

# DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH LITERACY

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## ABSTRACT

*This research manuscript focuses upon the development of gender equality and social responsibility through literacy. In India, it has been observed that there have been prevalence of male dominant societies especially in rural areas, people who are not well aware possess the viewpoint that only men and boys can acquire education, they can get engaged in jobs and earn a living for their families whereas women and girls are supposed to learn only how to do the household chores and become only house ladies; education or any kinds of jobs are not meant for them. Education is imperative for survival, it is a means that enables an individual to understand his/her responsibilities, acquire information and identify himself within the community. Education and literacy are considered to be important aspects that inculcate the attitude of responsibility amongst the individuals in every way, socially, economically, politically and enable them to become better citizens of the country. The main areas that are highlighted in this research manuscript are gender equality, gender equality and information and communications technologies, evolution of social responsibility in India, and development of social responsibility.*

**Keywords:** Gender Equality, Social Responsibility, Education, Information and Communications Technologies

## INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is the main principle of the global Education for All (EFA) campaign, which was initiated in 2000. As the target date for achieving the EFA goals (2015) approaches, it is significantly important that member states strengthen attempts to achieve gender equality in education, a basic human right. This is principally imperative with consideration to EFA Goal 4 that is achieving a 50% improvement of levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women. The percentage of women within the universal illiterate population has remained steady over the past 20 years, at 63-64 percent, even as the overall number of illiterates decreased. Of the 149 countries that submitted data on adult literacy to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 68 had achieved gender equality by 2011. In 77 countries, there were more women than men unable to read and write. If this situation does not change, it is likely to obstruct human development and lead to poverty in many parts of the world. The empowering role of literacy is uncontested, yet more complete upgrading and concerted efforts are needed to reduce the gender gap (Gender Equality, 2014).

At the International Conference on Achieving Literacy for All that took place in New Delhi in 2013, applicants from countries with great challenges in adult literacy accounted on different measures they are taking to close the gender gap in adult literacy. India, the host country of the Conference, initiated the five-year Saakshar Bharat initiative in 2009 with a special focus on women. It is planned that, out of the total target of 70 million beneficiaries, 60 million will be women. Women face substantial obstacles to admittance of learning opportunities. However, there are also stories of achievement, optimism and opportunity which illustrate how literacy learning can support the empowerment of women, families, communities, and, ultimately, entire societies. A number of literacy programs that straightforwardly aim women or plummeting gender disparities have been efficiently executed around the world. Several of them are documented on UNESCO's Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database<sup>3</sup>; they were scrutinized, together with other examples, to recognize key factors that involve achievement. These most excellent examples may update answers to acknowledged challenges in other areas (Gender Equality, 2014).

## **GENDER EQUALITY**

The meaning of gender equality refers to having equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will be similar in every aspect but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not be dependent on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and main concerns of both women and men are taken into thought, and recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should take into account and completely connect men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people centered development (UNICEF, 2011).

Ensuring gender equality within the educational system, for instance by modifying teaching materials, teacher training curriculum and classroom facilities, by ensuring equal financial support for girls' and boys' sports, and by addressing the ways in which boys often receive much more classroom attention than girls. Using schools to donate to gender conversion, such as by having parenting and cooking classes for both girls and boys or by making sure that schools do not emphasize gender norms and hierarchies for example, males dominating in senior positions or the use of corporal punishment (UNICEF, 2011).

Prevalent discriminatory treatment against women and girls has denied them their rights in many areas, from birth and throughout their lifetimes. Education has a role to play in providing opportunities to make equal this balance, break the cycle of discrimination and donate to a gender equality world. Empowerment of women for instance through literacy classes and participation as leaders in school associations and girls through incentives such as scholarships and leadership training, etc. is seen as a significant approach that is supported by UNICEF's 2010 Gender Policy, which recognizes the centrality of empowerment of girls and women in

accomplishing a gender equality world. On a worldwide basis, the advantages of education to individuals and national growth are comprehensively been familiarized with (UNICEF, 2011).

## **GENDER EQUALITY AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES**

The term ICT has been used to include technological improvement and union in information and communication leading to the development of professed information or knowledge societies, with consequential transformations in social communication, economic and business observations, political commitment, education, health, recreation and activity. Over the past decade, there has been an increasing perceptiveness that these technologies can be influential mechanisms for improving economic and social development through the establishment of new categories of economic movement, employment opportunities, improvements in health-care provision and other services, such as enrichment of system, contribution and support within society (ICT, 2005).

