Chapter-iii

Determinants of Women Education and Empowerment
DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Education is important in overall development of human kinds. It is a key factor for the rapid development within the country. Education which is the base of all development and advancement of civilization, aims at evolution of a better man and development of mind. Education cultured the individual and helps him in his needs all over the world. Its implications are rich and varied. It deals with ever growing man in the ever growing society. Different philosophers, politicians, statesman and education have defined education according to their own point of view and circumstance. In this sense, education includes the individual, the society, the environment, the social fabric and the prevailing traditions.

Hence, the definition of education ought to be very comprehensive and all inclusive one. Educational attainment ranks high in importance among the various qualities of a population. The population commission of the united nation considers the ability to both read and write a simple message with understanding in any language a sufficient basis for classifying a person as literate. The Indian census has adopted this definition. However, a distinction can be made between the literates and the educated as has been done in case of India. All those persons who are classified as literates on the basis their length of schooling into a number of categories. Their length of formal education is provided over a strictly narrow range of period roughly from 6th years adult lived when the person enters his professional life. In any system of education a number of stages are marked and organized in the instructional programme of the pupil during this period. A particular ladder of education is formed and there is a pattern comprising all the stages. The pattern may differ from country to country or state to state. Every country develops its own organizational
pattern or ladder of education. Our own ladder is a legacy of the British rule.

The origin of the present system of the education in India can be traced to the beginning of the 19th century when Macaulay presented his famous minutes that was actually the birth of English system of education. The ladder that Macaulay presented was nevertheless incomplete. But it was completed the picture by furnishing it with the head and a tail in the form of elementary education and the universal education respectively. It suggested three prominent stages of the educational ladder viz., the elementary, the secondary and the universal. Although there have been minor changes in the ladder, but the main as erected by the dispatch has continued to stand even to this day.

**Determinants of Education:**

Education is an important ingredient of social development. It is essential for eradicating poverty and marital association, for cultivation of peaceful and friendly international relations and for permitting the free play of demographic processes. There are inter regional variation and intra regional variation in the literacy rate. The literacy variation is quite significant between the developed and the developing countries. The literacy rates in a country or region are affected largely by the historical, economic, social and cultural determinants.

**Historical Determinants:**

The political situation and administrative governance have affected the rate of literacy in the ex-colonial countries.
In general the literacy rate in the ex-colonies has been generally low. During the British period education was neglected and, in the early stages at least, it was definitely ignored. The Britishers had denied the right to education to each and every body in the country. Their policy was to have a class of people educated in the western style who could be a staff to British rulers. For this class of people, schools and colleges were opened but they taken to the needs of only in insignificant percentage of the population. At the dawn of independence, the literacy rate was very low.

The present Government in the ex-colonial countries have taken the literacy true, but the scarcity of resources is coming in the way of eradication of illiteracy. Similarly, those areas, which have had a long spell of feudalistic rule, also continue, to display low literacy rates as a legacy of their historic past.

**Economic Determinants:**

Economically the type of economy is said to be one of the most powerful economic determinants of literacy. The differences in the literacy levels of the industrial and agricultural nations contrast so much that one can meet help interfering a correlation between the type of economy and literacy rates. Agrarian economic order is a new sustenance economy. People can do with ordinary primary education and often without any formal schooling. The agricultural operations especially in the developing countries are such that these do not have any demand on education on the other hand, the requirements of non-agricultural economy are that acquisition of literacy skills becomes a functional prerequisite. In this type of economy, higher education of various types is necessary and therefore more and more institutions grow up for the
benefit of the trading community, seeking and trade personal. Next in importance is the factor of standard of living. Normally there exists a positive correlation between literacy rate and the standards of living. The smallest unit of our Indian society is the village. We see that standard of living of people in villages is still very low. Though the governments are doing its best to raise this standard of living, it is still very low.

