

CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN (EMPOWERMENT) IN BIHAR

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Abstract

The present study was undertaken to ascertain the effect of rural development on the various dimensions of the respondents and the work of different Schemes/Yojanas and Projects provided by Government. It was hypothesized that : (i) There would be significant effect of rural development on the education of the respondents, (ii) There would be significant effect of rural development on the employment of the respondents, (iii) There would be significant effect of rural development on the female enterprise of the respondents. Literacy and adult education appears to be the key interventions to address both the status and position of women. Innovative implementation of literacy programmes, especially through institution building of women may be an effective strategy that can be implemented by the government. Several NGOs working in the field have demonstrated the viability of women sanghas or self-help groups in addressing the issue of literacy. There is a need to address the functional literacy needs of women in order to enhance their participation in economic and social spheres. Girl child education assumes importance in the context of gendered-poverty of Bihar. There is a need to address the infrastructure deficiencies and human resource requirements to enhance girl child participation. As most of the non-participation or drop-out of girls occur due to lack of education facilities, there is a need to develop methodologies to identify the schooling needs in rural areas and respond to the demand. School mapping exercise through community participation is needed in order to create a demand system for school education. It is found to be a very highly motivating experience for the rural communities to be involved in the school mapping exercises.

Keywords: Literacy, Education, NGOs, Women Education, Female Literacy, Social Development.

Introduction

Education has always been a foundation for economic and social development and it will be essential for the knowledge economies of the 21st century. Every issue that our society faces is like a link of a chain. Each issue is connected to another either directly or indirectly. Lack of education and illiteracy is the mother of all issues as it gives birth, to many other issues like poverty, unemployment, child labor, population burst and many more. Education in India is a key for social and economic progress. Education of girls is vital not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation. Level of literacy and educational attainment are important indicators of development of any given society and we cannot exclude women in the development of any society as they contribute about half of the human race. The present state of Bihar, comprising about 3 per cent of the total geographical area of India and about 9 per cent of its total population (102 million as per the 2011 Census), is the most densely populated state of the country. However, with an urban population of just 11 percent, it is the least urbanized among the major states of India. Till recently, it was also among the slowest growing regions of the country. Although the growth rate of state's GDP has considerably accelerated during the last six years, with the state economy growing at over 10 per cent per annum, the state continues to be among the economically most backward ones with one of the lowest per capita incomes and highest incidence of poverty in the country.

Rural literacy rate in Bihar

Bihar has a total literacy rate of 63.82%. Overall Males and Female literacy rate is 73.39% and 53.33% respectively. Total Rural literacy rate in Bihar is 43.9%. In rural areas of Bihar, Males and Female literacy rate is 57.1 and 29.6 respectively. Total Urban literacy rate in Bihar is 71.9. In urban areas of Bihar, Males and Female literacy rate is 79.9 and 62.6 respectively. . Total number of literates in Bihar 3,16,75,607 which consists.2,09,78,955 Male and 1,06,96,652 Female. Patna has highest Literacy Rate of 63.82% followed by Rohtas (62.36%) and Munger (60.11%). .Kishanganj has lowest Literacy Rate of 31.02% followed by Araria (34.94%) &Katihar (35.29%).

Literacy in Bihar

Districts of Bihar		1991	2014	1991	2014	1991	2014
		(Total)	(Total)	(Male)	(Male)	(Female)	(Female)
West Champaran	27.99	39.63		39.62	51.91	14.41	25.85
East Champaran	27.59	38.14		39.65	50.14	13.69	24.65
Sheohar	26.18	37.01		36.36	45.54	14.34	27.43
Sitamarhi	28.49	39.38		39.86	51.02	15.49	26.35
Madhubani	33.22	42.35		48.49	57.26	16.75	26.56
Supaul	28.11	37.8		40.96	53.23	13.74	21.02
Araria	26.19	34.94		36.99	46.5	14.01	22.14
Kishanganj	22.22	31.02		33.12	42.8	10.38	18.49
Purnia	28.52	35.51		38.92	46.16	16.8	23.72
Katihar	28.7	35.29		39.24	45.51	16.88	24.03
Madhepura	27.72	36.19		39.31	48.87	14.41	22.31
Saharsa	29.98	39.28		42.37	52.04	15.83	25.31
Darbhanga	34.94	44.32		48.31	57.18	20.09	30.35
Muzaffarpur	36.11	48.15		48.44	60.19	22.33	35.2
Gopalganj	34.96	48.19		51.62	63.81	17.75	32.81
Siwan district	39.13	52.01		57.51	67.67	21.33	37.26
Saran	41.79	52.01		60.18	67.81	22.71	35.74
Vaishali	40.56	51.63		55.62	64	24.08	38.14
Samastipur	36.37	45.76		50.39	57.83	21.17	32.69
Begusarai	36.88	48.55		48.66	59.71	23.52	36.21
Khagaria	32.33	41.56		42.97	52.02	19.79	29.62
Bhagalpur	41.84	50.28		53.41	60.11	28.11	38.83
Banka	34.55	43.4		48.17	56.28	18.99	29.1

