

A Critical Study : Contribution of Cross -Border Women's Higher Education to Sustainable Development

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Abstract:

Education is not a privilege; it is a human right. As Mahatma Gandhi famously said, 'The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed.' Educating men and women is crucial for sustainable development of a nation. In particular, raising women's literacy rates not only strengthens families but also helps break down societal barriers, contributing to a robust and healthier community. The Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) typically concentrated on eradicating poverty, achieving zero hunger, ensuring good health, and lending quality education. This research emphasizes the key element of "education". In the era of globalization, cross-border higher education has seen significant growth. In 2024, 40-45% of Indian female students pursued education abroad. This paper aims to explore the indispensable role of cross-border higher education in contributing to sustainable development in India. Additionally, the paper highlights how educated women contribute to building more robust and healthier communities by becoming experts equipped to address sustainability challenges.

Keywords: *Cross-broder, Female Indian students, Higher Education, Sustainability.*

INTRODUCTION

Equitable access to education is an entitlement, fulfilling this right is a key to address the important challenges that exist in society. In Ancient India, various factors hindered girls from educating. These difficulties ranged from social and gender norms to financial barriers, and harmful traditional practices¹education has been realised as an important requirement for human life, it is much necessary as food, cloth and shelter , it is thought that both men and women must be equally educated and they are like the two wings of a bird². Education is one of the finest investments for any century to educate and empower the female sector in a philosophical manner because it has been recognized as an imperative tool for the sustainable society. During 1992, In Earth Summit education and its importance was discussed, recognizing that education is an imperative element for achievement of a sustainable society³. It is emphasized that sustainable society can be achieved through cultivation of new knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes. In this era, it is highly essential to share insights about the need of higher education from abroad for female students' contribution in sustainable development in India. Much research has been conducted to know the importance of higher education and its contribution in sustainable development. Yet, cross-border higher education students' role in sustainable development has gone unnoticed. Approximately, 1.3 million Indian students pursue overseas education , of which indicates that females contribute 34% .The paper steadily focuses on prons side of cross-border higher educated female students' contribution in sustainable development. It also aims to emphasize on how educated women contribute to building more robust and healthier communities by becoming experts equipped to address sustainability challenges.

II. PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is anchored on three pillars such as society, environment and economy. It is believed that education for sustainable development (ESDs) fairly considers the three pillars which enable all individuals to fully

¹ Fourth International Conference on Higher Education: Special Emphasis on Management Education On December 29-30- 2014, ISBN 978-93-5196-889.

² International Journal of Trend in Research and Development (IJTRD)

³ International Conference on Globalization, Women Empowerment and Education (GWEE-17)

develop the knowledge, values and skills that are vital to facilitate their quality of life. These pillars are not that supportive to the female counterpart in many countries and hence are not good for sustainable development.

a) SOCIETY

Society is the place where a person nurtures, thrives and practices cultural traditions. It is instrumental in upliftment as well as deterioration of an individual. Society is not much conducive to women as data reflects, 2024 global review of available data says that 30 percent of women worldwide have experienced violence either physically or mentally more than once in their life.⁴ In India, the distribution pattern of crimes against women has remained relatively constant in the last few years, overall number of incidents of crime against women rose steadily, as per statistic 2023, the National Commission for women (NCW) in India received 28,811 complaints, with over 50% originating from Uttar Pradesh.⁵ In such a society, it is difficult to think about sustainable development.

b) ENVIRONMENT

Environment consists of those surroundings which are experienced by a person in the form of parents, siblings, neighbors and peer group etc., Present environment for girls in India is noted by imperative challenges, many of which are rooted in environmental, social and economic factors. Issues like education barriers, health disparities, gender-based violence, child marriage, and environmental degradation continue to hinder the well-being and development of girls.

c) Economy

In the world, as a proportion of male economic participation, female participation in the labor force has remained at 50%. In India, the female participation in the labor force is 32.7% only.⁶ It has become a global consensus too that approximately 32.5% female representation in key political decision-making positions is needed for women to bring about significant and meaningful change. Sustainable development can be achieved through the pillars, these pillars need to be channelized to work in favour of educating girls.

