

Impact of Female Teachers & Educators on Female Students Education and Empowerment

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Abstract: Women and the teaching profession is a growing issue even though women have been dominating school education for a long time. Female teachers play a very important role in representing a girl child's perspectives and needs; they help create inclusive environments that promote learning, not only in schools, but also in higher educational establishments. Many a times, female students benefit from being taught by female teachers particularly when these female teachers serve as centre stereotypical role models. Female educators have a positive impact in girl students' achievements, apart from their retention in schools. Female educators inspire and influence, can give the girl students, motherly care, listen to their problems and concerns, and be there for them during times of crisis. Female teachers are in a better position to represent the girl child's perspectives and needs, help create an inclusive environment that will promote learning. Beyond academic excellence, female teachers involve themselves with the students' overall development, especially of the girl students. In girls' school and colleges, the teachers' interpersonal traits motivate the students; activate the role of students in learning. Female teachers understand the female students' mental and emotional needs. In rural areas and remote villages, female students taught by female teachers are more likely to move up the academic ladder by completing high school and attending college and thereby have higher productivity. Parents too, feel comfortable and confident for their daughters in school which is inhabited by female teachers. The girls are also driven to come to school if the teacher is a woman. Availability of women teachers in school brings a sense of security among female students. Young girls feel comfortable opening up to female teachers. They feel protected and free from becoming victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. But often, women are underrepresented in leadership positions in most cities and income groups, even when the women are just as qualified as male teachers. The role of women in education cannot be underestimated. Besides being catalysts of empowerment, female educators are also forerunners of change. This paper aims to identify the role of female teachers in activating effective teaching skills and methods among female high school and college students from the

teachers' perspective, and the obstacles limiting their roles. Recruiting more women can be a way for government to boost the number of women who hold qualified jobs and promote gender equality.

Key words: Female teachers, educators, role models, girl students, achievements, etc.

INTRODUCTION

"If you educate a man you educate an individual, however if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Woman empowered means mother India empowered."(Jawaharlal Nehru)

Women help shape the society we live in today, using the most powerful tool available: Education. The 19th century showed a shift in perspectives about women, which opened educational opportunities for women and girls at various levels of education. In the 1800s, they began to take key roles in education, paving the way for more women to foray into various levels of education, first as learners, then as educators.

Teaching is primarily a communication profession. A teacher with effective communication skills can give clear presentation in effective ways using verbal and non-verbal communication skills, effective teaching methods, configuring proper learning environment, can reinforce the skills of students and facilitate the learning process to achieve targeted results (Zayed, 2013 & Ahmed, 2005)

Teachers take important roles when raising educational level of students. His/her scientific expertise and experience induce students the required skills and habits. The roles Female teachers play in representing a girl child's perspectives and needs are very important in creating inclusive environments to promote learning, in schools and also in higher educational establishments. It is often overlooked that these women play the most

important tool for self and national development and both sexes are equal parts of the society and the system.

Aims and Objectives: This paper aims to highlight the Impact of female teachers & educators on female students education and empowerment.

Methodology: A review paper assessing both cross sectional and longitudinal research studies by eminent researchers in different parts of the globe and in India.

The female teachers: Present Scenario:

Women have been dominating school education for a long time. An increased percentage of female teachers are often associated with the type of education systems, issues of feminization etc. In India, contrasting state-level differences are observed in Kerala and Rajasthan; Kerala with a high percentage of female teachers, and Rajasthan with lesser numbers of female teachers. Such issues need to be analysed with a broad view as it pertains to education, employment, women's rights, empowerment etc.

Most times, female students see the female teachers as stereotypical role models. Female educators too have great impact in the girl students achievements and future. Inspirations aroused by female educators and their influence, can give the girl students, great self-confidence during times of crisis. Academically excellent female teachers always involve themselves with the students overall development, especially of the girl students. In girls school, colleges and universities, the female teachers are always the motivational factors to the girl students. Also, it is always the Female teachers who understand the female students mental and emotional needs.

In rural areas and remote villages, the girl students, when there are female teachers, move up more on the academic ladder and complete high school, college and universities leading to higher productivity. A sense of security, comfort, etc. is also felt by parents when lady teachers are present. They feel more confident for their daughters achievements and security in such institutions. The young girls also feel comfortable when they open up to female teachers in issues regarding menstrual problems, sensitive gender problems and exploitations.

