

Gender Equality in Education with special reference to Assam

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality is a state where everyone enjoys equal rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It is a base for creating peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Gender equality always enhances the productivity for the current generation and improves development for the next. Education is an important path for breaking the walls of gender inequality and putting steps forward for sustainable societal development. As per census 2011, the total literacy rate in Assam 72.19%. It clearly indicates a significant gap in the literacy rate in between male and female population in Assam. A nation will develop when society is free from all kind of gender based imbalance, discrimination and violence especially in the field of education. Gender equality in education basically related with four dimensions i.e. , (a) equality of access (b) equality in the learning process (c) equality of educational outcomes, and (d) equality of external results. Govt. of Assam as well as India has taken various initiatives for reducing different gender inequality issues. Both the governments give stress in taking steps for strengthening the condition of gender equality for smooth development of the country and emphasis on the vision 'Education for All' by formulating different policies and acts like Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education act (2009), Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan etc. The central and state govt. introducing various schemes in different levels of education for increasing the enrollment and also looks after for solving of drop-out issue. This paper is intended to study the gender equality in education in Assam and also suggests some remedial measures for fuelling the gender equality for the benefit of the greater society

Keywords

Gender equality, Inequality, Education, Assam.

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Introduction

In a society both man and women have some social responsibilities which help in shaping culture and traditions of that area. This further influences choice, behavior and expectations of people. Society cannot be completed without man or women. When man and women becomes aware, literate, and responsible and enjoy equal rights and opportunities then society will automatically uplift to its fullest extent.

India is a country with unity in diversity. India itself represents as unique because of its multicolor in every aspect inside it. Assam is a state of northeastern India known for its wildlife, archeological sites, and tea plantation and also popular for its diversity in terms of language, culture, tradition, food habits, dress code, and transportation and so on. India has one of the largest education systems in the world where education is a prime right of a child from 6-14 years. Education helps people in achieving their individual and social goals. Education is the strongest means for ensuring gender equality and women empowerment as it is universally accepted as beneficial for the all round development of the human race .

Gender equality is a state where everyone enjoys equal rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It is a base for creating peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Gender equality always enhances the productivity for the current generation and improves development for the next. So, here education is the best way which creates and provides more opportunity for boys and girls to develop their potentialities which will definitely help to break the walls of gender inequality and putting step forward for sustainable societal development.

Gender equality in education is a global priority which is interrelated with the effort of right to education for all. 'Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (2016) has included 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all' and 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' as its aim 4 and 5 respectively. The agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that gender equality can be ensured only through education where boys and girls can equally access and complete education and empowered themselves too.

Gender equality in education is a process of progress towards development as its enables women and man to become equal part of labour market, sharing equal effort in increasing productivity and capable to make any decision in different situation. This process definitely helps in reducing poverty, improving life expectancy, family health and well being by increasing per capita income, etc. Gender equality in education basically related with four dimensions i.e. , (a) equality of access (b) equality in the learning process (c) equality of educational outcomes, and (d) equality of external results.

Equality of Access: - Equality of access refers that boys and girls should have equal opportunity to access formal, non-formal, informal approaches to basic education. Access is can be defined by enrollment, retention, persistence, attendance of students in all levels of an education system.

Equality in the learning process: - It refers that all boys and girls should receive equal treatment, attention and have equal opportunity to learn, explore and develop skills in both academic and extra-curricular settings. It means that all students should taught by the same curriculum and the teaching methods and materials irrespective of their gender. But alternative approaches of teaching should be carried out

for those students who are in need of special treatment to learn.

Equality of educational outcomes: - It means that boys and girl should enjoy equal opportunity to achieve on the basis of their individual efforts and talents. In order to ensure it length of any subject, examination result, and academic qualification should be same for both boys' and girls'. Teachers should conduct different types of examination. Results of a test helps a lot in boosting up the confidence level of the students. Test score not only measure grade or rank of students. It also illustrate about different attitudinal patterns which is become very important while measuring gender equality and equal access to education.

