

## **GENDER INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Dr. Challoyu Jyothsna**, Asst. Professor of Political Science, Tar Govt College(A)  
Sangareddy kpjyodl@gmail.com,

### **Abstract**

According to the AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education) 2019-20 report, total enrolment of women in India in higher education is 49%.

Women are not a homogenous category. Their education is determined by socio-religious conditions. The socio-cultural environment of Indian society exerts influences on all aspects of a woman's life. Women in India achieve a high echelon on the educational front despite social challenges. Women from all sections of society have entered the realm of higher education. At the national level, there has been a rise of 18% in female enrolment in higher education from 2015 to 2019.

Gender inclusive higher education is a necessary precondition for the human development. It is necessary because many women are inherently driven to bring people together to achieve something bigger than themselves. They often motivate and inspire others to think in new ways and overcome obstacles. Women excel in communication skills, in a professional setting; they demonstrate an ability team building and work well with others.

They are not only motivated to complete the tasks; they have an astute, wide-angle view of what is most beneficial for their careers in the long run. These aspects call for gender inclusive higher education which is enlisted in the new education policy also.

**Keywords-** Inclusion, Gender enrolment, Influences, obstacles, Human development

Inclusive education is a global concept, considering access and the inclusion of students in the education system as a human right. Inclusive education is ensuring those rights involving no discrimination and equal opportunities in the field of higher education. These rights are accepted by the United Nations through the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

Implementing the inclusive education within higher education is challenging. Inclusive education was originally developed for younger students, prior to its application within higher education. Universities should encourage interventions that favour the existence of means, support, and resources that guarantee equality for people with different background to pursue higher education.

It should include everything ranging from building structures, fee structures, financial options for fee payment, admission criterion, learning environments, virtual environments, services, procedures, information, and study plans in such a way so as to guarantee that no one's right to enrol, move around, remain, communicate, study, or obtain information is affected.

A university is inclusive when it assumes an inclusive culture that consolidates a common language among the teaching staff, which considers differences among students as an opportunity to enrich knowledge.

An inclusive university should avoid standardisation systems that will limit students' participation, and when resources are effectively used to support students' learning.

In short, university inclusivity occurs when conditions are created to stimulate the inclusive process that allow all students' needs to be satisfied.

Inclusive education is a global concept, considering access and the inclusion of students in the education system as a human right. Inclusive education is a democratic value. The teaching staff in the universities will play a key role in influencing the inclusive education. While policy of inclusive higher education is decided at the political executive level and university administrative chambers.

### **Best Practices**

Best practices of inclusive higher education in the Universities include, but are not limited to the following:

Inclusive services with flexible, broad educational and extracurricular options. Choices for taking classes are not limited and students with intellectual and other disabilities are involved in campus activities and organizations, including student orientations.

Faculty and academic advisors presume competence of students with intellectual disabilities and set high expectations.

Students from all communities are viewed as contributing members of the university and are recognized as such by all departments and organizations.

Students with intellectual and other types disabilities are able to navigate relationships with disabled and non-disabled peers and take pride in their identity.

As a result of interactions with students with intellectual and other disabilities, faculty change the way they view and enact the development and delivery of their course curriculum.

### **Inclusion of whom?**

Inclusive higher education call for the inclusion of women, specially abled – physical and intellectual, depressed sections – Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes, backward classes, LGBTQ, victims of substance abuse etc.

### **Gender inclusivity**

Gender inclusive higher education implies ensuring equal educational opportunities for men, women and LGBTQ and involving them in the higher education process. To-day, gender not only stands for feministic approach. It covers all those human beings who preferred to be known as men / women / and third gendered. However, more focus is given to women because, they were deprived of higher education for thousands of years. But in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it may not be completely true.

### **Facts about Women inclusive education**

First, Comparatively, women are equally competing with men in the higher education, more particularly in the urban areas. Learning outcomes also reveals gender equity. However, still there are deficits in this process.

Second, though girls in India today are more educated than they have ever been, the gap in educational attainment, as reflected in the mean years of education, has worsened over time.

Third, the gender gap increases with the increase in level of education due to social norms and deeply ingrained gender stereotypes correlated with biological factors such as adolescence, age of marriage, parental fear of girl's elopement, parental fear of girls being molested.

Fourth, Gender discrimination emerge at the earliest stages of education. The 2019 Annual Status of Education Report says, more boys than girls tend to be enrolled in private institutions, where parents incur out-of-pocket expenditure. The preferred choice for girls' enrolment is the free government school, highlighting societal gender biases in exercising school choice. It continues till the higher education.

### **Inclusion of LGBTQ+**

Inclusivity' for the LGBTQ+ community is taken as representation for members in an environment where they feel belonged, safe and comfortable to express their identity.

During the age between 18 and 22 many students start moving away from their homes, and they come out of the parental influence.