In cases of students with mothers as teachers, the mother is forever there to guide and support their learning. The teacher mothers in such cases take great responsibility for the educational growth of their own children too in making them become successful responsible persons.

Obstacles/ Under representations:

The under-representation of women in higher education management is well documented. The higher positions are often obtained based on the influence the women or her family has in the community, in the academic sphere, or certain political influence, instead of on her qualifications. Current practices of recruitment and promotion require urgent investigation in order to understand the barriers to women's progress and to identify strategies to bring about a fairer gender balance based on professional equality. Most often, women are under-represented in leadership positions in most colleges and universities, especially when the woman lacks influence (academic and political) and have lower financial backing, even when the women are just as qualified as male teachers. Sometimes, even more so. There are direct or indirect discriminations against them within the profession; undervaluing of their contribution and work that is often traditionally associated.

Common people also often underestimate the role of women in the education sector. They fail to realise that, besides being catalysts of empowerment, these teachers are forerunners of change in any family, society, and the Nation.

In human resource, female labor has always been instrumental for fulfilling capacity needs, while in perspective of educating women and girls, presence of women teachers and educators are major contributory factors. Education of the girl child lies at the heart of today's core global education mandates, centering around achievement of education related Millennium Development Goals and EFA (Education for All) goals. In countries where girl education of the girl child remains a challenge, female teachers presence within the system is identified as a core barrier to gender parity, equality in education (Herz and Sperling, 2004, Kirk, 2006), especially where retention of the girl child in the school is concerned. Such phenomena makes the recruitment of women teachers into the profession and lead to positive

outcome within the national education sector. India is also trying to recruit more proportions of female teachers in specific states.

Many studies and researches conducted by DISE (District Information System of India), NCERT, DPEP (District Primary Education Programme) shows lower proportions of female teachers at higher levels of schooling. Higher proportions in urban as compared to rural areas. This gap was found to be high in almost all states of India except Kerala. And proportions of female teachers are higher in private schools and colleges than in Govt. institutions. (DISE 2008-09). So, in spite of many advances that women teachers and educators have made in many areas of public life, in the higher education sector, they are still a long way from participation on the same footing as men.

Thus, this issue of women in higher education sector should not be treated in isolation from the general status of women in society, economic and social development. Cultural role perceptions which women are expected to fill are much reflected in the extent and women participation in formal education sector.

Impacts on School Quality, Gender and Social Equity

Certain qualitative researches indicated female teachers to have more positive impact on school quality than male teachers. It was also reported that women teachers were found to be more sincere and less involved in politics. The perceptions of children were also positive.

Another quantitative study in India found that male teachers were significantly more absent than female teachers.

It is suggested that this may be on account of power differentials. Older, more educated, more experienced teachers all had higher absence rates. But there is very limited India-based research on the impact of female teachers on learning achievements of students.

Barriers of women's higher education in India:

India is a developing country with wide range of complications and barriers for women in terms of higher quality education. Some of the most challenging barriers are —

□ **Poverty:** India is a land where most people live below poverty line, without enough food, clean potable water, houses, so, for many, education and higher education is a day-dream for them.

□ **Cost:** Even though education for 6-14 ages children is made free by the Govt., cost of higher education, fees, books, hostel, rent, and others are too high to bear for a poor family.

□ **Traditional and gender issues:** In spite of poverty, most families and parents in rural areas often try to bear for their sons education. But in India and some other developing poor countries, attitude toward girl child and woman is that of household works, kitchen, care of babies etc. Social and such parental negative attitude towards the girl child is a big barrier for the girls higher education.

□ **Distance:** When colleges or universities are far from home, it poses a big problem. Higher educational institutions are less in number in India and in most cases these institutions are too far from home. For their education, sometimes when the girl students need to stay in hostel or in rented places, they find it costly and also risky for the female students. Therefore, for safety reasons, parents often do not give permission to their daughters to go so far.