Literacy Rate from 1951~2014

Munger	52.25	60.11	64.95	70.68	37.07	47.97
Lakhisarai	39.4	48.21	53.12	60.97	23.48	34.26
Sheikhpura	40.92	49.01	55.43	62.56	24.41	34.13
Nalanda	46.95	53.64	61.95	66.94	29.97	39.03
Patna	56.33	63.82	69.07	73.81	41.35	52.17
Bhojpur	48.18	59.71	66.35	74.78	27.95	42.81
Buxar	33.49	57.49	62.94	72.82	25.74	40.36
Kaimur	39.35	55.57	55.68	70.57	20.69	38.9
Rohtas	48.52	62.36	64.5	76.54	30.29	46.62
Jehanabad	45.83	56.03	63.11	70.9	26.81	40.08
Aurangabad	45.14	57.5	61.8	71.99	26.67	42.04
Gaya	40.47	51.07	55.22	63.81	24.2	37.4
Nawada	38.96	47.36	54.85	61.22	21.82	32.64

Literacy Rate from 1951~2014

Year	Total	Males	Females
1951	13.49	22.68	4.22
1961	21.95	35.85	8.11
1971	23.17	35.86	9.86
1981	32.32	47.11	16.61
1991	37.49	51.37	21.99
2001	47.53	60.32	33.57
2011	63.82	73.39	53.33

Education in Bihar

Level	Persons	Male	Female
Below Primary	7,890,329	4,754,137	3,136,192
Graduate & above	2,109,415	1,737,651	371,764
Higher Secondary	1,826,093	1,385,282	440,811
Literate without educational	1,715,049	1,109,731	605,318
Middle	4,390,226	3,012,151	1,378,075
Non-technical Diploma	48,532	40,458	8,074
Primary	8,334,709	5,130,917	3,203,792
Secondary	4,751,560	3,439,918	1,311,642
Technical Diploma	24,989	20,088	4,901
Unclassified	18,675	14,043	4,632

The following are the some of the important factors which could affect the low literacy rate of women of rural Bihar

Poor school environment for girls

In general the school environment for girls in rural Bihar is not really interesting and encouraging. There are still many schools with poor basic amenities such as drinking water, and toilet facilities, improper building and inadequate number of teachers especially female teachers preferable for any parents for safety of their girl children from different types of exploitation and abuse.

The lower enrolment due to family responsibilities

The major educational problem faced by girls, especially girls from rural areas, is that although they may be enrolled at the beginning at the year, they do not always remain in school. Girls are often taken out of school to share the family responsibilities. Children belonging to low caste families are forced to learn skills and work and not encouraged to go to school due to various factors in the sphere of strict instruction from high caste communities for their selfish motives of keeping them as domestic servants. The data on school attendance collected by the World Bank shows the proportion of girls attending school decreases with age while for boys it remains stable.

Dowry system

In rural Bihar, dowry refers to the durable goods, cash and real or movable property that the bride's family gives to the bridegroom, his parents or his relatives as a condition of the marriage. The dowry system is thought to put great financial burden on the bride's family. Dowry system and other social act as main causes of the neglect of the girl child and discrimination against girl child including the deprivation of right to education. In some cases, the dowry system leads to the crime against women ranging from emotional abuse, injury to even deaths.

Early marriage

Early or child marriage in India, according to Indian law, is a marriage where either the woman is below age 18 or the man is below age 21. Most child marriage involves underage women, many of whom are in poor socio-economic conditions. Bihar is the state amongst the highest child marriage rates in India. Rural rates of early marriages were three times higher than urban India rates in 2009 and still it is on the higher side. There is high association of female literacy with female age at marriage. By and large the female age at marriage of 18 as prescribed by various legislations not at all followed in India. It is very much ignored and neglected by the families of parents with low literacy.

Priority to son's education compared to daughter's education

Many parents view educating sons as an investment because the sons will be responsible for caring for aging parents. On the other hand parents may see the education of daughter a waste of money as daughter will eventually live with their husband's families and the parents will not benefit directly from their education.

