



ISSN: 2230-9926

Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

IJDR

International Journal of Development Research

Vol. 14, Issue, 03, pp. 65226-65228, March, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.37118/ijdr.27999.03.2024>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

WOMEN ROLE AND EDUCATION RIGHTS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 09th January, 2024

Received in revised form

11th January, 2024

Accepted 20th February, 2024

Published online 30th March, 2024

Key Words:

Democratic society, Democratic Education, National Council, Traditional Education, Right Education.

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ABSTRACT

The national emergency made it clear that a democratic society can be strengthened only when its citizens are enlightened and understand the full implications of their responsibilities and rights. It was, therefore, imperative that in a state of emergency, the programme of education should be strengthened and promoted even more than in ordinary times. The National Council, therefore, resolved that there should be no cut in women's education programmes on account of the national emergency because such a cut is likely to be detrimental to the defence effort. On the contrary, as far as possible, a larger allocation for women's education programme may be provided. The tradition of education in India dates back to ancient times. Children were initiated to learning at a fairly young age by placing them under the tutelage of the learned. A strong student-teacher relationship developed in due course. Teachers considered the transfer of knowledge as one of their sacred duties. The students worked hard and pursued their studies. Facilities for traditional education, which might have been available to all children in the earliest times, subsequently due to social changes, came to be restricted to certain sections of the population. However, close links continued to remain between religion and education and institutions for learning came to be established by religious institutions and in some cases attached to places of worship. Woman's role in society as the complement of man need in no way be looked down upon; for man also is equally the complement of woman. That the true role, or rather the mission of woman is to be the friend, comfort and support of man rather than his competitor in the race of life, does not at all detract anything from her position and self-respect. The educated Indian Women do not consider this ideal of womanhood as unworthy will rest chiefly on our men, who must not give only women their due respect but must admit them frankly as their equals and friends, in all walks of life and thus maintain the ancient high ideal which looked upon matrimony as a spiritual union of souls. Her tradition, culture and bringing up, Indian woman, most of all, is best fitted to play this role in her life; and it would be, as the author has shown, a great mistake to change her ideal and graft in its place one, alien to her nature and traditions.

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Citation: *Dr. V. Deepthi, 2024. "Women role and Education Rights". International Journal of Development Research, 14, (03), 65226-65228.*

INTRODUCTION

Viable attempts to initiate change in traditions related to variably involve two major components education and women. The relative effectiveness of such attempts depends heavily on an enlightened awareness and understanding of the contributions of women to the economic and social development of family, culture and nation. The relationships of women and education to solutions of problems created by factors of population, modernization and economic development are being increasingly recognized. This trend represents at least, a shift in emphasis from concerns of family size to concerns of quality of life through effective use of human and non-human resources. Because of its singular nature, home economics has a unique role in the initiation, design and development of education programs. International home economists, because of their professional preparation, can approach concerns of family planning with a comprehensive view which includes recognition of the effects of health, housing, inter-personal relationships, nutrition, clothing, decision-making, and human development factors on the quality of life.

His collection of readings has as its major objectives (1) the development of a publication for use by international home economists and other educators as background information in designing curriculum which integrates education concepts into home economics programs; and (2) to provide students with convenient reference of current developments in theory and research on concepts related to, home economics, and education.

The Right to an Education: According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to an education. In the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, among other documents, girls and women, married or un-married, are to be assured equal rights with men in education at all levels, including study in educational institutions of all types, the same choice of curricula, and equal access scholarships and other financial support. To equal education has proven to be an elusive goal, however, even in countries where equality under the law is guaranteed. Illiteracy rates in most countries are much higher among women than among men, although the situation is improving. Females are less than half of the school population in most countries and their proportions decline rapidly at the highest levels of training.

In many areas the relative under-representation of girls and women in schools is compounded by an overall scarcity of educational resources, placing them at an even greater competitive disadvantage. The scarcity is often greatest where population Pressures are most acute.

Right Pertaining to Employment: International instruments declare that everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to fair remuneration and to equal pay for equal work, among other rights, to women married or unmarried, are to have equal rights with men in this regard. In addition, in order to eliminate other forms of discrimination against women in employment, measures are to be taken to prevent their dismissal in the event of marriage or maternity, to provide paid maternity leave with the guarantee of returning to former employment and to provide child care facilities and other necessary social service Conditions vary greatly from country to country according to their culture, socioeconomic structure and level of development. In general, however, one finds that women are less likely to be gainfully employed outside the home than are men, although they may be engaged in equally heavy unpaid domestic or agricultural labour. They are also more frequently classified as unemployed and looking for work than are men in many countries. Female earnings often average only a fraction of male earnings even when other factors such as type of work, education, training and experience are taken into account. Almost everywhere one finds women in the paid labour force disproportionately concentrated in lower this status, lower paying jobs. Most employers do not provide paid maternity leaves or guaranteed return to former employment after childbirth, as the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination proposes, and child-care facilities in most countries are inadequate to meet the needs of working parents. Moreover, whereas rates of male gainful employment vary little from country to country or through the normal working years in the life cycle, rates of female employment differ enormously across nations and within major sub-groups of the population, usually follow well-defined patterns by age, and generally fluctuate according to women's marital status and the number and spacing of their children.

