

Education Welfare Schemes for Women in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

India is a developing country and is the largest democracy in the world. Since the day of Independence, our country has remarkable development in all the fields, and this was all possible because of the increase in education for all the genders. The gender equality took the country to new heights. Furthermore, the involvement of women in all sectors has increased the India's growth rate, whereas now women are taking over every sector of the society. This in turn helps in expanding our country's literacy rate. Without any denial, one can say that women's education is a major step toward success. Moreover, since independence, women's literacy rate has not been increasing at a considerable rate. However, there are some reasons, which prevent women from moving forward in a proper manner. Moreover, taking this scenario into account there are certain anomalies in the state of affairs of both state and central governments in accordance with taking quick steps to promote women's education. The study intends to conceptually understand the women's education process through a critical review on education welfare schemes, especially designed for women.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Women's Education, Literacy Rate, Welfare Schemes.

Introduction

Education to women is the most powerful instrument for changing their position in the society and it also brings about reduction in inequalities and also acts as a means to improve their status within the family. Since independence there has been an accelerated rate of expansion of women's education among girls and women. The Constitution of India in Article 15(1) stipulates the right to equality. It provides the basic policy framework that enshrines the vision of girls' education and the spirit in which their education is to be provided. Thus, in order to encourage education of women at all levels and to dilute gender bias in the provision and acquaintance of education, schools, colleges and even universities have been

established exclusively for women in the State. Also, to bring more girl children, especially from marginalized (below poverty) families, into the main stream of education, the government has been providing a package of concessions in the form of free supply of books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for hostilities, mid-day meals, scholarships, free by-cycles etc. All these programmes and Schemes of the Government of Tamil Nadu aim at making women independent and self-reliant. Despite these enactments, a lot of social legislations, the welfare schemes for women lagged behind men in different spheres. Furthermore, to improve the women's social status, the Tamil Nadu government is implementing various Welfare programmes for the overall development of women.

Review of Literature

A study conducted by Singhal in 1995 highlights the special reference to employment patterns of female workforce and their employment in different sectors of the state economy within India. The report published by Government of Tamil Nadu for development of women provides insights into the demographic, social and economic characteristics of women in the state. The profile of women encompasses education infrastructure, employment status and imbalances in earning levels imbalance and welfare programme for women and its impact in Tamil Nadu. Also, the research study carried out by Sharma accounts for the position of women education in India from the sociological point of view (Sharma, 1994). Furthermore, the study by Rajalakshmi in 1999 deals with welfare measures for women, which failed to make an attempt through Five Year Plans. Hence, an attempt is made in this thesis to analyse the Welfare Measures for Women introduced by the Government of Tamil Nadu with special focus on Five Year Plans, Policy Note and Annual Plans.

Problem Statement

Although, women constitute 49.8 percent of the total population (2011 census) in a country like India, wherein six decades have been passed with the attainment of independence, they are still found backward in terms of social, economic and education aspects irrespective of their caste or creed. The present study attempts to assess the status of women in accordance with the various education schemes implemented by the government to uplift women.

Objectives

To portray the education condition of women in the state through the ages with a historical perspective

To highlight and analyze the various education schemes implemented by the government to socially and economically uplift and rehabilitate the women in Tamil Nadu

Scope

The State of Tamil Nadu stands pioneer in the promotion of welfare of women among the Indian states, since pre-independence period. In 1821, the first girls' school was opened in Chennai. Women were allowed to sit for university exams for the first time in 1897, through the Madras University. The State also took the responsibility of establishment of women's welfare department as early as in 1947. Furthermore, the State of Tamil Nadu has taken strenuous efforts to uplift women through various education schemes exclusively designed for women. Hence, the scope of the present conceptual study is limited to the women education schemes of Tamil Nadu from 1965 to 2012.

Methodology

This study is based on interdisciplinary approach to social science based on secondary data sources, which focuses its attention pertaining to development of women education. The analytical method has been adopted to give a critical note on education policies and programmes sponsored by the government for the welfare of women.