Equality of external Results: - It refers to the equal status of men and women to access goods, resources, have similar earning with same qualifications and experience, participation in different economic, political, social, cultural activities and benefited from it. Although this dimension of equality falls outside the education system, but it is very important as it reflects equality of men and women in broader society including labour market and home.

These four dimensions of gender equality are related, but the relationship is not necessarily linear. Equality in enrollment and in learning process can often co-exist with inequalities outside the external world.

Objective of the study

This paper attempts to study the gender equality in relation to different aspects of education in Assam and to suggest some remedial measures for solving different gender inequality issue also.

Methodology

This study based on secondary sources of data. Data are collected from the books, journals, official website, government reports and publications of other prestigious institutions.

Analysis and Discussion

The data regarding literacy rate, Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), gender Parity Index (GPI), Drop-out rate, Pass percentage of students in exam, availability of drinking water facility and separate girls' toilet in school are discussed below. These are directly or indirectly related with ensuring gender equality in education through maximizing equality of access, learning process, educational outcome and external result in an education system.

Literacy rate

Gender equality in education is a worldwide priority for sustainable development around the globe. Education is recognized as a very powerful way for achieving gender equality as different needs, aspirations and attitude of men and women can be considered and valued through it. In India as well in Assam different issues regarding gender inequality are often rise due to the gap of literacy rate between the male and female population. Literacy not only

includes reading and writing. Literacy makes people strongest and motivated to take decision in different economic, social and political matter. So, educating male and female population of a nation is very important for creating a smoother way for development. Increasing literacy rate of a country implies satisfactory progress in the area of societal development.

As per census 2011, there are 949 females to 1000 males in rural India and 929 females to 1000 males in urban India. The total population of India is more than 121 cores with 48.5% females. According to census report 2011, literacy rate of Assam is 72.2% where 66.3% are female and 77.8% are male against 73% at all India level where 64.6% are female and 80.9% are male. In Assam, the female literacy rate for 2011 increased to 66.3% from 54.6% in 2001. On the other hand, the male literacy rate is 77.8% in 2011 against 71.3% in 2001. The census report clearly indicates that the literacy rate is sharply increased in 2011 over 2001 which is a positive sign for achieving gender equality. A table describing the literacy rate of male and female population of Assam and India in 2001 and 2011 is shown below table Table: 1 represents literacy rate of male and female of Assam and India in the year 2001 and 2011. Is shown below

Table: 1

Year	Assam			India		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2001	71.3%	54.6%	63.3%	75.3%	53.7%	64.8%
2011	77.8%	66.3%	72.2%	80.9%	64.6%	73.0%
% Increase in 2011 over 2001	6.5%	11.7%	8.9%	5.6%	10.9%	8.2%

Source: Women and Men in India, 2018, 20th Issue from Central Statistics Office NSS 71st round 2014.

Gross enrollment ratio:

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) is a statistical measure used to determine numbers of students enrolled in different levels of education. This index is very important in accessing gender equality in education as enrollment is related to literacy rate and directly linked with equal access to education. Data regarding enrollment of students in different levels of education are shown below: -

Table: 2

State	Assam								
	2013-14			2014-15			2015-16		
Year	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Level of Education									
Primary level	111.77	113.16	113.43	113.39	116.60	114.96	104.70	107.39	106.11
Upper Primary level	87.85	98.69	93.13	90.10	101.94	95.86	87.65	98.75	93.05
Elementary level	103.32	109.37	106.28	105.26	111.51	108.31	98.82	104.56	101.62
Secondary level	65.60	77.20	71.21	69.36	80.37	74.78	72.48	83.04	77.39
Senior Secondary level	31.78	34.27	32.94	32.71	35.40	33.97	38.22	39.47	38.81
Higher level	16.5	15.2	15.8	15.4	14.3	14.8	16.2	14.7	15.4

Table: 2 represent Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of students at different level of education in Assam.