Participation of Women in Public Life and Decision-making: The United Nations has declared the right of women to participate in public life and political decision-making on equal terms with men, specifically the right to vote in all elections, to be eligible for all publicly elected bodies, to hold public office and to exercise all public functions. Women have won the right to vote in all but a handful of countries, but in most nations-even those that guarantee equality in the law-women are poorly represented at the upper levels of decision-making in government offices or elective bodies. Their greatest successes have occurred in countries where the Government actively promotes equality between men and women in public life, thus overcoming some of the traditional resistance to the idea of placing women in leadership positions. Elsewhere the story is not so encouraging. Many countries point to the one or two women in conspicuously high positions while ignoring the weight of evidence on the extreme underrepresentation of women as a major population group The participation of women in public life can have the same effect on fertility as other forms of employment. Women with reduced domestic responsibilities are more free to involve themselves in community or national activities, while women whose political involvement takes them out of the home and into a world of wider interests and rewards may desire and have smaller families. But beyond this relatively direct association between public life and reproduction among those who are themselves active participants, an expanded engagement of women in public affairs may have a far broader-though less direct and more difficult to measure- impact on fertility patterns by providing a community or a nation with highly visible models of women who are active, competent, leaders and decision-makers. Such women can be a powerful force towards changing attitudes regarding female roles and responsibilities, whether they intend to or not. Even the simple act of voting is symbolic in manifesting a belief in women's capabilities of independent thought and action and in portraying women as active

rather than passive participants in the life of their communities The exercise of civic responsibilities in this area could carry over in to private life as women acquire greater awareness of and confidence in their ability to make autonomous decision.

Access to Vocational Guidance and Training: General education, of course, is the foundation for working life and equality in the access of girls to education, is thus of the greatest importance in determining women's role in economic life. Leaving this aside, however, there is, first of all, the whole question of vocational guidance and counselling in relation to the choice of training and occupation. In principle, girls in most countries have the right to full and free access to such guidance and counselling on the same footing as boys. In practice, their occupational choice is frequently given little thought, and they very often receive biased advice, influenced by various and often unrealistic pressures of tradition, parents, teachers, the immediate environment, and marriage possibilities. Action to ensure to girls more realistic and forward-looking vocational guidance, based on a more positive and dynamic concept of women's role in the economic life of today and tomorrow, is thus a fundamental factor in facilitating the integration of women in employment on a basis of equality of opportunity and treatment. Moreover, while, in principle, girls may appear to have full access to training facilities of all kinds and at all levels, in fact, in most countries, they still have limited practical access to training for many types of occupations, and particularly, in many countries, for training at higher levels of skill and responsibility. By and large, for a variety of reasons, they go into systematic apprenticeship less than boys and tend to be satisfied with shorter and more simplified training courses within a narrow occupational range. Where vocational and technical education is segregated training opportunities for girls tend to be unequal: training is generally provided in only a small number of trades "suitable by their nature for girls," and standards of training are inclined to be low. Coeducation-which is, in fact, spreading, often for practical economic reasons-is the more obvious way to ensure equal training opportunities and standards. As an ILO meeting of consultants on women workers' problems concluded recently, although many countries have extended, improved, and varied training facilities, the general level of vocational training of girls and women is still markedly lower than that of boys and men in most countries. There is, consequently, a serious gap almost everywhere between the role which women could play in economic life and the means at their disposal to enable them to play this role.

Access to Economic Life and Advancement Work Careers: There is little discrimination in law as regards women's access to employment and occupation. Studies of occupational outlook, made in recent years by the ILO and the United Nations Secretariat for the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, confirm this with respect to the principal technical and professional fields (for example, law, architecture, engineering, medicine, and social welfare). 2 Analyses of national legislation indicate that the same holds true in other occupational fields. With few exceptions, however, women's right of access to economic life is limited by practical factors. The preceding section suggests clearly that girls on the threshold of employment are already seriously handicapped, as regards access to economic life, by deficiencies of general education and training. The limitations of access are most notable when the pattern of distribution of women by level of skill and responsibility is examined. For the most part women are concentrated in a limited number of technical and professional fields to which they are drawn by profession and often by natural inclination.

