

WOMEN EDUCATION IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: A STEP TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT

***Prof. Sudarshana Rana , **Jyoti,**

Dean Faculty of Education, Himachal Pradesh University, Summer Hill Shimla-5
Senior Research Fellow (Education) Himachal Pradesh University, Summer Hill, Shimla-5

ABSTRACT: *Women education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. India is poised to becoming superpower, a developed country by 2020. The growth of women education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large women folk in the country are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Education of women is the most powerful tool of change in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. This paper is an effort to capture the emerging picture with respect to women education and development in Himachal Pradesh.*

KEY WORDS: *Women Education, Women Development*

INTRODUCTION

The status of a nation, its overall socio-economic condition can be assessed by judging and appraising the status of its women as these are intimately linked with the development. Women are an integral part of society and they play an important role in determining the destiny of a nation. Therefore, due recognition to them in the society and their greater involvement in socio-economic and political affairs became all the more important. Now a day's 'Development of Society' does not mean the partial development for the male only. Man and woman should work together shoulder to shoulder for the all-round progress and development for our generations and the society we live in. The women of today play the equal role in the society as the men have been playing from the time immemorial. Accordingly, they have increased their number involving themselves almost in every work field of the present day society. This has been possible only due to awakening amongst the women community in response to the need of the hour. It carries a good indication for the future that our women community has also come forward to share the burden of leading the society. Thus, the responsibility taken up by the women community has doubled during the recent years. On one hand, they have been, looking after all the household activities traditionally undertaken by them and on the other hand they have gladly accepted the new responsibilities for leading the society taking equal share with men. Every educated woman can run her house well and make it a paradise on earth. She can think well about her future and aim in life and then choose the appropriate subject which will be useful to her throughout the life. To bear the heavy burden at present and in future our present and coming generation specially the women should be well educated.

NEED OF WOMEN EDUCATION

The education of women is of great importance in our social life. She can train a child's mind and keep him away from undeniable company and wrong notions. The role of women outside home is becoming an important aspect of the country. The Science and technology have brought a complete revolution in thought and attitude of human being. It is felt that Indian women have to come forward and play a great role in the development of scientific thinking and disposition in solving the problems of life. The women with their proper and up to date scientific knowledge and attitude can teach their children the art of healthy living. In India, gender bias is part of social system which has roots in most common social group named as family. Although women are treated slightly different in different communities but situation is not fair neither economical nor social. This social inequality is in the way of women empowerment. For a balanced growth, an equal participation of both the genders is a necessary condition. Women empowerment can only be achieved through the provision of adequate and functional education to the women folk. The need for women education is also informed by the fact that purposeful occupational achievement and satisfaction is ensured by deep self-awareness and understanding which can only be achieved through the provision of effective and functional education.

WOMEN EDUCATION IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

Education is the most important tool for bringing transformation and ensuring social change. Worldwide, the women have been denied the education opportunities. Opening of more educational institutions have helped to increase in enrolment of women students at all levels. Otherwise students of hill region had to traverse long distances to reach schools and many parents decided not to send their girl child to schools. The enrolment of girl child in primary schools has increased from 40.76 per cent to 48.21 per cent from 1981-82 to 1997-98 and from 7.55 per cent to 44.06 per cent at secondary level during these years. During 2012- 13, the enrolment of girls in primary, secondary and higher education has been registered as 47.51 per cent, 47.76 and 51.19 respectively. Interestingly, enrolment ratio of girls is more in higher education as compared to girls in the State. Women education in Himachal Pradesh has come to age and it is in process in its endeavors to do more and always better for the cause of higher education among women.

DEMOGRAPHY (2011)

Population of Himachal Pradesh is 68.56 lakh persons as per the census report for the year 2011. 89.01% of the total population inhabits 20,604 villages in the rural areas of the State. These villages are sparsely distributed across the State having population density as low as 1 person per square kilometer in the remote and tribal area of Lahaul & Spiti, Hamirpur district has largest population density of 369 persons per square kilometer as against 123 persons per square kilometer for the whole State. Himachal Pradesh is one of the few states of the country where gender equality is an integral part of the social ethos as well as the overall development strategy. The following table no. 1 shows the demography of Himachal Pradesh.