While there is acknowledgment of the prospective of ICT as a device for the endorsement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, a gender divide has also been identified, reproduced in the lower numbers of women accessing and using ICT in measuring up with men. Unless this gender divide is particularly concentrated upon, there is jeopardy that ICT may aggravate existing inequalities between women and men and generate new forms of inequality. If, however, the gender dimensions of ICT are in terms of access and use, capacity-building opportunities, employment and potential for empowerment are unambiguously identified and addressed, ICT can be an influential method for political and social empowerment of women, and the support of gender equality (ICT, 2005).

Scrutiny of gender issues in ICT constructs on preceding gender analysis of technology. Technologies are collectively created and thus have special impacts on women and men. Women's capability to develop the prospective of the innovative ICT as tools for empowerment is restrained in different ways. Some restraints are connected to factors that influence both women and men, including technical infrastructure, connection costs, computer literacy and language skills. These general restraints are, however, aggravated in many cases by gender-based determinants which particularly bring about difficulties to women (ICT, 2005).

## **EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN INDIA**

Indian economy has made considerable advancement across the complete gamut of industries; most of the sectors have grown at a hasty pace especially the information technology sector, leading to an increase in the incomes and enhancing consumption. India continues to undergo many challenges in bridging development gaps; almost 25 percent of its population i.e. 300 million people reside below poverty line. India's 25 percent rate of illiteracy is five times

that of China, with the economic cost of illiteracy alone estimated to be \$54 billion per annum (Catalyzing Change, 2015).

The public sector has been making numerous endeavors to bridge these gaps. Programs such as Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), are the largest social safety net programs around the world adding up to Rs 2 lakh crores in annual expenditure by the Government. In reality, during the last few years there have been improvement in many wellbeing indicators from 2000-01 to 2009-10; there have been a reduction in school dropout rates in primary education from 41 percent to 29 percent and percentage population with admittance to sanitation facilities has increased from 34 percent to 36 percent. However, the pace of change of these indicators has been slow; signifying that, going further, even larger attempts from all concerned stakeholders will be entailed (Catalyzing Change, 2015).

Almost all companies are performing tasks towards advancing education and vocational skills; furthermore, healthcare, environment and gender equality have noteworthy occurrence across these companies. Other areas included in the Companies Act are observed by less than 20% of the companies. Employee volunteering programs and straight funding to NGOs/beneficiaries have been the main areas of contribution across Indian IT and BPM companies. Companies that account for 50% are also contributing through the encouragement, however, promotion support is deficient across the board as only 19 percent companies are centering on making a difference through that channel. A major chunk (54%) of the IT and BPM companies' associate with NGOs and schemes that are routed through these organizations. Companies that account for 23% endorse social initiatives only through their personal business foundation. Significant portions (21%) of companies have a combination of initiatives run by company foundation and through collaborating with NGOs (Catalyzing Change, 2015).

Governments, private companies, civil society organizations, and academia will need to coordinate and commit themselves to sustainable development and dedicate themselves towards the development of gender equality and social responsibility to achieve its economic potential. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines sustainable development as disseminating the advantages of cost-effective growth rightfully, rejuvenating the environment rather than destroying it, and empowering people rather than marginalizing them (Social Responsibility, 2013).

## **DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

The following points have been stated that are crucial to understand the development of social responsibility amongst the individuals (Berman, 1990).

1. Relationship with Society – The development of moral values, psychosocial behavior, and behavior development provides an individual with the understanding of developing a relationship with the society. The parents, teachers, neighbors and the society are

