

EDUCATION – THE LIBERATING FORCE FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

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Abstract

Education is equated to the vigorous force that redeems the oppressed from the enslavement and injustice. Bringing about a change in the status of women has always been on the radar screen. The education of girls and women is not noteworthy when it is considered by merely neglecting the root causes that have led to classifying women as the weaker section of the society. Education, with its multidimensional approaches and functions, is capable of uplifting the female human beings from the lower state but education becomes worthwhile only when it succeeds in setting free the girls and women folk from the oppressions. The liberation emphasised here is the development of the critical consciousness that allows the oppressor to question and oppose the ill-treatment. Education is the most effective in building such consciousness. The heart of the paper is the proclamation of education as the significant instrument for changing subjugated position through the intent of liberating girls and women.

Education

Education is a very familiar concept that is commonly used by many but understood by very few. It is age-old as human race despite its inevitable changing nature of meaning and objectives. The term “Education” has been phrased differently by different people. Some people refer it to as formal schooling or lifelong learning while others, interpret it as acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. For some education is merely training of mind to bring about desirable changes in people. Likewise, there are multiple views about education by a learner, a teacher, a parent, a bureaucrat, a statesman, a psychologist, a sociologist, a philosopher, a layman. This implies that there is no precise definition of education and it has multiple meanings with different functions. Education could be understood in a real sense through the analysis and synthesis of the interpreted meanings of it.

Etymological Meaning of Education

Etymologically, the word education is derived from the Latin word ‘Educare’ meaning “to raise” and “to bring up”. The term “Education” has originated from another Latin word “Educere” which means “to lead forth” or “to come out”. These meanings of education are the indications that it develops, fosters and nourishes capabilities and draws the best out an individual.

Narrow and Broad Meanings of Education

Narrow Meaning of Education: Education is considered as a predetermined and deliberately planned activity that produces a literate man and prepares the man for certain professions.

Broad Meaning of Education: In a broader sense, education means a lifelong process that allows the child to learn, to gain experiences in and outside the classroom that prepares to bring social development contributing towards national development. It equips the child to adapt to various physical, social and spiritual environments.

Education in a wider perspective is referred to as the act of initiating learners into learning in a way that is morally acceptable. Education is therefore a worthwhile activity. Education formally takes place in a man-made artificial environment where every process is planned and implemented for the benefit of those who acquire it. It is carried out systematically. Education does not refer to a single process but a family of processes namely, training, instruction and learning by experience, understanding of principles, logical and critical thinking. Education thus feeds the holistic development of the learners.

Girls and Women

Girls represent the young female human beings ranging from childhood until she reaches the adulthood while women refer to adult female human beings. Over and over girls and women are categorized as vulnerable, belonging to disadvantageous and weaker section of the society due to the conceptualized gender disparity. They are looked upon as those who are being oppressed.

Education as the Liberating Force

Of all its multifaceted dimensions, education is designated as the force that emancipates the persecuted. Over the time, education has been sexist, stereotyping typically against women, on the basis of sex. In the current juncture, education can be talked of as a liberating force that liberates people from the oppressions. Education is now a political action. It is a liberating force when the subject of the education is the oppressed people and the purpose of the education becomes the people's liberation. It encapsulates teaching approaches that enables the oppressed to question the domination and the beliefs and practices that dominate.

Social Stratification and Historical Purview of Opposition and Obstacles to Girls' and Women's Education

Vindication of the Rights of Women is overlooked and sometimes remains rhetoric. It is perceived that liberal ideas of equality to girls'/ women's education do not find favour in many contexts. The educational needs of the girls and women are stratified by social class because of the perception that females are inferior to their male counterparts. The basis for this social stratification is merely cultural. Over and above all, the tyrannical views about the females, the Gender Essentialism is a concept that attributes fixed, innate and intrinsic qualities to men and women on biologically-based or psychologically-based features of gender that grounds the observable differences between the behaviour of men and women and has constructed Essentialized Male and Female Identities that refer to the fact of being who a male is or what a male is or who a female is or what a female is in the social and cultural context. The Gender Essentialism often gives excuses to the gender-based biases and gender stereotypes that exist in the society.

Girls with Disabilities – doubly discriminated: While the girls belonging to disadvantageous group underscore the discrimination that is twofold, the girls with disabilities are more prone to vulnerability and severe persecution. They are stereotypically labelled as sick, helpless, dependent, incapable, incompetent, asexual, thus hampering their progress and development by delimiting the options and opportunities for them.

It is a fact that Gender Discrimination exist in most of the walks of life, in all most all culture and society where discrimination in accessing to education stands top in the series. Education is the fundamental human right of every individual which is essential for any society to flourish in the path of development. Education of the girls and women is an important key to such progress. In this regard, equality in accessing education irrespective of gender is very crucial and has to be firmly ensured.

Education for the Liberation of Girls and Women

Education is the most powerful instrument that is capable of bringing social reformations and revolutionary changes. Extrinsicly seeming to be broad, yet, apparently a very narrow and a peripheral objective of women's education have ever since been to equip her for the multiple roles as citizens, housewives, mothers, contributors to family income and builders of the new decade. In a real sense, education can be perceived as the power that frees the oppressed classes of the society, the girls and women in particular. The underlying reason for such perception of education is due to its ability to develop a kind of critical consciousness that enables the learners to go beyond the myths, clichés, received wisdom and mere opinions that allows them to exercise human rights. Education is potent enough to break the 'culture of silence', the characteristics of the oppressed people who internalize negative images about themselves even to the extent of getting conditioned to the kind of dominations they are into without raising voice or sometimes even being ignorant about the hegemony by meekly accepting

the subjugation. The critical of this is that, oppressed get used to such autocracy that it becomes difficult for them get de-conditioned. Education serves as a noble activity that can de-condition the oppressed from all sorts of oppressive thoughts. It also strengthens the persecuted helping them to analyse the issues that are paradoxical, developing critical awareness to counterpoint the indoctrination.

Suggestions

- Education for Employment: Women must be educated in a way to prepare them for the manifold workforce that is available irrespective of the gender-based classification of the labour force.
- Learning through Apprenticeship: Free skill centres must be made open for all girls and women so that they can learn what they want through apprenticeships with the help of the skilled professionals without the constraints of not being affordable.
- Use of Technology and the Educational Networks: Technological access must be widely expanded to support individualized and free learning. Alongside, a peer-matching network must be created where girls and women with common interest can cooperate and collaborate to achieve a common goal through sharing and exchanging the information and resources.
- Educational Artifacts: The casual learning which is not directed by prescribed syllabus and curriculum can result in in-depth learning because such learning takes place out of volition and self-directed interests. The less-restrictive, less-controlling, and less-manipulative spaces would allow the target group to gain benefits by exploring.
- Issue-based Education: The content should be introduced with an issue which trigger the discussions by the process of which the learners come to the solution of the problem. Such issue-based education will help the female sector to analyse the critical solutions and find the solutions to the problems they face in reality.

Conclusion

Injustice and atrocity is ever growing, the endeavour to fighting against unethical activities and putting an end to them is possible through perseverance and sensibility, and education is the robust tool towards this goal. Truly, education is substantial in promoting development by not only unchaining the oppressors from oppressions but giving them insights into making the judicious use of the freedom that is given. This calls for shouldering the greatest responsibility on the part of every girl and woman who seeks freedom to not taking the freedom as personal autonomy but most significantly considering freedom as the social, political and cultural autonomy within which they are required operate in an ethically acceptable manner.

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