Source: Educational statistics at a Glance, 2018, MHRD
From the table 2, we can say that there is a greater accessibility in equitable quality elementary education as its GER exceeding 100. It shows that there is progress in secondary level education as GER of Girls is more than the boys. Such type of progress may be seen for different govt. initiatives in both primary and secondary level. But, the

table also shows girls' enrollment is less than boys in the higher education level which is 14.7 against 16.2 in the year 2015-16.

Gender parity Index (GPI)

Gender parity Index (GPI) is used to measure the access of education for both males and females. GPI is being considered in measuring gender equality as it has a direct linked with providing equal learning opportunity to all. GPI in different levels of education is shown below in table 3.

Table: 3

State	Assam		
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Level of Education/Year			
Primary level	1.03	1.03	1.03
Upper Primary level	1.12	1.13	NA
Secondary level	1.18	1.16	1.15
Senior secondary level	1.08	1.08	1.03
Higher level	0.92	0.93	0.90

Table: 3 represent Gender Parity Index (GPI) at different levels of education in Assam.

Source: Educational statistics at a Glance, 2018, MHRD

The above table 3 indicates the increasing trends of female participation at all levels. The table 3 also shows GPI based on GER is favorable to girls at both elementary and secondary level. But, the table indicates that boys' enrollment is higher than girls at higher level as GPI 0.92 in 2013-14, 0.93 in 2014-15 and 0.90 in 2015-16.

Average Annual Drop-out Rate in School Education:

Dropping out usually refers leaving educational institutions without completing it. More dropout rate of students indicates inequality in access to education and providing learning opportunity. Average annual dropout rate of students in different levels of education is shows below:-

Table: 4

Level of Education	Primary			Upper primary			Secondary		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2011-12	5.89	5.34	5.62	2.3	3.20	2.65	NA	NA	NA
2012-13	4.68	4.66	4.67	2.3	4.01	3.13	14.5	14.5	14.54
2013-14	4.53	4.14	4.34	3.09	4.49	3.77	17.93	17.79	17.86
2014-15	4.36	3.88	4.13	3.49	4.6	4.03	17.2	16.9	17.06
2015-16	4.4	3.9	4.15	3.5	4.6	4.05	17.2	16.9	17.05
2016-17	6.4	6.3	6.4	5.0	6.4	5.7	20.0	19.8	19.9

Table 4 represents average annual drop-out rate in different level of school education.

Source: Educational statistics at a Glance, 2018, MHRD Women and Men in India, 2018, 20th Issue from Central Statistics Office

As the above table shows the percentage of drop- out rate is gradually decreasing in primary level, in upper primary level drop-out rate has increased up to 4.03 in 2014-15 as compared to 2013-14, i.e., 3.77. In secondary level also, the percentage of drop-out rate has slightly decreasing in 2014-15 as compared to 2013-14. In the year 2016-17 the average rate of drop-out has increased again in both elementary and secondary level. As per the report of National Sample Survey, 2014 engage in economic activities is a major reason of higher drop-out rate of male from the school education. On the other hand, females are leaving school

education without completing due to their engagement in domestic activities.

Examination Result: Level- wise:

Considering examination result, it is necessary to access gender equality in education. It refers equality in achieving outcomes which indicates boys' and girls' are enjoying equal opportunity to achieve on the basis of their individual efforts and talents. Examination results of students in school education and higher education is shown in table 5A and Table 5B respectively.

Table: 5 (A): School Education

State	Assam		
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Level of Education/Year			
Primary level	1.03	1.03	1.03
Upper Primary level	1.12	1.13	NA
Secondary level	1.18	1.16	1.15
Senior secondary level	1.08	1.08	1.03
Higher level	0.92	0.93	0.90

Table 5 (A) represents percentage of students passed in board exam of school education in the year 2016.