□ **Violence:** Many female students face various kinds of violence, on the way to institutions, and in institution, many times from teachers, peers and others. Even teasing, molestation, rape, acid attacks etc and other types of violence are too common in certain areas of India. This creates big barriers to accessing higher education.

□ **Early marriage and pregnancy:** Whereas many laws and acts say marriage of girls before age of 18 years is punishable crime, but still it is going on especially in rural areas in India and some other developing countries also. In India more than 45% of girls get married before age of 18 years and get pregnant, facing stigmatization and discouragement in continuing to higher education.

□ **Poor infrastructure:** In institutions where there is lack of separate toilets for girls, sanitary products, wash rooms, or rooms for female students, it hampers them and they are discouraged to attend classes when they have their monthly periods.

□ Inadequate female teachers: Lesser or no female teachers in schools, colleges or universities pose big barriers to the female students higher education. The girl students are more encouraged when percentage of female teachers are adequate.

□ Curriculum: Attitude toward curriculum and course in the institution is also a factor. To date when many academic, professional, technical, vocational courses are open, many traditional views restricts woman in formal study. (Ghara, 2016). In most cases girl students are tempted away from learning mathematics, other science subjects, technology based courses etc. Often it become stigmatized that women are just capable for study literature or some identified easy subjects. So lesser woman lead higher post in various institutions and especially in modern technical professions even in the 21 century.

Few of the worlds top universities led by women:

The current number one institution (the University of Oxford) is led by Louise Richardson, while three of the prestigious Ivy League institutions in the US, the University of Pennsylvania, Cornell University and Brown University, have female leaders.

The US, France, Netherlands and the UK are some of the countries with high numbers of female-led institutions. Below, we take a look at the list of the female vice-chancellors of the top 10 universities in the world:

1. University of Oxford, Louise Richardson
2. University of California, Berkeley, Carol Christ
3. Imperial College London, Alice Gast
4. University of Pennsylvania, Amy Gutmann
5. Cornell University, Martha E. Pollack
6. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, Mary Sue Coleman
7. London School of Economics & Political Science, Minouche Shafik.
8. University of Washington, Ana Mari Cauce.
9. McGill University, Suzanne Fortier
10. University of Manchester, Nancy Rothwell.

Some Female Educators who changed the world:

1. Maria Montessori (1872-1952)
2. Mary Jane Mcleod Bethune (1875-1955)
3. Hellen Keller (1880-1968)
4. Gabriela Mistral (1899-1957)
5. Roberta Bondar

6. Dr Ayesha Jalal
7. Dr Hayat Sindi, etc.

Some influential women educators in Indian history:

Womens education in India has been a challenge over the years. Yet, there are those who made significant contributions to the nation's progress in terms of education, freedom, and societal development. Without women, a society, the entire world, and even existence itself would be incomplete.

For many, education is a distant dream. However, time changes everything. People who live with a purpose managed to find a way. It is evident when we witness women who have made outstanding contributions to technology, politics, human welfare, and, most significantly, education. Millions of people have been educated, inspired, and influenced by female educators around the world. Even though India still has a long way to go until all women are fully literate, these ladies have made enormous contributions to the field of education. Indian history is full of such amazing women.

1. Savitribai Phule
2. Begum Zafar Ali
3. Durgabai Deshmukh
4. Mahadevi Verma
5. Chandraprabha Saikiani
6. Vimla Kaul
7. Roshini Mukherji, etc.

Woman Vice Chancellors of India

The glass ceiling in educational institutions in India existed until 1946 when Hansa Mehta became Indias first woman vice-chancellor (V-C) with her appointment at the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey (SNDT) Womens University in Mumbai. In 1949, she also became the first woman to head a co-educational university as the vice-chancellor of Baroda University.

Today, out of 54 central universities of the country, only these 7 universities have female vice-chancellors. (Feb, 2022)

- Najma Akhtar -Jamia Millia Islamia
- Shantishree Dhulipudi Pandit- JNU
- Annpurna Nautiyal -Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University

- Neelima Gupta -Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya
- Dr. Malini V Shankar -Indian Maritime University
- Sunaina Singh- Nalanda University
- Sangeeta Srivastava -University of Allahabad.

