social continuity of life" (Dewey).

Having men and women in to consideration, Girls’ education is essential to the achievement of quality learning relevant to the 21st century, including girls’ transition to and performance in secondary school and beyond. Adolescent girls that attend school delay marriage and childbearing are less vulnerable to disease and acquire information and skills that lead to increased earning power. There is considerable evidence for the claim that access to education can bring about changes in cognitive ability, which is essential to women's capacity to question, to reflect on (Kabeer Naila, 2003).

In general meaning we can accept that education deals with formation of habits of human beings, if so we need an education seriously focusing on promoting the equal participation of women and men in making decisions; reducing enrollment gap between women's and men's access; giving equality in learning process, educational outcomes and external results; and providing equal benefits for both sexes (Elmas Sahin, 2010).

The present study is seriously focusing on the equal participation of girls and boys in various aspects of society particularly in educational system.

Problem Entitled

“Gender Equity in Education”

Review of Related Literature

Madhumita, Bandyopadhyay and Ramya, Subrahmania (2008) provide an account of gender equity in schooling in India, with a particular emphasis on educational access. It aims to highlight educational access issues affecting both girls and boys in India and the types of initiatives needed to secure meaningful and sustainable access for all. Female enrolment has increased rapidly since the 1990s; there is still a substantial gap in upper primary and secondary schooling. Increased female enrolment is, however, compromised by persistently high rates of drop-out and poor attendance of girls relative to boys. Girls also constitute a large proportion of out-of-school children. Gender inequalities interlock with other forms of social inequality, notably caste, ethnicity and religion, with girls from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Muslim minorities particularly, constituting the population of out-of-school and drop-out children. There are also considerable inter-state variations in gender parity. While the greatest surges in female enrolment have been achieved in the most educationally disadvantaged states such as Bihar and Rajasthan, these states still have a long way to go to catch up with the better performing states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh.

Elmas Sahin (2010) focuses on how and why education is the key to gender equality, importance of gender equity in education system in order to create a better environment for girls under traditional pressures. It will also query whether a philosophy of education offering the

same opportunities to young women and men, teaching the same things at the same time, in the same place, with the same methods, and under the same system or is necessary or not. Gender equity in education runs to failure for millions of girls and women under the heavy weight of circumstances throughout the world and needs supporters to take more active roles as early as possible in breaking down the traditional resistance against the education of girls.

Times of India (2014) daily newspaper points out that Gender-equality-in-India-among-worst-in-world. When India's Human Development Index is adjusted for gender inequality, it becomes south Asia's worst performing country after Afghanistan. New numbers in the UNDP's Human Development Report 2013 show. Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh, which are poorer than India and have lower HDIs, all do comparatively better than India when it comes to gender equality. The new UNDP report ranks India 136th out of 186 countries, five ranks below post-war Iraq, on the HDI. The HDI is a composite indicator composed of three equally weighted measures for education, health and income.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the gender equity in Education.
- To study some serious concerns in Indian educational system.
- To study girls education.

Methodology

The present study is an attempt to discuss the gender equity in Education. Secondary data has been taken in to consideration. It is a data study and descriptive in nature. Some books, Journals and e- contents related to gender equity and professional development programs were studied to find out some serious concern in gender equity in education. Content collected from various resources reflects the objectives of the study.

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Gender equity can be defined as boys and girls are mostly not separated into different schools and class rooms. Boys and girls have very similar levels of educational attainment & achievement. **Gender equity** in education refers to boys and girls experiencing the same advantages or disadvantages in attending school, the same approaches in terms of teaching methods, gender neutral curricula, and academic orientation, all of which aim to ensure equal learning achievement and subsequent life opportunities (UNESCO).

Limited participation of one gender group in educational planning and management may also lead to decisions that fail to promote the participation, retention, and learning acquisition of female (or male) students in the school system. Furthermore, even where gender balance in management positions is achieved, biases in favour of one gender group (due to cultural norms or practices) may persist. The Education 2030 agenda recognizes that gender equality requires an approach that 'ensures that girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete education cycles, but are empowered equally in and through education'(UNESCO).

