



Literacy and Women in Developing Nations

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ABSTRACT

The International Literacy day was celebrated every year on 8th September with the aim to highlight the importance of literacy to individuals, communities and societies. The emphasis upon the problems, concerns and capacities of women is used for the development of the future. Statistics show that in most parts of the world where the standard of living is high, literacy is equally high among the women in the society. The women had an opportunity to educate themselves so that they become more aware of the prenatal health care, hygiene and nutritional practices. It is also proven that educated women have a profound effect on future generations. Literacy campaigns and programmes were provided in order to give proper education to women.

KEYWORDS :

The United Nations educational scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) has drafted a definition of literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. The national literacy mission defines literacy as acquiring the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic and the ability to apply them to one's day to day life. The achievement of functional literacy implies self-reliance, awareness of the causes of deprivation and the ability to move towards amelioration of the condition by participating in the process of the development, acquiring skills to improve economic status and general well being, imbuing values such as national integration, conservation of women's environment, women's equality, observance of small family norms.

Government schemes like National Literacy Mission, Sarvasiksha Abhiyan, non-governmental efforts are launched in order to provide education to all women in the society and increase the literacy rate. The government also are taking measures to improve the illiterate state by providing awareness programs. For example, not long ago a group of newly literate women from the south coast of Kenya explained the advantages of their recently acquired skills in reading, writing and education. The success of the women also motivate the youth. Literate women has the probability of taking decisions in an appropriate way. Literacy increases not only in the point of view of the nation's welfare but also helps in providing education to their children.

Literacy in India is a key to socio-economic progress. Many developing nations have recognized the benefits of women's education and adopted mass literacy programs. These programs were implemented in countries where both the state and people concerned expected literacy to be one of many factors which would improve social, political and economic conditions that leads to the development of human and material resources. Literacy campaigns, however is a beginning to have an impact on many communities. In order to be effective, these programs have full support of national and local leaders in order to reduce illiteracy. By making education to all members there will be economic expansion in the society and also progress of the individual. The examples of Women entrepreneurs are Chandakocher and Indranooji.

Expanding women's education has become an important objective for developing countries. The benefits are undeniable, educated women contribute positively to every aspect of society. Within in the community, these add labour force, increasing GNP, country's level of income. For developing nations to grow in an increasing trend it is crucial to provide education to women. Most of the developing nations believe that the greater amount of knowledge a women possess, the more it influences and contributes herself to the society.

Due to prejudices and stereotypes, not all members of the society have been given equal access to an education. These discrepancies in literacy levels directly reflect society's stereotypical perceptions of women and their role in the society. The United Nations declared 1990 to be the International Year with female illiteracy as its focal point. At that time, the estimates shows that one third of all women could not

read nor write. UNESCO, one of the literacy's leading sponsors declared the lack of advancement in the education of women.

Education will empower women to maintain a superior position. Education in the society enhance a society's ability to overcome poverty, increase incomes, improve health and nutrition. By making education available to all members a nation can create larger and more skilled labour force. The survey shows that the men who receive literacy training are better equipped to search for jobs and can therefore earn more. Educating women allows a country to tap into a previously unused resource, thus heightening the level of production the country can achieve. The campaigns of women education is not based solely on the economic benefits which it provides. The benefits of women education extends to all aspects of society. Besides contributing to the nation's economy, educated women are an asset to the nation's private sector. Most of the developing nations also says that the large proportion of illiterate females is another reason for low literacy rates.

There are 25 Resource Centres working across the country. Ever since its inception the National Literacy Mission has taken measures to strengthen partnership with NGOs and to evolve both institutional and informal mechanisms to give voluntary organizations active promotional role in the literacy movement. Under the scheme of support to NGOs they are encouraged and provided with the financial assistance to run post literacy and continuing education programmes in well defined areas. In order to revitalize, reenergize and expand the role of state resource centres, not only their member is increased but also their infrastructure and resource facilities are being strengthened to enable them play the role of catalytic agents in adult education. They are responsible mainly for organizing training programmes for literacy functionaries in the state and to prepare literacy materials in local languages.

The Directorate of Adult Education, a subordinate office of the Department of School education and literacy has been entrusted the task of monitoring and evaluating various literacy programmes being launched under the aegis of the National Literacy Mission. It also provides technical and resource support to the National Literacy Mission including media support to achieve its objectives. The National Literacy Mission is laying stress on vigorous monitoring and systematic evaluation of adult education programmes launched under the aegis of the country. It has developed and circulated guidelines for concurrent and final evaluation of the Total Literacy Campaign and Post Literacy Programmes. So far 32 districts have been externally evaluated under the continuing education phase.

It is hoped that the new approach of evaluating literacy campaigns and continuing education scheme will ensure complete transparency and enhance the credibility of the results and impact assessments. The bulk of Indian illiterates live in country's rural areas where the social and economic barriers play an important role in keeping the lowest strata of the society illiterate. Major social reformation efforts are sometimes required to bring about a change in the rural scenario. So far 424 Total Literacy Campaign districts and 176 post literacy districts have been evaluated by the external evaluation agencies. By ed-

educating the women their capabilities increase and also they become entrepreneurs. The Right to Education is a fundamental right and UNESCO aims at education for all by 2015. The campaign to achieve the least threshold literacy level represents the largest ever civil and military mobilization in the country. International Day is celebrated each year on 8th September with the aim to highlight the importance of literacy to individuals, communities and to the society.

REFERENCES

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