

Female Education and National Development: As Viewed By Women Activists and Advocates

Saleha Parveen*

Abstract

The term development is very broad and may be interpreted in different ways by different individuals. It is a global process of societal change that is planned cooperatively by government and international organizations with the full and informed participation of the inhabitants of the area to be developed. In fact the progress of any society largely depends on the effectiveness of its educational system and the best educational system is that which gives equal opportunities of getting education to all its members. Female literacy plays a very significant and crucial role in the development of nation especially in the economic development of a country. But Female Education in Pakistan, its status and standard particularly is at the lowest ebb. Thousands of girls' otherwise intelligent and capable enough to get education, but are deprived of because of multifarious socio-cultural and economic reasons and gender prejudices. Due to this reason they are unable to play active role in the development of society. This study reflects the views of women activist about the role of females in national development and suggests necessary measures for improvement of the situation.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Study

Generally speaking development means progress, growth and change. It is a broad term used in different ways by different educationist. According to C.V Good, development refers to, "Growth or change in structure, function, or organization, constituting and advance in size, differentiation, complexity, integration, capacity, efficiency, or degree of maturity". (C.V Good, 1973). The concept of development represents the application of the general idea of progress in the socio-economic and political sphere of the nation. According to International Encyclopedia of Education, "The meaning of the term "development" has never been well-defined and has been expanding constantly since its initial formulation. The relationship between development and education has therefore evolved with the meaning of the concept. Development initially referred to stage reached by some national societies, which were characterized by the ability to increase systematically the amount of goods and services available to its population through the application of science and technology to production. Education and in

*Faculty of Education, University of Sindh, Hyderabad

particular schooling, was conceived as one of the necessary preconditions of development” (Husen, 1985). Development is not only characterized by the growth of production and income, it is closely linked with and necessitates the evolution and transformation of economic and social structure. The combination of these factors results from the will for change, which itself is associated with the resolves of the governments in power and the mobilization of national efforts. The most important national resources for development are the human labor force / man power. According to Humla, “A productive labor force equipped with effective leadership and intelligent management skills is necessary requirement for successful development” (Khalid, 1990). The manpower for development during next years would come from our own present population of children (male and female), so we need to worry and plan for health, education, the skills training and the socio-cultural attitudes essential for responsibilities of development of our younger generation. The first training institution of our children is family especially mother, but unfortunately in our country most mothers are incapable of bringing up their children in a good manner because of their own illiteracy, poor health, and lack of recognition of social and legal rights. Literacy is the first step towards development. Education of women is the most effective channel for reducing the inequalities between men and women and ensuring the maximum participation of women in the developmental process. It is perceived that women were ignored in the past during the process of development. One major implications of ignoring women is that they have not benefited from the education and training programs that have taught new skills and improved the education and status of men. Male and female are integral part of each other in life. Rather it could be more appropriate to say that society is incomplete without any one of them. The female participates with her partner in living, passing life and struggling for it. She shares with him in the daily life activities, sorrows and pleasures of life. No doubt there are differences, physiological as well psychological, between male and female, hence the task demanding great physical strength and vigor of regular outdoor activities were naturally assigned to male while female traditionally took over the lighter and domestic task. This state of affairs has been continuing since times immemorial. Throughout the history, right from the very beginning, women every where have been subjected to low status in comparison to men, mainly because of the “division of labor” between men and women. Now with the advancement of human society and a broader vision about female, women of developed countries have earned a lot of social, educational, economical, as well as political recognition and status, but in Pakistan they are still deprived of their right and have limited opportunities in different walks of life. They experience comparatively lower position in our society. Female education is a process of educating female in order to make them efficient and effective

members of society both at home and outside. It should enable them to look after and take care of their daily life duties and responsibilities as well as their legitimate rights.

Objectives of the Study

This study was specifically designed to:

1. point out the social and educational problems faced by Pakistani women.
2. determine the role of women and their education in the national development.
3. suggest measures for the improvement.

Review of Related Literature

Female education in Pakistan, like the overall system of education is the legacy of the British rule. Before this colonial rule, although there were indigenous educational institutions prevailing and there was a network of indigenous school system all over the country but there was no provision of education for females. They were deprived of all educational facilities except with some provision of religious education and house hold affairs in homes and muhallas. There were no traditions and customs of sending girls to school. As mentioned by Nurullah and Naik,

“Native custom excludes females from the advantage of education. Schools strictly speaking are confined to the education of boys. Female education was practically non-existent” (Nurullah and Naik, 1951).

The history of a formal system of education in India starts when in 1813 according to the charter of East India Company, the responsibilities of the education of masses was taken over the government. It was decided that out of the profit of the East India Company, not less than, amount of Rs. One Lac annually will be spent on the literacy and educational activities of the Indian peoples. It was just modest beginning on the part of the government to introduce a national system of education. However, from 1813 and 1854 nothing significant was done in the field of education. It was in fact Charls Wood Education Dispatch of 1854, which recommend a system of education including female education by establishing separate educational institutions for them.

The existing female education in Pakistan, a part of our national system of education, was introduced in 1854 during the colonial role. There was hardly any provision for the education of girls in the indigenous traditional educational system consisting of Maktabs and Madarssahs. Girls were not allowed to seek admission in these indigenous institutions as they were

exclusively meant for boys. Also there were no separate educational institutions for female.

It was Wood Education Dispatch of 1854 which observed that,

“The importance of female education in India can not be over-rated and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men. We have already observed that schools for females are included among those to which grants-in aid may be given and we cannot refrain from expressing our cordial sympathy with the efforts, which are being made in this direction” (Wood Educational Dispatch 1854, paragraph 83).

From 1854 to 1947, till the creation of Pakistan, female education developed very slowly. According to the report of Federal Bureau of Statistics, (50 years of Pakistan in Statistics, volume II), “At the time of independence there were only 82 female secondary schools (18%) with 800 females teachers (11%) and 8000 girls enrollment (13%) of the total in Pakistan”. During the last over 150 years, female education has remained comparatively a neglected sector. In spite of best efforts since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, female education has lagged much behind. After the creation of Pakistan the first educational conference was held on Nov. 27th 1947 at Karachi. In this conference Women Education Committee made many recommendations for the improvement of female education. The Commission on National Education 1959 was constituted on January 5, 1959 during the days of President Ayub Khan. This commission reviewed and revised the whole system of education including women education. In this report (chapter no. 06) many valuable suggestions were given.

According to the report,

“There can be no doubt that the women of Pakistan are striving to play their part in raising the status of themselves, their families and the nation. To realize this potential women need education just as Pakistan needs educated women, and it is the purpose and nature of this education that concerns us here” (National Commission on Education, 1959).

In 1998-2010 the new education policy “IQRA” was announced which also emphasized the importance of female education. In this regard the policy said that,

“The future education will be more useful if we induct the following areas in the discipline of education: education to meet the demand of varied groups with an emphasis on disadvantaged section of society i.e. minorities, female and rural area inhabitants, residents of urban slums, nomads, etc.” (National Education Policy, 1998-2010).

According to Human Development report, 2005 of United Nation Development Program (UNDP), in the Human Development Index (HDI), the rank of Pakistan is 135th among 177 countries indicating low life expectancy at birth, low educational attainment and low income. The report also indicates the adult literacy rate of age (15 years and above) as 35.2% of female as compared to 61.7% of male. In the same report the Gender related development index (GDI) rank of Pakistan is 107th among 177 countries. This explains as how the Human Development gap has been further aggravated by substantial gender disparities. In 2004-05 State Bank of Pakistan announced annual report and discussed the current situation of education in detail. The report states that,

“Unfortunately, Pakistan’s track record in literacy and education has not been satisfactory. The education system in the country is characterized by highly illiteracy rate, low gross and net enrolment at all level of education, high dropout rates from schools, a wide disparity at gender and regional level, and a poor quality of education” (Annual report of State Bank of Pakistan, 2004-05).

In this connection, Economic Survey 2005 states that,

“Gender disparity in literacy and enrollment is one of the key concerns of the Government. Pakistan’s overall record in promoting and delivering gender equality has been weak” (Economic Survey, 2005).

Keeping in view all the facts, government of Pakistan has taken many initiatives for the improvement of social and educational status of women and their role in the national development.

Methodology

This study aims at discussing and taking into consideration the role of women and their education in national development. It was descriptive survey type study in nature. The population of this research study was prominent working ladies related to female education in one way or other living in Sindh Province. In order to collect data, a semi-structured and open-ended interview schedule having 05 questions was prepared. These questions were related to different aspects of females education and its impact on national development. To conduct interview from woman activist two groups were formed.

Group I	:	Educationists
Group II	:	Other Professionals

Randomly 25 women from each group were selected, details of which is given below.

Table 1
Showing the number of women interviewed

Group-I		Group-II				Total
Educationists: Working as		Other Professionals: Working as				
20	05	05	05	05	05	50
25		25				

In all 50 interviews were conducted with women including educationists (having 10 years job experience at university level) and other professionals working in different organizations and also have 10 years job experience in their relevant fields.

Views Expressed by Women Activist

Q.No.1 Are you really satisfied with the existing situation relating to women, there is status in society, their right and their life in Pakistan? If not, Why?

Ans: 85% to whom the question was asked, answered in negative terms. They felt completely dissatisfied with the present status of women in Pakistan. In this connection they expressed different reasons like illiteracy, traditional and conservative behavior of family members toward the education of female especially in rural areas, poor health and lack of recognition of their rights. They said that educationally Pakistan is at the lower level in comparison with other countries of the world. At all levels the literacy rate of Pakistani women is not satisfied yet. Literacy of

women is an important key to improve health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in social and economic development of a nation.

Q.No.2 What is your opinion can be the role of female in national development?

Ans: All respondents including educationist and professional agree that Pakistan women can play a vital role in the progressive development of a society. They said that the role of women in character building of children and their contribution to the development of a healthy and progressive society is universally recognized, but because of their own educational, social and economical problems they are in capable of playing their due role in the national development of society. They again said that the progress and prosperity of any society largely depends on the effectiveness of its educational system and best educational system is that which gives equal opportunities of getting education to all its members. If we want to see Pakistan as a prosperous, educated and developed country, we must uplift the educational and social status of Pakistani women.

Q.No.3 How far the Pakistani women have play their due role in the national development, awareness and awakening among women?

Ans: Both the respondents reply that now, to some extent Pakistani women have play their due role in the progress of society as well as awareness and awakening among women. They said that many Pakistani women represent Pakistan at national and international level in every walk of life successfully, but their number is very little. 80% respondents give the reason that most of the population of Pakistan lives in rural / remote areas and the life and status of women in such areas is poor and miserable. They are deprived of basic facilities of life. In such conditions they cannot play any role in the progressive development of a country.

Q.No.4 What are the hurdles and problems faced by women in life?

Ans: Both educationists and professionals said that Pakistani women have faced so many problems in life. They have comparatively lower status than men. The patriarchal system continuous to prevail given men control over all aspects of women's lives, including domestic, reproductive, productive, socio-cultural and legal. The men-dominated value system and socio-economic structure is retained and even internalized by women. They general tend to be unaware of their role, not being able to perceive the extent of their involvement and contribution in productive and reproductive activities; they deeply entrenched to patriarchal and feudal system, which gives women and their work

a low status. They again said that a variety of factors contribute to the disadvantaged position of women in Pakistan. A gender segregated school system and lack of educational opportunities limits their access to formal education. This situation restricts them from participation in the main stream economy and low social status inhibits them from taking on major decision making position.

Q.No.5 What measures should you suggest for improving the life and status of women in Pakistan?

Ans. About the existing situation relating to women in Pakistan the majority of educationists (78%) said that the position of women is still far from being satisfactory although a period of about 60 years has passed since we achieved independence in 1947. The majority of women particularly of rural areas fall prey to poverty, literacy, diseases and family problems, which have made life miserable for the women. There are still a lot of things to be done for improvement and betterment of women's life in Pakistan. They need respect, shelter, love and affection and feeling of contentment. 80% professional women while responding to this question expressed similar ideas as expressed by the educationists. Some of the professional women were of the opinion that we should make very radical changes in the existing socio-economic setup in order to improve the life of women. They held view that unless such drastic changes are brought about at the national level, nothing good will comes out. Some of the professional women were in fact very active worker and wanted to revolutionize the whole pattern of socio-cultural setup.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Female education has been a controversial and difficult subject, since the very day, it was introduced in sub-continent as a part of our existing system of education. Due to poverty, socio-cultural and educational problems, traditional and rigid attitudes of a family, females of our country can unable to play active role in the development of a society. In the final analysis, it was concluded that the task of the improvement of female education is gigantic and it requires our continued efforts with determination to solve the problems related to it. In order to improve female education, as a first and basic step, it is essential to change or improve the attitude of the people toward social and educational status of female by emphasizing Islamic teachings. In this connection public and private sector as well as media should also play their positive role for the improvement of the situation. Unless as a nation we improve our system of education in general

and female education in particular, the dream of an educated, strong and prosperous Pakistan will remain unfulfilled.

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