The issue of gender inequality in education is not restricted to girls' and boys' access, participation, or achievement, but also involves the question of gender-balanced roles and participation in decision-making, planning and management in the sector. Despite the feminization of the teaching profession in many countries, fundamental inequalities remain within leadership positions, particularly in planning and management of education systems. For

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example, research conducted by Smulders 1998, highlights aspects of organizational culture in education institutions and how gender bias generated from management practices are often incompatible with female responsibilities at the household level.

Gender-based discrimination in education is both a cause and a consequence of deep-rooted disparities in society. Poverty, geographical isolation, ethnic background, disability, traditional attitudes about their status and role all undermine the ability of women and girls to exercise their rights. Harmful practices such as early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and discriminatory education laws, policies, contents and practices still prevent millions of girls' from enrolling, completing and benefitting from education.

Gender must therefore be integrated at all levels of education, from early childhood to higher education, in formal and non-formal settings and from planning infrastructure to training teachers. When gender equity in formal or informal education is attached importance, the vital issues such as gaps, divisions and conflicts between sexes in society are reduced. Despite progress in recent years, girls continue to suffer severe disadvantage and exclusion in education systems throughout their lives. An estimated 31 million girls of primary school age and 34 million girls of lower secondary school age were not enrolled in school in 2011. Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest proportion of countries with gender parity: only two out of 35 countries. Furthermore, many countries will still not have reached gender parity. On current trends, it is projected that 70 per cent of countries will have achieved parity in primary education, and 56 per cent of countries will have achieved parity in lower secondary education.

Education is widely recognized as the gateway to economic security and opportunity—particularly for girls and women.

Girls' education is both an intrinsic right and a critical lever to reaching other development objectives. Providing girls with an education helps break the cycle of poverty. An educated woman is less likely to marry early and against her will; less likely to die in childbirth; more likely to have healthy babies; and is more likely to send her children to school. When all children have access to a quality education rooted in human rights and gender equality, it creates a ripple effect of opportunity that influences generations to come. (UNICEF, 2014)

Gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured.

Muslim countries worldwide have problems with gender equality. They dominate the bottom 10 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report, and none of the 10 most successful countries offering equal opportunities for men and women is Muslim. Girls lag behind boys in school attendance, making up 54 per cent of the out-of-school child population in the Arab states, a figure that has not changed since 2000. Of the 10 countries that are the worst for child school attendance rates, seven are Muslim. These are Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Niger and Yemen - countries that are often considered hot spots for acts of violence against women and school girls. (Straits times, 2014)

Gender inequalities, and its social causes, impact India's sex ratio, women's health over their lifetimes, their educational attainment, and economic conditions. Gender inequality in India is a multifaceted issue that concerns men and women alike. Some argue that some gender equality measures, place men at a disadvantage. However, when India's population is examined as a whole, women are at a disadvantage in several important ways.

Gender is the most pervasive form of inequality, as it operates across all classes, castes and communities. Yet, while gender equality has been a key objective of education policy in India for over three decades, it has lacked critical edge in implementation. In real terms, the dropout rates of girls, especially from the marginalized sections of society and the rural areas continues to be grim—9 out of every 10 girls ever enrolled in school do not complete schooling (NCERT 2006).

The 2011 Census in India revealed that there are 914 girls for every 1000 boys in the 0-6 age group in India. In rural areas it is 919 girls for every 1000 boys whereas 902 girls for every 1000 boys in urban areas, highlighting the imbalance in child-sex ratios. Ideally, this ratio should be above 950. This imbalance is a result of the practice of gender biased sex selection - a manifestation of deep seated patriarchal mindsets leading to the preference for sons over daughters; aided by technological misuse. Some of the consequences of an imbalanced child sex ratio are an increase in violence against women and girls, trafficking for marriage and restrictions on mobility and choices of young girls. Another manifestation of patriarchy and discrimination is the high prevalence of child marriage, with almost one in two girls married before the age of 18 i.e. 43 percent of women aged 20-24.