Closely associated with this is the less factor of cost of education. In the less developed countries where education is not free and the cost of education is high, the cost of imparting education to the children becomes an important determinant of literacy. India is a poor country. Most of its social groups live a life of extreme misery without even the essentials of life available to them. A vast majority of people live in slums and extremely filthy surrounding. They remain below the poverty line and lead a life of starvation. Under these conditions, they are too poor to think and avail of any education at all. It is difficult to expect children belonging to the families that lie below the poverty line to go to schools, especially when they can start helping the family in its pursuits of making a living. The experience of India in this regard reveals that even if education is made compulsory and free, the extremely poor families prefers their children to help in making an earning, how so ever meager it may be rather than for schools. In case of female children who cannot be sent outside to work they stay at home to look after younger children in the family when the parents go outside the work.

Degree of urbanization has often been referred to as another factor of literacy. There is a positive correlation between literacy rates and the degree of development. Thus the most urbanized societies have very high and even unusual literacy rates while the rural societies usually display low level of literacy rates. The type of economy and the social set up of
urban areas is such that the literacy skills have greater functional utility, whereas in the country side the various occupations do not warrant literacy as pre-requisites. Moreover, the children in the rural areas can become associates worker with other members of their family, whether it be cultivation or household industry or labour but in the urban areas there is no such possibility. A positive correlation has been observed between literacy and stage of technological development.

Technological advancement opens new areas of progress in all fields of development in a country. The technologically advanced countries have achieved greater heights of prosperity in all areas of human activity. These countries display high literacy rates in contrast to the low literacy rates of the countries where the technological advancement was in its infancy stage. These differences are related to the differences in the requirements of the economy of the two types of areas. While in case of highly technologically advanced countries, literacy and education may be a prerequisite of getting employment it may not be so in case of the technologically less advanced countries. The recent development means of transportation and communication has added a new dimension to the process of propagation of literacy and education in the less developed realm. It has increased the degree of spatial interaction. The so called rural isolation has been broken. The educational institutions in the urban area have now become accessible to the country side. In the areas where means of transport and communication is not developed they face lots of problem. In the villages the roads are Kutcha which get damaged specially during the rainy season. As a result during the rainy season, the little children of the villages cannot attend even the neighbouring schools. Besides lack of proper roads, sometimes there are big springs which become risky enough to cross in rainy reason. As a result many of the
school going students cannot attend their schools regularly. The rural society which interacts more with urban society with the development of means of transportation and communications starts appreciating the value of education and starts making the use of educational institutions that are not located locally.

**Social and Cultural Determinants:**

Religion has played important role in the process or propagation of education. Those religious communities where oral worship has been in vogue for millennia of years still have low literacy in comparison to these religious communities where reading of religious books is a part of religious tenets. Religion inculcates those moral qualities which mould the educational system on democratic time. Religious and belief, of a society influence the educational pattern to a great extent. Those societies which hold fanatical religious belief plan their education in their own way and deny free thinking and liberal attitudes to be inculcated in their children. On the other hand, societies which believe in free thinking liberal attitudes and respect for all religion provide education of a secular and liberal nature and promote liberal attitudes and respect for all religious emphasizing only moral basis for educational processes and programmes. Similarly language in which education is usually imparted is another importance factor determining education of an area. In the multilingual society of the third world. It has often been found that education in the mother tongue is more acceptable than the education in English or even the national language.