Table: 5(B): Higher Education

Level	2014-15			2015-16		
	Male	Female	% of females among total pass out	Male	Female	% of females among total pass out
Certificate	39391	36574	48%	37321	41465	53%
Diploma	470765	276887	37%	500999	287323	36%
Integrated	12680	9593	43%	12477	10127	45%
M. Phil	9678	13519	58%	8701	14423	62%
PG Diploma	115065	107445	48%	95013	80340	46%
PhD	13252	8578	39%	14887	9284	38%
Post Graduate	693697	726514	51%	665846	739150	53%
Under Graduate	3086332	3208575	51%	3128466	32203533	51%
Total	4440860	4387685	50%	4463710	4385647	50%

Table 5 (B) represents percentage of students passed in different levels of higher education.

Source: Educational statistics at a Glance, 2018, MHRD Women and Men in India, 2018, 20th Issue from Central Statistics Office

Percentage of Schools with Drinking water facility:

Table: 6

State	Assam		
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Schools			
Primary school	79.14%	82.51%	85.41%
Upper Primary school	83.71%	86.62%	89.21%
Secondary school	90.96%	90.45%	92.79%
Senior secondary school	95.1%	95.31%	96.24%

Table 6 represents percentage of schools having drinking water facility.

Source: Educational statistics at a Glance, 2018, MHRD

Table 4 shows number of schools having drinking water facility is increasing. In the year 2015-16 there were 85.41% primary schools which had proper drinking water facility. But interestingly, it is a very poor condition of primary schools regarding proper drinking water facility after 6 years of enacted "RTE Act". On the other hand, in secondary level schools the condition is quite impressive with having drinking water facility in 92.79% secondary schools and in 96.24% senior secondary schools in the year 2015-16.

Percentage of schools with Girls' Toilet:

Table: 7

State	Assam		
Schools	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Primary school	60.74%	55.36%	86.58%
Upper primary school	57.71%	53.94%	78.47%
Secondary school	72.49%	71.32%	87.73%
Senior secondary school	79.37%	79.77%	88.22%

Table 7 represents the percentage of schools having girls' toilet.

Source: Educational statistics at a Glance, 2018, MHRD

From the table 5 we can say that the number of separate girls' toilet is increasing in both primary and secondary schools. 86.58% of primary schools, 78.47% of upper primary schools, 87.73% secondary schools, and 88.22% of senior secondary schools having girls' toilet in the year 2015-16. The condition is quite favorable though the percentage is not raised to 100%. The increasing number of separate girls' toilet clearly indicates a progress in equal access to education and retention of girls' students in the educational institutions.

Govt. Initiatives for ensuring Gender Equality in Education:

The gap between male and female literacy rate in Assam is decreasing day by day. But, there are some people especially females who are still illiterate and not aware of their right to pursue education. After recognizing education as a means for achieving gender equality govt. India as well as Assam has taken various initiatives to maximize access to education. Both the governments have put steps forward with the idea of equal educational opportunity to all in order to achieve gender equality in every aspects of education.

In Primary Level: - Govt. of India as well as Assam put one step forward for access of equitable quality primary education for ensuring gender equality by formulating Right to Education Act in 2009. Under the RTE Act govt. has established a school within 1km and within 3 km of the neighborhood for the children of class I-V and class VI-VIII respectively. Free text books and uniform, clean drinking water facility, separate toilet for boys and girls, mid-day-

meal also provided in the elementary schools for ensuring greater access to education and enrollment, persistence, attendance in the school. Home based learning facility is also provided for the students to ensure equality in access to education.

In Secondary Level: - In the year 2009, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), a centrally sponsored scheme of MHRD, govt. of India, was also launched to provide universal education for all children between 15-16 years of age. The main aim of this project is to enhance the quality of secondary education and increase the total enrollment rate from 52% (as of 2005-2006) to 75% in five years (2009- 2014). Under the scheme free text books and uniforms, ICT based teaching, drinking water facility, separate toilet facility, vocational training facility is provided for the students. Separate boys and girls hostel facility is also provided for the students in backward area. Advanced teaching –learning materials are used to provide learning experience to the differently able children. Home based learning facilities and Scholarship also provided to them.