Child marriage has a tremendous impact on the health, education and well-being of a girl. By 2015, India is expected to achieve the target on gender parity in education; however, the targets on women's economic empowerment and representation in National Parliament will not be met. In shaping the post 2015 development agenda, the attention of the world is focused on India and the role of the Government in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment focused on women's security, voice and empowerment (U.N. India).

It is essential to create continuing education opportunities which link literacy and education to self-development and skill based training, leading to greater bargaining power and self-esteem— particularly for girls. Such programmes will act as a bridge between the children and adults, creating a positive environment for education and an instrument for social change. The foremost factor limiting female education is poverty. Gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development. Girls and women have made major strides since 1990, but they have not yet gained gender equity. The disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation, labour market, etc.—with negative consequences for development of their capabilities and their freedom of choice (United Nations 2016)

Economics plays a key role when it comes to coping with direct costs such as tuition fees, cost of textbooks, uniforms, transportation and other expenses. Wherever, especially in families with many children, these costs exceed the income of the family, girls are the first to be denied schooling. Gaeta Sharma, 2010 correctly points out that in the rural areas the girl child is made to perform household and agricultural chores. This is one of the many factors limiting girls' education. Cleaning the house, preparing the food, looking after their siblings, the elderly and the sick, grazing the cattle and collecting firewood are some of the key tasks they have to perform.

Education can play an important role in redefining gender norms in India. Around the world, there have been numerous excellent examples of education changing people's way of viewing the world and leading to new forms of behavior. Female education has long been acknowledged to have strong correlations with other dimensions of human and social

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development. Education has the power to transform people's lives. Promoting equality and encouraging diversity is core business for education.

Gender parity in educational attainment has been achieved by most of the countries, but further action is needed in many developing countries like India, to improve enrolment and retention of girls in primary education. Furthermore, women remain severely under-represented in key, growth-enhancing fields of education such as science, technology and engineering.

Suddhasil, Siddhanta, (2004) observed that the gender gap in education is not only significant but also have definite spatial pattern. Such pattern highlights a sad picture of entitlement failure for females, a phenomenon that provokes a deep question about the significance or depth of our development activity. Society needs to understand that educating a female is as important and crucial as educating a male. There is no difference between man and woman when it comes to education. Each individual should encourage men to support women in this regard.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Child Sex Ratio (0-6 yrs) in India

| India/States/Union territory# | Total | Rural | Urban |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| INDIA | 914 | 919 | 902 |
| JAMMU & KASHMIR | 859 | 860 | 854 |
| HIMACHAL PRADESH | 906 | 909 | 878 |
| PUNJAB | 846 | 843 | 851 |
| CHANDIGARH # | 867 | 862 | 867 |
| UTTARAKHAND | 886 | 894 | 864 |
| HARYANA | 830 | 831 | 829 |
| NCT OF DELHI # | 866 | 809 | 868 |
| RAJASTHAN | 883 | 886 | 869 |
| UTTAR PRADESH | 899 | 904 | 879 |
| BIHAR | 933 | 935 | 906 |
| SIKKIM | 944 | 952 | 917 |
| ARUNACHAL PRADESH | 960 | 964 | 944 |
| NAGALAND | 944 | 932 | 979 |
| MANIPUR | 934 | 929 | 945 |
| MIZORAM | 971 | 966 | 978 |
| TRIPURA | 953 | 955 | 945 |
| MEGHALAYA | 970 | 972 | 957 |
| ASSAM | 957 | 957 | 955 |
| WEST BENGAL | 950 | 952 | 943 |
| JHARKHAND | 943 | 952 | 904 |
| ORISSA | 934 | 939 | 909 |
| CHHATTISGARH | 964 | 972 | 932 |
| MADHYA PRADESH | 912 | 917 | 895 |
| GUJARAT | 886 | 906 | 852 |
| DAMAN & DIU # | 909 | 925 | 903 |
| DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI | 924 | 961 | 878 |

| # | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|
| MAHARASHTRA | 883 | 880 | 888 |
| ANDHRA PRADESH | 943 | 942 | 946 |
| KARNATAKA | 943 | 945 | 941 |
| GOA | 920 | 924 | 917 |
| LAKSHADWEEP # | 908 | 888 | 915 |
| KERALA | 959 | 960 | 958 |
| TAMIL NADU | 946 | 937 | 957 |
| PUDUCHERRY # | 965 | 957 | 969 |
| A & N ISLANDS # | 966 | 975 | 947 |

Source- Census of India, 2011

Table-1 reveals that there are 914 girls for every 1000 boys in the 0-6 age group in India. In rural areas it is 919 girls for every 1000 boys, whereas 902 girls for every 1000 boys in urban areas. This ratio should be above 950.

Table 2: Literacy Rates in India

| India/States/Union territory# | Total | Males | Females |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| India | 74.04 | 82.14 | 65.46 |
| Jammu\$ Kashmir | 68.74 | 78.26 | 58.01 |
| Himanchal Pradesh | 83.78 | 90.83 | 76.6 |
| Punjab | 76.68 | 81.48 | 71.54 |
| Chandigarh# | 86.43 | 90.54 | 81.38 |
| Uttarakhand | 79.63 | 88.33 | 70.7 |
| Haryana | 76.64 | 85.38 | 66.77 |
| Delhi# | 86.34 | 91.03 | 80.93 |
| Rajasthan | 67.06 | 80.51 | 52.66 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 69.72 | 79.24 | 59.26 |
| Bihar | 63.82 | 73.29 | 53.33 |
| Sikkim | 82.2 | 87.29 | 76.43 |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 66.95 | 73.69 | 59.57 |
| Nagaland | 80.11 | 83.29 | 76.69 |
| Manipur | 79.85 | 86.49 | 73.17 |
| Mizoram | 91.58 | 93.72 | 89.4 |
| Tripura | 87.75 | 92.18 | 83.15 |
| Meghalaya | 75.48 | 77.17 | 73.78 |
| Assam | 73.18 | 78.81 | 67.27 |
| West Bengal | 77.08 | 82.67 | 71.16 |
| Jharkhand | 67.63 | 78.45 | 56.21 |
| Orissa | 73.45 | 82.4 | 64.36 |
| Chhattisgarh | 71.04 | 81.45 | 60.59 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 70.63 | 80.53 | 60.02 |
| Gujarat | 79.31 | 87.23 | 70.73 |
| Daman\$ Diu # | 87.07 | 91.48 | 79.59 |

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| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Dadra\$Nagar Haveli# | 77.65 | 86.46 | 65.93 |
| Maharashtra | 82.91 | 89.82 | 75.48 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 67.66 | 75.56 | 59.74 |
| Karnataka | 75.6 | 82.95 | 68.13 |
| Goa | 87.4 | 82.81 | 81.84 |
| Lakshadweep# | 92.28 | 96.11 | 88.25 |
| Kerala | 93.91 | 96.02 | 91.98 |
| Tamilnadu | 80.33 | 86.81 | 73.86 |
| Pondicherry# | 86.55 | 92.12 | 81.22 |
| Andaman\$ Nikobar Islands | 86.27 | 90.11 | 81.84 |

Source- Census of India, 2011

Table-2 clearly highlights, female literacy rate in India; it is lower than the male literacy rate. Female literacy levels are 65.46% where the male literacy rate is over 80%. Here are some facts about different states literacy rate, Kerala is the only state in India to have 100% literacy rate. It is followed by Goa, Tripura, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra, Sikkim. The lowest literacy rate in India is seen in the state of Bihar.