Table No-1

Description	2011
Population size	6864602
Population size (Males)	3481873
Population size (Females)	3382729
Population size (Rural)	6176050
Population size (Urban)	688552
Population size (Rural Males)	3110345
Population size (Rural Females)	3065705
Population size (Urban Males)	371528
Population size (Urban Females)	317024
Population density (Total, Persons per sq km)	123
Sex ratio (Females per 1000 males)	972
Sex ratio (Rural)	986
Sex ratio (Urban)	853
Population size, 0 - 6 yrs	777898
Population size, 0 - 6 yrs (Males)	407459
Population size, 0 - 6 yrs (Females)	370439
Population size, 0 - 6 yrs (Rural)	712822
Population size, 0 - 6 yrs (Urban)	65076
Population size, 0 - 6 yrs (Rural Males)	372854
Population size, 0 - 6 yrs (Rural Females)	339968
Population size, 0 - 6 yrs (Urban Males)	34605
Population size, 0 - 6 yrs (Urban Females)	30471
Sex ratio, 0 - 6 yrs (Females per 1000 males)	909
Sex ratio, 0 - 6 yrs (Rural)	912
Sex ratio, 0 - 6 yrs (Urban)	881

Source: http://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/censusinfodashboard/stock/profiles/en/IND002_Himachal%20Pradesh.pdf

The table no. 1 shows that the sex ratio of Himachal Pradesh is 972 females per 1000 males as per 2011 census.

LITERACY RATE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH (1951-2011)

Literacy has made remarkable progress in Himachal Pradesh. At the time of independence, with only eight per cent literates, Himachal Pradesh had the lowest literacy level in India. The state was in fact classified as a “backward” region in North India. The literacy rate however, improved steadily and today it ranks 11th among all the states and UTs in India which is a remarkable achievement. Table no. 2 shows the literacy rates of Himachal Pradesh between 1951-2011.

TABLE-2

Year	Male	Female	Literacy
1951	7.5	2	4.8
1961	32.3	9.5	21.3
1971	43.19	20.23	31.96
1981	53.19	31.46	42.48
1991	75.36	52.13	63.86
2001	85.35	67.42	76.48
2011	90.83	76.6	83.78

Source: Census of India, Provisional Population Totals, Paper 1 of 2011, Himachal Pradesh.

Note: * Excludes 0-6 population

The table no.2 shows that the proportion of total literates in the state (90.83%) is higher than the all-India average of 65.38 per cent, according to the 2011 census. As Table 1 shows, the literacy rate in Himachal increased by 12.62 per cent points from 1991 to 2001 and by 7.18 per cent points during the last 10 years. Female literacy increased by 9.18 per cent points and the male literacy by 9.99 per cent points during the last decade. Despite the relatively faster rate of growth of female literacy, the gap between male and female literacy continues to be very high at 14.23 per cent.

DISTRICT WISE LITERACY RATE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH (2011)

The table no. 3 shows the male and female literacy rates in all the districts of Himachal Pradesh.

TABLE-3

Districts	2011		
	Male	Female	TOTAL
Bilaspur	92.39	78.9	85.67
Chamba	84.19	62.14	73.19
Hamirpur	95.28	83.44	89.01
Kangra	92.55	80.62	86.49
Kinnour	88.37	71.34	80.77
Kullu	88.8	71.01	80.14
LahulSpiti	86.97	66.5	77.24
Mandi	91.51	74.33	82.81
Shimla	90.73	77.8	84.55
Sirmour	86.76	72.55	79.98
Solan	91.19	78.02	85.02
Una	92.75	81.67	87.23
H.P.	90.83	76.6	83.78

Source: Census of India, Provisional Population Totals, Paper 2 of 2011, Himachal Pradesh.