Poverty

Poverty happens to be the single biggest cause of illiteracy in rural Bihar and a precursor to all other effects. Rural women are found to be economically very poor all over the state. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world. Sex slaves are a direct outcome of poverty. In a poor family, girls are the main victims; they are malnourished and are denied the opportunity of better education and other facility. If poverty were not a concern, then the girl child will be able to follow her dreams without concerns of sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and any education or work. Numerous studies show that illiterate women have high levels of fertility, poor nutritional status, low earning potential and little autonomy within the household.

Lack of adequate number of Female teachers

Another barrier to female education is the lack of female teachers. As India is a gender segregated society, it is a very important factor in the low female literacy rate. It is one of the barriers to girls' education. Girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement if they have female teachers. This is particularly true in highly gender-segregated societies such as India

Caste Disparities

Severe caste disparities also exist. Specifically it is on the higher side in the rural part of Bihar. Discrimination of lower castes has resulted in high dropout rates and low enrollment rates. But in spite of all reasons, women must understand and realize that education can actually end the vicious cycle of poverty, their misfortune, so that they can live a life with pride. In case of any misfortune in life, it is education that would help her, not anything else. The government should really work towards the number, distance and quality of schools in rural as well as urban India. We should encourage the girl child in getting education to create a balanced and an educated society.

Collaborative Efforts and Incentives for the Betterment of Rural Women Education

The cause for female education has attracted the efforts of many organizations and governments, and different initiatives have proven the importance of financial incentives, non-formal training, the hiring of women in the education sector, and community engagement. Financial incentives have been used both to encourage educators to enter the field of girls' education and specially enabling the rural girls to come into the main flow of development.

Issues

Bihar has made fast stride since 2006 in terms of growth rates and human development indicators. Yet, the poverty levels in the state show signs of sluggishness. As per a Planning Commission bulletin of March 2012, while the population under the poverty line at the national level declined by 7.3 percent between 2004-05 and 2009-10, the decline in the case of Bihar was a mere 0.9 percent. The corresponding figures in the neighboring states of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa were 11.9 percent and 20.2 respectively. Is the low skill base in Bihar one of the important contributory factors to this sluggish trend in poverty reduction?

The demographic profile of Bihar, the livelihood pattern of its masses and the low skill baseline indeed point to a strong causal relationship. As per the 2011 Census, out of the total population

of 104 million, 40 million were in the age group of 15 to 29 years and the child population in the age-group 5 to 14 years was 20 million. Further, about 60 percent of the rural population in Bihar is landless and depends on labour alone for its subsistence. Yet, the existing skill baseline that determines the livelihoods prospects of this youthful population remains quite dismal. An IIPA scoping study on skill development commissioned by the Government of Bihar reports that in the age group of 15-29 years, only 0.3 percent reported „to be receiving formal vocational training“ as on the date of the survey and 0.2 percent reported „to have received formal vocational training“. Another 1-2 percent reported to have received non-formal vocational training. Thus, “in each category, the all-India averages were 4 to 12 times their Bihar counterpart.” A similar picture emerges from a district-wise assessment of skill demand sponsored by the National Skill Development Corporation.

Issues and Challenges with Female Literacy of Rural Bihar

Although the rural women are playing a crucial role in the advancement of agriculture and economy and largely to the society, a number of challenges are being faced by the rural women of our society due to various reasons like- the gender discrimination, inadequate access to the health care etc. They are also having light access to the medical services, less income, limited inheritance and land rights. The females of rural area are deprived of job security. Injustice, violence and insecurity are the major issues that persist in the rural society. The ultimate reason behind all these issues is lack of having quality education for the women of rural Bihar. There are other burning social issues such as child marriage and gender inequality which are reasons for several social problems. These too can be tackled through girls' education. The Bihar Government has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all; however the state still has one of the lowest rural

female literacy rates in Asia. This low level of literacy not only has a negative impact on rural women's lives but also on their families' lives and on their country's economic development.

Conclusion

To make Bihar nationally competitive and to boost its economic growth further, a skilled workforce is essential. As more and more Bihar moves towards the Knowledge economy, it becomes increasingly important for it to focus on advancement of the skills and these skills have to be relevant to the emerging economic environment. For transforming its demographic dividend, an efficient skill development system is the need of the hour. Therefore to achieve its ambitious skilling target, it is imperative to have holistic solutions of the challenges instead of piecemeal interventions.

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