

EDUCATION FOR EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN IN INDIA

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Introduction:

Women's empowerment has been an issue of concern for decades. Though a survey on the women of the Mo communities of Ghana reveals a high level of participation in decision-making both at home and in the community and some level of economic independence, much needs to be done to further enhance their skills for higher education, income generation and participation in decision-making. This paper shows how functional literacy education could be used to facilitate empowerment among women in a developing community. Olivia Tiwaah Frimpong Kwapong has just completed her studies as a Special (PhD) student at GSAS, Harvard University and an ABD doctora student at the University of Ghana. She is a Lecturer in Principles of Adult Education and Programme Management at the Institute of Adult Education, University of Ghana, and Legon.

Historical Review:

The history proves that after considerable struggle the universities opened their doors to women. Cambridge University permitted to appear women students at the examinations from 1872, London University in 1878 and Oxford University from 1884. In India, Calcutta University from 1877 followed by Bombay University in 1883. It means that only to enter for higher education women wait for years.

In India, up to middle of the 20th Century women's total economic and cultural dependency was accepted by the society at large. Since, 1950, the movement of empowerment of women took its roots. Establishment of first Women University in Maharashtra, publication of

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the book titled as 'Women and Economic Development' of Easther Boserup, publication of the Status of Women's Committee Report (Towards Equality– Dec. 1974), declaration of the year 1975 as 'International Women Year' and the decade – 1975-85 as 'Women's Decade', Programme of Action – 1986 and 1992, and such other activities & actions, books & reports and National & International Conferences on Women Studies contributed much to bring the women to the present status. Now we observe that in every field of social life wherever women got opportunities, proved best.

Present Position:

After independence, to promote higher education of women government established separate women universities and women colleges. During the last six decades, no. of women colleges increased by nearly 10 times but the percentage of women colleges to total colleges remains more or less same i.e. about 12%. On the eve of independence, the share of women in total enrolment was about 10%. When the country is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee of independence, it crossed 40%. This shows awareness about women higher education in the society.

Education for Empowerment of Rural Women

Women's empowerment, several policy approaches have been used. It is said that though the Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD)/Gender and Development (GAD) strategies that shaped policy interventions and informed scholarly reflections in the 1960s and 1970s were limited by the fact that they remained within the established parameters of the state-led model of development and the discourses of its organic intellectuals, these approaches went some way in addressing some of the gender-based contradictions in the development process.

Educational Empowerment

it was observed that the women had a low level of formal education. Some of the women had no formal education, some were schooled up to the basic level and some had attended training college. Meanwhile the desire of the women to participate in training programmes to

upgrade themselves and their careers implied that the women were determined to enhance themselves. At the same time as many as being keen on promoting female education.

Economic Empowerment

the women engaged in income-generating activities; some being able to manage their own income-generating activities; some were allowed by husbands to decide on how to use their own money; some of the women had access to land for agricultural purposes; few were allowed by their husbands to cultivate for commercial purposes; some were capable of controlling or managing their own income; and many of the women were strongly determined to partake in any training programme to upgrade themselves and improve upon their career. It could be emphasized that the women had a high level of economic independence. This implies that the women need to be strengthened or assisted in order to reduce their level of dependence and rather enhance their level of independence.

Decision-Making in the Home

It was found out that as many of the women studied were able to share ideas with their spouse; few were able to express their views on family planning; some could give instances of the type of decisions that they were able to take in the home. Some of the women were involved in the planning of their family's budget, few were able to decide on their own to hand over their properties to their heirs, all most all were allowed by their husbands to decide on how to use their money, and the women had high participation in decision-making in the home. There were however a few lapses which would require capacity building to improve upon their situation.

Alternative Courses / Vocational Courses/ Distance Courses –

Due to our socio-cultural condition, girls, mainly from rural area are not sent to colleges. A major portion of the women population is away from the higher education. Universities have to design such vocational or distance courses that could enable them to get traditional degrees such as B.A. & B.Com. Even skill oriented courses are run on vocational and distance mode. Open universities are doing the same job but they are not so spread and reached to remote areas just like formal education system.

Linking training with Vocation –

To make the women self-reliant, it is necessary to enable them to earn sustainable income - make them economically self-dependent. The add-on courses should be market oriented. Proper channel be provided that they can get the market for their production. College girls do the courses but in practice they do not apply the skill they acquired because they don't know market requirements, market status and marketing skill. So, only job oriented courses are not sufficient but proper guidance regarding market availability, identification of customers, counseling and negotiating with customers be provided. The skill and knowledge of encashment of their skill and knowledge are taught. Professional knowledge and skill without knowledge of practical application is worthless.

Promoting Research in Women Studies –

Universities should promote structural studies regarding women. Research grants or project grants should be provided for data base studies. Their conclusions and suggestions are communicated to the policy makers at state level as well as at national level. These studies certainly suggest new ways, means and measures for empowerment of women and the national policy can be designed on the realistic ground.

Information Cell or Career Guidance Cell –

In every college women information cell be established. A senior lecturer with additional charge is appointed as an officer in charge. The duty of officer – in- charge would be to provide and publish the information regarding the various courses available in the college, nearby colleges and in the university. The details regarding the courses such as fees, qualification, duration, benefits etc., and jobs available after completion of the course, government subsidies and procedure of obtaining bank credit for self employment etc. He should be in contact with the business organizations where placements are available.

Development of Women Entrepreneurship –

In the post independence era Indian women proved that there is no job, profession or business which they can not shoulder. In every field they are shouldering responsibilities and accepting challenges of even risky tasks. Higher educational institution can promote the women

entrepreneurship through establishing specialized institutes imparting education and training on development of entrepreneurship, reserving admission quota for women in technical and professional courses and networking with professional institutes such as institute of Chartered Accountants, Institutes of Cost and Works Accountants, Company Secretaries, IITs, IIITs, IIMs, Bar Council etc. (S B Singh, Sanjai S Rathore, Alka Singh)

Conclusion:

This Article deals with Education for Empowerment of Rural Women in India. In which the Women's empowerment has been an issue of concern for decades. The history proves that after considerable struggle the universities opened their doors to women. After independence, to promote higher education of women government established separate women universities and women colleges. Women's empowerment, several policy approaches have been used. Further it also concentrated on the Education for Empowerment of Rural Women, Educational Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, and Decision-Making in the Home. It also emphasized the Alternative Courses / Vocational Courses/ Distance Courses, Linking training with Vocation, Promoting Research in Women Studies, Information Cell or Career Guidance Cell, Development of Women Entrepreneurship.

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