On the other hand, govt. of Assam initiated a series of programs to improve the quality of secondary education. Govt. of Assam introduced scheme 'AAROHAN' for mentoring and monitoring of poor talented students from the remote areas. Govt. of Assam also distribute free bicycle to BPL Girls students up to class X studying in govt. and provincialised high and higher secondary schools, provided scholarship for girls students, waiving of admission and examination fees, setting up new secondary schools in tea garden area for securing equitable access and gender equality in secondary level of education.

In Higher Level: - MHRD, govt. of India has formulated various schemes and policies in different plan period for encouraging students to pursue higher education. In the field of higher education MHRD, govt. of India has taken steps for setting up new colleges and universities and strengthening existing one, developing infrastructure facilities, constructing hostels for girls, fee waiver scheme for economically backward students etc.

Moreover, govt. of Assam appointed well trained up teachers who have D.El.Ed or B.ed degree and also cleared Teachers Eligibility Test (TET). Appropriate authority provides training to teachers on inclusive education and gender issues. Teachers are being taught not to give any gender bias example in the classroom. Training is also provided to teachers for setting up question paper. Here, teachers are being taught to used several types of question, e.g., multiple choice, short answer type, essay type, fill in the blanks type, short note type questions etc. so that all students irrespective of their gender and intellectual level can answer it. Training also provided to give individual and group work to the students so that they can build their confidence level and modify their attitude towards gender equality. Both the central and state govt. develop curriculum by trained personnel's who have adequate knowledge on different matter related to gender. Curriculum developer always gives emphasis on removing gender specific content from the curriculum. Furthermore, both the govt. carries out various initiatives to ensure equality outside the school campus. Govt. of India enacted labour laws in different time in order to ensure equal opportunity irrespective of gender in

labour market. Besides, govt. of India is conducting leadership training in different time in order to empower women. Both the central and state govt. give emphasis on conducting social mobilization campaign to ensure gender equality in the greater society.

Suggestion for achieving Gender Equality in Education:

Achieving gender equality in education is an international priority as it is a major issue across the globe. Gender inequality is a type of situation where men and women are not treated equally. Gender inequality creates a lot of hindrances in smooth way of societal progress. Govt. takes different initiatives for solving this expanding issue. But, still gender inequality represents itself as a major issue particularly in Assam as well as in India. There are some ways described below through which we can strengthen the way to achieve gender equality solve in Assam as well as in India.

1. School building should be constructed attractively so students get motivated to come to school.
2. School building should be equipped with necessary infrastructure facilities.
3. Trained teachers should be appointed in the school so that various issues can be addressed in front of the students in order to smoothing the way to achieve gender equality.
4. Curriculum should be develop as a way so that gender disparity can be removed and modify people's attitude regarding gender.
5. Emphasis should be given to provide vocational educational right from the secondary level of education so that students become self- dependent and contribute in the labour market.
6. Govt. should take steps in conducting social mobilization campaigns in order to ensure equality in every field of the greater society.
7. Govt. of India should formulate different laws and policies which will help in protecting rights and opportunities of people irrespective of their gender.

Conclusion

Gender equality commonly refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women in all stages of life. Gender equality in education is a worldwide priority as it is a very fragile moment to develop our globe sustainably. In India, achieving gender equality in education is still like a dream. A strong base is always needed to ensure it. Education can be considered as a mean for bringing gender equality in every aspects of our society. Education brings socio-economic strength, standards of living, moral values, and awareness among the people which ultimately helps in protecting rights and opportunities of people irrespective to their biological differences. So, quality education should be provided to the people to ensure development of a nation. Moreover, govt. should take some necessary steps for giving equal opportunity to all. Govt. should take proper stand to provide adequate vocational, professional and skill training to the people so that they can feel equal and contribute to the process of development.

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