Key Principles for empowering female teachers in India to be architects of girls empowerment:

Suman Sachdeva (July, 2018), in a research (online article at EDUCATION PLUS DEVELOPMENT), stated that: increasing realizations among reformers, development workers, and feminists agree that the most significant and strongest tool that helps achieve empowerment for girls is education. Policy frameworks are now set in this direction, to create positive environments for female students.

Strategies and interventions (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Kasturba Gandhi Ballika Vidyalayas) resulted to improved access and participation in educating girls in India. There is the need to nurture empowered teachers, as a prerequisite to the empowerment of girls as these teachers are responsible for the development of the girls. They need be equipped with the kind of knowledge that girls can learn and then apply towards the challenges of today's rapidly changing world. Expectations from teachers to empowering girls can only be fulfilled if they be provided with supportive and environments.

1. Create a common mission of social transformation.

Development programs need to shift focus from pedagogical skills to evoke sense of larger purpose and social missions to empower girls in India, especially for those belonging to disadvantaged communities.

2. Move beyond literacy and numeracy.

To expand vision of education to learn vocational skills, sports, or confidence building through sessions to create multiple touch points within the curriculum. To give teachers more opportunities to interact with and nurture the girls personalities. Teachers to provide mentoring and support to the girls to develop their self-esteem, confidence, and sense of optimism, to exercise their own agency.

3. Develop an empowering curriculum.

Curriculum must be aligned with larger vision to empower girls and must include elements that help

build empowerment. Teachers need to be familiar with the social reality of the girls in order to situate the pedagogy in the context of their learners.

Ensure teachers are sensitive to social and gender norms.

Teacher development programs should prioritize gender sensitization, along with the training of all levels of administration and school management to ensure a supportive environment for the teachers.

4. Ensure teachers autonomy and flexibility with the curriculum.

Teachers should be provided with the flexibility to complete the syllabus, to pace their own teaching-learning processes, create time and space needed for meaningful and empowering activities with the girls.

5. Scaffolding teachers through effective institutional provisions.

Teachers at all levels of the system be respected and adequate remuneration be given; to give access to training, and other professional development programmes, on-site mentoring; enabling to participate locally and at national levels in decision making which affect their professional lives and teaching environments.

6. Foster a “universe of care” at all levels.

Nurture non—hierarchical relationships built on trust, value, and compassion to create a sense of pride and ownership of the school program by the teachers, to motivate them to take on their responsibilities diligently. This will aid their ability to influence changes and affect the girl students outcomes.

The above principles—based on equity, diversity, and rights—function together to empower teachers to play an empowering role for girls. Empowered teachers can thus become promoters of gender equality, induce quality teaching, create leadership platforms, encourage free expression that will address underlying social norms, attitudes, and behaviours that prevented other strategies from empowering the girls. They can then reach out to the lives of the girls, help them overcome the challenges of marginalization, of discrimination, or subordination.

SUGGESTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Certain Policy initiatives are needed to increase recruitment of female teachers to draw girls into schools and colleges especially in gender segregated societies. (Chudgar and Sankar, 2008). Policy documents on education (Agrawal and Aggarwal, 1992) include recommendations to incentivize female teachers, preferences to females when recruiting teacher; giving females from rural areas; to provide living quarters to female teachers posted to rural areas and other special allowances.

More exclusively girls schools and colleges need to be set up where most teachers can be female but there will also be male teachers.

More female teachers need to be appointed to co-educational institutions.

Recruiting more women into the teaching profession in increasing numbers will be a major contribution towards greater education provision within societies.

This review paper also aimed to identify the role of female teachers in activating effective teaching skills and methods among female high school and college students from the teachers perspective, and the obstacles limiting the roles.

This study will benefit all female teachers in the assessment of their career performance, trainers in modifying their training programs, and those in the educational process, to guide them with the truth about what is happening in the field.

This paper will be an important reference for scholars and researchers in this field, a motivation for further subsequent studies dealing with female teachers, the development of teaching methods in improving educational processes and in raising the performance level of girl students.

Recruiting more women by the government will boost the number of women who hold qualified job to promote gender equality.

More training of female teachers in the use of appropriate teaching aids, teaching methods through modern technology and computerized software will help achieve great educational goals. Women are needed to empower women. And for this, they need the chance to do it.

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