Women Education Through the Ages

In any community, the education of women is a more complex task than the education of men. On this subject, a vast variety of views have been expounded. The Vedic period consistently believed that despite the differences in physiology, woman is in no way intellectually inferior to man. She possesses excellent memory, intelligence, and other mental powers, and hence she has the capacity to obtain any kind of education. It is because of this the nature of feminine education differs from that of masculine education. Consequently, girls were educated at home, except such women as Vishwavara, Jboha, Apalla, Ghosha, Romsa, Lopamudra, Saraswati and others who are mentioned in ancient texts as examples of women who composed commentaries on the Vedas. Yagyavalkya has mentioned the names of Maitreyi, Kaushitiki, while Brahman has mentioned the name of Gandhrava. Grahita, as instances of women who obtained the highest education, Manu has gone so far as to say that it is the duty of parents to give their daughters an integral education. They should also be given education in the various arts. There is some evidence of education of women during the Vedic period, but during the Brahman age, this was neglected. In addition, women became the victims of many restraints. Surprisingly, it is in the Buddhist period, women occupied a position inferior to men. Initially, they were prohibited from joining a Sangha or congregation and later on they were granted admission to such congregations and it was there feminine education progressed. Dr. Altekar points out that the permission for women to enter congregations gave great encouragement to female education, particularly the education of women belonging to the noble and trading classes. There is

considerable evidence to prove that female education prevailed during this period. Separate monasteries were established for women. It is among the women who attained fame is Sheel Bhattarika, Vijayanka, Prabhudevi, etc. A lady named Sanghmitra went to Ceylon to propagate the Buddhist faith.

The education of women was completely neglected during the Muslim period. Special provisions were however made for ladies belonging to the royal families. Since a sense of insecurity prevailed almost everywhere, no attention was paid to the education of women. Interestingly, during the British period, the Hunter Commission laid stress on free education and a separate curriculum for education of women. It suggested that schools for girls should be opened wherever there was need or demand for such institutions. In addition to this, the Commission also made provisions for the education of Muslims, Harijans and backward classes, tribal people of hilly regions and members of royal families. The Commission stressed the view that aid should be given to Indian or local institutions to encourage them. It suggested that there should be provisions for scholarships for students studying in them. It was also made clear that the administration should be taken over by local municipal boards of local bodies, and that they should have independence in framing their syllabi. In order to overcome the other defects in the Education Department, the Hunter Commission made useful suggestions for making grants systematic and regular. The students were given complete freedom of religious education, but the system of grants had connection with this form of education. It is in the year 1947, when an independent government took charge of India, the education department was reorganized into a ministry of education. The responsibility for imparting education to the people was put into the hands of State governments, though higher education, women education, scientific and technical education were kept in the hands of the Centre to ensure proper harmony and progress of various institutions. According to Articles 15(3) of the Constitution, the state cannot be absolved of responsibility of framing special scheme for education of women and children. This section does not restrain the state on any way in making special provisions for women and children. Moreover, since independence, there has been an increase in the women educational sphere. The number of schools has increased and so have the students, but the objectives of education could not be achieved. Many new professional institutions came into existence, as did many new universities. However, there was no satisfactory progress in the sphere of women's education. Hence, various policy measures have been introduced by the Central and State Governments. The policies of the Government of Tamil Nadu benefiting women are classified under the following heads:

Free Coaching Classes

The Government of Tamil Nadu has shown utmost care to strengthen the higher education system and the State was to equip itself to the emerging demands of the new century. By adopting progressive educational policy and reforms of central

government, the state is moving forward to achieve gender equity in education. The Directorate of Collegiate Education has been carved out of the erstwhile Directorate of Public Instruction in the year 1965 with a view to administer the college at education exclusively Tamil Nadu. It enjoys the privilege of being one of the most developed states in the field of higher education.

Directorate of Distance Education

The Directorate of Distance Education is a boon to career women who aspire for holding higher degrees and also to enhance their personal and professional competence. Its mission is to empower women through education, especially women who for some reason are deprived of studying through regular mode. The Directorate of Distance Education seeks to break the boundaries which block women from pursuing higher education and their aim was to extend not only equal but equitable opportunities of education to women who desire the privilege of higher education, to be pursued at own place and time, simultaneously with the demand of a job or domestic commitments. Thus the Directorate of Distance Education is committed to provide access to affordable, supportive and flexible quality of education.