Table 3: Percentage of Boys & Girls Enrolment in Primary Classes (Classes 1st to vth)

| States | Boys | Girls |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Andhra Pradesh | 51.5 | 48.5 |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 51.04 | 48.96 |
| Assam | 50.34 | 49.66 |
| Bihar | 50.53 | 49.97 |
| Chhattisgarh | 51.03 | 48.97 |
| Goa | 52.02 | 47.98 |
| Gujarat | 53.35 | 46.65 |
| Haryana | 54.29 | 45.71 |
| Himachal Pradesh | 52.41 | 47.59 |
| Jammu and Kashmir | 52.34 | 47.66 |
| Jharkhand | 51.01 | 48.99 |
| Karnataka | 51.62 | 48.38 |
| Kerala | 51.23 | 48.77 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 52.26 | 47.74 |
| Maharashtra | 52.95 | 47.05 |
| Manipur | 50.13 | 49.87 |
| Meghalaya | 49.92 | 50.08 |
| Mizoram | 51.7 | 48.3 |
| Nagaland | 50.91 | 49.09 |
| Orissa | 51.71 | 48.29 |
| Punjab | 54.85 | 45.15 |
| Rajasthan | 53.41 | 53.41 |
| Sikkim | 52.26 | 52.26 |
| Tamil Nadu | 51.35 | 48.65 |
| Tripura | 50.98 | 48.02 |

| | | |
|---------------|-------|-------|
| Uttar Pradesh | 51.41 | 48.59 |
| Uttarakhand | 52.7 | 47.3 |
| West Bengal | 50.82 | 50.8 |

Source- DISE Data, 2013-14

Table 3 indicates the enrolment of boys and girls in all over India. Boys' enrolment is almost more than 50%. Whereas girls' enrolment is under 50%. Girls enrolment in primary classes is not satisfactory. Punjab is the lowest in girls' enrolment which is 45.15%. followed by Haryana by 45.71%. Rajasthan is in the highest position in girls' enrolment.

Findings of the Study

- There are 914 girls for every 1000 boys in the 0-6 age group in India. In rural areas it is 919 girls for every 1000 boys, whereas 902 girls for every 1000 boys in urban areas. This ratio should be above 950.
- Female literacy rate in India; it is lower than the male literacy rate. Female literacy levels are 65.46% where the male literacy rate is over 80%. Here are some facts about different states literacy rate, Kerala is the only state in India to have 100% literacy rate. It is followed by Goa, Tripura, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra, Sikkim. The lowest literacy rate in India is seen in the state of Bihar.
- The enrolment of boys and girls in all over India shows Boys' enrolment is almost more than 50%. Whereas girls' enrolment is under 50%. Girls' enrolment in primary classes is not satisfactory. Punjab is the lowest in girls' enrolment which is 45.15%. followed by Haryana by 45.71%. It shows the gender inequity in enrolment.

Conclusion

Girls' education is essential to the achievement of quality learning relevant to the 21st century. Gender is the most pervasive form of inequality, as it operates across all classes, castes and communities. Literacy is the main foundation for social and economic growth.

There are 914 girls for every 1000 boys in the 0-6 age group in India. In rural areas it is 919 girls for every 1000 boys, whereas 902 girls for every 1000 boys in urban areas. This ratio should be above 950. Female literacy rate in India is lower than the male literacy rate.

Many families, especially in rural areas believe that having a male child is better than having a baby girl. So the male child gets all the benefits. Today, the female literacy levels according to the Literacy Rate 2011 census are 65.46% where the male literacy rate is over 80%. The numbers of girls' children who do not get education especially in the rural areas are still high. Gender-based discrimination in education is both a cause and a consequence of deep-rooted disparities in society.

Poverty, geographical isolation, ethnic background, disability; traditional attitudes about their status and role all undermine the ability of women and girls to exercise their rights. Harmful practices such as early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and discriminatory education laws, policies, contents and practices still prevent millions of girls' form enrolling, completing and benefitting from education. Yet, while gender equity has been a key objective of education policy in India for over three decades, but there is a need to serious implementation. Only Education can become a gateway of Gender Equity.

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