CROSS-BORDER HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Education for all is on the world agenda. In India, as per RTE Act 2009, Education is a fundamental right of every child irrespective of sex, color, caste and creed. Yet, as of 2021, India's literacy rate exhibits gender disparity. Gap between male and female education exists in rural areas especially rural and tribal communities.⁷ Further, a notable number of female students drop out from school during their transition from primary to upper primary levels.⁸ In contrast, female student participation in higher education has increased. Higher Education transforms individuals into leaders, entrepreneurs, and change-makers, enhancing individuals with knowledge, skills and confidence needed to drive innovation and make a significant impact in society. Overseas higher education promotes peace, fosters a fair understanding of cultural diversity, contributes to global harmony by encouraging cross-cultural experience. It can be leveraged to address economic, environment, social challenges.

a) *How does cross-border higher educated women help in sustainable development?*

Higher Education for sustainable development helps individuals to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable and better future. It demands participatory and developing society, economy and environment for sustainable development. This participation is expected to complete only if women are given their due place everywhere without any kind of gender discrimination. Therefore, cross-border higher educated Women helps in multifold ways to achieve the goal of sustainable development as discussed below:

i. Employment

Higher education is a great tool to impart knowledge, develop abilities, change the attitude and improve self-confidence. Cross-border higher educated female students getting employed in host countries benefit India in several direct and indirect ways, bringing substantial remittances back home. It boosts house-hold incomes, improves living standards, and contributes to the Indian economy. Female professionals from abroad frequently invest in or mentor Indian start-ups,

⁴ Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: C Sociology & Culture Volume 16 Issue 1 Version 1.0 Year 2016

⁵ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>

⁶ <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/>

⁷ <https://www.statista.com/>

⁸ <https://www.outlineindia.com/>

specifically led by women, contributing economic growth and gender diversity in entrepreneurship. Many return to their home country to start their own businesses carrying innovative ideas and creating jobs.

ii. Economic Independence

In the economic and political realm women's participation is low. Questions about women's economic independence have existed for ages. Higher education from abroad renders easy opportunities to access high-paying jobs and also to gain access to global investors, grants, networks, enabling women to easily address local challenges. Return on investment is emphasized because women support their families, notably contributing to upliftment of their households economically. Cross-border educated women create a ripple effect of empowerment as they invest in the well-being of the next generation. No wonder it helps in countries economic development and hence in sustainable development.

iii. Empowerment

Education equips women with confidence, higher education endows women with confidence, knowledge to advocate for social justice(gender equality, women's rights and education). Cross- border higher education renders opportunity for women to participate in political leadership roles, with their knowledge they can influence policy and governance, avail opportunities for national development and pave the way for sustainable development.

iv. Decision-Making

Higher Education helps individuals to broaden their approach to problem-solving and to consider multiple perspectives. Undoubtedly higher education from foreign countries will enable female students to get exposed to diverse cultures, viewpoints and global issues. This results in sharpening critical thinking, analytical and strategic decision -making abilities to make informed decisions as they live in different environments . This makes them excel in decision making. Furthermore, the global academic environment helps them to navigate complex situations effectively.

b) Cross-Border higher educated women are experts in building robust and healthier communities & in addressing sustainability challenges.

Knowledge powers them to share their insights and to solve problems related to healthcare, education, nutrition, disease prevention and mental health, maternal health and gender-based violence etc., Education from foreign countries broadens their knowledge to address specific needs of women, children, and marginalized groups.

With the experience of their global exposure women can introduce new technologies and affordable healthcare models, also they can create equitable, sustainable and healthier communities worldwide.

CONCLUSION

Education is universally recognized as a powerful tool for improving the status of women Considering it as a step-ladder for both occupation and social mobility. In this globalized era, education enables women to lead a desirable life , making them more informed of their rights and justice. Moreover, women's participation in the workforce has seen a historic surge across all sectors. Higher education plays a vital role in the empowerment and upliftment of women. Additionally, cross-border higher education for women is increasingly considered as essential for a country's economic development and sustainability. It facilitates the exchange of resources and knowledge, enhancing the capacity to address sustainability challenges and inspiring women to contribute to healthier, more sustainable communities.

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