Periyar EVR Nagammai Scheme

Periyar EVR Nagammai Free Education Scheme was implemented during the year 1989-90 onwards. It was aimed at educating women students irrespective of caste, creed and community thereby reducing dropout rate in B.A., B.Sc. and B.Com courses respectively. The main aim of this scheme is to provide free education up to the stage of degree level in colleges for girls belonging to poor and middle class families. Hence, to give fillip to women students belonging to poor families so as to pursue postgraduate courses in government and government aided colleges, the Periyar E.V.R.Nagammai Scheme was extended from the academic year 2007-2008 to women students whose parental annual income is below INR 50,000/-. It is during 2007-2008, a sum of INR 65 lakhs was allocated for implementing the above scheme and a total of 1204 students were benefited.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Periyar E.V.R. Nagammai Scheme has achieved the recognition of Universal Elementary Education and has been operational since 2001-2002 as a centrally sponsored scheme. The present fund sharing pattern is 65:35 (Centre: State). SSA has become all the more significant with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) coming into force from 1st April 2010, which provides free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of six to fourteen years. Also, Tamil Nadu has been taking all efforts in achieving the objectives of this aforementioned programme for the past 10 years.

National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)

The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) is a programme of Government of India, to reach the "Hardest to Reach" girls, especially those who were not in school. Launched in July 2003, it is an important component of SSA, which provides additional support for enhancing girl's education. The programme provides for development of a "Model School" in every cluster with more intense community mobilization and supervision of girls' enrolment in schools. Gender sensitization of teachers, development of gender sensitive learning materials and provision of need-based incentives like escorts, stationery, workbooks and uniforms are some of the endeavours under the programme. The scheme is implemented exclusively for enrolling, retaining and empowering girls studying in regular Primary education by establishing Model Cluster Schools (MCS) to provide academic standard to all the other schools in the cluster.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Programme (KGBV)

The concerted efforts of Government of Tamil Nadu on women's education has been able to bridge the gap between gender and social category by providing access and empowering them through various interventions such as National Programme for Girls at Elementary Level launched in July 2003. In continuation to this, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya programme launched in the year 2004- 2005, wherein special programmes for girls have been implemented in 2008-09. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya programme (KGBV) is a special intervention to set up residential schools in the educationally backward blocks with free boarding facilities and ensuring access to girls especially at upper primary level for whom social, cultural taboos and economic conditions hindered their educational improvement. The quality education is being imparted in these schools. In furtherance, the scheme of KGBV ran as a separate scheme in harmony with SSA, NPEGEL and Mahila Samkhya (MS) for the first 2 years and from 1st April, 2007, KGBV merged with the SSA programme as a separate component.

Women Special Literacy Programme through NSS

In order to involve the student's community on a mass level for eradicating illiteracy among non-literate parents/relatives/neighbours, "Each one Teach one" scheme has been implemented through volunteers of National Service Scheme (NSS) in Higher Secondary Schools. This scheme was implemented in all the districts of Tamil Nadu during the year 2007-08 for 6 months for women in the age group of 15- 35. It is important to note that 100 percent grant was given by Government of Tamil Nadu and 1,25,000 women were benefitted under this programme.

Girls' Hostels

The Government of India has launched a new centrally sponsored scheme called Scheme for "Construction and Running of Girls Hostels for Students of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools". The main objective of this scheme was enrolment and retention of girls in high schools and higher secondary schools. This scheme was launched in 2008-09 and is being implemented from 2009-10 to set up girl's hostel with a capacity of 100 beds in each of the 3479 educationally backward blocks (EBBS) in the country. This scheme has replaced the earlier NGO driven scheme for construction and running of girls' hostels for students of secondary and higher secondary schools, where assistance was provided to voluntary organizations for running girls' hostels. The expenditure of the project will be shared between Central and State Governments in the ratio of 90:10. The beneficiaries will be girls of age group between 14 to 18 years studying in standards IX to XII. Each hostel will have a capacity to accommodate 100 girls. This scheme will be implemented in convergence with "Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya" (KGBV) scheme of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme.

The convergence is important as the girls who are pursuing their education up to elementary level in the residential KGBVS will be given the opportunity to pursue their higher secondary education by taking shelter in the girls' hostel. This would discourage dropout of girl students pursuing their elementary education in the KGBV for want of residential schools and would give them the opportunity to complete their higher secondary education. The girls' hostels will be a residential one providing boarding and lodging facilities for the girls studying in educationally backward blocks. This scheme specifically focuses on girl children belonging to the underprivileged, economically backward sections of the society.