Table No. 3 shows that the Chamba district in all the districts of Himachal Pradesh has the lowest literacy rate, followed by Sirmour and Hamirpur district the highest, and closely followed by Una and Kangra districts. The other districts with literacy rates above the state average of 77.13 per cent are Shimla, Bilaspur and Solan. In brief, Himachal Pradesh has tremendously improved its literacy percentage. However, the literacy of females especially in few pockets needs particular government attention.

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PLANS FOR WOMEN IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

The Government of India's National Policy on Education, 1986 (modified in the year 1992) is a forthright statement on education as an empowering agent. The Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution provide for free and compulsory education for all children till the age of 14 years. The famous Unnikrishnan Case declared primary education as a fundamental right. The 93rd Amendment has added a new clause to make elementary education a fundamental right. A state subject so far, education has been brought on the Concurrent List. Himachal Pradesh does not have any policy of its own and adheres to the national policy. In order to achieve universalisation of education, the Government of Himachal Pradesh has already made primary education compulsory by promulgating the Himachal Pradesh Compulsory Primary Education Act, 1997. Launching of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan by the Government of India further reflects its commitment towards the universalisation of elementary education. It is an effort to improve the performance of schools and provide community owned quality education. Its specific aims are to enroll and retain children and bridge gender disparities at elementary level of education.

STEPS FOR ENHANCING WOMEN EDUCATION

Although much work has been done to improve the state of education in Himachal Pradesh, we are still a long way off from attaining standards comparable even to other states. Himachal Pradesh is ranked 11 amongst 29 states and 7 Union Territories of India in its education index for women. Although there is much work to be done to enhance education in India, particular attention is warranted to women's access to education. An attempt has to be made to remove the social, psychological and structural barriers, for participation of majority of women in education. The state must play a prominent role in preventing gender stereotyping and segregation in education, and providing stipends, scholarships, loans, transport facilities, guidance and counseling services to women and their families, especially belonging to the lower and marginalized sections of society, and with required regulation and intervention, when necessary, to correct the imbalances in education access. Below are some recommendations and suggestions for improving access to education for women of the country. Each of these is discussed in detail.

1. **GRASSROOT LEVEL IMPROVEMENTS / INTERVENTIONS:** One of the foremost requirements for ensuring increased participation of women in education is effecting a mindset change in society. This class of recommendation, the building block or core of enabling any kind of change, is discussed first.
 - **Sensitization and awareness building for women's education:** Although the government and various voluntary organizations engage in various attempts to sensitize the local population to the need for women's education, much needs to be done in this area. Unless parents of the girl child see value and merit in sending the girl child to school, they will resist doing so and instead prefer to use her help in household chores or agricultural activities. Institutes of higher learning such as the Universities, IIMs, IITs, NITs, etc. can lead the way by partnering with the state governments in the region to spearhead such an initiative.
2. **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:** Beyond building awareness and sensitizing people towards the need for educating women, innovative approaches to make education available and accessible to women, and incentives to make the prospect attractive for both women and their families, is required. Some recommendations in this direction are offered below;
 - **Target segment and approaches:** We need to move towards a segment-based and sector-wise approach to tackle the problem of poor access to education for women. In rural areas, where enrolment of women in education is rather low, mechanisms need to evolve such that the schools are more accessible for the girl child as well as the psychological and sociological barriers to sending the girl child to school are overcome. An approach that ensures the schools go to the girls instead of the girl child having to struggle to reach the school is one possible direction such as mobile schools, video and tele-schooling.
 - **Build linkages between government schemes and education:** A recurring concern is that of poor infrastructure in schools, such as provision for toilets for women, that specifically addresses the needs of the girl child. While every school needs to have adequate facilities such as drinking water and toilets for both men and women, the fact that these are currently not in place indicates perhaps the lack of will or the fund and resource crunch at the local level.
 - **Incentivisation for education of the girl child:** Since girls are more likely than boys to stay on in schools once they enroll, the primary problem is that of attracting the girl child to the school in the first place. To facilitate this process, beyond communicating the usefulness of education to women, education of the girl child must become an attractive proposition for the parents of the girl child, who might otherwise prioritize sending the male child only to school. Some form of monetary incentive that state governments or panchayats can introduce at their level would go a long way in ensuring equal participation of both boys and girls in formal education. These incentives may not cost the government much in aggregate; they are likely to fuel stronger participation especially in the short term where instrumental and monetary concerns override the need to educate women.
3. **ENABLING POLICY FRAMEWORK:** Efforts to improve access to education for women may also be addressed through effective regulation and government intervention beyond piecemeal efforts by the citizen body for any long-lasting impact. This class of recommendation is shown as the outer ring in the figure, intended as the overarching umbrella in efforts to revitalize education access for women.
 - **Reservation for women in education:** The role of legislation and government intervention is one of the most powerful and effective tools to remedy systemic errors and imbalances prevalent in any society, which continue to be sustained over a period of time. A form of affirmative action, akin to other affirmative action's that provide for reservation to SC/ST and OBC in institutes of higher education, reservation for women in education can potentially reduce the disparity in education access and enrolment, and therefore opportunities made available to women. Although government intervention may not always be desirable, there is no denying that the reservation policy for 'backward castes' has benefited a section of the population and has been instrumental in correcting existing social imbalances. Extending the same logic, since women have continued to be inadequately represented across the education value chain, necessitating a certain percentage of women participation across various levels through required legislation and reservation will not only ensure fair representation but also encourage schools and institutes to actively devise means and programmes to attract women to their portals. Additional subsidies and incentives can further augment such structural mechanisms to ensure gender parity in education.