- responsible for constructing the relationship with each individual's formation of a positive and an empowered link with the society.
2. Understanding the Interdependence – In the field of education, teachers help students in understanding the social and ecological interdependence. The problems of hunger, poverty, terrorism, destruction, natural calamities, homelessness and so forth demonstrate that there is an inextricable connection that one individual has with another across the globe. An individual has to understand his interdependence and learn how to get along with others in a mutually dependent world.
  3. Educating for the Development of Social Consciousness – This means putting before the people a set of questions that would focus upon their social development. What are an individual's aspirations for the future, what can a person do to create a more just, peaceful and an ecologically sound environment, and what means should be adopted in order to bring about an end to the problems of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. An individual should imbibe within himself morality, astuteness, honesty and integrity; he should be responsible, hard working and show courteousness towards other individuals.
  4. Becoming part of a Community – It is vital that an individual should be aware of the needs and requirements of the community in which he resides. An individual should possess the capability to develop togetherness, harmony and team spirit amongst the people. The means that are required in order to bring about welfare of the society have to be understood by the individuals and they are required to possess an interactive, helpful and a social nature.
  5. Developing Basic Social Skills – The basic social skills that an individual is required to develop are effective communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and holding point of view. Besides educational skills, these skills are essential in order to promote gender equality and social responsibility. Formulating perspectives, opinions, beliefs and ideas with respect to the welfare of the society is crucial to achieve the desired goals and objectives.
  6. Developing Basic Participatory Understandings and Skills – In order to effectively participate in the political arena, the individuals need to learn several skills that are part of the curriculum in an indirect way. These skills are the organizational skills, so that they can work well in groups and in organizations. Consensus building skills, so that they can transform oppositional debates into productive dialogues. Group problem solving skills, these would enable them to have access to the diverse resources and talents from the groups to find out solutions to complex problems. Long term thinking skills, these should have a positive impact upon family, job and the community. These skills enable the individuals to become more competent as they enter into the political arena.
  7. Exploring Real world Issues – Education should enable the students to understand the issues and problems of the real world. In all the fields of, science, technology, English, mathematics etc. what are the real facts, problems and current issues should be

understood and effectively dealt with. Learning about the social and political issues should be an integral part of school life. The thinking of the students should be developed in a critical and a creative manner about the issues encountered and they should be authorized to take actions to influence events.

8. Experiments in Social Responsibility – There have been various experiments that individuals are educated about in social responsibility; the key elements are the moral discussion, cooperative learning, participatory decision making both within the classroom as well as the school, community building and providing caring roles beyond the classrooms through cross-age tutoring, service to the school and service to the wider-community. Educational institutions employ such kinds of strategies that serve to build an organized and an encouraging atmosphere that cultivates ethical development and social competency.
9. Social Vision and Education – Educators should train their students to develop a positive vision regarding their future, students should be confident and believe that they can do well, live in an enhanced manner, be kinder and be reasonable. The educators should be efficient and develop their students in such a manner that they can effectively contribute towards the goodwill of the society, maintain social skills, social responsibility and gender equality.

## DISCUSSION

In India, education has been considered important for the development of gender equality and social responsibility.

Literacy skills enable an individual to become aware, informative and knowledgeable regarding societies, problems, different cultures, religions, morals, ethics, duties, and social responsibilities. In rural areas, people do not very much believe in acquiring education, they recognize the difference between men and women, they are of the viewpoint that men are able to acquire literacy skills and get engaged in some kind of employment, whereas education should not carry any significance for women, they are meant to perform only the household chores. In the present, this viewpoint is undergoing a change and in rural areas too, educational institutions are being developed so that both boys and girls can acquire literacy skills.

Education has indoctrinated this viewpoint into the mindsets of the people that men and women should be treated equally; acquiring literacy skills, getting enrolled in higher educational institutions, having equal employment opportunities is applicable to both men and women without any kind of discrimination or inequality. Men and women have the basic rights to acquire equal rights and opportunities. With the enhancement of technologies and development of the ICT sector, there has been immense reduction in the disparities of gender equality.

The developments in the system of education, initiation of various programs and schemes such as Integrated Child Development Services, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Targeted Public Distribution System and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act have

largely contributed in the development of gender equality and social responsibility. It is important for an individual to possess the attitude of responsibility; this attitude should be applicable in all areas socially, economically, financially, politically and administratively. For the achievement of this purpose, there are certain factors that need to be taken care of, these are: relationship with society, understanding the interdependence, educating for the development of social consciousness, becoming part of a community, developing basic social skills, developing basic participatory understandings and skills, exploring real world issues, experiments in social responsibility and social vision and education. Identification of all these factors would contribute in developing gender equality and in making individuals well educated, aware and responsible citizens of the country.

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