LGBTQ+ students may face difficulty of inclusion in this particular age. They may be ruffed or ragged.

Absence of an inclusive environment can seriously hamper their future growth. Many of them may have talent and potential that can get stifled due to the challenges they face in college.

In 2021 a study was conducted by Boston Consulting Group, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad and Pride Circle Foundation. As part of the study, over 1700 students across colleges in

India were surveyed to understand the level of acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community. It is the first of its kind in India.

The study revealed that 64%, or almost two thirds, of community members who were 'out' to everyone, felt that they have either been discriminated against, or have seen other community members facing discrimination. There were others who were not 'out', who also faced discrimination.

The exclusion of the LGBTQ+ is attributed to gender stereotype beliefs like – homosexuality is either unnatural, or a disease, or both; or the people had not made up their mind about the subject.

There are several institutional and structural challenges which have led to skewed and unequal access to higher education in India. Education as a whole is a sector that has consistently grappled with low public expenditure, under-financing and under-allocation of resources. The public expenditure on education is currently estimated to be around 3per cent of India's GDP which the policy aims to expand to 6 per cent. However, even at the suggested rate, the proposition that a higher GDP might pave ways to higher spending is contingent upon a higher tax-GDP ratio. With both the central government and state governments grappling with shortages under the present GST regime it remains to see how much money would be made available and through what processes. However, the expansion of public expenditure on education is not a new promise and has remained undelivered despite changes to political regimes. Even with the present public outlay, the policy has to pave pathways that are effective in dealing with several other problems such as inadequate infrastructure, deficiencies in decentralised planning, shortage of human resources and a highly skewed gender disaggregated distribution of faculty, lack of investment in human capacity building and teacher training, and delayed fund flows.

### **NEP 2020**

There is a need to understand impact of the National Education Policy 2020 on higher education in India from a gendered lens. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisages equitable and inclusive education for all, with special focus on children and youth, especially girls, from socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

The policy's focus is important because despite effort to educate women, the dropout rate for girls is still high after secondary education. The enrolment ratio too dips at the secondary and higher secondary levels. Among many reasons, the onset of menstruation and the lack of availability of hygienic toilets are responsible for girls leaving school without completing education.

The NEP 2020 intends to meet this challenge through its Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF). The fund will be used to provide quality education to all students

Besides toilets, hostel facilities for girl students have been recommended by NEP. This would be welcome in those areas where students have to travel long distances to reach school.

NEP 2020 appears to have recognised the fact that female students are disadvantaged in additional ways and so in the four Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) that have been identified within this policy, females form at least half of each of these groups.

It is aimed at achieving Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50 per cent by the year 2035. The document lists out several challenges such as severe fragmentation, rigid separation of disciplines, limited access, limited decentralised autonomy, ineffective regulation and low emphasis on research, among others.

To tackle these issues, it makes many propositions including changing the pedagogic structure of undergraduate courses to a 4-year system, proposing a centralized research curriculum to prevent early narrow specialization, expansion of vocational education and open distancing learning (ODL), amendments to the dropout policy etc. There is need to evaluate these propositions and their implications in addressing the present challenges within India's higher education sector using a framework of gender equity and right to education.

### **Conclusion**

There is a need for constituting a diversity and inclusion student interest group in every campus that offers women and specially abled students greater representation and improved quality of life in their institution. Inclusivity and sensitivity towards students with different backgrounds, orientations and identities are factors around which colleges and universities will rapidly have to develop competencies. This is a key gateway to better student admissions, rankings and recruitments in the future. Students have to play a major role in giving legitimacy to a diversity and inclusive environment. They comprise the largest section of members, and have the power to influence others. They should help sensitise peers and create a positive environment for the female students . The administration must be willing to permit the establishment of a positive environment to include everyone. Members of the administration must be proactive about breaking stereotypes. Gender-neutral policies, programs and amenities should be installed on campus. Faculty members can bring an element of dignity to a diversity and inclusive student interest group. Teachers can rally their students and give confidence to the shy ones about associating with the group. For example, Women studies and Queer Studies can be introduced as part of course work and research.

### **References**

1. National Education Policy 2020, Ministry of Human resource Development, Government of India
2. Mike Adams , Towards Inclusive Learning in Higher Education: Developing Curricula for Disabled Students, Routledge; 1st edition
3. Mithu Alur , Michael Bach, The Journey for Inclusive Education in the Indian Sub-Continent
4. Inclusive Education for the 21st Century Theory, policy and practice, Edited by Linda Graham, December 2019
5. Madan Mohan Jha , From Special to Inclusive Education in India: Case Studies of Three Schools in Delhi.
6. Handbook of Inclusive Education for educators, Administrators and Planners, IRST Edition Edited by: Madhumita puri, George Abraham