CONCLUSION

It is gratifying to note that Himachal Pradesh Government is giving priority to the education sector especially women education and is spreading a very high proportion of GDP. Literacy and enrollment have improved considerably. As per census 2011 the sex ratio is 972 females per 1000 males, which has made remarkable progress for past years. The overall literacy rate has increased to 83 percent (census 2011) as it was only 8% at the time of independence. Today Himachal Pradesh ranked 11th among all the states and UTs in India. As it is clear from the study, Chamba district has the lowest literacy rate followed by Sirmour. The government of Himachal Pradesh should frame policy of its own to target

improving the quality of education imparted in the state which will work for the progress and development our coming generation and society we live in.

REFERENCES

- [1] Anil Bhumali (2004): "Education, Employment and Empowering Women", Serials Publications, New Delhi.
- [2] Government of India – Selected Educational Statistics, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, (Various Years).
- [3] Parikh Kirit.S and Chirajib Gupta (2001): "How Effective Is Female Literacy In Reducing Fertility?" Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 36, No.35, September 1, P.3391-3398.
- [4] Rao, R.K. (2001). Women and Education, Kalpaz Publications, Delhi. Elected Educational Statistics (2003-04).Planning, Monitoring & Statistics Division, Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.
- [5] S. Gopal Krishan. (2014). Women Empowerment on Hill State: A Case Study of Himachal Pradesh. Indian Journal of Public Administration. VOL.LX, NO. 3, JULY-SEPTEMBER 2014. P.528
- [6] S.P.Agarwal (2001), Women's Education in India. (1995-98). Present Status, Perspective, Plan, Statistical Indicators with Global View, Vol. III Concept Publications Co, New Delhi.
- [7] Mukherjee, Dipa (2007) "Women's Education in India: Trends, Interlink ages and Policy Issues", MPRA Paper No.4871.
- [8] Vinod K. Mishra and Robert D. Retherford (2000): "Women's Education can Improve Child Nutrition in India", NFHS No.15, ISSN 1083-8678.
- [9] http://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/censusingdashboards/stock/profiles/en/IND002_Himachal%20Pradesh.pdf
- [10] http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Final_PPT_2011_chapter6.pdf
- [11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_states_ranking_by_literacy_rate