National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education

The national scheme of incentive to girls for secondary education was launched during 2008-09 To encourage SC/ST girl students studying in standard VIII. Under this scheme, the SC/ST girl students who a completed standard VIII and studying in standard IX but not completed 16 years of age are eligible to get INR 3000/- as incentive and this amount will be deposited in students' name in nationalized banks. Furthermore, the girls who pass VIII standard examination from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalayas (irrespective of whether they belong to scheduled castes or tribes) and enrol for class IX in State/UT Government and should be unmarried who are falling below 16 years of age (as on 31st March) are eligible to get benefit under this scheme.

Special Incentive Scheme for Girl Students

Education brings overall development to the society. Hence, in order to improve the standard of education of Adi Dravidar and Tribal girl students right from their birth and to ensure 100 percent enrolment, the girls' incentive scheme was implemented. Accordingly, 80000 Adi Dravidar and Tribal girls studying in Standards II to V were given an incentive of INR 50/- per student per month for 10 months. Moreover, for girls belonging to Adi Dravidar community, this scheme was implemented in 16 educationally backward districts namely Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Cuddalore, Villupuram, Virudhunagar, Kancheepuram, Thiruvallur, Vellore, Salem, Namakkal, Tiruchirappalli, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Karur and Nagapattinam. Also, to encourage the girl students to continue their studies from VI standard, each Adi Dravidar and Tribal girl student was given a sum of INR 100/- per month as an incentive for 10 months and annually covering 40000 Adi Dravidar and Tribal girls in all districts except Chennai. It is during the year 2011-12, an additional amount of INR 1616.64 lakhs was provided under this scheme and extended to all districts in Tamil Nadu.

Saakshar Bharat (Karkum Bharatham) - 2012

The Prime Minister of India launched Saakshar Bharat, a centrally sponsored scheme of Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL) under Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (GoI) on the International Literacy Day, 8th September 2009. It aimed at promoting and strengthening adult education, especially for women. This programme was being implemented by National Literacy Mission Authority in 365 districts at National Level, wherever adult female literacy rate was below 50 percent with a special focus on education of rural illiterate women in the age group of 15 years and above with a special preference to SC, ST, minority (Muslims) and disadvantaged backward people. In Tamil Nadu "Karkum Bharatham" programme was implemented in 7 districts in two phases i.e., Villupuram, Dharmapuri, Salem, Erode, Perambalur (under Phase-I) and Thiruvannamalai and Ariyalur (under Phase-II). The total beneficiaries were 14,26,060 and 3,20,439 women under Phase-I and Phase-II respectively during the period 2011-12. The aforementioned were implemented in the districts having 50 percent adult female literacy rate and below along in accordance with number of Block and Village Panchayats respectively.

Limitations

The study covers a period from 1965 to 2012 AD, wherein the succeeding governments of Tamil Nadu continued the implementation of these schemes with modifications and enhancements of assistances. The study concludes with the year 2012 with the end of the Twelfth Five Year Plan.

Suggestions

The awareness among women about welfare schemes, rehabilitation schemes through awareness generation scheme does not reach the grass root level. Hence, the steps to popularize such schemes shall be carried out with the help of voluntary or non-governmental organizations functioning in the localities. Also, in order to educate a female child in all places, various girl schools need to be constructed in village levels so that the female child might feel safe and travel shorter distances for schooling. The security for women should be there so that women may not hesitate to come out of their houses. Also, strict actions and punishments should be there for any crime against woman. Lastly, the governments (Centre and State) have to recognize the fact that women play a special role in the society and therefore specialized training and orientation programmes have to be imparted at all levels. All men should be responsible to facilitate and encourage women for their holistic development in our country.

Conclusion

Women are the significant contributors for socio-economic growth, wherein the State has been implementing variety of women Education welfare programmes in difficult circumstances to pursue education and providing the healthy and protective environment to them. However, the girls have to be well prepared for their future life and devote a good deal of time in learning things, which would be essential in their day-to-day life. Also, equip themselves towards career and economic prosperity. The sanitation, hygiene, domestic science and vocational education should receive more attention with regard to women's education. In addition to this, considerable importance should be given to music, games and physical culture, wherein the awareness to educate a female child in all places have to be provided. Finally, it has also to recognize the fact that women play a special role in the Indian society.

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