Since women constitute about half the total population of any society. Therefore any discrimination against them in the form of status or prejudices also tells upon the literacy rate of such societies. There is a
positive correlation between the status granted to the women and literacy rates. Those societies which do not give equal status to males and females suffer from low female literacy rates which affect adversely the total literacy rate. Similarly, the societies where the female education is lower coupled with low literacy results in poor literacy in general. There has traditionally been general prejudice against female education and their employment females were meant essentially for household works for which literacy was not a functional female, particularly in rural areas, which takes away many girls from school before becoming literate. There has also been a shortage of girls schools in the rural area, and the girls avoided to go to co-educational schools. The purdah system was also an obstacle in the attainment of education for females. Women were discouraged from being educated. The general value system adhered to by the people, in general, is also an equally important factor. For instance, the desire on the point of people for getting educated may be determined by the general social value system cherished by a society. The attitude of the people towards education is governed largely by the value system of a society. Higher the socio-economic awakening more favourable is the attitude of the people of towards education. The ideals of a society determine the ideals and values which education is to achieve and close and despotic society will have this organizational pattern of education to develop qualities of absolute and objective together with attitudes of complete an unquestioning self-surrender, while open and democratic societies will advocate education to promote free reasoning, eager cooperation, initiative and self discipline together with other self-experience and activities according to one’s own needs, nature activities and inherent capacities. Such societies plan and encourage mass educational schemes and promote people’s educations to the fullest possible extent.
Much of the progress in less developed countries, which are lagging behind, depends largely upon the availability of facilities for getting education. There exists positive correlation between the literacy rates and the degree of availability of educational institutions. However, the number of people per educational institution is higher, where the literacy rate is much. The availability of educational facilities with an easy access and within the reach of one’s pocket works as a positive factor in the propagation of literacy and education. The destiny of our country resides in our classrooms. The need to travel long distances to school is a particular barrier for girls, especially in countries where a cultural premium is placed on female seclusion. In the end mention must be made of the policies of the government, which in their own way affect the attitudes of the people towards education, such policies like the free and compulsory education and adult education literacy programme have their positive impact felt in the countries that have followed them. Political ideologies also influence education to a great deal, we see that political and set up of states organized education according to their potential aims and ideals which are to be achieved through educational processes and programme the purpose is just to prepare citizens for politically conformity. In India also, education among its masses as it adopted the idea of welfare state. Consequently, India today is the largest producer of technical trends in the third world and may soon complete with the advanced countries in this regard.

**DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:**

Empowerment is a multi dimensional social process which helps people gain control over their own lives. Empowerment is not a capsule therapy which anyone who is in need can obtain. It is a process with equal access of opportunities and provisions without gender
discrimination, factor from violence and choice of one’s life, economic and independence and finally participation in the decision making process. Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices in desired actions and outcomes”.

Hence, the concept of Women’s Empowerment has taken into consideration two essential elements. The first is that of the process which encompasses, a transformation from one state of gender inequality to another stage of gender equality. The second is the agency, that is, women involved in the process as an agent rather as a recipient. Women’s empowerment is a very critical factor for the development and raising the standard of living. Empowerment of women provides them opportunity to govern themselves or in other words give them autonomy. As far as autonomy is concerned it has been defined to manipulate one’s personal environment to make decision about one own concern or about close family members. Women’s autonomy thus can be conceptualized as their ability to determine events in their lives, even though man and other women may oppose to their wishes empowerment also provides opportunities to educate and employ the women the women. Both the education and employment are the decisive factors of status of women in a society.

**Political Determinant:**

The political empowerment of women is one of the most important aspects in the overall empowerment of women for it gives women the capacity to influence the decision making process. Women occupy a marginalized position in society because of several socio-economic constraints. This has inhibited effective participation of women in
political processes and the institutional structure of demography. Even after the five decades of the grant of political equality, statistics have over the years revealed that while there is an acceptable visible manifestation of gender equality at the voter level, gender visibility within the power structures show cause for women concern according to the document on women’s development (1985) women’s role in political structure had virtually remained unchanged despite the rapid growth of informal political activity by them. In general, the women candidates have to cross three hundreds before they could aspire to enter the formal political structures:

a. They should be willing to stand for election
b. They should be judged suitable by the party electorate which is the ‘gatekeeper’ of power and
c. They have to be voter friendly.

Besides, broad based political participation of women has been severely limited due to the nexus of traditional factors such as consideration of caste, religion and feudal and family status. Further, the political parties do not favour the nomination of women candidates, as they are not sure of their success. Although political parties do have a women’s wing, few women have access to the inner ring of the party, which is the core of the power structure. Majority of the women are illiterate, not politically conscious due to lack of information and political awareness and they make their choice on the basis of suggestions from male members of the family. As a result, women were left on the periphery of political process.

