

A study on role of education on the status value of women

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Abstract

As women's education has become one of the key development objectives in the nineties, it is crucial to examine the assumptions under which policies, programs and projects are formulated towards this goal. More recently, the concept of empowerment has been tied to the range of activities undertaken by and for women in different areas, education included.

To facilitate the exchange of experiences, the participants were each requested to prepare a background paper describing their education-related activities. It was further meant to stimulate the discussion on major problems in the field of women's education as well as to explore ways and means of carrying out efficient and innovative programs for empowering women.

The participants were likewise asked to reflect on the relevant theoretical issues and practical concerns regarding the empowerment of women through education.

Keywords: Education, Women, Government policy.

Introduction

In terms of government policies on women's education, it was observed that while there is no explicit discrimination by gender in most places, neither is there a real commitment to provide sustainable programs for women. There is such a perceived gap between the rhetoric and policies of decision-makers that many of the women considered the policies as simply paying "lip service" to women's concerns.

Even in developed countries, the proportion of resources that is being allocated to women's needs is small considering the many diverse needs of the women. The fact that many of the decision-makers are men also constrains their appreciation of these needs.

There was consensus among the participants that "empowerment" has become one of the most widely used development terms. Women's groups, non-governmental development organizations, activists, politicians, governments and international agencies refer to empowerment as one of their goals. Yet it is one of the least understood in terms of how it is to be measured or observed. It is precisely because this word has now been one of the fashionable concepts to include in policies/programs/projects that there is a need to clarify and come up with tentative definitions.

This review has not only covered a very broad range of issues and regions but has also attempted to address the literature from the perspective of both challenges and opportunities for women and girls through education. Still, there is more complexity than could be covered by the scope of this review. Therefore, for example, it did not address the role of textbooks. However, the gendered portrayal of women and men in textbooks has elicited much comment throughout the literature on education and gender^[1].

While in many high income countries care has been taken to ensure gender equitable representation in text books, this remains an issue of concern in developing countries. The bulk of the literature reviewed outlined particular adverse consequences and outcomes for girls through the education system. The challenges reviewed in this study are diverse.

They relate to

- a) The distribution of educational provision and financial resources available to help girls get educated;
- b) Policies and institutional factors that deliver education;
- c) Cultural and social norms.

Research Study

In terms of the distribution of educational provision and financial resources, the literature examined the influence of poverty and socio-economic status on educational poverty has a strong influence on gender equal access to education due to both outcomes as well as potential solutions for this^[2].

The key findings were: Providing free access to school is a very effective way of addressing gender direct and indirect costs of sending children to school; Strategies to improve gender equal educational access must address not only direct inequalities in education however, costs of schooling but also the wider social factors that impact a families' decision to Parental behavior, for example reading with children, can counter the effect of send their children to school; Girls are slightly more likely than boys in general, throughout OECD countries, to be socio-economic disadvantage on children's educational outcomes; Boys are slightly more likely than girls to be 'resilient' students meaning that they classed as 'economically disadvantaged low achievers'; are high achievers despite being poor, again based on OECD data.

Other research focused on institutional cultures and practices in both schools and there is evidence of gender segregation in University and schools hierarchies in universities and how these reproduce gender stereotypes^[3].

Key findings include: Europe and advanced economies which is both horizontal and vertical in nature – male academics tend to earn more than female and women are more likely to be associated with non-science subjects.

This segregation reinforces gender stereotypes throughout the education system. Teachers attitudes and beliefs towards gender similarly reinforces students' gender roles, often to the disadvantage of girls, for example teachers are more likely to

there is a considerable literature detailing horizontal segregation among students in under-rate girls' maths abilities and over-rate boys'.

Their choice of subject in which girls are discouraged from taking subjects that are Horizontal segregation is found to be associated with the extent to which girls and perceived as 'male', for example, science, technology, engineering and maths.

Boys adhere to traditional gender roles as well as teachers' attitudes towards literature, also pointed towards more pronounced educational inequalities for girls in children, which may reinforce gendered views of students' abilities. Ethnic minority groups, this is explained both by direct discrimination against ethnic There were a significant number of articles on bullying, violence and gender groups and socio-economic factors associated with ethnicity [4].

Discrimination in schools. Bullying is found to have a profound effect upon boys and girls are likely to experience bullying to similar extents however, they are educational outcomes likely to experience different types of bullying and be affected by these experiences.

Education and Women's Status Value

Bullying is found to be closely related to dominance-submission models of gender. Gender-based bullying and harassment includes sexual harassment and 'sexing' in different ways. Relations whereby those holding 'traditional' views of gender relations are also more likely to be bullies.

Across the findings, the influence of social and cultural norms was found to be an intervening factor in whether or not education can translate into greater empowerment for women. The review also considered the impact of social and cultural norms and whilst girls may outperform boys at school, families and communities' expectations of gender.

Key findings are of their future careers may prevent them from translating educational success in some countries girls are less likely than boys to continue education into higher career success [5].

In other countries, particularly in advanced economies, although women may levels. Outnumber men in tertiary education, they may choose fields that are not as lucrative or prestigious (science or technology subjects), owing to embedded beliefs and media attention to the influence of family dynamics on educational outcomes has not 'female' subjects and Scrutinised mothers' roles disproportionately.

The findings in this review may be organised according to elements of the 'negative' and 'positive' feedback loop which perpetuates or changes gender inequalities through education. Distribution of resources, institutional cultures and practices as well as social norms and expectations of gender all play a part in how education can empower women.

These factors are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. This demonstrates the challenge for policy makers. Policies and initiatives to increase empowerment for education must take account of this complexity. This has been a failure, to a large extent, of gender mainstreaming when applied purely as a technical tool.

Gender mainstreaming is intended as a transformative process for improving gender equality across multiple areas, whether it is applied in a single institution or across many. However, the evidence in this review suggests that despite good intentions, if gender equalities policy does not tackle socio-

cultural, economic as well as institutional factors connected with gender it impact will be hampered.

Another challenge for policy makers and educational institutions is challenging often invisible gender stereotypes and beliefs which are subtly reproduced throughout the education system. Beliefs are transferred through teacher training, through teachers' attitudes and practices towards boys and girls and also through young people themselves.

Significance of the Study

Adolescents particularly adhere to traditional male and female roles and archetypes as they try to make sense of their roles and identities. Addressing detrimental gender stereotypical views in the classroom will involve improving teachers' self-awareness of their own views and how to challenge destructive gender beliefs in the classroom [6].

Some authors have suggested that single sex schools may have a positive effect in this regard, however, the evidence is mixed on this and there may be other ways that the same result can be achieved, for example, training of teachers, or through directly educating girls on their human rights and encouraging their autonomy.

The extent to which education leads to empowerment for women and girls depends on the definition of empowerment. Education has been shown to improve economic empowerment for women and girls, however, only if they are able to access similar levels and types of education and boys and men and only if they are able to continue their studies. That is to say, education can empower women economically if they are actually being educated.

Conclusion

There are a number of ways in which girls are excluded from education, as this review details. Furthermore, equality of educational attainment and achievement may not automatically translate into better labor market outcomes. Other factors are at play including the disproportionate amount of child and other caring that women undertake, the tendency of women to take career breaks for child rearing and the role of wage bargaining power in different economies.

Thus, education alone cannot empower women economically although it is a powerful necessary condition. Importantly, education may be an empowering experience in and of itself. If girls access good quality education which is provided in gender-sensitive, safe and supportive environments, they may be able to develop self-awareness and confidence to overcome the very broad challenges they face as a result of gender inequality.

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