

The Quest for Qualification – Women Degree Teachers' Struggles with PhD/NET Exams and Their Impact on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Abstract- This paper explores the challenges faced by women degree teachers in qualifying for PhD and National Eligibility Test (NET) exams in India, and how these struggles impact the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Quality Education. It highlights systemic barriers, socio-cultural factors, and institutional constraints that hinder women's academic progression and professional development. The paper also discusses the broader implications of these challenges on educational quality and gender equality in the teaching profession.

This study examines the challenges faced by women degree teachers in India as they strive to qualify for PhD and National Eligibility Test (NET) exams, highlighting the systemic and socio-cultural barriers that hinder their academic progression. These struggles are analyzed in the context of their impact on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The research identifies key obstacles such as institutional policies, societal expectations, and psychological stress, which disproportionately affect women educators. The findings reveal that these challenges not only limit career advancement for women but also undermine efforts to improve educational quality and achieve gender parity in academia. Recommendations include policy reforms, institutional support systems, and flexible learning resources to empower women educators and enhance their contribution to sustainable development. This paper underscores the critical need to address these barriers to foster inclusive education and equitable professional opportunities, aligning with global SDG targets.

Keywords- Sustainable Development Goals, Education burden, social effect, Professional opportunities, Policy reforms.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women teachers pursuing higher qualifications, such as a PhD and clearing NET exams, face multifaceted challenges that affect their career advancement and contribution to education quality.

These qualifications are often prerequisites for university-level teaching and research positions in India. The struggle to attain these credentials is intertwined with social norms, institutional policies, and resource limitations.

Challenges Faced by Women Teachers in PhD/NET Qualification

1. Academic and Institutional Barriers

- The recent policy of combining PhD admissions with NET exams has increased the academic and financial burden on candidates, especially women who often balance family responsibilities alongside studies.
- The reduction of NET score validity to one year forces repeated attempts, adding stress and limiting career progression opportunities.
- The scrapping of MPhil degrees under NEP 2020 has marginalized many women with research experience, denying them direct access to PhD interviews⁴.
- Lack of mentoring, orientation, and support for new female instructors leads to low self-confidence and inadequate teaching and evaluation skills³.

2. Socio-Cultural and Gender-Specific Challenges

- Women often face societal expectations to prioritize family over career, limiting their time and resources for exam preparation.
- Limited access to technology and flexible learning resources can hinder preparation for competitive exams like NET.

3. Psychological and Skill-Related Issues

- Many women teachers report low self-confidence due to educational disparities compared to male or more qualified peers.
- Time management and evaluation skills are often underdeveloped, affecting teaching effectiveness and exam readiness.

- The pressure to perform in research and teaching aptitude exams adds to mental stress.

Impact on Sustainable Development Goals

4. Quality Education

- Qualified teachers are critical for delivering quality education and fostering sustainable development awareness among students.
- The shortage of qualified women teachers due to exam-related struggles undermines efforts to provide inclusive and equitable education.
- Teachers with higher qualifications are better equipped to integrate sustainability competencies into curricula, essential for achieving targets.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Challenges Faced by PhD Students in India: Exploring the Impact of Limited Bond and Negative Relationships with PhD Guides(Khritish Swargiary Dec 2023)- a survey study explores the challenges faced by PhD students in India, particularly strained or weak relationships with their guides. The research highlights key factors behind these issues and suggests ways to enhance the doctoral experience.

Problems and Issues in Teacher Education in India-ISSN: 2320-2882. Education is a key driver of national development, and its quality largely depends on teachers' competence. A teacher's expertise, motivation, and professionalism are crucial for learners' holistic growth and high-quality education. However, in today's fast-evolving world, with expanding knowledge, new teaching methods, and globalization, producing such capable teachers has become a major challenge.

Teacher education: Issues & challenges in India-(Shrikant Dwivedi Dec 2012)The Government of India has increasingly emphasized quality in higher and teacher education to enhance learning outcomes. Teacher quality, a widely studied area, is closely linked to student achievement and remains a central topic in modern educational research. Studies highlight issues such as outdated curricula, limited practical training, and ineffective in-service programs. Research also points to the impact of classroom environment and teacher behavior on learning, emphasizing the need for continuous improvement in teacher education.

Several studies have examined the relationship between classroom environments, teacher behavior, and subject-specific teaching practices (Kaur, 2012; Sharma & Singh, 2016), indicating that these factors significantly affect learning outcomes. Despite numerous reforms and policy initiatives, challenges such as outdated curricula, insufficient practical training, and ineffective in-service programs continue to hinder teacher education in India. This body of research underlines the need for continuous evaluation and restructuring of teacher training programs to meet evolving educational demands.

III. FINDING

The findings reveal that these challenges not only limit career advancement for women but also undermine efforts to improve educational quality and achieve gender parity in academia. Recommendations include policy reforms, institutional support systems, and flexible learning resources to empower women educators and enhance their contribution to sustainable development. This paper underscores the critical need to address these barriers to foster inclusive education and equitable professional opportunities, aligning with global SDG targets..

Addressing these challenges aligns with the SDGs' goal to empower all women and girls through education and professional opportunities.

IV. CONCLUSION

Women teachers aspiring to advance their qualifications through PhD and NET exams in India face a complex web of academic, socio-cultural, and psychological challenges. The integration of PhD admissions with NET exams, the limited validity of NET scores, and the discontinuation of MPhil under the NEP 2020 have created structural hurdles that disproportionately affect women. Coupled with societal expectations, gender-specific constraints, and limited access to supportive resources, these challenges significantly impede their academic and professional growth.

The literature underscores that quality teacher education is vital for national development and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. Qualified women educators are instrumental in fostering inclusive, equitable, and sustainable learning environments. However, without targeted interventions—such as enhanced mentorship,

flexible learning systems, better support structures, and gender-sensitive policies—their potential remains underutilized.

Addressing these systemic and social barriers is essential not only for empowering women teachers but also for improving the overall quality of education in India. To truly transform the educational landscape, reforms must prioritize inclusivity, provide sustained support for aspiring women educators, and recognize their dual roles in academia and society.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Policy Reforms: Extend NET score validity, reinstate MPhil equivalency, and provide special provisions for women balancing family and career.
- Institutional Support: Establish mentoring programs, gender-sensitive training, and safe work environments to support women teachers.
- Flexible Learning: Expand online and part-time preparation resources tailored for women with caregiving responsibilities.
- Awareness and Advocacy: Promote societal change to support women's academic ambitions and reduce stigma around women's professional growth.

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