However, with the Panchayati Raj Institution getting constitutional status by way of the Seventy Third Amendment Act, it is hoped that the
women will have been participation in the political process and decision making capacity as the act made such a role mandatory and universal in the whole of India. But it must be remembered that a change cannot be brought about overnight. Women have been subjected to exploitation for ages and thus cannot break free of all the shackles of illiteracy poverty and tradition at one stroke. Even today most of the women are uneducated, have little or no property and live in a tradition bound society. In such case, the politically powerful can make them contest elections for their own political gains. Another problem is that women especially in rural areas would not come forward to fight the elections. But it is necessary that a breakthrough has to be made.

Those with gender bias; view women as basically different from men; psychologically, physiologically and often intellectually. Women’s perception of life is a wave. Men’s is that of ladder. Women stress on attachment, affiliation, empathy and inter-dependence. Men emphasize on competition, independence, separation and formal rights.

Gender empowerment strategies, under the circumstances, require structural systematic change and basic attitudinal and value change. The real empowerment of women requires a thorough going renewed of the political process a democratic basis. Unless women are equipped with the necessary skill in political decision-making, their increases representation in the local bodies may not alter the existing set-up. It is, therefore, necessary to sensitize the women in the women’s perceptive, not in the narrow feminist sense but in the sense of honourable co-existence with men, as this will enable women to exercise their ‘will’ and advance to their complete emancipation.
There is a need to extend greater affirmative action from the Panchayat level to the State and National level and potential consciousness raising and political consciousness raising and supportive actions by women’s organizations at the voter level to enhance self-potency and political efficacy. If these measures are followed, political participation of women will open up new vistas of development, which will automatically result in the political empowerment in the society.

**Social Determinant:**

Education is a powerful in the emancipation and empowerment of women as it not only helps women to gain knowledge but also provides the necessary courage and inner strength to face the challenges of life. It also enables them to get a job and supplement the income of the family and achieve social status. Educated women could play an equally important role as men in nation building. Thus, there is no denying the fact that education empowers women.

One of the recommendations of the National Policy on Education (1986) by the Government of India is to promote ‘empowerment’ of women through the agency of education and it is considered to be a landmark in the approach to women’s education. The National Literacy Mission is another step towards eradication of illiteracy in the age group of 15 to 35 years by the year 1995. In the year 1901 the status of women’s education was deplorable since it was less than 1%. In 1981, women’s literacy was 24.83%. The 2001 census report indicates that literacy among women is 54.16%. A century has passed away and in spite of best efforts India has achieved only 54% literacy among women. These are better educational facilities for women in big cities and towns. But the growth of women’s education in rural areas is very slow. In general,
majority of the women is still illiterate, weak, backward and exploited. Though the aim of education has changed the perception of women’s education is still backward. A girl child from her childhood is socialized to be a good sister, good wife and good mother and not for a challenging career. She is constantly reminded that her role is limited to home management. Even in those families where girl children are given higher education they are encouraged to take up humanities and social sciences and not sciences, medical or engineering. Though the trend is changing but still it is very slow. The fact that education by itself will not contribute to social status of women, has been shown by the Population crisis committee’s (USA) data sheet, which shows that many countries which had high scores on education of women are low on social status of women. In Kerala women, especially in their quality of life, level of white colour employment, expectation of life, maternal and infant mortality rates, control of birth but in other fields the women of Kerala are more in secured to-day than before. Wife burning, dowry deaths and other crimes against women which were unheard a few decades ago, have now become a general feature be able to deliver the goods unless it fosters new values. Values which expose the inequities against women and which expose gender injustice.

There is a need for encouraging more women to participate in vocational, technical and professional education. Women’s education should be treated as a special priority in all programmes of development. The government can open more places in schools for girls, lesson the financial burdens of educations for women, reform curricula and educational system, in order to encourage girls to formulate non-traditional career goals and centralize the educational system to ensure greater equivalence of experience for girls. Besides, education for women
must be practical and well adopted to their needs, specially in relation to health, nutrition and legal rights.