Right to Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation: In general, men and women are, in principle and in law, granted equal treatment in employment and occupation in most respects in most countries, irrespective of the stage of development. Where there are differences, it is usually the woman who is accorded what is regarded as more favourable treatment, alleged to be justified for the sake of her health and welfare in relation to her functions of maternity and motherhood. Thus, a great many countries place special restrictions on the hours of work of women off (including overtime), on night

work by women, and on their employment in certain industries and occupations regarded as particularly dangerous or unhealthy for them (such as underground work in mining). These special standards governing women's employment are of long standing. Recently, however, there has been a conscious effort in a good many countries to re-examine them, not with a view to weakening the social protection afforded to women workers, but with a view to ensuring that it is realistic in present-day terms. and not a historical hangover. This is being done, for example, in the Scandinavian countries with respect to revising restrictions on the night work of women. After having considered the matter, the ILO Consultants on Women Workers' Problems, in 1965, concluded that, apart from standards for maternity protection in the widest sense, it was perhaps "both realistic and important to envisage an evolution of social policy directed towards obtaining similar protective standards for men and women, with as few differentials as possible." It is generally recognized that existing ILO standards are particularly important for the protection of women in the developing countries.

Right of Equal Pay for Equal Work: Experience indicates that acceptance and application of the equal-pay principle are very closely related to efforts to raise the status of women in economic and social life in general. In-deed, equal pay is often taken as a test of a nation's willingness to integrate women into the economy on a true footing of equality with men and to accept them as partners in work-life. Acceptance of this principle and its full application in practice, in addition to their intrinsic importance for all women workers, are therefore of even wider significance than would appear at first sight. Today the principle is widely accepted. Steady progress has been made in various parts of the world, whether by laws or regulations, collective bargaining, judicial decisions, educational and promotional measures, or, most often, by a combination of several or all of these means. In this forward movement, the role of governments has been influential!, sometimes decisive; more liberal and realistic attitudes on the part of employers and their organizations, even if adopted under pressure, have been important; the struggles of many trade unions to apply the equal-pay principle in negotiating or revising collective agreements have often been victorious; and women's organizations of all kinds have been in the vanguard of equal-pay campaigns and related activities.

To cite a few examples: equal pay is the law and practice in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of eastern Europe; in the Scandinavian countries it has been achieved by progressive stages, thanks to government encouragement, central employer-worker acceptance of the principle, and revision of collective bargaining agreements; the European Economic Community (EEC) countries have been moving towards equal pay gradually, under the impetus of Article 119 of the Rome Treaty, committing them to apply equal remuneration without discrimination based on sex; Canada and the United States have made progress through new federal and state equal-pay laws, collective agreements, educational and promotional measures, and the assistance of the Women's Bureaus; and in the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America the equal-pay principle has been increasingly incorporated in the constitutions, in labor codes or charters, and in minimum-wage legislation. In some countries (for example, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom), acceptance of the principle has gained ground, but practical application has been slower, and in other countries (for example, some in Africa), the issue of equal pay hardly arises as yet because women are not working alongside men to any large extent (except in the public service where equal pay is usually the rule). While progress has been encouraging, in practice much remains to be done to make sure that women get equal remuneration for work of equal value. Thus, preoccupation with equal pay has shifted from an earlier concentration on efforts to promote theoretical acceptance of the principle towards efforts aimed at solving the practical problems of its full application. There have been difficulties, for example, in arriving at a common concept and a practical definition of what is meant by "equal pay for equal work" or "equal remuneration for work of equal value."⁸

There have been complaints, for instance, in EEC countries, that the expression is defined too narrowly (equal pay applying only on "mixed jobs" where both men and women are employed on the same work); that in abolishing separate wage categories and scales for men and women and introducing new uniform ones established without regard to sex, women have been relegated to low paid categories; and that in work done by workes only and in industries and occupationes employing a predominantly female labour force, there has been a persistent tendency to undervalue, undergrad, and underpay the work performed. There have been technical difficulties of job classification and evaluation, that is, of finding a reliable and objective method of measuring job content and comparability; a lack of adequate factual data about many factors bearing on equal pay and related questions; and some reluctance to apply equal pay, which, combined with general lethargy and an un-willingness on the part of women to press their claims, results in inaction even where economic, technological, and social factors converge to create a climate conducive to the achievement of equal pay.

CONCLUSION

The goal of such an educational process is to produce people who, by virtue of their having gained population literacy, will be able to be responsible population actors. First, the individual would understand how their own actions affect population processes and characteristics. Stress would be placed on the individual as a population actor constantly involved in a wide range of decisions which have direct or indirect population consequences. Among these, for example, would be decisions concerning age at marriage, family size, choice of residence, and continuity of education or employment. Second, the person would understand how population phenomena affect him and society. Here the focus would be on how such things as the size and rate of growth and the composition and distribution of the population affect such things as the political system, resource utilization, subjective feelings of crowding, and the availability of social services. Finally, the programs would assist the development of the knowledge and skills necessary to evaluate the impact of personal and public decisions affecting population change. Involved is some understanding of basic demo-graphic concepts. In addition, the learner must be assisted in the development of skills so that he can evaluate various population policy proposals both in terms of their potential effectiveness and in terms of their relationship to societal values and norms, and so that can apply these skills to actual decision making.

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