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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION: OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

Manoj Kumar Haldar

Abstract:

It is a recognized fact that women are the weaker and marginal section of our society in respect of socio-economic conditions and right to entitlement. Specially women's education is currently at the centre of development discourse. In the discourse on education and development, 'education' has tended to mean primary and to an extent, secondary education. The issue of higher education has so far received lukewarm attention. This article tries to understand the conditions of Indian Women in Higher Education, which is important for their empowerment. The statistical data show that women's share in higher education are always far below from the males' share in all of primary, secondary and tertiary level. The study tries to understand the conditions and causes which play the most vital role for this gap. Generally, it was seen that, most of women student cannot complete their higher study due to the early marriage. The average age of marriage of girl students is same as to starting point to the higher education. In this context Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system has tremendous potential of inclusive growth of education because of its distinctive nature of being a user friendly system. This study attempts to outline the opportunities which open and distance learning can provide to women students so that they can contribute to a more supportable and vigorous civilization.

Keywords: Open and Distance Learning System, Women Empowerment and Development, Women in Higher Education, Women Education

Introduction

Improvements of the women conditions are not enough to establish a modern developed society. Women of India have been exposed to greater insecurity, to poverty, illiteracy, casteism, orthodoxy unhealthy living conditions, some religious conservativeness and patriarchal dominance in most of the fields and also all other backwardness. They have been affected by lack of consciousness of their legal rights, various opportunities and facilities owing to the innate discriminations prevalent in the society. In the second half of the last century, there has been a national and global effort with a strong support from The United Nations to understand the discrimination and restore a status to women. The slogan has been women empowerment, equality, development and peace.

Empowerment

The word empowerment is used in many different contexts and by many different

organisations. For example, literature about empowerment is found in the fields of education, psychology, social work, in US radical politics in the 1960s, as well as in the work of feminist and development organisations. In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars and practitioners used the term empowerment, which is said to occur when women mobilized themselves and take leadership positions in work settings or the community. There are a variety of understandings of the term empowerment due to its widespread usage.

Empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.

A widely used definition of women's empowerment is increased power achieved through