**Economic Determinants:**

Economic independence or access to an inherited or self-generated income is considered to be the major means of empowering women. Contribution of employment to the enhancement of women’s positions is largely contributed by the modern sector and they enable women to move out of their homes to an extended plane, express their ideas, exchange their problems and evaluate their position vis-à-vis men in many areas of social-life. Full employment of a women assures her a better more enriching and rewarding life and human relationship. The government has taken certain positive steps in full employment of women and payment of equal remuneration to them. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (India) was a major step towards protective legislation and establishing the principles of equality, as it provides for equal remuneration against women in the matter of employment. In addition, to enable women to stand on their own legs, the Government of India and the Indian States had introduced a number of women oriented income generation programmes. The recognition of national responsibility towards the economic empowerment of women cannot by anything but to the advantages of women.

But there seems to be a little link between the level of economic development and women’s economic opportunities. There are some major factors, which hinder gainful utilization of female labour force such as general antipathy towards women’s employment, responsibilities at home, traditional forms of job discrimination, high male unemployment, women’s work and earning being treated as subsidiary to
that of men’s absence of facilities such as cheap eating facilities, child care centers and safe transport. In India, labour force participation of women is very slow. As per 2001 census, the percentage of women in the labour force was only 25.7\% against 51.9\% for men. Though women engage in a wider variety of occupation, they are concentrated usually in the unrecognized sector, at the lowest ring of the ladder. Lack of organization and un-organization makes their bargaining power very weak. Moreover, the unpaid economic activities of women and their contribution through work in the domestic sectors remain unrecorded.

The plight of working women has drawn attention of many welfare institutions and women’s organizations in the recent years. In order to ensure women the right to work, it is especially necessary to eliminate unemployment and all forms of discrimination, enable them to have access to every profession, ensure them to have general and vocational training and to eliminate illiteracy through the establishment of functional literacy. As women’s economic participation is related to a variety of variables, cultural values relating to the sexual division of labour, women’s access to education and availability of jobs to women should be taken care of.

One of the major hurdles to the development of employment opportunities for women is the lack of adequate training. Women should have access to productive resources, such as land, building credit, housing and skill training. Supporting service provisions would make women more functional and productive by reducing their drudgery and provide them with more time of employment. Programmes for women consisting of skill building and skill upgrading can be more fruitful for improving their economic status and make them to have a superior bargaining power as far as employment is concerned.
Therefore, it is crucial for raising the female earning power to increase the effective demand for education, health and family planning services, which are necessary for improving the status of women to a great extent.

**Cultural Determinant:**

The most basic factor which inhibited from being empowered till recently, was the attitude of society towards a women’s role and her place in the society. These social values and attitudes get reflected in the education and socialization of girls and in the institutional arrangements of society. Traditionally, a women’s reproductive role was considered as her primary role and her role as a producer secondary unless as in the low-income classes, economic necessity forced a woman to support the family. Women were socialized to accept their image as ‘one who subordinated self to the family’. Thus, women were conditioned to sacrifice their own goals and ambitions, deny themselves their legitimate space and surrender resources which might have contributed to their independence. They were rather forced to always adjust, accept and accommodate. This was not at all conducive to the development of self-confidence, self-image, initiative or willingness to take risks which are essential for empowerment.

These values and attitudes also meant that girls were mostly given less education than boys. The aspiration of parents for a girl child used to be very low in terms of educational attainment and future prospectus as well. For a young girl, marriage and children were only considered to be the only lifelong activity. These attitudes also reflected in the courses and curricula offered to women as these were not designed to equip girls with specialized training for a job or career. If employment was at all
considered for women, it was perceived merely as temporary occupation till marriage. This affected women’s aspirations, judgment of their capabilities, choice of occupation and training. In turn, the above clearly reflected the attitudes of parents, teachers, employers, policy makers towards women. From above, it is clear that it is not enough if empower themselves through education, employment and participation in decision making. There should be cultural empowerment of women. In order to make this a reality, social recognition must come and this calls for attitudinal change. Freedom is necessary for women. It does not mean breaking away from home and tradition, but it means searching for one’s own identity and making people around to accept her as a human person. Moreover, there is need for creation of awareness for achievement of cultural empowerment of women, media publicity, organizations (NGOs). Thus, creating awareness among women about their freedom is invaluable. Finally, unless patriarchal values die and principles of justice are enshrined in the minds of each and every individual in the society, it will never be possible to reap the fruits of empowerment of women.
References:


